WENATCHEE VALLEY COLLEGE

NEWS RELEASE

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Wenatchee Valley College announces 2025 student award recipients

Wenatchee Valley College is pleased to announce the 2025 graduates who were recognized at commencement ceremonies and nursing convocations for their academic excellence.

Mary Smith from the Wenatchee campus and Tonya Rasmussen from the Omak campus received WVC **President's Medals** for academic achievement, leadership, and service.

Smith, who is from Wenatchee, earned an associate degree in nursing. While completing the nursing program, she participated in the Student Nurses of Wenatchee club and became one of the co-presidents. This role enabled her to participate in volunteer opportunities and acts of service, including a clothing drive, blood drive, and guest speaker events. She also served as a mentor to her fellow students, including first-year nursing students.

Smith has maintained a 4.0 GPA, consistently earning a spot on the WVC President's List each quarter.

Professor Kristen Baltz of the WVC Nursing department shared, "what distinguishes Mary most is her exceptional spirit. She treats everyone with kindness and empathy, approaches challenges with integrity, and goes above and beyond to support her classmates and the broader WVC community. In every sense, [she] represents not only the ideals of the President's Award, but the ethical and professional comportment of the nursing profession."

Rasmussen, from Okanogan, earned an associate of science-transfer degree. She began her educational journey in the computer lab at Wenatchee Valley College Omak struggling with passwords and technology, and then went on to become a tutor who

helped other students overcome the same difficulties she had experienced. The WVC employee who nominated Rasmussen wrote, “She has supported countless students with patience, clarity, and encouragement. Her contributions have had a direct and meaningful impact on her peers’ academic success and confidence.”

During her time at WVC Omak, Rasmussen sat on the hiring committee for the Omak campus dean, on the Student Cabinet hiring committee, and on a tenure committee.

Rasmussen plans to continue her education by seeking a degree in behavioral health. “I never dreamed I could even go this far, and yet the reality is that I can and will go even further,” she said.

Additional **nominees for the President’s Medals** included Ava Burk of Omaha, Neb., associate of arts and sciences transfer degree; Jacob Gutierrez of Wenatchee, associate of arts and sciences transfer degree; Oscar Ojeda Penilla of Wenatchee, associate degree in environmental systems and refrigeration technology; Anessa Hanson of Wenatchee, associate of arts and sciences transfer degree; Alustriel Lioliadis of Las Vegas, Nev., associate of arts and sciences transfer degree; and Jordan Aguilar of Omak, associate of nursing degree.

Outstanding Graduate Awards at the Wenatchee ceremony went to Shannon Brouse of Wenatchee, who received an associate degree in computer technology-network administration; Ava Burk of Omaha, Neb., who received an associate of arts and sciences transfer degree; Jovany Arredondo of Warden, who received an associate of arts and sciences transfer degree; Hector Alvarez of Wenatchee, who received an associate of nursing degree; Jairo Aguilar-Solorio of Wenatchee, who received an associate of nursing degree; Natalie Jensen of Wenatchee, who received an associate of arts and sciences transfer degree; Anessa Hanson of Wenatchee, who received an associate of arts and sciences transfer degree; Robert Grimes of McPherson, Kan., who received an associate degree in environmental systems and refrigeration technology; Savoy Schorn of Wenatchee, who received an associate of applied science-transfer degree in business computer technology; and Elizabeth Rivera Avila of Wenatchee, who received an associate degree in business computer technology.

Recipients of the **Academic Achievement Award** at the Omak ceremony went to Amber Bader of Brewster, who received certificates in Early Childhood Education; Christine E. Zandell of Omak, who received an associate of arts and sciences transfer degree, an associate of science-transfer degree, and a Washington High School Diploma; Gabrielle Pipkin of Tonasket, who received an associate of nursing degree; John Godwin of Tonasket, who received an associate of arts and sciences transfer degree; Melissa Rodriguez de Leon of Bridgeport, who received a certificate in Early Childhood Education; and Mykala Berntsen of Post Falls, Idaho, who received an associate of arts and sciences transfer degree. The Academic Achievement Award is bestowed on students who have the highest GPA in their graduating class.

A **Capstone Impact Award** was given at the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (LPN to BSN) convocation in Omak. Doris “Diko” Yatta of Juba, South Sudan, received the award for her project, “Improving Wound Identification on Diverse Skin Tones.” The Impact Award is given to a project that has demonstrated exceptional innovation, practical application, and significant potential to improve patient care and outcomes. The capstone projects and poster presentation represent the culmination of students’ hard work, integrating their academic knowledge, clinical expertise, and deep understanding of the healthcare environment. Each project reflects a commitment to addressing real-world challenges and making a meaningful difference in the lives of patients and communities.

Micah Lee, Keira Martinez-Pinoargote, and Charlee Buchert were also recognized as **All-Washington Academic Team** members.

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Wenatchee Valley College is committed to a policy of equal opportunity in employment and student enrollment. All programs are free from discrimination and harassment against any person because of race, creed, color, national or ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability, or the use of a service animal by a person with a disability, age, parental status or families with children, marital status, religion, genetic information, honorably discharged veteran or military status or any other prohibited basis per RCW 49.60.030, 040 and other federal and state laws and regulations, or participation in the complaint process. The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies and Title IX compliance for both the Wenatchee and Omak campuses:

To report discrimination or harassment: Title IX Coordinator, Wenatchi Hall 2322M, (509) 682-6445, title9@wvc.edu.

To request disability accommodations: Student Access Manager, Wenatchi Hall 2133, (509) 682-6854, TTY/TTD: dial 711, sas@wvc.edu.