

Western Wyoming ranked 7th in the nation among community colleges by *Washington Monthly*

WWCC is Wyoming's only community college to appear in the annual Top 50 list

ROCK SPRINGS – Western Wyoming Community College has been ranked seventh nationally among community colleges by the news and public-affairs organization *Washington Monthly*. Western is Wyoming's only community college to appear in the annual Top 50 list this year.

The *Washington Monthly College Guide* rankings aim to serve as a counterpoint to the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings (which do not include community colleges), and are based on the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the U.S. Department of Education's measures of student retention and completion. Western moved from #15 on the list last year to #7 this year.

"We are so pleased that Western has been recognized in this notable annual review of the nation's top community colleges," said WWCC President Karla Leach. "This success can be attributed directly to the passion that our faculty and staff have for serving our students and providing them with a quality education and campus experience."

The *Washington Monthly* ranking is the latest in a series of mentions for Western in national Top 20 lists for community colleges. Previously, CNN Money had ranked Western #13 for student success among community colleges nationwide, while the college website TheBestSchools.org ranked Western #18 in the country.

But this latest *Washington Monthly* ranking represents Western's emergence into the Top 10 of community colleges nationwide. Leach credited the College's strong showing to the institution's determined focus on student retention, completion and success, and to the dedicated efforts of its expert faculty and staff to provide students with a rich and rewarding college experience both in and out of the classroom.

WWCC Vice President for Student Success Services Jackie Freeze acknowledged that a debate exists in higher education about the usefulness of such yearly lists, but she said the *Washington Monthly* ranking does provide a helpful yardstick by which Western can measure its progress in comparison with like institutions.

"There is significant national discussion about the value of rankings and the kinds of indicators they consider. The *Washington Monthly* rating is no exception," Freeze said. "The value to Western is that this one considers indicators that are very important to the institution as measures of student success and Western's accomplishment of its goals, and allows us to determine how we compare to other comparable institutions."

One such noteworthy statistic was Western's 76.6 percent three-year graduation/transfer rate for first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students. That number was tops among all 50 colleges on this year's *Washington Monthly* list.

"We have the highest graduation rate of any community college in Wyoming, and the second-highest retention rate," President Leach said. "While we are proud of this latest ranking and the quality effort that it represents on the part of our students, faculty and staff, we are not satisfied. We know that we can do better. We are committed to the process of continuous quality improvement, and we continue to look for new and innovative ways to help our students achieve academic success."

For more information on this year's *Washington Monthly College Guide* rankings, go to http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/college_guide/rankings_2013/community_rank.php

Western Wyoming Community College is a two-year institution of higher education that serves students from southwestern Wyoming and across the Rocky Mountain region. Western is headquartered at its residential campus in Rock Springs and also offers classes through outreach centers in Green River, Rawlins, Evanston, and many other communities throughout Sweetwater, Sublette, Lincoln, Uinta, and Carbon Counties in Wyoming. WWCC awards 60 associate degrees and 26 certificates in: business; health sciences; education; science, math, and engineering; humanities and communication; social sciences; technology and industry; and visual and performing arts. Western also offers a variety of workforce-development and community-education classes.

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