

North News Briefs



JANUARY 2026

Welcome to this month's North News Briefs. This newsletter is shared each month with all North Seattle College faculty and staff. If you have news to share with the North community, please send it to northcommunications@seattlecolleges.edu. The content submission deadline is the last day of the month. Please try to keep your submission to 150 words or less.

POUNDER THIS

* **January is National Mentoring Month** – National Mentoring Month is an annual campaign held every January in the United States to promote mentoring and recognize its positive impact on individuals and communities. It was launched in 2002 by the Mentoring Partnership Network and the Harvard T.H. Cahn School of Public Health. Goals include encouraging people to become mentors to youth or peers, celebrating existing mentors and the difference they make and highlighting the benefits of mentoring for personal growth, academic success and career development. [Learn more.](#)



TREE FROG TIDBITS

* **Welcome to North!** Joining North in December were **Jimmy Abungan**, Enrollment Services and Outreach; **Ekaterina Aksenova**, Basic and Transitional Studies (BTS); **Aidan Carroll**, Division for Access, Community and Opportunity; **John DeRosa**, Workforce Instruction; **Liz Heaven**, Workforce Instruction; **Rajiv Ikiah**, College Access Partnerships; **Jinhua Johnson**, Workforce Instruction; **Dennis Lewis**, Workforce Instruction; **Jay Mickel**, Continuing Education; **Pascal-Ricky Nzoni Mikulu**, Student Learning Center; **Amanda Moreno**, Continuing Education; **Benjamin Olson**, Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AH&SS); **Andrew Shyne**, Workforce Instruction; **Julian Smith-Jones**, Math and Science; **Garima Thakur**, Math and Science; **John Tingley**, AH&SS, and **James Wood**, BTS.



* **Ninderjit Gill Receives Employee of Quarter Honor** – Congratulations to Ninderjit Gill, Early Childhood Education faculty member, who was named Employee of the Quarter for fall by the STARS committee. In considering Ninderjit for the honor, the nominator said she "exemplifies the tree frog spirit and leads with integrity, kindness, creativity, and always going the extra mile to innovate the program and ensure that equity is at the core of practice and policy. She has been an exceptional mentor to students who continue to be in contact with her years later and who want to collaborate with her to move forward a justice-centered early childhood education system."

* **Climate Pledge Showcases NSC Faculty Member's Designs** – Each NHL season, Climate Pledge Arena partners with a local artist to create a merchandise collection with proceeds supporting [One Roof Foundation](#)'s environmental justice pillar, helping ensure all young people have clean air to breathe, clean water to drink and safe places to play. This year, North's Kelda Martensen is showcased, sharing her collage prints using woodblock, letterpress, screen print and monotype printing processes. Kelda's designs for this season invite fans to look deeper,

echoing both her artistic style and the [Seattle Kraken](#)'s own spirit of what lives "beneath." [Learn more.](#)

*** Bryan Aguila Perez: Building Bridges through Bilingual Education** – When Bryan Aguila Perez walks into a preschool classroom, he does so with quiet confidence and a big smile. Children run to greet him, calling his name with excitement. At just 21 years old, Bryan has already found his purpose: to guide, support and inspire young learners just as teachers once did for him.

Now pursuing a Bachelor of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education at North after completing an Associate of Arts degree last spring, Bryan's story is one of resilience, gratitude and the power of community. From his early days in El Salvador to his current role as a bilingual assistant teacher in Seattle, his journey reflects the transformative impact of educators who saw his potential and encouraged him to keep going. [Learn more.](#)

*** Lessons from an NSC Alum Now at Amazon** – When Amazon engineer Lenny Brown looks back, he credits North's bachelor's program in Application Development with teaching him the ultimate tech skill: the willingness and drive to keep learning. In his view, a sustainable tech career depends on staying adaptable and curious – "genuinely believing that you can learn whatever tooling you run into, because it never stops changing." [Learn more.](#)

*** NSC Grad Turns Coding Passion into Career Success** – In the household where Dureti Shemsi grew up, career options came in just two flavors: lawyer or doctor. "One or the other," she says with a smile. "I chose doctor." Her journey began with pre-med classes at South Seattle College, continued through a bachelor's degree at the University of Washington, and came full circle when she returned to Seattle Colleges for a second bachelor's – in Computer Science. "Yes, a big plan change!" she laughs. "I graduated from UW during COVID and lost some of my passion for entering healthcare. Plus, by that point I had a kid." [Learn more.](#)

*** Student Spotlight: International Business Graduate Boris Robles-Slyusar** – When Boris Robles-Slyusar enrolled at North, he didn't expect his path would lead to a senior marketing role at a global EdTech company. He began by taking college-level business classes to earn an associate degree, drawn by his entrepreneurial drive and the versatility of business skills. He soon discovered he could continue at North and earn a bachelor's degree in International Business without transferring. Today, Boris is a senior digital marketing manager at Educative Inc., an e-learning platform for developers and data professionals. His degree prepared him to manage global projects, collaborating with colleagues across the U.S., India, Pakistan, Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America. [Learn more.](#)

RIBBETING NEWS

*** Johnson Controls Renews NSC Workforce Development Grant** – North received a \$100,000 grant for the fourth year – for a total of \$400,000 as part of the Johnson Controls Community College Partnership Program. The grant is part of Johnson Controls nationwide initiative that aims to donate up to \$15 million to community colleges by the end of 2026 to expand access to high-demand technical fields. The funding strengthens on-campus training and educational pathways for emerging leaders in the HVAC, digital, fire and security sectors. In partnership with Johnson Controls, the global leader in smart, healthy and sustainable buildings, North Seattle College continues to invest strategically in closing the skilled trades gap. Together, they are empowering the next generation of skilled professionals and building stronger, more resilient communities. [Learn more.](#)



*** Microsoft Awards North an Additional \$25K for Tech Bachelor's Programs** – North has been awarded another \$25,000 in support of integrating AI tools in education and the college's upcoming student capstone showcase. The funds will be managed and utilized by NSC's technology bachelor's programs. Microsoft is investing about \$4 billion in a large philanthropy initiative called Elevate with the goal of democratizing AI and training about 20 million people to develop AI skills. North aims to pursue more funding opportunities with Microsoft in an effort to help career-seeking students across all workforce sectors represented at the college – from Early Childhood Education to Real Estate to Pharmacy Technology and beyond.

*** Article Accepted for Publication in League for Innovation Learning Abstracts** – North's Early Childhood Education staff and faculty members have had an article accepted for publication in the May 2026 issue of the League for Innovation's Learning Abstracts. The article is titled "Advancing Anti-Bias Competency Through Cohort-Based Learning and Strategic Partnerships in Early Childhood Education." The article highlights the ECE program's Bachelor of Applied Science and their work to develop equity-informed teachers.

*** International Accounting Features Executive Speakers** – North's Accounting with International Accounting program started a new initiative featuring Boeing executives who shared global accounting insights and answered student questions. This partnership improved the course for students by providing real-world expertise and expanded students' exposure to industry leaders. Both the speakers and students found it to be beneficial and expressed interest in continuing in the coming quarters.

*** North's BTM Program: Where Business Meets Innovation** – In today's fast-paced economy, organizations need professionals who can bridge the gap between business strategy and cutting-edge technology. North's Business Technology Management (BTM) program is designed to prepare students for this dynamic intersection, equipping them with the skills to lead data-driven business transformations. [Learn more.](#)



ON THE LILY PAD

*** Sunlight Cafe Coming to Library January 29** – Chase away the winter blues by basking in full spectrum light from the library's collection of Happy Lights (also available for checkout) on Thursday, January 29, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., on the library's top floor. Enjoy fruit snacks and relaxing activities to help bring a little sunshine to your day. For more information, please contact [Willa Sweeney](#), administrative assistant, Library Services.

*** Reminder: Winter Quarter Parking Options** – Winter quarter parking permits are available. You may purchase quarterly permits [online](#). For more information about parking and other transportation options, including Orca cards, bike lockers and more, please see the December 17 email from Casey Saunders, transportation coordinator.

*** Exhibition in NSC Art Gallery Continues through January 16** – The NSC Art Gallery is pleased to offer an exhibition called "SUSTENANCE: Interweaving Food & Identity" through January 16. The artists in SUSTENANCE use food as a visual and conceptual language to question how cultural identity is preserved, transformed and represented. Together, their works support a discussion of the politics of identity, reminding us how deeply tied food is to who we

are. The gallery is open Monday through Thursday, from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. [Learn more](#).

PUDDLE JUMPING

* **Commencement 2026 Date Set for June 18** – Seattle Colleges [Commencement 2026](#) is scheduled for Thursday, June 18, at the University of Washington's Alaska Airlines Arena. Like this past year, there will be two sessions: one in the late afternoon and another in the early evening. Exact ceremony times will be announced soon. For now, please mark your calendar and plan to attend. If you want a taste of what's in store for 2026, watch the [Commencement 2025 highlight video](#).



Office of Communications

North Seattle College | northseattle.edu

College Center Building | 9600 College Way North | Seattle, WA 98103

Mike Sprouse, Communications Director, 206.934.7791

Rakhee Phelps, Marketing Manager, 206.934.5681

[Facebook](#) | [Twitter/X](#) | [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#)