

North News Briefs



FEBRUARY 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.

PONDER THIS

* **February is Black History Month** – This year marks the 100th anniversary of federal recognition for Black Americans. What began as a singular week of learning and recognition called Negro History Week in 1926 has grown into an overall cultural observance of Black History throughout the month of February. In 1925, when Dr. Carter G. Woodson planned the inaugural week-long observance of Black history, he could hardly have anticipated the imprint he would leave on the world. For the 100th theme, the founders of Black History Month urge us to explore the impact and meaning of Black history and life commemorations in transforming the status of Black peoples in the modern world. [Learn more](#).



TREE FROG TIDBITS

* **Welcome to North!** Joining North in January were **Ocbazgi Abraham**, Facilities and Plant Operations; **Raad Alaqra**, Math and Science; **Morgan Fries**, Workforce Instruction; **Peter Gillooly**, Workforce Instruction; **Eva Groenink**, Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; **Gretta Hitimana**, Student Leadership; **Edwin Ho**, Workforce Instruction; **Mia Ishdorj**, Library, Teaching and Learning Center, and Student Media Center; **Rohan Katuwal**, Business Operations; **Bo Lee**, Continuing Education (CE); **Taylor Merkel**, Student Learning Center (SLC); **Le Kim Dan Nguyen**, SLC; **Derek Pharr**, CE; **Anna Szylewicz**, Workforce Instruction; **Matab Saleh**, Math and Science; **Roger Tang**, SLC; **Lukas Tegegn**, Math and Science; **Mikaela Vo**, Math and Science; **Matthew Whinery**, Facilities and Plant Operations; and **Heleya de Barros**, CE.

* **Student Ramon Cazarez Featured in Video** – North student and Seattle Colleges Foundation scholarship recipient Ramon Cazarez is featured in a short Foundation video highlighting his story. Ramon is studying business at North while working full-time as a re-entry navigator on campus, helping those who have been impacted by the criminal justice system. Ramon has already earned a prestigious full-ride transfer scholarship to attend UW (Martin Family Achievement Scholarship), where he intends to continue his education after completing his associate degree at North. [Watch the video](#).

* **Nyles Austin Joins North's Project Baldwin Team** – Welcome Nyles Austin as North's new Project Baldwin navigator. Nyles is excited to join the team to support students through personalized academic guidance, advocacy and connections to campus and community resources. He is a recent graduate of Seattle Central College and is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration at the University of Washington. With a

background in youth development and community engagement, Nyles brings a strong commitment to relationship-building and culturally responsive support. With Nyles on board, Ebrima Banda will now serve as navigator for Project Baldwin at Central.

*** Welcome Matthew Whinery, Associate Director of Facilities** – Matthew Whinery recently joined North as our new associate director of Facilities. He brings extensive experience in higher education facilities management and previously served at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas and Cal-Poly Pomona, where he oversaw a broad range of facilities operations, including custodial services, grounds, trades, and design and construction. Matthew looks forward to working closely with the Facilities team to continue providing high-level services across campus.

*** Welcome Jonah Israel, Manager of Facilities Operations** – Jonah Israel recently joined North as our new manager of Facilities Operations, with a primary focus on custodial services supporting clean, safe and welcoming environments for students, faculty and staff. He has extensive experience in custodial and facilities operations from the University of Washington, King County and Federal Way Public Schools.

*** Michael Saunders Transitions to Associate Director of Capital Projects** – The additions of Matthew Whinery and Jonah Israel to the Facilities team have allowed Michael Saunders to fully transition into the role of associate director of Capital Projects, after many years of dedicated service within Facilities. Michael's deep knowledge of the campus will be a tremendous asset as we advance capital improvements, strengthen preventive maintenance efforts and support the long-term success of the entire North campus.

RIBBETING NEWS

*** Wellness Center BEST of 2025 Seattle Award Winner** –

Congratulations to the Roy Flores Wellness Center as it was recently recognized as the BEST of 2025 Seattle Award Winner in the Wellness Center category by BusinessRate. The honor is based on verified data from Google Reviews – in other words, authentic feedback of customers, as opposed to applications or nominations. This award is designed to identify local leaders in terms of customer satisfaction, brand reputation and service excellence. Way to go, Wellness Center team!



*** North Accepted as a Mentor-Connect Cohort** – North has been accepted as a Mentor-Connect cohort, in preparation to apply for the National Science Foundation (NSF) Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program grant. This national mentoring initiative will provide North with targeted guidance, professional development, and support in crafting a competitive NSF ATE proposal. Participation in the cohort strengthens the college's efforts to expand high-quality STEM and technology-focused education pathways for students. Michelle Melero is the administrator for this cohort, IT faculty Poul Nichols and Allan Kafley are primary investigators, and Heather Neikirk is the grant administrator/grant writer for the project.

*** College Presidents Kick Off Coast-to-Coast Showdown** – With excitement building for Super Bowl LX, the presidents of Quinsigamond Community College in Worcester, Mass., and North Seattle College are bringing some friendly competition of their own to the field. The two institutions have announced a lighthearted wager tied to their respective hometown NFL teams. [Learn more](#).

ON THE LILY PAD

* **What to Do if You Encounter Federal Agency** – Across the district, work is actively continuing to ensure clarity and consistency in our practices related to the possibility of federal agencies showing up on campuses. If you encounter a federal agency – including ICE – stay calm and contact Security at (206) 934-3636. For most situations, reaching out to North's campus security officers will be sufficient and is the appropriate first step. Our security team is trained in responding to these situations and will work directly with federal officers as needed. They will also contact additional college or district leaders when appropriate. Learn more about our ICE Response Protocol on the [Seattle Colleges website](#).

* **Lilypad Café Opens in College Center Building** – January 28 marked the soft opening for the new LilyPad Café on the first floor of the College Center building. The café is scheduled to be open from 8 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday, offering a variety of coffee drinks, specialty beverages and pastries. Hours may be expanded as business grows, so please stay tuned for more updates and food services information. To support this new operation, a full-time lead barista has been hired to staff the café. Please welcome Sami DeCracker to the Tree Frog family. Sami is excited to get to know everyone and create a welcoming space on campus. She enjoys creating art, going to concerts and hanging out with her cat, Dr. Pepper. (And according to a source close to the situation, Sami makes a mean cappuccino!)

* **Workshop on Serving Justice-Involved Students February 3** – College students who are justice-involved face unique challenges and constraints as they leave incarceration and move to re-enter life in the community. This workshop will shine a light on some of the challenges of re-entry and what those mean for the academic and classroom experience. Communication strategies and resources that can foster academic success to help these students thrive will be shared. The workshop is on Tuesday, February 3, from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. via [Zoom](#).

* **Development Day February 5** – Winter Faculty and Staff Development Day is set for Thursday, February 5. Check out the schedule on [Canvas](#) or the Teaching and Learning Center [webpage](#). Please note Student Services will be closed from 8:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. to allow all staff and faculty to participate in the day's events. The Roy Flores Wellness Center has previously arranged events so it will be open. While there are no classes scheduled that day, we will have signage and messaging to students announcing the closure of Student Services offices.

* **Open Studio Cambodia Exhibition in NSC Art Gallery** – The NSC Art Gallery is pleased to announce a new exhibition called Open Studio Cambodia: Art of the Kingdom of Wonder, curated by Seattle-based artist Lauren Iida. Founded in 2018 by Iida, Open Studio Cambodia's mission is to support emerging contemporary Cambodian artists. The exhibit runs through March 6. Gallery hours are Monday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.



* **Cozy Valentine/Reading Event in Library February 12** – Come hang out and read together Thursday, February 12, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. in the top floor of the library. Bring your own book or borrow one of the library's. Cozy up with hot cocoa, coffee and tea from the hot drinks bar (with mini marshmallows!), then create a valentine for your favorite book or character! For information, please contact [Willa Sweeney](#), administrative assistant, Library Services.

* **Mini Zine Workshop Coming to Library February 26** – Learn how to make your own one-page zine with Continuing Education instructor Bryan Edenfield, Thursday, February 26, from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. in the Library Seminar Room (LB2208). Basic supplies will be provided, but feel free to bring any other materials you want to use. For more information, please contact [Willa Sweeney](#), administrative assistant, Library Services.

* **Capital Projects Update** – A major focus of recent capital efforts has been heating and cooling improvements across campus. Three new boilers and new fans were installed in the Arts and Sciences building, and HVAC improvements are underway in the College Center building. Other improvements include lighting repairs along most of the main stairway from College Way to the courtyard, improving visibility and safety. In addition, failing doors in the Opportunity Center were recently replaced. Exploratory work is being done for a future campus badge-access system. All these projects represent critical investments in campus infrastructure and long-term reliability.

* **Campus Security Cameras Installed** – North has completed installation of campus security cameras, marking a major milestone after more than two years of planning and coordination. Cameras are primarily located outdoors and in the parking garage. They are expected to be operational by the end of winter quarter, significantly enhancing safety and providing greater peace of mind for our campus and surrounding community.

* **Wellness Center Offers Something for Everyone** – It may be February already, but it's not too late to kick those new year resolutions into high gear. The Roy Flores Wellness Center offers something for everyone to help prioritize your well-being and support your wellness journey. [Learn more](#).

* **Food Truck on Campus Every Tuesday** – A food truck will be available most Tuesdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the west parking lot, next to the library. For the current food truck schedule, menus, pricing and online ordering, visit the [Washington State Food Truck Association](#).

PUDDLE JUMPING

* **Seattle Colleges, WWU Establish Transfer Agreement** – Students at Seattle Colleges now have a streamlined and guaranteed route to a bachelor's degree at Western Washington University through a new transfer pathway partnership. The agreement guarantees admission to Western for Seattle Colleges transfer students who complete a transfer degree, providing a clear and dependable path to continue their education at one of the state's top public universities. [Learn more](#).

* **Scholarship Applications for 2026-27 Now Open** – Scholarship season is upon us, so please help get the word out to our students. The Seattle College Foundation is now accepting applications for 2026-27 scholarships. The application deadline is Wednesday, March 18. Scholarships range from \$100 to \$5,000. All current and prospective students at North, Central and South are eligible to apply (including DACA, undocumented, international students, and those with a prior degree). [Learn more](#).



* **Mindful Meditation Sessions on Mondays** – Seattle Colleges students and employees are invited to the Mindful Meditation Zoom sessions each Monday through March 16. These sessions are free and led by mindfulness team members from all three campuses. They take

place each Monday from 12:10 to 12:30 p.m. To access the Zoom room, use the meeting ID 994 361 6628, passcode: Bliss! Or 715567. Contacts are [Patricia Naylor](#) or [Kelli Murphy](#).

*** 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](#).



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