

Creating a Perfect Educational Partnership

Working with PMI helps Bellevue College establish a project management certificate program that is attractive to both students and employers.

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—Margaret Murphy, director of business and professional programs, and continuing education programs, Bellevue College

SUMMARY:

"We're located in Microsoft's backyard," says Margaret Murphy, director of business and professional programs and continuing education programs at the Bellevue, Washington, USA-based school.

Today, about half of the students come from IT organizations, including Microsoft and other tech titans such as T-Mobile and Nintendo Co. But the school also pulls in participants from companies across a wide variety of other sectors, such as healthcare and construction.

With such a diverse group of students, Bellevue has to offer a program that's respected in the project management profession—and that can easily fit within the students' lifestyle.

BUILDING A RESPECTED CURRICULUM

As Bellevue looked to set up a project management program that stood out from other schools, Ms. Murphy says working with PMI was the only way to go. School administrators reached out to project management experts from the PMI Puget Sound Chapter to help develop curriculum through

identifying core skills needed by project managers. And PMI's *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide)* serves as the basis for what is taught in many of the classrooms.

One of the biggest steps the school took was to become a PMI Registered Education Provider (R.E.P.) (See "What are R.E.P.s?" on page 4.).

BELLEVUE COLLEGE

Location: Bellevue, Washington, USA

Program: Classes can be taken individually or as part of a project management certificate program.

School Highlights: Bellevue College is Washington's largest community college, with an operating revenue of US\$67.3 million and a total annual enrollment of 34,000.

Its continuing education department offers more than 1,000 classes every year, including a 150-hour project management certificate for professionals.

Delivery method

- Traditional Classroom

www.conted.bcc.ctc.edu

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—Margaret Murphy

That means Bellevue is approved by PMI to offer professional development units (PDUs) to students participating in its programs. (See “What are PDUs?” on page 3.)

Classes included in Bellevue’s project management program count toward the 35-hour education requirements for PMI’s Project Management Professional (PMP)[®] credential and the 23 education hours for PMI’s Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM)[®] certification. (See “PMI’s Family of Credentials” on page 4.)

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BECOMING A REGISTERED EDUCATION PROVIDER

The R.E.P. designation has proven to be a powerful weapon in Bellevue’s marketing arsenal, linking the school’s project management program with a globally recognized brand, says Ms. Murphy.

“PMI lends credibility to Bellevue College, which in turn has made our program much more marketable,” she says.

Being able to use the PMI R.E.P. logo on the school’s website and marketing materials has given the program even greater visibility in the project management world and beyond. And the school’s listing as an R.E.P. on PMI’s website helps attract students who are members of that organization.

Whether students are career changers looking for a way into a booming profession or project management veterans seeking PDUs, the Bellevue certificate program is designed to deepen, update and reinforce their knowledge. And the relationship with PMI means the curriculum is always up-to-date with PMI’s standards and reflects

the latest changes to the *PMBOK[®] Guide*.

It doesn’t end there, however. The PMI network has created other opportunities for growing the program and expanding the student population.

“The PMI Puget Sound Chapter [Seattle, Washington, USA] has allowed us to display our [information] at their meetings, which have a huge turnout—several hundred people a month—so that is quite a bit of exposure for us,” Ms. Murphy says.

The school’s relationship with the local chapter has proven to be a great recruitment tool for educators, too. Bellevue found most of its instructors—nearly all of whom are practicing project managers or consultants—through the chapter’s monthly meetings.

“Faculty really like being part of a program that is [a PMI Registered Education Provider Program],” she says, adding that participation in the program allows them to earn PDUs of their own.

CREATING A FLEXIBLE PROGRAM

The average age of project management students at Bellevue is around 38. They are typically professionals who must balance continuing education with the demands of their job and personal life.

When designing the program, school administrators knew it had to offer flexibility. They set it up so that it typically takes three quarters (about 9 months) to complete, but students can start at any time and complete the work at their own pace.

The program also had to cover a wide variety of subject matter to accommodate different student needs. Although most have bachelor's degrees, professional backgrounds vary greatly.

"We have some students coming in with 10 or 15 years of experience but have never had formal training and are now seeking out certification," Ms. Murphy says. "And we have others who are career-changers, people who are brand new to project management and looking to break into the field. So it really runs the gamut."

WHAT ARE PDUs?

Professional Development Units (PDUs) are used to quantify approved professional development activities.

PMI credential holders (excluding the Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM)[®] certification holders) must earn a set amount of PDUs to maintain their credential as part of PMI's Continuing Certification Requirements (CCR) Program.

For more information:
www.pmi.org/ccrs

To meet these needs, Bellevue offers an array of classes such as Agile Project Management, Dealing with Discord, and Understanding and Developing a Work Breakdown Structure.

To obtain a certificate, students must take 120 hours of required courses and 30 hours of electives. The curriculum culminates in a Project Management Practicum, an 11-week class where student teams of eight to 10 people work on projects for not-for-profit organizations such as the American Red Cross or Hopelink.

THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT

As a discipline, project management is applicable across a broad range of industries. Building competency in communication, leadership, management, team-building and risk management prepares students for a wide range of careers. And that gives Bellevue's project management certificate holders a distinct edge in the workplace.

Ms. Murphy says students consistently report high rates of satisfaction with the program—particularly that it has a practical focus and is taught by certified professionals. The PMI affiliation is an added seal of approval, she says.

Paul Hara, who came to the certificate program with two decades of experience in the biotech industry, reports the program helped him stand out from his colleagues.

Not only did it help him get a promotion almost immediately, but the certificate helped Mr. Hara in seeking another position.

"More than one employer told me my résumé rose to the top of the pile because it had that project management credential from Bellevue College," Mr. Hara says.

He eventually landed a job at MDS Pharma Services, a drug discovery and development organization. Recently, he was promoted to director of program management for the company's development and regulatory services group.

And in the end, that is the goal: Improving the skill sets of project managers to ultimately benefit their career ■

WHAT IS AN R.E.P.?

A PMI Registered Education Provider (R.E.P.) is an organization approved by PMI to issue professional development units (PDUs) for its training courses. Courses offered by R.E.P.s are preapproved for contact hours in fulfillment of certification eligibility requirements, as well as PDUs to fulfill the continuing certification requirements for PMI credentials.

The R.E.P. program has been designed to enhance the ongoing professional development of PMI members, those credentialed through PMI and others in the project management profession.

**For more information visit
[PMI.org/REP](https://www.pmi.org/REP)**

PMI'S FAMILY OF CREDENTIALS

PMI Risk Management Professional (PMI-RMP)®: PMI-RMP credential holders are project team members with expertise in project risk management.

PMI Scheduling Professional (PMI-SP)®: PMI-SP credential holders are project team members with advanced expertise in project scheduling management.

Project Management Professional (PMP)®: PMP credential holders lead and direct cross-functional teams to deliver projects within the constraints of schedule, budget and scope.

Program Management Professional (PgMP)®: PgMP credential holders manage programs that contain complex activities that span functions, organizations, geographic regions and cultures; build credibility, establish rapport and maintain communication with stakeholders; possess advanced skills in finance, cross-cultural awareness, leadership, influence, communication, negotiation and conflict resolution.

Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM)®: CAPM certification holders contribute to projects as subject matter experts and team members. They may also serve as project sponsors, facilitators, liaisons or coordinators.