**WACTC – November 25, 2008**

**Key Talking Points (Budget Shortfall)**

Washington State is experiencing an economic crisis like we haven’t seen in decades.

The impact of this crisis to higher education couldn’t come at a worse time.

This is especially true for the two-year college system, as citizens are coming to our campuses in record numbers to gain marketable skills for a rapidly changing job market.

A twenty percent reduction to our budget will cut into the lifeline of our state’s economic recovery and our system’s promise of an open door to higher education for every citizen.

Simply put, our colleges play a critical role in the state’s economic recovery but that effort will be diminished if dramatic budget cuts are levied against the colleges.

We are in the process of taking a comprehensive, strategic approach to impending cuts, which include focusing on those campus services that have the least impact on students and the state’s economic recovery. However, if the cuts are too large, educational program reductions are unavoidable.

Substantial budget cuts will force community and technical colleges to:

* Cut enrollments, reducing the number of students we can admit and serve
* Increase tuition – possibly up to 7 percent (or higher)
* Cancel selected programs and critical services to students

We will continue to advocate for additional resources to ensure higher education continues to be within reach and affordable for those who most need assistance through financial aid.

At **<college name>,** these cuts will mean… **<Insert college-specific information here…>**

Within available resources, we remain committed to our mission and to helping Washington and its citizens move out of this difficult economic time.

**Today’s students are tomorrow’s workforce. Let’s not starve the solution!**