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## **112 alternative program students to receive high school diplomas Monday**

**PUEBLO** – Given a second chance in a new environment, some high school dropouts find their niche. Through three of Pueblo Community College’s alternative programs, many even excel.

This year’s students in the Alternative High School Diploma, Gateway to College and GED (General Equivalency Diploma) programs have reason to be proud. In addition, for the first time, they will be recognized at a combined graduation ceremony this Monday, May 23, beginning at 6 p.m. at the Colorado State Fair’s Events Center.

Terri Martinez-McGraw, Director of Advocacy & Program Development for the GOAL Online Academy, will be the keynote speaker. The public is invited and admission is free, with seating available on a first-come basis.

A total of 112 graduates will receive high school diplomas from either Pueblo City Schools or Pueblo School District 70. That includes 63 students from the Alternative High School Diploma Program, 21 students from the Gateway to College program and another 28 students from the GED program. With the 24 students it graduated in December, the GED program at PCC will record an all-time high of 52 grads during the past year.

Among Monday’s graduates are two students who will receive PCC mini-certificates in addition to their high school diplomas. Jacob Colby and Dominic Coatney will both be receiving an Emergency Medical Technician Basic certificate, and Jacob has earned 22 college credits and Dominic 19.

Also, 11 of the other students have earned varying amounts of college credits. They are led by Brendon White, who will be taking 31 credits with him into the military, and Josh Dismuke, who has earned 27 college credits and compiled a 3.89 GPA, gained induction into the Phi Theta Kappa honors society, made the PCC President’s List and has been an active officer in the college’s new Earth Keepers environmental-awareness organization.

The pre-college programs were designed to provide other opportunities for students who, for whatever reasons, have dropped out of high school. While the GED students can be of any age from 17 and over, the Gateway and Alternative programs target the 17-20 age group. The programs are operated by PCC’s Community Education & Training Division.

Having these students based in a college campus environment with college instructors who are tuned to providing instruction, life/career guidance and personal respect often gives the positive stimulus that these students need to turn their lives around.

Once they taste a bit of success, many of them go full bore into completing their studies. And as the name “pre-college” implies, the majority who earn their high school diploma go on to seek higher education certificates, associate degrees or even bachelor’s and master’s degrees and become positive contributing members of society.

PCC also operates an Alternative High School Diploma Program at its Fremont Campus in Canon City through a partnership with the two Fremont County school districts. The graduation ceremony for those students will be held at 6 p.m. Wednesday, May 25, at Harrison Elementary School in Canon City.

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*Founded in 1933, Pueblo Community College is a premier teaching institution focused on providing academic and service excellence to help its students acquire the 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills needed to better their lives. An educational and technological leader, PCC fosters economic development and utilizes strong partnerships in the communities it serves through its Pueblo, Fremont and Southwest campuses.*