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Largest alternative diploma graduation class to be honored in Pueblo, Canon City ceremonies

PUEBLO – The largest graduation class in the six-year history of the Alternative High School Diploma Program will receive diplomas next week, and for the first time there will be separate ceremonies in Pueblo and Canon City.

Fremont County graduates will be honored on Wednesday, May 27, at the PCC Fremont Campus, 51320 W. Highway 50 in Canon City. There will be a “Meet the Graduates” social gathering at 4:30 p.m. followed by the ceremonies at 6 p.m.

The following day – Thursday, May 28 – the commencement for Pueblo County students will take place at 6 p.m. at Memorial Hall at the corner of Union and Grand avenues. A total of more than 130 students will receive high school diplomas in the two ceremonies, and the public is invited to attend.

PCC Fremont Campus Dean Jennifer Pierceall Herman will give the keynote address at the Fremont Campus ceremony and State Rep. Sal Pace will be featured speaker at Memorial Hall.

More than \$13,000 in scholarships will be awarded to the students, including \$500 to every graduate of the Fremont County program. In addition, the prestigious \$500 Mary Leonard Scholarship of Hope will be awarded to one outstanding student, and numerous special achievement awards and certificates will be presented.

“This is by far our largest graduating class, which is why we decided to have two ceremonies this and why we moved the Pueblo commencement to Memorial Hall,” said Corry Higbee, PCC faculty member and coordinator of the alternative program.

The AHSDP was created in 2003 through a partnership between PCC and the Pueblo school districts. In 2006, the program expanded to incorporate the Florence and Canon City school districts. PCC has taken the leadership role by conducting the program on its campuses through its Community Education and Training Department.

The program's aim is to recapture high school students who have fallen off the traditional educational path. It provides a self-paced and competency-based alternative for them to earn a diploma in PCC's adult learning environment, plus gain college credit for technology-based classes.

The program's courses include orientation, career assessment and planning, introduction to computing, applied mathematics, applied technology, writing, civics, etc. It also includes a portfolio development presentation that is required as a final learning capstone.

Students who successfully complete all of the components receive a diploma issued by their local school district. Importantly, they also acquire the confidence and positive self-esteem needed to pursue higher education.

The majority of the students continue their education at PCC, which gives them the instructional support system that helps them succeed and gain the skills needed to enter the local workforce. The scholarships that will be awarded at the commencements will help many of them continue their education.

More information on the Alternative High School Diploma Program is available by calling Higbee at 549-3140 or Juanita Fuentes at 549-3252.

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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 21st 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.