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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – August 1, 2011

PCC kicks off new Learning Center project aimed at enhancing the success of its students

PUEBLO – Pueblo Community College took its first step toward increasing the services that are available to help students succeed by conducting a groundbreaking ceremony for its new \$4 million Learning Center here Monday. The 10,000-square-foot facility will be located in an empty, unfinished portion of the basement in the Mike Davis Academic Building.

HGF Architect Co. of Pueblo was a major player in the development design of the new Learning Center, while Golden Triangle of Colorado Springs was selected the general contractor through a bid process. Timelines call for the project to be completed in early January 2012 and occupied a month later.

The new Learning Center will contain:

- A check-in kiosk
- A reception counter
- An express computer area and a computer cyber café
- Rooms for individual and group tutoring
- Classrooms
- Open study and quiet study areas
- 75 laptop computers for checkout and use inside the facility
- An electronic bulletin board
- Space for student use of printers
- Administrative offices

The Learning Center also will support campus efforts to be environmentally friendly, having been designed to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) gold status. To help meet that goal, it will utilize geothermal energy to help reduce heating and cooling costs.

Connie Ryan, Principal Architect for HGF, pointed out that there currently are only two buildings in Pueblo that are gold-certified and that the Learning Center will be the first to have such status in the Colorado Community College System. The installation of external geothermal wells will begin later this week.

The project is taking place following 13-years of on-again, off-again funding and planning that saw it be approved for state funding twice only to be de-funded both times because of state budgetary pressures. To finance the project without state funding, PCC sold \$4 million in AA2-rated 2010 C & D series Build America bonds.

The Learning Center will be a vibrant area with ample space for study, tutoring, computer use, and classrooms as necessitated by PCC's strong enrollment growth in recent years. It will be located directly below PCC's current Learning Center but will contain nearly triple the space, a greater variety of learning spaces, and enhanced technology to promote collaborative student learning.

"We care about our students and we want them to be successful," said Patty Erjavec, PCC's president, of the decision to self-finance the project. "We want them to complete their studies here and get the skills the skills they need to be successful in the workplace."

The center will provide additional resources and space to increase student academic success and retention by directly supporting learning. Its aim is to help students continue their education through graduation, thus bettering their lives while providing the workforce with more high-skilled employees.

The project was necessitated by PCC's tremendous enrollment growth over the past decade and an accompanying explosion in services needed to accommodate that increase in students. During the 2010-2011 academic year, the Learning Center:

- Served more than 50,000 students compared to 15,000 in 1998
- Served students in 7,700 courses, or about 25% of Pueblo Campus offerings
- Had a 48% increase in student visits for tutoring and a 76% increase in hours serviced
- Recorded 41,234 hours of tutoring vs. 23,454 the previous year
- Saw 88% of its students pass courses in which they were tutored-

Rick Ruedin of Golden Triangle Construction pointed out that 40 percent of the work on the project will be done by local contractors.

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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.