

# A Legacy of Excellence

*inspiring students to thrive*

**55 YEARS**

**PIERCE COLLEGE  
FOUNDATION**   
*possibilities. created.*



**Fort Steilacoom**



**Puyallup**



**JBLM**

## A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE

For 55 years, Pierce College has provided access to comprehensive educational offerings and support services for students, built broad-based partnerships in the community and promoted an equitable and diverse environment for teaching, learning, and working with collaborative decision making and mutual respect.

### Did you know

- Over the last eight years, Pierce College increased graduation rates by 94%
- The average class size is 15 students
- 27 percent of students have dependent children
- 53 percent of students experience housing insecurity
- 68 percent are the first in their families to attend college
- 21 percent of students do not have a home
- More than 40 percent of students experience food insecurity
- In 2022, Pierce College was one of ten colleges nationwide chosen to attend Achieving the Dream and the University of California's Race and Equity Centers inaugural Racial Equity Leadership Academy.
- Pierce College has been named twice as one of the top 10 community colleges in the nation by the prestigious Aspen Institute. The Aspen Institute has recognized Pierce College for exceptional achievements in several areas, including student learning; certificate and degree completion while in community college and after transferring to a four-year institution; employment and earnings rate after graduation; and access for and success of minority and low-income students.

### For Veterans, Pierce College is rated:

- #1 Two-year college in the nation
- #1 College in the Northwest
- #1 College among JBLM on-base schools

“Pierce College is a strong example of an institution that took bold action to align college-wide solutions that result in significant and sustainable institutional improvements.”

– Dr. Karen A. Stout, President and CEO of Achieving the Dream

“Our students come from diverse communities. Our reach is local and global serving our neighborhoods, our military, and our international learners. Finances are often a struggle. Many students scrap together enough money to cover tuition, books, and basic needs. The impacts of the pandemic and racial and social unrest have intensified the challenges. We need to help students who are stepping up to help themselves and their families to achieve their possibilities and to give back to community.”

– Michele L. Johnson, Ph.D.

*Jerry Korum, first recipient of the Pierce College Honorary Associate of Arts Degree, 2015*



*Haley Ness* grew up in a home with alcoholism and adversities. Serious instability was a common occurrence throughout her childhood. At 13 years old, she left home and quickly found herself a victim of human trafficking. "I met an older man and was groomed to think he would keep me safe because my parents weren't there for me," she said. "I was bought, sold and traded, and only came out of that situation when I got pregnant [at 16 years old]."

In spite of experiencing abusive relationships, along with periods of homelessness, drug addiction and health issues, Haley never lost her vision for a better future. She knew the importance of education, and put herself through school to finish her high school diploma.

"When I was at rock bottom, I had a judge tell me that I'm a prostitute and drug dealer, and that I never need to see my kids again," she said. "I was so insulted when I heard that, and that is what inspired me to get clean. I had to do better."

Even during her time at Pierce, she experienced abuse at the hands of her husband and struggled to continue her education. "When my husband assaulted me in the middle of the quarter, I almost said school is not for me," she admitted. "I couldn't imagine how I was going to take care of my kids, do well in school, and heal from what my husband did to me. But when I reached out to my professors to tell them what was happening at home, and that I may need extra time, they listened and supported me!"

**Finances were tight during this dark time. Haley applied for financial assistance in the form of emergency funds that paid for rent, utilities and more. "The support from the Pierce College Foundation allowed me to stay focused on my goals and my education," Haley stated.**

Haley, now 29 with six children, is currently working toward her degree to become a social worker. She will attend University of Washington Tacoma after graduating from Pierce, and plans to pursue her master's degree to become a licensed clinical social worker specializing in trauma.

## STUDENT NEED AND COST OF ATTENDANCE:

The story is clear. Our students' needs are great and varied. Cost of attendance including tuition, books, housing, food, childcare and transportation can dash the hopes and dreams of our diverse students.

In the last five years, Pierce College has awarded \$842,213 to 1,131 students in scholarships and \$245,611 to 186 students in emergency funds that provide necessary support to overcome barriers and stay in school.

**While we have been able to fund 48 percent of scholarship requests, 52 percent are not funded due to a lack of resources. Your contribution to the Legacy of Excellence Fund will help us provide financial assistance to more students. Together we can make a difference.**



## A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP



For 45 years, Dr. Michele Johnson has focused on a relentless pursuit of student success. From when she began as a coach, to an instructor, to college President and for the last 18 years as Chancellor, her passion is providing opportunities for students to thrive.

Dr. Johnson will be retiring on Dec 31, 2022.

To celebrate 55 years of Pierce College and 45 years of Dr. Johnson's contributions to the college, a Legacy of Excellence Fund will continue her passion and remove barriers while uplifting students.

### The Legacy of Excellence Fund will:

- Provide emergency funding in response to emergent challenges impacting student completion, including books, tuition, food, rent and other supports
- Create initiatives that provide an environment of empowerment and belonging
- Provide scholarships focusing on historically marginalized students

The fund will be flexible to ensure the Chancellor's focus on student success continues for years to come

## WHY NOW?

As we return to in-person classes, financial need is greater than ever. Students are facing unprecedented hardships as they navigate the last two years of isolated learning. The pandemic has made evident how important flexible funds are to meet students' needs and remove roadblocks that help them thrive and complete their education.



*Anton Dang*, 23, arrived in the United States with his family in the beginning of 2019, with little more than goals and dreams for a new future in America. He enrolled in English as a Second Language courses at Pierce College, and never looked back.

"My time at Pierce College has helped me so much," he said. "Receiving a scholarship helped me focus on my studies and not worry so much about food, rent, and how I will help my family."

Anton is earning his Associate in Science from Pierce College, and will transfer to University of Washington in Seattle to major in Electrical and Computer Engineering this fall. Throughout his time at Pierce, he has held a variety of jobs to help support his family financially.

**"I don't want to give up on my dream of becoming an engineer," Anton said. "This scholarship is helping to keep me in school, and it's helping me buy food and help my family. We don't have a lot of money, and receiving this scholarship meant I have more time to stay home and focus on my studies. I don't want to leave Pierce College, but I'm also so excited to start my program at the University of Washington!"**

## THE GOAL: \$550,000

Join us to support student success now and into the future in honor of Dr. Michele Johnson's 45 years and 55 years of Pierce College.

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**PIERCE COLLEGE**   
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Pierce College creates quality educational opportunities for a diverse community of learners to thrive in an evolving world.

Pierce College is an equal opportunity institution. Learn more at: <http://www.pierce.ctc.edu/policy>

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