



NEWS RELEASE

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Renton High School senior Tia Barnes (l) learns of her immediate acceptance into Washington State University during an interview in the high school principal's office with Wendy Jo Peterson, director of the Office of Admissions at WSU. Barnes will study communications at WSU in the fall.

Washington State University gives personal admissions interviews to Renton High School students

13 Renton High seniors meet with WSU admission director to discuss college acceptance, academic future

January 25, 2010—Thirteen Renton High School seniors today were told to report to the principal's office, though not for the usual reasons. The students were being personally interviewed by the director of admissions for Washington State University.

In a first-of-its-kind college interview process, WSU admissions director Wendy Jo Peterson came to Renton High to personally visit



with seniors who had applied to WSU with the hopes of being accepted into the university after high school graduation this spring.

During the interview, most students were presented with signed letters of acceptance to the school in Pullman, Wash. Others were given insights into how to strengthen their application to be accepted at a later date. Some students were also surprised with a WSU Achievement Scholarship which honors strong academic achievement and generally ranges from \$2,000 to \$4,000 per year.

The new personal interview program is the creation of Petersen and Renton High principal Damien Pattenaude—a WSU graduate—to accelerate the college admissions process for high achieving students, and, Peterson says, “to offer these students a personal message that says ‘We want you at WSU.’”

Renton High counseling staff prepared packets of information on each student to be reviewed prior to the interviews by Peterson and Christopher Wells, WSU’s director of outreach in the Office of Enrollment. The files contained student grades, community service information, extra-curricular activities, SAT scores, as well as a WSU application and letters of recommendation: Everything Peterson’s team uses to determine eligibility for admission for incoming freshman.

“ We think the students at Renton High have the capacity to excel at Washington State University.”

—Wendy Jo Peterson, Director, Office of Admissions



Wendy Jo Peterson, (l) director of the Office of Admissions at WSU, and Christopher Wells, WSU’s director of outreach in the Office of Enrollment, surprise Renton High School senior Thearith Thy (far right) during an interview at the high school with a letter of acceptance to the university along with a WSU Academic Scholarship.

The usual college-acceptance process, however, can take weeks and keep high school students waiting by the mailbox for word about whether they’ve been accepted by the school. Today, Peterson and Wells brought the process directly to Renton High students to give them a personal connection to college. The process helped high school students feel that after all of the preparation, thought and research they put into future plans for higher education, WSU is the right school for them.

This isn’t the first time Renton High’s principal connected his high school with one of the state’s premiere universities. In November, Pattenaude brought WSU staff to Renton High to teach classes as part of the university’s [Imagine U @ WSU](#) program which provides high school students opportunities to engage with university faculty.

Renton High School continues to excel in preparing students for future success. Last year, 81 percent of Renton High seniors graduated on time; 95 percent of those students planned to attend a post-secondary school.