



BMCC PENDLETON  
2411 NW Carden Ave. ♦ PO Box 100 ♦ Pendleton, OR 97801  
(541) 276-1260 ♦ [www.bluecc.edu](http://www.bluecc.edu)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*Contact: Casey White-Zollman, Vice President of Public Relations  
541-278-5839, [cwhitezollman@bluecc.edu](mailto:cwhitezollman@bluecc.edu)*

## BMCC to hold 55<sup>th</sup> annual Commencement ceremony June 15

PENDLETON, Ore. – The 55<sup>h</sup> annual Blue Mountain Community College Commencement Ceremony will take place this Thursday evening, June 15, and will honor 393 graduates. The Commencement Ceremony begins at 7 p.m. at the Pendleton Convention Center, and is open to the public.

The 393 graduates range in age from 17-66, and hail from Oregon, Alaska, Idaho, Montana and Washington. Of those, 142 students are graduating with honors/high honors, nine will have earned a high school diploma and Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT) degree concurrently, and 12 are veterans.

The 2017 Commencement speaker is Pendleton resident and former BMCC student Kristin Swaggart. Swaggart is the culinary arts teacher at Pendleton High School, and is most recently known for winning the Farmer's Insurance "Thank America's Teachers Dream Big Teacher Challenge," which granted her \$100,000, which she'll use to purchase a food truck for her culinary students. She attended BMCC from 1991-93, and has an AAS Culinary Arts degree from Wine Country Culinary Institute in Walla Walla, Wash.

In addition to Swaggart, BMCC President Cam Preus will address the graduates, as will two student speakers: Sarah Bonner of Billings, Mont., and Christopher Smith, who grew up in Seaside, Ore. Bonner has played softball for the Timberwolves for two seasons as an infielder and is also a member of the BMCC Associated Student Government. She has earned her AAOT, and plans to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Health and Human Performance, followed by a Master's in Sports Medicine in her efforts to become an athletic trainer for a professional sports team. Smith came to college later in life, and was a member of BMCC's TRiO program. He has earned an AAOT, and plans to transfer this fall to Oregon State University in his pursuit of earning a doctorate in psychology.

In addition to Thursday evening's Commencement Ceremony, BMCC's nursing program will host its pinning ceremony for graduates of the Associate of Applied Science degree in nursing at 2 p.m. in the Bob Clapp Theatre in Pioneer Hall on the Pendleton campus. Also, BMCC's inmate education program will host a commencement for its graduates at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution at 9 a.m. Friday. The program leads the state in the number of GED completers.

**BMCC BAKER COUNTY**  
3275 Baker St.  
Baker City, OR 97814  
(541) 523-9127

**BMCC HERMISTON**  
975 SE Columbia Dr.  
Hermiston, OR 97838  
(541) 567-1800

**BMCC MILTON-FREEWATER**  
311 N Columbia Dr.  
Milton-Freewater, OR 97862  
(541) 938-7176

**BMCC MORROW COUNTY**  
PO Box 939/300 NE Front St.  
Boardman, OR 97818  
(541) 481-2099