Cabrillo College today announced that it has been awarded $995,270 in one-time grant funding from the Bay Area Community College Consortium (BACCC) to create, staff and provide a shared regional Internet, Communications and Technology (ICT) lab facility. This facility will be housed at the Cabrillo College Aptos campus and used by 25 community colleges throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.

The combination of software and hardware will enable faculty and students from any Internet accessible location to utilize a virtual lab environment designed to provide employer demanded “hands-on” experience with a variety of computer operating systems, networking equipment, and application software.

“This was truly a collaborative effort—many area colleges worked together on the grant proposal,” said Rock Pfotenbauer, BACCC Chair and Cabrillo College Dean of Instruction, Career Education and Economic Development. “All of the 25 San Francisco Bay Area community colleges participating in this regional ICT lab facility have ICT related programs of study, and all have previously struggled with funding, building and managing hands-on ICT lab facilities that develop the skills demanded by ICT employers.”

The solution comes with 450 ICT lab assignments that will enable participating colleges to offer both entry-level classes and incumbent worker training in ICT related areas that range from introductory computer classes to cutting edge courses that focus on cyber security, virtualization, data storage, operating systems, systems administration and network configuration and design.

“This is a very exciting project—it’s a great opportunity to work together with other community colleges on a regional level, and coordinated efforts such as this one are an emerging trend,” said Gerlinde Bracy, Computer and Information Systems Program Chair and Instructor. “It would cost an individual college about $150,000 to create a similar lab just to support its own needs, not including costs and time to manage the system. One centralized lab with a systems administrator and shared, remote access by all 25 community colleges is not only more cost efficient, it enables students and faculty to be more mobile.”

“I am so proud of the Cabrillo faculty involved in this endeavor,” said Dr. Laurel Jones, President and Superintendent of Cabrillo College. “This innovation has been an idea for a while now, and I am glad to see it come to fruition. These are very exciting times for the College.”

In one week of 24/7 access, the ICT lab system will be able to accommodate 288 simultaneous connections and up to 16,128 individual three-hour lab sessions.

The grant award includes the creation of one system administrator; staff position at Cabrillo College to oversee and maintain the lab, as well as to provide remote support to the participating colleges. The ICT lab is scheduled to be fully operational by Fall semester 2015.

The Bay Area Community College Consortium (BACCC) is comprised of the 28 colleges surrounding the San Francisco and Monterey Bays funded by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998. The BACCC supports activities and projects that meet the four objectives of the Act:

- Improving the Academic skills of vocational and technical education students
- Strengthening connections between secondary and postsecondary education
- Preparing individuals for occupations in demand that pay family-supporting wages
- Investing in effective, high quality programs