



# TCUP CENTRAL

Expanding the Future of Tribal Education

## Tribal Colleges Address Community Health Concerns

Tribal colleges and universities play a vital role in some of the nation's poorest communities. They offer postsecondary educational opportunities, provide a means to study and preserve traditional languages and cultures, and offer job training and career opportunities for adults. The schools also offer important services to address chronic unemployment, poor health conditions, and other problems associated with social and economic harshness. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Office of University Partnerships (OUP) offers grant opportunities for these institutions of higher education to develop new programs and enhance existing activities that help strengthen communities served by the 32 federally recognized Tribal Colleges and Universities in the United States.

"For far too long, Native Americans have lacked quality health services, resulting in increasing numbers of Native Americans who endure a wide range of diseases and illnesses," states New Jersey Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. in a July 22, 2004, speech on Native American health. Native Americans born today have a life expectancy that is almost 6 years less than the U.S. all-races population, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. With unemployment rates reaching 75 percent on some reservations,

individuals and families must postpone nutrition and healthcare issues. The result is unhealthy living conditions, a lack of proper food and nutrition, increasing levels of diabetes, and high levels of alcoholism. OUP's Tribal Colleges and Universities Program provides grants to tribal colleges to develop and administer a

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broad range of programs and activities, including initiatives that address chronic health issues affecting Native Americans.

Tribal community colleges provide more than academic opportunities, they also assist with the social, cultural, and welfare needs of the populations they serve. The Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico, recently developed a program designed to educate

students and local residents about health-related issues, help them to reduce obesity, improve their overall health status, reduce their chances of developing diabetes, and control already-diagnosed conditions. Working in partnership with the school's Family Extension and Education Program, and with additional financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, this outreach program serves the health education needs of Native American families in Albuquerque and throughout New Mexico.

In Belcourt, North Dakota, the Turtle Mountain Community College recently developed the Anishinaubag Wellness Center for residents of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation in the north central portion of the state. The center provides educational resources about maintaining a healthy lifestyle, offers information about proper foods and nutrition, links the programs to the overall environment, and highlights the traditional techniques specific to the Native American culture. The school developed the center as a place to hold community events and the annual Turtle Mountain Wellness Conference. The center is located on a 100-acre property with a wooded campground and waterfront. The design and setting encourage community members of all ages to learn about and participate in wellness programs and opportunities in a safe environment. The new center is a pivotal feature of the

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### *Health Concerns continued from page 1*

school's enhancement to its current curricula in the areas of health, agriculture, animal husbandry, environmental science, Native American culture and herbology, and computer science.

"Educators in tribal college communities on reservations and in urban areas know many of their diseases and problems are not inevitable, and they are beginning to see evidence that they are not impossible to overcome," states Marjane Ambler in *Reclaiming Native Health*. Access to quality healthcare information that is specific to the social and cultural situation within the reservation community is helpful for individuals to address their own health issues and develop model behaviors for their family, friends, and neighbors. Tribal colleges and universities combine traditional practices with Western approaches to address healthcare issues in their communities. Combining these techniques and addressing the national or systemic problems prevalent on reservations can develop new models of health education to be used at the community level. ❖

## Albuquerque College Focuses on Diabetes Prevention, Health Promotion

Genetic and lifestyle factors have contributed to the creation of a diabetes epidemic among Native Americans, who are twice as likely to develop the disease as members of other ethnic groups, according to the American Diabetes Association (ADA). Complications from diabetes are now a major cause of death and health problems within this population.

In an effort to reduce the numbers of Native Americans afflicted with diabetes, the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, has launched three initiatives that are educating SIPI students and local residents about health-related issues. The programs are teaching Native Americans how to reduce obesity, improve their overall health status, and reduce their chances of developing diabetes. All of SIPI's health-related initiatives will eventually be housed in a new Child Care and Family Center being built on campus with funds from SIPI's 2001 TCUP grant.

"The timing has been right to start these programs," says Joan Goodman, coordinator for the college's Seven Generations of Health program, which is developing community-based, health promotion programming. "You can hardly open a newspaper or newsletter that doesn't have something on obesity and diabetes. The awareness is there that something needs to be done. We are fortunate because we can move right into sharing prevention strategies."

**Diabetes Among Native Americans.** Recent studies have shed new light on just how devastating diabetes—and its complications—have been for Native American populations. About 15 percent of Native Americans and Alaska Natives who receive care from the Indian Health Service have been diagnosed with this chronic disease, according to the National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse at the National Institutes of Health. Regional diabetes rates among Native Americans range from 22.9 percent for Navajo adults aged 20 and older, to 27 percent for Native Americans in the southeastern United States. Diabetes rates are as high as 50 percent among the Pima tribe of Arizona. Scientists at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases have identified a gene in the Pima Indians that may play a role in insulin resistance. In addition, obesity and a sedentary lifestyle are also major risk factors for type-2 diabetes (T2D), which most often affects adults.

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*Health Fair display for Diabetes Prevention*



Because diabetes can lead to heart disease, kidney failure, amputations, and blindness, SIPI takes it seriously, says Goodman. To combat the disease, Goodman's program—officially called Seven Generations of Health: A Transgenerational Approach to Human Nutrition and Obesity Interventions in Indian Country—is bringing health-related messages and strategies for developing healthy lifestyles directly to the community.

As part of a 4-year initiative, Goodman and her colleagues are developing educational programs, newsletters, videotapes, and a Web site dedicated to health-related topics. Seven Generations of Health is also broadcasting health-related courses and workshops by satellite to residents throughout the region. This outreach activity is being performed in cooperation with SIPI's Family Extension and Education Program (FEED), an educational program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which serves Native American families in Albuquerque and 25 tribal communities. FEED will be housed in the TCUP-funded family center when it opens.

"Distance education is a very important way to reach the Indian community," says Goodman. "For example, one of our target areas is 265 miles, round trip, from SIPI. By transmitting presentations through satellite, more communities and people benefit."

Locally, the Seven Generations of Health program will establish Healthy Lifestyle Clubs in four communities. Peer educators will facilitate the clubs by helping local residents decide what type of healthy activity they would like to pursue and then helping those residents form clubs around the activity.

"These trained community residents will go out into the community and help others develop healthy lifestyles," says Goodman. "By using the club model, you have more community buy-in since the community makes the decision about what it wants to do in the areas of nutrition and increased activity." One community may decide to establish an aerobics club, says Goodman. Another may opt for a cooking, line dancing, or walking club.

Goodman hopes that having peers lead the clubs will encourage local residents to join and ensure that the clubs can eventually operate independently of SIPI and its funding sources. "This way, if the funding disappears, the benefits won't disappear," she says.

**Preventing Diabetes.** Two other SIPI health initiatives are focusing on the development of health-related curricula for a variety of student audiences. Through the Diabetes Based Science Education in Tribal Schools (DETS) program, for example, SIPI and seven other colleges are using funds from the National Institutes of Health to develop a curriculum about diabetes for middle and high school students. The curriculum, which SIPI will pilot test in four local schools during Fall 2004, has a dual purpose. The course work is designed to help youngsters and teenagers understand the science, social, and community aspects of T2D. In addition, developers hope the curriculum will raise interest in science among young students and encourage them to pursue careers in health and the sciences.



*Display at Diabetes Awareness Walk at SIPI*

"We also have a curriculum in nonscience areas, including health, physical education, and language arts," says Carol Maller, coordinator of SIPI's Diabetes Prevention Program. "We wanted to make sure that we were not missing anyone. The overall message is making healthy choices by choosing what you eat and getting exercise."

SIPI's third health-related initiative—the Diabetes Preventive Initiative—is focusing on the educational needs of SIPI students. The planning grant, sponsored by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is helping SIPI take a look at its own student population so it can put a health curriculum in place "that educates students so they can take the message back to their community once they leave college," says Goodman. One component of the project will examine the efficacy of establishing an associate degree/certificate program at SIPI that would prepare students for careers in recreation, fitness, health promotion, and wellness. The National Diabetes Prevention Centers and the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion are also participating in the project.

**Working with the Community.** Community input—in the form of focus groups—has been crucial to the curriculum development process, says Maller. In addition, all of SIPI's new curricula are culturally sensitive so that Native Americans can relate to them easily.

"We are reaching out into the tribal community and looking at ways to change behavior," says Goodman. "We are not there to tell them what they are doing wrong. We are helping the people design the programs that best meet their needs. It may be tempting to go into a community and say everyone needs to have bicycles, but no one may want to use those bicycles. Instead, you have to help them figure out how to best change their lifestyles to achieve healthy eating and activity. One of the main things you need is patience."

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### ***Cityscape* Highlights Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant Program**

The upcoming issue of *Cityscape*, a journal of policy development and research, showcases research by scholars in the Office of University Partnership's Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant (DDRG) program.

*Cityscape*, published by HUD's office of Policy Development and Research, promotes research in the field of housing policy and other housing-related issues. This special issue highlights the DDRG program and its housing-related research through topics such as:

- \* "Neighborhood Jump-Starting: A Los Angeles Case Study."
- \* "Valuation of Metropolitan Quality of Life in Wages and Rents."
- \* "Positive Attitudes, Behavior, and Neighborhood Ties in Poor Urban Neighborhoods: The Impact of Neighborhood Poverty, Household Economics, and Demographic Variables."
- \* "Moving Over or Moving Up? Short-term Gains and Losses for Relocated HOPE VI Families."
- \* "Aging in Place in Multifamily Housing."
- \* "The Work of Cities: Underemployment and Urban Change in Late Century America."
- \* "The Struggle for Housing Equality: The Impact of Fair Housing and Community Reinvestment Laws on Local Advocacy."
- \* "Knowledge Production and Use in Community-based Organizations: Examining the Impacts and Influence of Information Technologies."

To order a free copy of this special issue of *Cityscape* (Volume 7, Issue 1) contact the University Partnerships Clearinghouse at 1 (800) 245-2691, option 1.

## **Tribal Colleges and Universities Program 2004 Grantees**

Tribal Colleges and Universities Program (TCUP) grantees, Fiscal Year 2004 grantees will use their funds to construct new facilities and expand and equip existing facilities. The following profiles summarize the types of activities that the 2004 grantees will undertake:

*Stone Child College, Box Elder, Montana*, will use its \$600,000 TCUP grant to construct a new health and physical education facility, which will allow the university to add six new health and physical education courses. As a direct result of this project, students will have a facility that is appropriate in size and design to support future growth and expansion of the institution's health and physical education curriculum. The design for this proposed facility has been completed.

*Cankdeska Cikana Community College, Fort Totten, North Dakota*, will use its \$600,000 TCUP grant to construct a 4,500-square-foot addition to the college campus. The new addition will house an administrative office area and allow the college to regain two classrooms that are now being used as office space. As a result of this effort, the college will be able to increase its instructional capabilities, impact the services provided to students, and increase student enrollment. The new addition will also allow the college to move the main electrical entry from its current location in the boiler room, which is a hot, moist area that poses a significant safety hazard.

*Si Tanka University, Eagle Butte, South Dakota*, will use its \$587,960 TCUP grant to construct and equip a Library Learning Center to serve as the information hub to support and enrich the curricula, programs, and activities of the university, the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, and

the community; and to replace dilapidated windows and add air conditioning in two dormitories.

*College of Menominee Nation, Keshena, Wisconsin*, will use its \$594,340 TCUP grant to develop additional classroom space for academic preparation, and training and economic development activities. The construction will consist of a three-story, 7,368-square-foot addition to Shirley Daly Hall's science wing. This new space will provide four additional classrooms and future expansion space for the college faculty. Additional classroom space is one of the college's highest and immediate priorities.

*Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College, Hayward, Wisconsin*, will use its \$600,000 TCUP grant to expand the college library. Library patrons, college employees, an external evaluator, and the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation team have identified the need for a new library facility. The college library is chartered and recognized by the State of Wisconsin as a public library serving the greater Lac Courte Oreilles community. Currently the library is 2,500 square feet and the collection has exceeded the capacity of the space, causing older books to be placed in storage to make room for new acquisitions. With the support of this grant, the college will achieve the following goals: renovate 3,000 square feet of existing campus space to accommodate the relocation of staff and program offices; raze an unhealthy, existing campus building to make room for new library construction; and add 2,000 square feet to the new library.

## TCUP Grantee Promotes Health and Cultural Awareness

**T**urtle Mountain Community College (TMCC) has allocated recently acquired grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to providing cultural and health awareness to the Native American community of Belcourt, North Dakota. By establishing the Anishinabe Cultural and Wellness Center, on the site of a former Lutheran retreat camp, TMCC is joining the community's young and old to promote healthy living and preserve the traditions of their Native American culture.

According to Lyle Poitra, TMCC's institutional development research specialist, the project began when the Eastern Lutheran Synod of North Dakota offered its former retreat to TMCC. The college purchased the former Lutheran retreat camp in April 2002 with funds from a 2001-03 TCUP grant. Poitra and his staff wanted the facility's focus to be on the cultural and physical health of young and old residents within the Belcourt community. TMCC combined the remainder of its TCUP grant with funds received from USDA and began renovating the retreat's former administration building. This became the Anishinabe Center's main building where it now holds health-related workshops that incorporate standard medical practices with Native American practices. Workshops on how to deal with substance abuse and violence, high blood pressure, and other topics are offered in

tandem with workshops on more traditional holistic practices such as preserving fruits and vegetables naturally and preparing different types of jerky.

In addition, the center pairs youth volunteers with elders from the Turtle Mountain Retirement Home, who teach them how to cook using traditional methods and ingredients and how to use herbs from the retirement home's community garden, which TMCC planted at the home. Such mentoring ensures the continuation of cultural culinary customs and promotes healthier eating habits for a people often beset by chronic illnesses such as diabetes.

TMCC also invested a large portion of its money into preparing part of the former retreat's more than 100 acres for a community garden at the center, which provides reconnection with cultural medicinal and meditative practices. Mark Hamley, the USDA's extension coordinator and TMCC's special events coordinator, explains that the garden is helping to reestablish traditional herbs, natural grasses, and flowers to the area. "Anishinabe has been visited by more than 500 students over this summer," says Hamley. "It's a beautiful area and it's amazing that so many kids are willing to come here." Visitors hike the trails and learn about the gardens and the classes offered at the center.

Hamley is currently working with student and community volunteers to plant a traditional medicine wheel garden. "Each corner

[of the garden] requires special rituals to make it authentic," explains Hamley. By pairing college students with the elders from the community, this project serves as a means to pass along traditional horticultural knowledge to the younger tribal generation. Hamley also notes, "Once it is completed, the medicine wheel garden will be a wonderful place [for center visitors] to go to meditate."

As special events coordinator, Hamley helped Anishinabe become the site of the first National Youth Sports Program (NYSP) sponsored by a tribal college. NYSP, a national nonprofit that organizes recreational and educational activities for young people, drew children to the center for basketball, volleyball, flag football, biking, canoeing, and many other activities. NYSP also gave seminars on substance abuse prevention and healthy eating habits, among other wellness-centered topics. Hamley says that more than 200 children from the surrounding communities came to Anishinabe to participate in this summer's NYSP.

Anishinabe is also home to TMCC's Youth Leadership Project. Students from the college learn how to perform culturally significant activities, such as drumming, singing, and traditional storytelling. More than 60 students participated in this summer's project.

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*Two views of the cultural center and the pristine lake it overlooks.*

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*Awareness continued from page 5*

The college won another TCUP grant for 2003-05 when it decided to use the funding to replace the camp's deteriorating water and sewer lines, which were detrimental to the surrounding environment and limited the growth of the center. Poitra explains that connecting the center to the main water and sewer lines "will be the capstone for future development." Planned development includes adding another cabin to the property, which will provide sleeping space for students attending future retreats as well as for visiting presenters.

Both Poitra and Hamley say the community has come together to support Anishinabe's efforts. Many people in the community are amazed by the center's achievements, says Poitra. However, they welcome the center's contributions and some have even made gifts of appreciation. One local resident donated land to the center, which Poitra says, is ideal for rice crops and allows him and his staff to give demonstrations on how to grow and harvest rice.

TMCC continues to use its grants to their fullest potential. The college looks forward to expanding on the center's many activities that are already popular with the community. The hope is that through continued education the center will provide a haven for cultural and health education for the surrounding tribal community. Poitra expresses deep gratitude for the funding that TMCC has received from HUD's TCUP grants. "The HUD funding is going to come back tenfold to our community. Without HUD, all we have achieved wouldn't be possible."

To learn more about the Anishinabe Cultural and Wellness Center, please contact: Lyle Poitra, Turtle Mountain Community College, P.O. Box 340, Belcourt, ND 58316; phone: (701) 477-7862, ext. 2065; e-mail: [lpoitra@tm.edu](mailto:lpoitra@tm.edu). ❖



*Youth help to tend the center's grounds.*