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Lane Community College Builds a Longhouse

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By [Scott Carlson](#)



Here's an unusual campus project: Lane Community College, in Eugene, Ore., has built a longhouse, a modern version of a traditional American Indian dwelling. Made of logs hand-cut on tribal lands, the longhouse was paid for in part by local tribal funds, [reports](#) the *Statesman Journal*, in Salem, Ore. The building, 20 years in the making, will officially open with a powwow and ceremony later this week.

Why would a community college build a longhouse? In Lane's case, it's important to the college's constituency. The newspaper points out that Lane has three times as many American Indian students as the University of Oregon and one of the largest American Indian populations among any community college.

Mary Spilde, president of Lane, saw the longhouse as a way to help both the college and its students, the *Statesman Journal* reports:

College enrollment among American Indians is one of the lowest of any ethnic group, and the difficulty of adjusting to college life is cited as a major factor. "The longhouse will provide that kind of connection to culture and learning," Spilde said. "For all the others that will use the space, it introduces them or connects them to a culture that may be different than their own, and that understanding of different cultures is really key to being successful as part of a team, as part of a workplace, as part of a community."



The college raised \$470,000 for the \$1.6-million building and pledged \$250,000 of its own funds, while students donated \$600,000 through student fees. "That still leaves the college about \$300,000 short," the article says. "It will use money from its capital improvement budget to cover the gap, with the money being repaid from additional fund raising and the student fee."

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