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The Honorable Gordon Smith
Federal Building
211 East 7th Avenue, Room 202
Eugene, OR 97401

Dear Senator Smith:

I am writing to voice my support for Lane Community College's request for federal appropriations to help build a Native American Longhouse on the college's main campus.

Because not all students can gain admittance to a four-year college, Lane Community College offers an important entry to higher education and the option to learn professional or technical careers. The college serves as a stepping-stone for students wanting to attend nearby UO, OSU or other educational institutions. Lane Community College will have the first longhouse on a community college campus that is not part of a tribal college.

Retention of students is a major goal of Lane Community College. Research continues to demonstrate that urban, rural, and reservation-based Native American students commonly find institutions of higher education overwhelming and out-of-sync with their cultural ways. A longhouse will provide Native American students a connection to culture that help them feel connected to the campus and continue with their education.

Lane Community College has developed many services to enable Native American students to complete a program or earn a degree.

- A Native American student coordinator—an academic advisor who teaches leadership and skill building courses—will oversee the stewardship of the Longhouse.
- Five Native American faculty in English, Ethnic Studies, and Anthropology departments.
- American Indian Languages including development of a first-year course of study in the Northwest trade language, Chinuk Wawa.
- The Native American Student Association, for more than 20 years providing social, cultural and academic support for students and hosting an annual Powwow drawing over 1,000 people.
- Rights of Passage, an interdisciplinary and multi-ethnic summer program for students in grades 6–12.

Building a longhouse is a logical next step to serving the diverse needs of Lane Community College's Native American students.

Lane Community College's community-centered longhouse will provide a place to offer learning programs for both students and community. The longhouse will provide a place where Native and non-Native people can gather to learn about one another.

For these many reasons, I urge your support of this culturally-significant project which will serve to help ensure that all students can access higher-education.

Sincerely,

Kitty Piercy
Mayor of Eugene