



OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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March 9, 2005

Honorable Gordon Smith
c/o Lori Prater
United States Senate
404 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Smith:

Lane Community College is deeply involved in efforts to build a Native American Longhouse on the school's main campus. Lane's Foundation is applying for a \$350,000 federal appropriation to support construction of the longhouse on main campus. I am writing to voice my support and ask that you do all that is possible to ensure federal funding is granted for this crucial project. Community support for the project is evident; over \$518,000 in gifts and pledges have already been made.

According to national and state statistics, Native American students have the lowest college enrollment, retention rate, and graduation rate. Native American students face significant barriers to academic success; culture shock, loss of cultural identity, and lack of social interaction all contribute.

To respond, Lane administrators and Oregon tribal officials have collaborated to provide opportunities for students to connect with their culture. Lane's Native American Student Program began in the early 1970s. Native American students are drawn to Lane from all over the region because of outstanding academic programs and the depth of the college's culturally appropriate student services.

I agree that building a longhouse is a logical next step to serving the diverse needs of the college. The longhouse at Lane Community College is another part of Oregon's overall effort to help all students in our P-16 education system be positively connected to learning, creating more opportunities for success.

This multi-use facility, available to all students, will provide spaces for culturally appropriate classes and activities such as: American Indian Language; summer youth academy; classes on Native American culture; dancing and drumming; and community and professional tribal gatherings and ceremonies.

Lane has earned a strong reputation for innovation in academic and student support programs and is well qualified to carry out the proposed project. Lane is Oregon's second largest community college (12,364 FTE in 2002-03), and has been rated as one of the nation's top community colleges in multiple studies over the last 25 years. It therefore seems appropriate that Lane would be the first public community college to have a longhouse located on its campus.

Lane is committed to supporting the ongoing operation of the longhouse; your help in funding construction will make the project possible. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Susan Castillo
Superintendent of Public Instruction