



November 2011

UPDATE

\$2 million grant will assist Native American students

Enhancing the academic success of Native American students is the goal of a nearly \$2 million federal grant received by Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

The five-year, \$1,995,623 Title III grant was awarded by the U.S. Department of Education. Chris Wesberry, Native American Center for Student Success coordinator, was principal investigator for the project, and Tim Boatmun, Associate Dean for Academic Services, was co-principal investigator. Also assisting in writing the proposal was Paul Buntz, grant coordinator-writer.

The "Connect2Complete (C2C) Project" will strive to bolster the retention rates and graduation rates of Native American students at Southeastern. Currently, approximately 29 percent of Southeastern's enrollment is comprised of Native Americans.

Southeastern president Larry Minks acknowledged the support of members of the U.S. Congressional delegation from Oklahoma, including Rep. Dan Boren, Rep. Tom Cole, Sen. James Inhofe, and Sen. Tom Coburn.

"Our Congressional delegation is to be commended for its support of higher education," Minks said. "This project will certainly complement the many existing programs we have in place through our Native American Center for Student Success. We are very proud of the history and

heritage that the Native American students have played throughout the course of the University's existence. I also want to recognize Chief Gregory Pyle of The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and Governor Bill Anoatubby of the Chickasaw Nation for their continued support of the University's initiatives. For many years, they have partnered with Southeastern to ensure a better learning environment for all students."

The C2C project will fund two new positions – retention specialists – with Wesberry serving as project director and Boatmun as co-director. In addition to strengthening the retention and graduation rates through additional admissions and advising services, the project includes such components as enhancing the Native American collection in the Henry G. Bennett Memorial Library, professional development, mentorships, and office renovations.

The University's efforts have not gone unnoticed nationally. In its 2011-2012 special college issue, "Winds of Change" magazine rated Southeastern second in the nation in two categories: "Top 5 Colleges for American Indians by percent of Bachelor's degrees" (4-year weighted average of 23.9%), and "Top 5 Colleges for American Indians by percent of full-time undergraduates" (27.1%).

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Homecoming 2011

Joan Minks, left, and Southeastern president Larry Minks, far right, congratulate 2011 Distinguished Alumni Major General James Chambers, The Honorable John Carey, and Greg Armstrong. For a complete wrap-up of Homecoming, see page 3.