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NEWS RELEASE

Sept. 10, 2009

Contacts: Ann Garfinkle, associate professor and chair, UM Department of Curriculum and Instruction, 406-243-5262, ann.garfinkle@mso.umt.edu; Cindy O'Dell, SKC Education Department chair, 406-275-4752, cindy_odell@skc.edu.

UM, TRIBAL COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP RECEIVES \$1 MILLION GRANT

MISSOULA

A collaboration between The University of Montana and Salish Kootenai College on the Flathead Indian Reservation recently received a four-year, \$1,098,268 federal grant from the Office of Indian Education.

The UM/SKC Endorsement Partnership Project, intended to address shortages of Native American special education teachers and principals in Montana, plans to enroll 25 participants during the four years. Five participants will earn principal certifications and master's degrees in educational leadership and 20 will earn a special education endorsement, the majority of whom also will earn master's degrees in curriculum and instruction.

Ann Garfinkle, associate professor and chair of UM's Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and Cindy O'Dell, Education Department chair at SKC, will lead the project at each school. They said the schools will collaborate to offer courses on both campuses and through distance-learning technology, such as online courses and Vision Net video streaming.

"We really tied the project to UM's goal to increase Native student enrollment and graduate education, and SKC's strategic plan for advanced degrees for Native students," O'Dell said.

Garfinkle said the grant will offer financial and technological support, a local adviser/mentor, and a combination of face-to-face and technologically delivered courses.

“The funding, technology support and on-site mentoring will reduce some of the barriers Native American students have in obtaining higher education degrees,” she said.

The project requires participants to meet the federal definition of “Indian student” and be a student admitted into one of the designated programs. Three students are already enrolled in a program and are attending classes on the UM campus. Garfinkle and O’Dell hope to recruit 22 more over the course of the project.

“We’re excited to meet the needs for Native Americans and also the needs for the field. We see it as a long-term partnership,” O’Dell said.

For more information on the project, call Garfinkle at 406-243-5262 or e-mail ann.garfinkle@mso.umt.edu, or call O’Dell at 406-275-4752 or e-mail cindy_odell@skc.edu.

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