

ISU committed to Native Americans

One of our goals at Idaho State University is to offer programs and events that benefit the community. For example, through programs such as the Native American Business Administration program and the Shoshoni Language project, ISU faculty are working to preserve Native American culture while looking to its future.

NABA, as it is often referred to among students and faculty, integrates Native American values and experience into the traditional curriculum at the College of Business. Students in the program take all the courses necessary for a Bachelor of Business Administration degree, but they also take courses exploring tribal government issues, Native American enterprise, and contemporary issues facing tribes.

ISU College of Business faculty member Doyle Anderson created the program in 2005 as a way to provide a high-quality business education for future Native American business and community leaders. Anderson was born in Blackfoot and is a member of the Red Pheasant Cree nation, making him an ideal candidate to mentor students and inspire Native American communities. Anderson previously served as the director of a

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highly successful business education program administered by the University of Saskatchewan and First Nations University in Canada. This program significantly increased the number of professionally trained Native American business managers in Saskatchewan and the surrounding region. Anderson is the university's only fully endowed faculty member, through a generous donation from Idaho Falls philanthropists Anne S. Voillequé and Louise S. Nelson, who donated \$1 million to the project.

The program benefits from leaders such as Jason Pretty Boy, the program coordinator.

Pretty Boy was recently awarded a First Nations Leadership and Entrepreneurial Apprenticeship Development (LEAD) Program Fellowship for 2009-10. The one-year mentorship program will train participants in areas critical to successful nonprofit leaders, including financial management, factors affecting Native or reservation-based nonprofit organizations, fundraising, program evaluation and service leadership.

Pretty Boy and the Native American Business Administration program were also featured on the Web site, www.americasdiversityplace.com, along with a feature on efforts to bring culturally-based education to disci-

plines across ISU.

While we look toward the future of Native American leaders, researchers at Idaho State University are also working to preserve early traditions and language.

The Idaho State University Shoshoni Language Project recently celebrated its 20th birthday. Shoshoni language instructor Drusilla Gould and anthropology professor Chris Loether developed the program in 1989 to teach and preserve the Shoshoni language. Professors Gould and Loether created the first Shoshoni language dictionary and a writing system. Since then, other Shoshoni-speaking communities have used the work of Gould and Loether to create their own materials and teach Shoshoni in their own dialects. ISU also offers Shoshoni language classes.

Their work seems to have made a difference. In 1990 the U.S. Census counted 2,284 Shoshoni speakers. In 2000, there were 2,724, an increase of 440 speakers. Although Gould and Loether say the language is still considered endangered, they have made great progress in preserving an important part of a culture.

As you can see, Idaho State University has a strong commitment to Native American language, culture, and education, and I predict that that commitment will even grow stronger in the years to come.

Gary A. Olson is provost and vice president at Idaho State University.