

**WOKINI
INITIATIVE**
A NEW BEGINNING
South Dakota State University®



SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

a new beginning



Barry Dunn, President
South Dakota State University

Dear Friends and University Supporters,

As a historic part of the U.S. land-grant system, South Dakota State University (SDSU) stands as a beacon of opportunity for all.

Grounded in our nation's democratic principles of equality, SDSU is committed to providing access to higher education, championing and creating knowledge and understanding, and continuously expanding the University's impact and influence in the Great Plains region. Our state has a long, dramatic and many times tragic relationship with our state's nine tribal nations. The Wokini Initiative seeks to mend these relationships by providing better academic and financial support to Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota students at SDSU.

In this spirit and with support of the state's tribal nations and colleges, we have created the "Wokini Initiative." In Lakota, the word "wokini" means "new life" or "a new beginning." The goal of this initiative is to collaborate and partner with local tribes and tribal schools to increase access to SDSU's many educational and advancement opportunities for American Indians.

SDSU is a public university whose work clearly benefits its graduates, spurs economic development for all sectors of the region and state, and strengthens community and social structures. The Wokini Initiative is a strong step to help ensure all people – including those among the most economically disadvantaged in this state – are empowered to contribute.

We are seeking donations to assist with these efforts. Your generous support will be used to fund a scholarship program for Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota students, as well as establish a new American Indian Student Center that will provide students from South Dakota's nine tribal nations with the skills and resources they need to succeed, as well as provide a multipurpose collaboration space for the entire campus community.

Please help us create this new beginning. Imagine the impact we can make with your support. To help these young people is to help us all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry H. Dunn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barry H. Dunn, President
South Dakota State University

promise



SDSU – we’re on a mission

With more than 200 majors, minors, and specializations, SDSU is the state’s largest university. We provide hands-on learning with internship opportunities, study abroad experiences and experiential learning. Ninety-five percent of our students go onto jobs, graduate school, or other opportunities, such as internships and fellowships.

Unfortunately, too few of these students represent the rich heritage or cultural diversity of the longest-standing and fastest-growing population within our state. American Indians are 10% of South Dakota’s population, but make up less than 1 percent of the SDSU student body; a trend replicated across the nation. Through the Wokini Initiative and your help, we can support American Indian students to provide the necessary resources needed to clear the path to SDSU, graduation and future career goals.

Although many young American Indian students in South Dakota possess the intelligence and imagination to get to college, the hard truth is that most of these students are the first in their families to attend college and often don’t have the financial resources or support services needed to stay here.

In South Dakota, some reservation communities report unemployment rates as high as 80 percent. The Wokini Initiative seeks to alleviate some of this financial hardship by offering scholarships to these students.

And we hope you’ll join us.



“Having taught Native American students for the past 26+ years, I am seeing now more than ever students realizing that college is that vital building block for their future's success.”

Bruce Rekstad, Native American Studies teacher at Washington High School in Sioux Falls, SD



Marisa Hare, Yankton Sioux Tribe,
Sports and Recreation Management
with minors in Management and
Youth/Community Work
(Anticipated graduation: Fall 2019)



opportunity

Making it achievable

Through a student scholarship fund, the Wokini Initiative will award scholarships to qualifying SDSU students. For up to five years, each Wokini scholar will be given the resources and have access to academic, personal, health and financial wellness knowledge to succeed at SDSU and in life.

The Wokini Initiative and student scholarships are in line with similar scholarships and student support programs that are time honored and successful. Namely, those given to NCAA Division I student athletes as well as the federally funded TRiO programs. Students in each of these programs consistently outperform the general university student population here at SDSU.

In addition, SDSU is building a new American Indian Student Center in the heart of our campus, which will be an “educational home” for American Indian students. The center will be a dramatic improvement in our services, and will help set the standard for opportunity and access at SDSU. It also will serve as a multi-purpose collaboration space to the greater campus community.

We are thrilled that donations for both efforts already are coming in, including a \$4 million gift from an anonymous donor. We look forward to being able to provide the support Wokini scholars need.



Joseph Robertson, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate
of the Lake Traverse Reservation, M.S. 2014,
currently a candidate in the Computational
Science & Statistics Ph.D. program



“A new stand-alone American Indian Student Center represents commitment and hope; it represents belonging. The Center is our home on campus and it provides a welcoming space for students to come together as family to support one another as they pursue higher education. It will be a home for future generations.”

April Eastman, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribe,
American Indian Student Center Director, 2010 SDSU graduate



Ben Reifel, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, 1932 SDSU graduate, first Lakota to serve in Congress, from 1960-1970

Supporting our friends and communities

An important part of the Wokini Initiative is to help preserve and recognize American Indian culture and its value.

In English, “Dakota” means friend, and in South Dakota we have tribal friends across the state – from the people of Cheyenne River to Lower Brule, Sisseton-Wahpeton, Flandreau, Crow Creek, Yankton, Rosebud, Pine Ridge Oglala, and Standing Rock. SDSU is developing the Wokini Initiative in collaboration with the tribes and their leaders, the four Tribal Colleges serving South Dakota, and tribal members in South Dakota.

At SDSU, students will have opportunities to focus on community infrastructure and economic development, agriculture, career advancement, education, healthcare, nutrition, and business development.

We anticipate many of the Wokini scholars, like previous American Indian graduates, will remain active in their reservations and local communities which will help strengthen and bolster the state’s social and economic structures.

Equally important, Wokini scholars will serve as role models, empowering future generations to follow the same path to college graduation and beyond.



“I’m thankful and grateful SDSU is creating these opportunities to help native students become successful.”

Boyd Gourneau, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Tribal Chairman



Sustaining resources

Our state has a long, dramatic and many times tragic relationship with American Indians. The Wokini Initiative is designed to deliberately reach this historically underserved population.

SDSU stills benefits from much of the land-grant land the federal government originally designated to it in 1889. This is the same land the U.S. government previously had guaranteed to the Lakota and Dakota tribes, before reclaiming it in 1887 without officially gaining consent from tribal leaders.

As part of the Wokini Initiative, SDSU is reinvesting proceeds gained from this land into the heirs of those it was taken from so many years ago. While these funds will help sustain the initiative, much more support is needed.



achieve



“ Graduating from college takes guts and determination. Great mentorship and a ‘community’ of learning helped me get through the times of self-doubt. Wokini will give many more American Indian students the support they need to find their way.”

Casey Isburg-Wenzlaff, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Soil Conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; 2005 SDSU graduate

Fulfilling our mission

SDSU was founded in 1881 to make it possible for children to imagine their potential beyond preconceived limitations. SDSU is a public university whose work clearly benefits our graduates. It also is a comprehensive university, where research and outreach spurs economic development and prosperity for all sectors of the state’s and region’s economy as well as strengthening community and social structures.

As stewards of the land-grant mission, we must fulfill our commitment of outreach and service to all, which includes intentional and culturally relevant support for American Indians here at SDSU.

We hope you’ll help us.

“ The Wokini Initiative will help shed light on the beauty of the Native American culture, what it really embodies, and how it trickles through everybody’s path. It will help everyone relate to one another better.”

Kelsey Ducheneaux, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Youth Projects Coordinator at Intertribal Agriculture Council, 2015 SDSU graduate

To donate or for more information about the Wokini Initiative, please contact:

Keith Mahlum, Vice President for Development
Keith.mahlum@SDStateFoundation.org
(605) 697-7475, (888) 747-7378 toll-free

Donations can also be sent directly to:

The Wokini Initiative, c/o Lohr Building
815 Medary Ave.
Brookings, SD 57006



sdstate.edu/wokini

“LET US PUT OUR MINDS TOGETHER AND SEE
WHAT KIND OF FUTURE WE CAN
BUILD FOR OUR CHILDREN.” **SITTING BULL**



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