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New Haskell Indian Nations University educational partnership to improve opportunities in Tribal agriculture

WASHINGTON – The Bureau of Indian Education and the [Native American Agriculture Fund](#) today announced a historic investment in a new agriculture business degree program in partnership with [Haskell Indian Nations University](#). Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland made the announcement in remarks at the American Indian Higher Education Consortium’s Annual Legislative Summit in Washington, D.C.

The educational effort will be housed within Haskell’s business school, and the program will cover areas such as lending operations, risk management, regulatory compliance, and customer service, encompassing comprehensive fundamental lending principles that will ultimately improve the relationships Native farmers and ranchers have with their financial institutions.

“I am excited to see Haskell implementing innovative programs to foster opportunities for the next generation of Native American farmers and ranchers,” said **Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland**. “This new program will help ensure that Indigenous farming students can build sustainable business models that support them, their families and our traditional food systems by bridging the gap between educational needs and agricultural financial literacy.”

“Haskell Indian Nations University looks forward to working with the [Native American Agriculture Fund](#) to advance the career opportunities and skillsets available to Native communities and individuals,” said **Haskell Indian Nations University President Francis Arpan**. “Through this grant, we hope to expand valuable resources to Native communities in the areas of agribusiness and beyond.”

The program will offer students degree and certificate options in both agriculture and finance, ensuring students possess a deep understanding of lending processes specific to Indian Country and the agricultural industry. This represents a significant step towards nurturing the next generation of skilled professionals who understand the unique requirements of Tribal agriculture production and lending and thus empower economic opportunities for Native American farmers and ranchers.

“Through this educational program, the goal is to empower individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the unique lending landscape of Indian Country and address the

importance of improving capital access for Native producers,” said **NAAF CEO Toni Stanger-McLaughlin**. “At NAAF, we are proud to support educational entities like Haskell as the stewards of education in our tribal communities and hope the certificate programs will become a useful tool in educating both students and non-students that serve their tribal communities. This new engagement will build off our work in providing access to capital through Community Development Financial Institutions and the creation of a new Other Financing Institution within the Farm Credit System called Native Agriculture Financial Services.”

The partnership will focus on building bridges between educational needs and the ongoing efforts to improve agricultural financing, which is critical to a long-term sustainable and resilient Native food economy.

“We are excited to create new and exciting opportunities for our students and the communities they come from,” said **Mackie Moore, dean of Haskell Indian Nations University College of Business**. “Through education and economic development opportunities we see the growth of, not only agriculture practices being used for basic sustainable food, but business opportunities.”

This holistic educational program will provide learning experience for students interested in the intersection of business, finance and agriculture. NAAF was created as part of the Keepseagle national class action settlement, which focused on lending practices impacting Native farmers and ranchers. One of the important areas impacting Native producers' success is access to capital, and NAAF's mission is to help address and impact Native producers' barriers to success.

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