

Casino, if built, would help state's university system

85 to 90 percent of the state's portion of the casino's net win would go toward direct student assistance

BY ADAM CHERRY
NEWS REPORTER

A prospective casino in Cascade Locks may benefit future Oregon University System students in need of financial aid.

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, who would build the casino, agreed in a compact to share up to 17 percent of its annual net win with the state if the Cascade Locks casino project moves forward. Eighty-five to 90 percent of the state's cut would go toward direct student assistance for post-secondary education, according to a press release from Gov. Ted Kulongoski's office. The remaining money would go to environmental purposes in the Columbia River Gorge, home of Cascade Locks, and economic

development around the state.

Some estimates have placed the possible total state revenue from the casino near \$30 million per year.

Margie Lowe, executive director of the Oregon Student Assistance Commission, said money devoted to student assistance would go toward the Oregon Opportunity Grant.

"(Right now) we're only serving the neediest of the needy," she said.

Lowe added that she'd like to make several expansions to the grant, including raising income thresholds, funding grants for part-time students and funding a higher percentage of the cost of attendance. The money probably wouldn't be available to OSAC for several years.

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Africa: Faculty members want permanent funding

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"There are 2,000-plus languages in Africa," Wooten said, adding that very few are taught.

As part of the new initiative, the Swahili language class will be enhanced and Bamana-Dyula and Wolof classes will be added.

Africa has been an increasingly popular study abroad and internship destination, Wooten said.

IE3 Global Internships Regional Coordinator Holly LeMasurier, who oversees internships in Africa, agreed that the overseas programs are popular. IE3 will be cooperating with the College of Arts and Sciences on the new African studies program.

"It's just a very rich place for student learning," LeMasurier said. "The diversity there is definitely unique."

LeMasurier added that the language, culture, geography and history of the continent are among the reasons to study there.

"Africa is a priority for setting up new internships," LeMasurier said.

University President Dave Frohn-mayer commented on the new program in a press release.

"The grant from the U.S. Department of Education recognizes the commitment and dedication of our faculty members involved in African studies," Frohn-mayer said. "It will enhance greatly the faculty's capacity to work with students eager to learn more about this vitally important region of the world."

Eventually, program faculty members hope the University will offer a minor or certificate in African studies.

"That's a long-term goal," Wooten said of the minor. "We have to work through a number of institutional hurdles to get to that spot."

One of those obstacles is obtaining more permanent funding from the University.

"After the grant period, we need to make sure that the programs we start we can continue," Wooten said.

Wooten added that students appear to be interested in Africa.

"The faculty members worked to get this grant because the students have expressed interest in it," Wooten said.

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