



\$700,000 federal grant to aid Kodiak area college students

Anchorage, Alaska – February 4, 2010 – In September, the Department of Education (DOE) awarded Koniag Education Foundation (KEF) a \$700,000 Alaska Native education grant to be applied to the expansion of KEF's student recruitment and retention programs over the next three years.

Last month, the Mentorship Program completed its first pilot semester. The program provides a peer-to-peer network among students by designating mentor roles to upperclassmen and matching them to underclassmen. KEF conducted a survey to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of the program and measure the impact on students. The responses clearly demonstrate that communication among KEF's students has increased significantly.

KEF's Mentorship Program is the heart of its student retention efforts. The program's student networking component helps motivate students as they tackle their first years of college at campuses away from home. KEF established this networking program in response to data showing high numbers of Alaska Native students dropping out of school due to culture shock, homesickness and lack of academic support.

With federal grant funding, KEF is able to reach out to descendants and shareholders by traveling to Kodiak and its villages and meeting with prospective students. KEF closely collaborates with the Kodiak Island Borough School District on college/career fairs and organizes group meetings with junior and senior high-school students from Kodiak Island. The foundation hosts student gatherings to encourage interaction among students, and guest speakers are invited to give presentations that address Native students' academic and professional careers.

Koniag Education Foundation is a private, not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization established in 1993 by a \$5 million endowment from Koniag Inc., an Alaska Native Regional Corp. KEF offers scholarships and grants to approximately 4,500 Alaska Natives of primarily Alutiiq heritage from the Koniag region for post-secondary education, vocational training and career advancement. Fifty percent of these shareholders reside in the rural villages of Kodiak Island and in the state of Alaska, while the other 50 percent reside in the continental U.S. and throughout the world.

For information, visit www.KoniagEducation.org.



Klint VanWingerden is one of the many KEF students attending UAA
Photo courtesy of Koniag Education Foundation