**Bridge of the Gods Summer Academy 2013**

**June 16 – June 29**

Well it’s finally happening. I know that a lot of you out there in “Indian Country” have patiently been waiting for information about and the application for this year’s Bridge of the Gods Summer Academy. This letter is a five-year update and a brief history of the development of BOGSA to date and an effort to answer some questions that are frequently asked about the academy.

**History and Update**

BOGSA started in its current form 5 years ago. The academy was developed out of Rites of Passage programs at Lane Community College. Originally the program was in a day camp format that served local Native American students, assisting them in preparing for and transitioning into higher education. The program was put on hold for a couple of years as LCC dealt with campus wide budget issues. When funding was reestablished, the program was restarted. At this time the decision was made to change the format of the program to the in-residence program that it is today. Another major change was to try and be more inclusive of the Native American student populations throughout the State; in particular other major urban areas in Oregon and the 9 Federally recognized tribes of Oregon. And finally, with assistance of Dr. Tom Ball, the University of Oregon stepped up to collaborate with Lane Community College by assisting in financing the academy, identifying Native faculty to teach the classes offered at BOGSA, helping design a program that would reflect the processes that student have to go through to enter higher education and design curriculum that would again be a reflection of the first year class room experience for students entering higher education. And lastly the academy has grown, with the additional funding, from a weeklong program to the two-week program that it is now.

Due to major administrative changes at the University of Oregon, questions developed around whether or not the University was going to continue to assist in funding the academy and who Lane Community College would be working with at the University, because one of the major changes was to do away with the office that Lane Community College was working with and more importantly, to the Native American community, to do away with Dr. Tom Ball’s position. Some good and bad came out of this change. The bad is obvious to those of us in higher education and Native American communities in the state, and that is the loss of Dr. Ball’s position and all that he personally brought to the table in terms of advocacy for Native American communities, organizations and programs like BOGSA. The good news is that the University of Oregon pledged to “institutionalize” their funding for BOGSA (again advocated by Dr. Ball) and reestablishing new administrative contacts for Lane Community College to work with for BOGSA. And one of the best things to happen is that, though he may no longer be working for the University of Oregon by the end of this academic year, Dr. Ball will still be teaching a class for BOGSA. His personal commitment to the program and the Native American communities the program serves continues. Due to these administrative changes, program organization has been delayed, but is now moving forward with more financial assurances that will allow BOGSA to continue in its present format.

**BOGSA, What is it?**

The Bridge of the Gods Summer Academy is an intense academic transitional program targeting Native American high school students that have aspirations of going into higher education, at both the 2 year community college or 4 year + major university levels. There are 20 available slots for students and the academy is offered at no cost to the students selected. Room and board, all academy activities and the tuition for the college credit that can be earned are paid for by BOGSA.

The academy offers curriculum and processes that first year college students will encounter as they enter higher education. Students will experience living in residence halls, housed in a University of Oregon dorm while attending classes on both the University of Oregon and Lane Community College campuses. Students will use the public transportation system (paid for by BOGSA) to attend classes at LCC. There will be four counselors and at least one (hopefully two) resident assistant(s) staying with the students in the dorm and the counselors will be with the students at all times while they attend class and other program activities.

Students will go through the process of admission into Lane Community College, take placement tests in math, writing and reading and finally register for the class, Native Circles, a college success course that is taught at Lane Community College and are the credits students can earn by passing all of the classes they attend while at BOGSA. These classes are again meant to reflect the required courses students must take to earn a degree at either 2 year or 4+year levels of higher education. The courses are in math, writing, language, science, social science and arts & letters. There will also be “elective” courses taught in a workshop format in the evenings. Some of these past workshops were in/about tribal identity, jewelry, basket making and theater. While there aren’t really any designed cultural activities, instructors are encouraged to infuse the Native American perspective/philosophy/worldview into their respective classes, as it should be for all students. We also try to have as many Native American instructors as possible (those that are available and willing to work for what we can pay). We also try to maintain the high quality of the instructors. Most are actual professors on either campus or have advanced (graduate) degrees.

The students are put through a rigorous academic schedule, but we do have extra curricular activities that are dependent on what is going on in the Eugene/Springfield area at the time of the academy. Some of these activities in the past have been a movie night at the local mall, a putt-putt/pizza night, attending a day at the US National Track meet (qualifying meet for the Olympics), attending a concert at the Hult Performing Arts Center, dune buggies rides, a weekend trip to the coast (to take a class at the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology) and being invited to a coastal Tribe’s restoration celebration (got to eat some outrageous huckleberry butter on fried bread!) and spent the night in their beautiful Longhouse. And believe it or not, the students do have a little free time to explore the campuses or the city of Eugene or window shop at the mall or just catch up on sleep, all under the supervision of their assigned counselor. All the activities with exception of the free time activities are paid for by BOGSA.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

***Does BOGSA provide transportation to and from Eugene?***

No. Some of the Portland area and Salem area parents have coordinated rides with other students attending BOGSA from their respective areas. The same has happened with Reservation students, sometimes through their educational programs. Car pooling is not arranged by BOGSA, but if there are queries sent our way asking if there are other students attending the academy from the same location we can assist by sharing contact information of the parent/guardians, of course, only with their permission.

***Who is eligible for BOGSA?***

All high school students are eligible, but if there are more applications than available slots there are priorities that are taken into consideration from information provided by the students in their applications: year in high school (Juniors and Seniors have the highest priority) grade point averages, curriculum achieved in high school and the essays they write in the application.

***Does this mean freshman and sophomore students can’t apply?***

No, but because the academic standards are high, these younger students will do better if they are high achievers or highly motivated. All of the students attend class together and our instructors are told to teach to the college level and sometimes the younger students haven’t developed the skills in writing and math to pass some of the classes.

***If the student doesn’t pass all of the classes, are they disqualified from returning to BOGSA?***

No. Actually it is just the opposite. If a student doesn’t pass all of the academy classes they are given an incomplete for the college credit course and are encouraged to improve their skills when they return to high school then return to try and successfully pass the courses they didn’t pass at BOGSA and earn the college credit.

***Are the credits the student’s earn applicable to a college degree?***

Yes and no. The credits are not applicable to 4-year major university requirements if the student goes directly from high school to a major university, but they can if the student attends a community college FIRST before transferring to a major university. Lane Community College offers an Associates of Arts Transfer degree, (where these credits count) and on completion of this degree qualifies the student for automatic admission into any Oregon University System school (University of Oregon, Oregon State University, Eastern Oregon University, Portland State University, Western Oregon University, Southern Oregon University and Oregon Institute of Technology) if the student wants to continue in higher education to that level, so in this instance the credits do apply directly to a students efforts in earning a degree from a major university. The credits also fulfill requirements for most Associates of Arts degrees offered at the community college level should that be the level the students wish to aspire and again the credits apply directly to the student’s efforts to receive a degree in higher education at this level.

**What does a student need to bring to the academy?**

***Clothes and shoes*** -The students need to bring a variety of clothing to wear. Weather at this time of the year can be very warm or very wet. The students will also be going to the coast where the weather can be just as unpredictable. The “layered” look works well here. The students are also involved in a lot of play, so active wear is also recommended (both shoes and clothes). Also some “nice” clothes for the closing ceremony and any other semi-formal activity (possibly dining in a nice restaurant or attending a concert or performance) are recommended.

The students also need to bring at least one pair of closed-toe (something covers the entire foot) shoes. The students will be taking a class in a science lab where this is a requirement.

Everyday dress should be appropriate for attending any public school.

***Toiletries***- The University dorm provides blankets and pillows for the rooms, but students need to bring their own towels, shampoo, toothpaste, deodorant and similar items. The students can bring extra blankets and pillows if they want. If the occasion arises that the student forgets to bring or runs out of any of these types of items there are plenty of nearby stores (and campus bookstore) where they can be purchased. If the student doesn’t have the money for this, BOGSA will make arrangements to provide these items.

***Medications***- If the student has a prescribed medicine and/or a medicinal routine they must follow they must bring the medicine and the clearly described routine the student must follow so that the BOGSA staff can refer to if the student forgets or needs to be reminded. If the student runs out of a prescribed medicine, if allowable, there are drug stores near campus where prescriptions can be refilled.

First aid kits are always on hand for any minor bumps or scrapes. Aspirin/Advil, cold and allergy medicine is also readily available if the student is not allergic to any of these medicines. This information must be clearly defined in the application by the parent/guardians so that the BOGSA staff is aware of any student’s special medical condition.

***Computers, zip drives, phones, I-pods and cameras***- None of these items are forbidden, but I-pods, phones and cameras will be strongly monitored during class and planned activities. Computers would be handy, but not required as a computer lab will be provided for students to do their assignments and zip drives will provided to save and print out their work. If students have previously attended BOGSA they are asked to bring with them the zip drives with which they were provided. Cameras have been used in classes before, but most students used their phone cameras or if they didn’t have one, a camera was provided for the class that it t is needed.

***Money***- While all of the BOGSA activities are paid for, there will be free time, there are many restaurants and the campus bookstores where some students may want to buy a souvenir or try some different types of food. Most of the time students will be in class, study hall or planned activities and of course eating and sleeping in the residence halls.

***School supplies***- Writing instruments, paper and binders will be provided.

***Who’s “watching the kids”?***

There will be four counselors who will each be assigned five students and will be with their assigned group all the time, in the dorm at night, on the buses to LCC, in the classroom and at all of the planned events. If the students want to explore the local community, they will need to be accompanied by their assigned counselors, or they won’t be exploring. The BOGSA director and other staff (instructors, resident assistants, college student volunteers) will also circulating throughout the academy for the duration of the academy. There will be “many eyes” on the students for the duration of the academy. Should any student find a way “to escape” these eyes and violates any of the University of Oregon or Lane Community College campus rules, parents/guardians will be notified and arrangements will be made for the student to return home immediately.

***In conclusion***, we hope that this answers most of your questions. If you need any clarification or have any other questions please contact James Florendo at 541-463-5238 or by email at [florendoj@lanecc.edu](mailto:florendoj@lanecc.edu). Lindsey Watchman is no longer at the University of Oregon, so please direct any queries to James.

We also ask that you please adhere to the application deadline and be as complete with the information asked for on the application as you can, it contains the criteria that students will be selected on if there are more than 20 applications. If there are any extenuating circumstances that can prevent this, please notify us to see if we can make any accommodations (no promises that we can, but we will look at each situation to see if it is possible).

The Bridge of Gods Summer Academy has grown over the past five years and we getting more interest from students wanting to attend. We anticipate that we will have to make choices and that not everyone will get in, until there may come a time, financially, that we can continue to grow and allow us to help more students get into higher education.

We apologize for the length of this letter, but we thought it necessary to update everyone and try to answer questions that have arisen over the past five years.

Respectfully,

James Florendo, Native American Student Programs Coordinator, Lane Community College

Dr. Tom Ball, University of Oregon