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**EXCEL**

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## High School Students Explore WSU During EXCEL Conference

Native high school juniors and seniors came from all over the northwest to WSU Pullman for the 1st annual Exploring College Emerging Leaders (EXCEL) conference the last weekend in October.

EXCEL is a new college preparation conference hosted by the Tribal Liaison Office, packed with workshops and an overview on Native programming and resources at WSU. Eighteen youth from the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska participated.

"I want students to be excited about attending WSU to further their education and encourage the exploration of what WSU has to offer as a whole," said Native American Outreach Coordinator and conference organizer, Autumn Jones. "We want students to come to WSU and know they are going to have the support they need academically, and recognize their cultural needs."

On Friday, the first night of the conference, the group played ice breaker games, followed by a campus tour. That evening, the students participated in a leadership workshop facilitated by Tribal Liaison Office staff member, Faith Price. One portion of the leadership workshop was an exercise where students were divided into tribal councils and had to make decisions regarding natural resource management and tribal needs.

On Saturday, EXCEL participants spent a good portion of the day exploring careers. They attended the WSU Fall Preview, including an academic showcase featuring degrees available at WSU. They heard from WSU Native Health Sciences director, Robbie Paul, on opportunities in health careers, and completed a career interest survey with the Center for Advising and Career Development. They also learned about the admissions and financial aid process, as well as scholarship programs at WSU.

The conference concluded Saturday evening with a banquet in the CUB Jr. Ballroom and keynote speaker Brooklyn Baptiste of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee. Baptiste inspired students with stories from his youth on the Nez Perce reservation and experiences as an adult in tribal leadership.



*EXCEL 2013 participants pose with the Cougar Pride statue outside Martin Stadium.*

EXCEL gave students the opportunity to experience WSU first-hand. They ate on campus in the dining halls, and played at the Rec Center. Current WSU Native students served as camp counselors, and shared their own experiences with the high school participants.

"Students have different academic interests, social and cultural needs," Jones said. "It is important for students to visit college



campuses to experience what resources are available to them should they choose to apply.”

*EXCEL students respond to questions during a leadership workshop.*

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