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## Unique Building Dedication Planned for USU Eastern Blanding Campus



USU Eastern Blanding campus students, such as Roderick Jed Francis, are now benefitting from the newly completed administration building located in the heart of the campus. The new high-tech building will be dedicated Oct. 3.

Official recognition of the newest building to grace the USU Eastern Blanding campus will not be a typical building dedication. Then again, this is not a typical Utah campus.

The Oct. 3 dedication at 11 a.m. of the new Utah State University-College of Eastern Utah Blanding Campus administration building will include a traditional Navajo Blessing Ceremony by a Medicine Man from the Red Mesa area.

The blessing ceremony acknowledges the college's Native American population that comprises some 65 percent of the student body.

“It is a common cultural practice for Navajos to have private home blessings and larger, public ceremonies used to bless buildings such as schools,” said Garth Wilson, Blanding campus associate vice chancellor. “It is a special sacred time to invoke blessings on our campus facilities and, more importantly, on our students, faculty, and staff.”

The public is invited to both the dedication in the morning and an open house that afternoon, 3-6. At 4:30 p.m., the dedication of the new Distance Education Building in Logan will be broadcast to Blanding.

New visitors to the Blanding campus are often impressed not only by what they see, but also by what they don't see, said USU Eastern Blanding Vice Chancellor Guy Denton.

The predominance of Native Americans among the 600 traditional students attending the campus is unique, but also unusual are the 300

non-traditional students who rarely set foot on the campus but take classes, nonetheless, through the distance education campus offerings. It's a capability made possible through partnerships with USU's Regional Campuses and Distance Education (RCDE) system and the Utah Education Network (UEN), Denton said.

"A multi-faceted student body means our structures must be equally multi-faceted," Denton said.

The newest building on the 150-acre campus meets those criteria.

It not only houses administrative offices, but also contains two conference rooms seating up to 40 people. The classrooms are well connected too. They come equipped with the latest technology to provide students with real-time interaction and connections to other professors and students across the state. That means a student in Blanding can take a *Strategic Marketing Hospitality & Tourism 3900* course from Logan. But the new facility also makes possible just the opposite. Blanding professors can broadcast their lectures to Logan and beyond.

Ask Susan Lunt. She recently wrote a note to James Barta, director of the USU Eastern Blanding campus' School of Teacher Education, thanking him for the opportunity to take his class — in Nephi. She attended through the university's Nephi campus.

"I'm a 41-year-old mother of five and I get discouraged sometimes," she wrote. "I wonder if I can really do this college thing. Then I have a class like yours and I remember why I'm doing this."

Distance Education's move to its new building keeps USU at the forefront of education delivery technology. It enables the university to deliver high-technology education and quality academic programs to students throughout the state and around the world through online, interactive video broadcast, as well as face-to-face classes, said Robert Wagner, vice provost and executive director for RCDE.

"USU is leading the way by implementing new technologies, advancing higher education and increasing access," Wagner said. "This high-tech building illustrates the transformation of teaching and learning in a new century."

The facility also provides two-way educational access for Blanding campus satellite locations, including Monticello, Monument Valley and Montezuma Creek. It includes 60 classrooms spread over its 40,000- square-mile service area capable of broadcasting and receiving.

Integral to the technology is the team that helps to maintain it; the new structure also houses the Information Technology Support Center. The tech team not only works closely with RCDE, but also with UEN, responsible for building and maintaining the high-speed network to communities across the state.

“We don’t consider this just another building, not when we know how much it allows us to expand educational opportunities and help our students lead successful lives,” Denton said. “Education and the power it is to change lives for good is core to why we build these structures in the first place and why we celebrate their completions.”

Wilson said student success is a hallmark of their “little campus that could.” In the 35 years since its original inception as the College of Eastern Utah, the Blanding campus has awarded more than 2,000 associate degrees, 500 certificates in heavy equipment and trucking and 500 licensed practical nurse (LPN) and registered nurse (RN) degrees. In addition, hundreds of other certificates have been awarded over the years in computer science, accounting, business and early childhood development. Notably, 26 alumni have become medical professionals as doctors or dentists.

“We have an accomplishment rate that is truly impressive,” Wilson said. “It comes as no surprise to me that a recent study published by *CNN Money* ranks USU Eastern top three in the nation in connection with student success.”

He attributes these accomplishments to student determination, academic support from dedicated faculty and staff and great facilities.

“It begins with high expectations, belief in self and being in the right environment,” he said. “The majority of our students don’t have the depth of academic preparation, the financial means or the family educational experience that would predict a number three ranking in the national success rate, but our students have, in fact, achieved it!”

It’s a notable accomplishment, a significant realization of prayers and

blessings offered by Navajo medicine men. Certainly it is not the typical way of dedicating a building, but then again, this is not a typical Utah campus.

***Related links:***

[Utah State University-College of Eastern Utah](#)

[USU Eastern Blanding campus](#)

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