

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New advisors help Aboriginal students

Assistance can begin with application process, transition to urban living

August 25, 2011 – The start of classes will be a little easier for Aboriginal students at SIAST this fall, thanks to the addition of six new student advisors. The Aboriginal Student Advisors will help students make the transition to post-secondary learning by providing a range of support services.

“The new advisors will provide a helping hand for Aboriginal students who are making the transition to student life at SIAST,” says Susan McIntyre, acting associate vice-president, Student Affairs. “The advisors will support students from the application process right through to graduation by providing and connecting students with programs and services to meet their needs. They are there to help students successfully complete their education at SIAST.”

The advisors were hired as part of SIAST’s Aboriginal Student Achievement Plan (ASAP) – a five-year, \$5.5-million action plan to increase Aboriginal student success at SIAST. The plan is based on a SIAST study that identified a number of barriers faced by Aboriginal students, including difficulties in relocating to an urban environment, financial hardship, unfamiliar funding processes, challenging personal and family circumstances and inadequate academic preparedness.

Myrna Yuzicapi, SIAST’s special advisor on Aboriginal issues and co-chair of the committee that developed ASAP, says, “This initiative will provide proactive support to students to address the barriers and challenges they encounter. The Aboriginal student advisors will be the “go-to people” for students who are looking for answers to questions and are trying to find the resources they need to settle in to school and have a successful experience.”

The ASAP initiative builds on SIAST’s long-term commitment to Aboriginal student recruitment and retention through supports such as Aboriginal Activity Centres and Elder access at each campus. More than 2,800 Aboriginal students attend SIAST, more than attend any other Saskatchewan post-secondary institution.

Two Aboriginal Student Advisors will be located at SIAST Woodland Campus in Prince Albert, three at SIAST Kelsey Campus in Saskatoon and one at Palliser Campus in Moose Jaw.

SIAST is Saskatchewan's primary public institution for post-secondary technical education and skills training, recognized nationally and internationally for its expertise and innovation. More than 15,000 students were enrolled in SIAST programs in the most recent academic year; additionally, the organization drew almost 25,000 individual course registrations. Through program and course registrations, SIAST served almost 26,000 distinct students with programs that touch every sector of the economy. SIAST operates campuses in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon, and provides a number of courses and programs through distance education.

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