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NEWS BRIEF – January 27, 2011

Southwest Colorado Community College Helps Native American Students Obtain A.A.S. Degrees

CORTEZ/MANCOS – It's a case of preparation meeting opportunity for 13 students on the Ute Mountain Ute reservation who have the goal of earning an associate's degree. Many of the students have had some college courses, but time and distance have made it difficult for them to finish their degrees.

The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe's Career Center turned to the newly formed Southwest Colorado Community College (SCCC), a division of Pueblo Community College, to help these students accomplish their educational and career goals. With help from a U.S. Department of Education grant, the tribe is able to pay tuition, books and fees for the students' college classes. Additionally, the students' employers release them from work early four afternoons per week to attend class. Most of the students work for either the tribe or the Ute Mountain Casino.

SCCC faculty member Melinda Green travels to Towaoc four days a week to teach two classes at a computer classroom in the Career Center in Towaoc. This semester 12 students are taking "Marketing Your Image" and 13 are taking "Public Speaking", two classes that will help students earn six credits toward an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree in Office Administration with a specialty in Office Professional.

"We are pleased to be able to offer these courses to the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe," said Shannon South, Dean of SCCC. "One of the benefits of being in a small community is that we can all work together to get needs met. Providing customized educational classes in Towaoc just makes sense."

According to Green, she has a great bunch of students, and most of them will be able to complete their degree in two years by taking two classes per semester, including summer. Students need between 62 and 67 credits for this AAS degree.

The spring semester began January 17 at Southwest Colorado Community College. Interested students can apply now for the summer semester which begins May 31.

Registration for summer classes begins Apr. 4. For more information, please visit: www.enrollsouthwest.org or call 970.564.6200.

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Founded in 1933, Pueblo Community College is a premier teaching institution focused on providing academic and service excellence to help its students acquire the 21st Century skills needed to better their lives. An educational and technological leader, PCC fosters economic development and utilizes strong partnerships in the communities it serves through its Pueblo, Fremont and Southwest Colorado campuses.