

Stout Solutions and Wisconsin's Indian Nations assess options for training partnerships

Tribal tourism is an important source of employment and economic development for Wisconsin's Native Americans. To enhance this, UW-Stout Solutions launched an assessment of the educational needs of Wisconsin's tribal tourism industries. The project will ultimately facilitate the development and delivery of programming tailored to the needs the Native American community, where citizens have historically enrolled in and completed post-secondary schooling in low numbers.

Situation:

Through its Gaming Management Certificate Program, UW-Stout's Office of Continuing Education saw an opportunity to serve Native American residents who work in the rapidly growing gaming industry. Casinos in Wisconsin employ more than 9800 workers, yet some tribal members may not have easy access to training opportunities that could lead them to higher-paying management positions there. To attract and retain Native students to its programming, UW-Stout needed to determine the specific educational needs of employees at tribally-owned casinos and of the Native American communities who operate them.

Response:

Three UW-Stout departments collaborated to determine how an existing certificate program in casino management could be adapted to meet the needs of Wisconsin's Native American communities. Stout Solutions-Continuing Education, the Department of Hospitality and Tourism, and Multicultural Student Services teamed up to design and implement two assessment instruments for tribally-owned casino employees. Early on, program staff also consulted with representatives from each of the state's eleven tribes. The resulting instruments – *Tribal Tourism Business Assessment* and *Tribal Tourism Professional Development Assessment* – evaluated the educational and certification needs of tribal tourism businesses and of their employees, respectively. A Diversity Program Development Initiative from UW-Extension provided financial support for the project.

In 2004, managers and employees of Mole Lake Casino and Bingo in Mole Lake, Wisconsin, completed and returned both assessment instruments. Their responses offered insight into the particular educational needs of the casino and its workers. Participants called for training in hospitality and tourism, computer programming, business, business law, security, law enforcement and detection, management, electronics, economics, sociology, psychology, information technology, accounting, culinary arts, hotel management, marketing, slot machine management, insurance, property management, health, bookkeeping, food and beverage operations and

restaurant operations. They also indicated an interest in certificate and degree options. The pre-assessment work provided valuable input from participating tribes as well.

Impacts:

This program set in motion a series of discussions between representatives of UW-Stout and of Wisconsin's tribal tourism industry that will allow UW-Stout's Continuing Education program, Stout Solutions, to serve the state's Native American communities more effectively. In November 2004 an official partnership was formed, when Native American Tourism of Wisconsin (NATOW) accepted UW-Stout as a member. As contributing members to NATOW, UW-Stout faculty and staff can now better:

- identify educational needs in tribal tourism industries
- facilitate tribal access to existing programming available through UW-Stout
- develop instructional resources, professional development certificates, specializations and classes that will continue to meet identified needs
- develop internship and cooperative learning experiences for UW-Stout students within tribal tourism industries

Through the assessment and ensuing conversations, tribes expressed a desire for smoother transfers between the two-year colleges that serve their members and four-year institutions. As a result, UW-Stout and the Northeast Wisconsin Technical College system signed a transfer agreement in October 2004 for the two institutions' hospitality and management programs.

The newly formed partnerships also led to Stout's participation in both state and national tribal tourism conferences, where faculty and staff connected with tribal representatives across Wisconsin and the U.S. These tribal leaders continue to express interest in accessing the educational opportunities UW-Stout has to offer.

Success Story:

A new specialization in Golf Enterprise Management at UW-Stout may lead to further training partnerships with state tribes. UW-Stout administration has met with the owners of Gilmore Graves Golf, a national company that works with tribes to construct golf courses. They are considering ways to form training alliances for employees of tribally owned golf courses.

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