SENATE EDUCATION
EXHIBIT NO. 3
DATE 3-9-05
BILL NO. HB-16

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 16
BEFORE THE MONTANA SENATE
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES
Alice Chumrau, Academic Vice President, Salish Kootenai College (SKC)
March 9, 2005

- **All seven Montana tribal colleges are accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities under rigorous academic standards** - - the **same** accrediting body that accredits the units of the Montana University System and the state's three community colleges.

- **Tribal colleges provide increased access to higher education resulting in a better-trained workforce and greater income for Montanans.** During the five-year period 1998-2003, an average of **312 non-beneficiary resident students ("NB")** attended Montana's seven tribal colleges each year. The **vast majority (190 or 61%) attended SKC**. Last year, **219 FTE non-beneficiary students attended SKC.**

- **HB 16 would advance the "Shared Leadership Initiative for Economic Development" of the Montana Board of Regents to strengthen the Montana economy. The centerpiece of this initiative is increased access to higher education for Montanans.**

- **Higher education and jobs produce self-sufficiency and reduce dependency on public programs supported by taxpayers.** They reduce the social ills accompanying low education levels, unemployment, or minimum wage jobs.

- Tribal college non-beneficiary students and graduates are Montana citizens and taxpayers. **These graduates produce significant contributions to local and state economies and tax coffers.**

- During the 5-year period **1998-2003**, SKC conferred a total of **174 degrees or certificates** on Montana non-beneficiary students; **145 (83%) graduated from 17 vocational career education programs** (**119** associate degrees and **26** certificates of completion); and **29 earned bachelor's degrees.**

- **The job placement rate for non-beneficiary graduates in the labor market pool during the five-year period was 77%.** These degrees and job placements included:

    - 62 associate degrees in nursing (and 9 nursing bachelor's degrees)
    - 7 associate degrees or certificates in dental assisting technology
    - 10 associate degrees in information technology
    - 10 certificates in highway construction training

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- **Beginning wages** for graduates during the 5-year period **totaled $4,722,380**, with **71 nurses earning $2,538,863.**

- For **2003** graduates, **beginning wages totaled $1,505,280**; the **average annual salary was $30,720**; and the **highest salary** was **$52,104.**

- **Considering the beginning wages of Montana tribal college non-beneficiary graduates, the annual return of an HB 16 investment would be several-fold. In short, this bill makes good economic sense.**

- **The costs of educating non-beneficiary residents are high, especially at Salish Kootenai College,[1] considering that it enrolls 61% of the state's non-beneficiary students each year. For example, in 2002-03 SKC subsidized 211 FTE non-beneficiary students at a cost of well over $1,000,000. This is a heavy burden for a small college to bear.**

- **HB 16 would allow tribal colleges to hire additional instructors, improve curricula, and strengthen student service programs.**

- **The State of Montana has an obligation and responsibility to provide a postsecondary education for its residents.** It partially meets this obligation by providing, or proposing to provide, **$3,024 for each FTE** Montana resident attending its three fine community colleges. We respectfully urge the Legislature to treat tribal colleges the same regarding our non-beneficiary Montana resident students.

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[1] Based on the methodology of the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) for determining the costs of undergraduate education ("Explaining College Costs"), February 2002. Cost factors aggregated herein are limited to instruction, academic and administrative support, library, student services, and a physical plant operation and maintenance.

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