Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Director Dr. Charles M. Roessel today announced the selection of Dr. Venida S. Chenault as president of Haskell Indian Nations University (Haskell) in Lawrence, Kan. Chenault, an enrolled member of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation in Kansas, had been serving as vice president of academic affairs at Haskell since December 2004. Her new appointment is effective Jan. 12, 2014.

"Dr. Venida Chenault is an experienced administrator whose leadership at Haskell Indian Nations University and strong commitment to American Indian higher education is well-known among her students and colleagues," Roessel said. "Her familiarity with the needs of students, her respect for the school community and her vision for the institution itself has made her the right choice as Haskell president. I am proud to have her on my education management team."

Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Kevin K. Washburn also praised the appointment: "I am very pleased at the selection of Dr. Venida Chenault for Haskell president. This institution is one of the most important Indian higher education institutions in the country. Our search for new leadership at Haskell has led to a strong and able education professional, a person who has long been committed to this institution, and who will work towards its constant betterment."

Chenault has held several positions at Haskell during almost 21 years of her association with the university. With degrees in social work, she started in 1991 as social work faculty and as an advisor where she taught and developed pre-professional courses and curriculum in social work, American Indian studies and addiction until August 2004. During that time, she also served as interim director of American Indian studies (June 1996 to July 1999); as acting associate dean for the Division of Instruction (December 1997 to June 1998); as acting director of the Institute for Distance Education (April to August 2003); and as co-director of a Ford Foundation grant that Haskell held in conjunction with the University of Kansas, exploring the Native American experience.

From October 2008 to October 2009, Chenault served as a Visiting Scholar in Social Welfare at the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare, where she worked to advance research and scholarship on the topic of violence and abuse against Indigenous women. She also authored a book on the same topic during this period.

In December 2004, Chenault was named Haskell's vice president of academic affairs, which gave her administrative oversight of a $3-$4 million budget and supervisory responsibility for all academic programs, budgets, faculty and staff within the Division of Academic Affairs. In her position she also served as acting vice president for university services from October 2009 to January 2010; acting Haskell president from January to May 2010; and at BIE headquarters in Washington, D.C., from September 2012 to April 2013. While with the Bureau, she helped lead key priority post-secondary education projects, including developing partnership agreements with tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) and working with the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Office of Justice Services and the National Park Service to design professional development curriculum. From 2006 to 2007, she also held consultations and workshops on tribal sovereignty and self-determination as well as academic assessment and

research for TCUs.

Chenault attended Haskell as a student in the Fall of 1975 and the Spring of 1984. She later attended the University of Kansas where she earned a bachelor's degree in social work in 1986, a master's in social work in 1990, and a Ph.D. in philosophy in 2004. She has given numerous presentations on the subject of violence and substance abuse activity and prevention within the American Indian community, and developed and taught courses on human behavior, community health social work practice, chemical dependency and social work as they relate to Native people. In addition, she has published numerous articles and reports on a variety of topics related to the study of American Indian societies and cultures.

She has received several awards, including Haskell Outstanding Alumni of the Year (Spring 2009) and the Crystal Eagle Indigenous Leadership Award, Center for Indigenous Studies, University of Kansas (Spring 2005). She was named both a Kellogg Minority Serving Institutions Leadership Program Fellow and an American Indian Higher Education Consortium Fellow in 2003, and an American Indian College Fund Mellon Award Fellow in 2004. From 1998 to the present, she served at various times on Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation Education, Social Services and Constitution committees, and the Nation's Social Service Advisory Board.

Chenault will lead a BIE-operated university which has been educating American Indians and Alaska Natives from the nation's federally recognized tribes for almost 130 years. Opened on September 1, 1884, as the United States Industrial Training School with a focus on agricultural education in grades one through five, the school was known as Haskell Institute throughout Indian Country until 1970 when it was transformed into a two-year higher education institution and renamed Haskell Indian Junior College. In 1993, the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs approved changing the school's name to its current form.

Haskell has grown from its original 22 students to an average enrollment today of over 1,000 each semester from tribes across the United States. It offers associate and baccalaureate programs accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and integrates American Indian and Alaska Native cultures into its curricula. Students may transfer to another baccalaureate degree-granting institution or go directly into the workforce. For more information, visit www.haskell.edu.

The Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs oversees the Bureau of Indian Education, which operates the federal school system for American Indian and Alaska Native children from the federally recognized tribes. The BIE director is directly responsible for implementing federal education programs and laws, such as the No Child Left Behind Act, in 183 elementary and secondary day and boarding schools on 64 reservations in 23 states serving over 40,000 students. The BIE also funds or operates off-reservation boarding schools and peripheral dormitories near reservations for students attending public schools. In addition, the BIE provides post secondary education opportunities to American Indians and Alaska Natives by offering higher education scholarships, providing operational support funding to 26 tribal colleges and universities and two tribal technical colleges, and by directly operating two institutions of higher learning: Haskell and the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in Albuquerque, N.M.