IEED, CERT and Argonne National Lab partner on college-level science and engineering internship program for American Indian, Alaska Native students starting summer 2009

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
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WASHINGTON – Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Economic Development – Indian Affairs George T. Skibine today announced a new effort to recruit and train American Indian and Alaska Native post-secondary students to become Indian Country's next generation of tribal energy and natural resource management professionals. The Energy Resource Development Tribal Internship Program has been developed through a partnership between the Indian Affairs Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development (IEED), the Council of Energy Resource Tribes (CERT) and the U.S. Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory (ANL) to help increase the number of American Indians and Alaska Natives who can effectively manage a tribe's energy and natural resources.

"This internship program will offer an exciting opportunity for American Indians and Alaska Natives interested in the science and engineering professions, two fields where they are traditionally underrepresented," Skibine said. "It will also help tribes by developing a cadre of professionals who have the training and expertise to aid them in managing the development of their energy and natural resources."

Title V of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 requires the Secretary of the Interior to provide technical assistance to those Indian tribes seeking to develop their energy resources, establish an Indian energy resource development program and to further the goal of Indian self-determination. The internship program is one aspect of the IEED's efforts to fulfill the act's mandate.

The IEED will provide guidance and oversight for the program and funding for student recruitment. CERT, in coordination with ANL, will recruit interns from public, private and tribal institutions of higher learning. CERT also will seek to recruit tribes that are in various stages of energy development to provide mentors for the interns. It also will seek to match internship candidates with the pool of potential tribes and ANL research opportunities, and will work with ANL to identify strategic opportunities for internships based on current ANL programs and the availability of mentors at its facility.

"Tribes are being severely impacted by the inadequate number of available American Indian and Alaska Native energy resource professionals," said CERT Executive Director A. David Lester. "We anticipate that the Native youth of today will play a critical role in Indian Country's, and the nation's, energy future as they inherit the responsibility for prudently managing tribal resources. Unless deliberate measures such as this internship program are undertaken to prepare them for such a role, however, we fear that many will be lost to other fields of work unrelated to their major fields of study."

The program, which will be held annually, is slated to begin this summer and run for 10 weeks.

Students will be housed at the ANL facility in DuPage County, Ill. Applicants will be considered based on whether they have the requisite skills to perform necessary tasks, if their needs will be met by the program and if they are interested in developing capabilities in sustainable energy programs.

“At this critical time, meeting the demand for energy from sustainable sources can only be achieved through investment in training programs such as the Energy Resource Development Tribal Internship Program,” said ANL’s Director of Educational Programs Harold Myron. “We are very excited to play a role in that effort by hosting interns from the program at Argonne.”

For more information about the Energy Resource Development Tribal Internship Program, contact the ANL Division of Educational Programs at 630-252-4114 or visit ANL’s website at http://www.dep.anl.gov and click on “Tribal Internships.” Information also can be found on CERT’s website at http://www.certredearth.com. The deadline for applications is April 3, 2009.

The Secretary of the Interior created the Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development, which is located in the Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, to encourage economic development in Indian Country. The IEED’s mission is to foster strong Indian communities by creating jobs, Indian-owned businesses and a trained workforce, by developing Indian energy and mineral resources, and by increasing access to capital. The IEED believes that thriving economies and opportunities for work are the best solutions to Indian Country’s economic and social challenges.