

Jim Doyle
Governor

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Thursday, February 15, 2007

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Governor's Cabinet Member Highlights Vocational Rehabilitation *Also Applauds Technical College and Tribal Partnership*

Ashland – In a visit today to Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC), Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman met a non-traditional aged student enrolled in the Supervisory Management program with a 4.0 average. She praised the partnership among several organizations in Ashland as an example of what Governor Doyle wants to achieve by increasing vocational rehabilitation opportunities statewide.

"It is great to see Wisconsin citizens seek independence through employment. This wonderful partnership recognizes people with disabilities who have been able to work, or who have continued working, with renewed support from the community," said Secretary Gassman.

In the budget he offered Tuesday, the Governor said he would increase funding for Vocational Rehabilitation. By the end of the biennium, funding will increase by \$1.6 million in state dollars, allowing Wisconsin to receive more funds from the Federal government. Currently, for every \$1 spent now on vocational rehabilitation, the Federal government matches approximately four times that for Wisconsin residents.

Executive employees of WITC, DWD, and the Director of the Vocational Rehabilitation for Native Americans (VRNA) program at Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC) met with Phillip Couture, Ashland Campus Student Ambassador, to hear more about his path to getting a degree, after a back injury prevented him staying in the industry in which he was working. Couture, a Bad River Tribe Member, was working full-time when he decided to become a full-time student.

Couture will serve as the WITC Ashland Campus Student Ambassador until winter of 2008. As the ambassador, he represents WITC-Ashland students at different events, and will speak at the WITC commencement ceremony on May 18, 2007. Couture will graduate in spring of 2009, with a goal to work in human resource management, specifically at the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Wisconsin's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a federal/state program designed to obtain, maintain, and improve employment for people with disabilities by working with VR consumers, employers, and other partners.

With a \$70 million annual investment in people with disabilities for training and placement in good paying jobs, VR services have a positive impact on Wisconsin's families and economy. Wisconsin's Vocational Rehabilitation Services are an important part of our "Grow Wisconsin" action plan and success. You can find information on Grow Wisconsin at http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/docs/Doyle_Economic_Package.pdf.