

Ottawa University

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OU Guarantees Free Education for Ottawa Tribe in New Agreement *Agreement Signed during Eichner Inauguration Ceremonies*

OTTAWA, Kansas – Ottawa University's residential campus is located in Ottawa, Kansas, on 65 acres of land donated to the institution more than 150 years ago by the Ottawa Indian Tribe, now located in Miami County, Oklahoma. Understanding the importance of education for ensuring the tribe's future, tribal forebears donated the land in return for its members receiving free tuition indefinitely at The College.



On Friday, September 17, 2008, new Ottawa University President Kevin C. Eichner and Ottawa Chief John Robert Ballard honored their long-standing relationship with an historic signing that renewed and extended the original agreement between the two

parties. Under the new agreement, official Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma members will be provided a free education at any of OU's five sites or online. That education includes tuition at all sites, as well as room and board at the residential campus. The free OU education encompasses both undergraduate and graduate degree seekers.

"Heritage is important and we want to honor that," said Eichner. "We believe that expanding this agreement is in keeping with the Ottawa Spirit and honors the heritage of this institution and its relationship with the Ottawa Tribe. I was thrilled when the tribe agreed that this is a good way to go, and thrilled again when the Ottawa University board of Trustees unanimously agreed that this was the right thing to do."

Chief Ballard said he was "very honored and very humbled" to be a part of the historic event. "This university was built on faith that brought my ancestors and the people who built the school together. And now today we're signing an agreement to complete the spirit of that original coming together. The spirit of the Ottawa Tribe and of Ottawa University is together, it's all one, and it lives here today. And it's going to continue and it's going to grow."

The celebrated signing took place during a week of festivities surrounding the inauguration of Kevin C. Eichner as the 21st president of Ottawa University. Installation ceremonies were held on Saturday morning, October 18, in the OU Chapel with numerous dignitaries and guests on hand, including U.S. Senator Sam Brownback and four former OU presidents. Internationally renowned opera tenor Otoniel Gonzaga, who is a 1965 graduate of Ottawa University, sang at the ceremony, as did two of Chief Ballard's sons, who sang songs of prayer, honor and memory in their native language.

During his inaugural address, Eichner explained why he took on the role of president at his alma mater and laid out his vision for where he wants to take the 143-year-old institution.

"I am here because I have heard the call," said Eichner, who left his position as CEO of Enterprise Financial Services, a \$3.7 billion banking and wealth management company, to lead OU on July 1. "I am here because I believe Ottawa University is positioned to be an outstanding institution of higher learning."

Eichner, a 1973 OU graduate with a degree in Social Change, read a letter from a 65-year-old OU-Arizona graduate who heard Eichner speak at the commencement ceremony in late September. She shared how she had endured the hardships of both an abusive husband and cancer, and how she emerged determined to pursue her lifelong dream of becoming an educator. Starting her education at age 50 by becoming a paralegal, the graduate later moved to Arizona to care for her ailing father and became a certified teacher. She went on to earn a master's degree, as well. The woman now teaches at-risk students and English to adult students. "These are the types of people we want to prepare," said Eichner. "We are here to help God's people think and act well."

Eichner, who describes himself as the quintessential goal setter, then unveiled his 12-year plan for the University in what he calls "Vision 2020." The comprehensive plan states

that by the year 2020, “Ottawa University will be a distinctive and highly effective institution educating as many as 25,000 students per year for lifetimes of enlightened faith, exemplary service, inspired leadership and personal significance.” One distinctive of the plan is the initiation of a Student Development Center project which aims at integrating life planning, degree planning, career placement and counseling, academic advising, experiential learning, and special skills-based learning modules for all OU students, traditional and adult, in an age-appropriate way. Eichner also said he hopes to have OU’s endowment increased to \$100 million by 2020.

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Founded in 1865, Ottawa University is a comprehensive, not-for-profit educational institution serving over 7,000 students through its residential campus in Ottawa, Kansas, its online unit; and its adult campuses in Overland Park, Kansas; Phoenix and Chandler, Arizona; Brookfield, Wisconsin; Jeffersonville, Indiana; as well as multiple international instructional sites. For more information, visit www.ottawa.edu.