



VPRESIDENT'S OFFICE | COURTESY PHOTO

Vice President Jonathan Nez, left, President Russell Begaye, center, and Fielding Graduate University President Katrina Rodgers, right, sign a memorandum of agreement to help 20 Navajo students get their doctorate in education on March 20 at the president's office.

Nation, Fieldings sign agreement for 20 doctorate students

BY PAULY DENETCLAW
NAVAJO TIMES

WINDOW ROCK – Telletha Valenski has 26 reasons to go back to school for her second doctorate degree. “It would be the 26 students who are the ones that encourage me to go back to school,” Valenski, the founder of Dream D.I.N.E., said. “I really enjoy education and I’ve been teaching a curriculum called ‘Sports, Play, and Active Recreation (for Kids).’” Valenski is part of the newest

cohort of 20 Navajo students who will be getting their doctorate degree in education from Fielding Graduate University. This partnership between the Navajo Nation and the university has been going strong for nearly two decades. The original cohort graduated 22 Navajo students with their doctorate degree in education. This time around, the Navajo Nation and the university signed a memorandum of agreement on Monday that they would each provide funding for an additional 20 Navajo students to get

their doctorate degrees. Students who are accepted into the program will only have to pay for 15 percent of their tuition every term, which is about \$1,279. The nation is responsible for 65 percent at \$5,541 and Fielding will provide an additional 20 percent at \$1,705. “What drew me to the program? The fact that I didn’t have to leave the Navajo Nation,” Valenski said. “My first doctoral degree was on the East Coast. I realized I don’t do well studying ‘abroad.’ I do better studying locally.”

The program is fully online with some in-person meetings with local mentors. Right now, the program has already filled eight of the slots and they will begin their program in May. “I’m excited about talking with other scholars,” Valenski said. The MOA will remain effective until May 1, 2020, and will pay for a maximum of 20 students each academic year. “We need to develop a very strong education system to where we can have the best education system in

the country,” said President Russell Begaye. “So, far we’ve not done well because of the workforce. But we’re developing this workforce and we can upgrade. And raise the level of learning here on Navajo.” The hope of the Navajo Nation is that this program builds a group of highly trained educators that will take on leadership positions within schools that serve Navajo children. “I’d like to see us in the top 500 schools to attend in the country,” Begaye said. Information: 928-871-7444.

Navajo Technical University honors Claw for 10 years of service

CROWNPOINT – Harry Claw of Chinle was honored March 7 for his 10 years of service as a member of Navajo Technical University’s board of regents, according to an NTU news release. Claw stepped down from the board and during his time at NTU, Claw accomplished numerous projects that helped the institution gain university status and expanded its reach into Arizona. “We accomplished a lot in 10 years,” Claw said. “I remember being on the board when we were Navajo Technical College. I hate to go but my time has come to allow others to step in. The next person will do a great job. “Thank you everyone and it was a pleasure to work with each of you,” said Claw, who represents the Chinle Agency. “I’ll continue to support Navajo Technical University.” NTU President Elmer Guy said Claw was dedicated to supporting strategies to improve and expand the university. For example, Guy and Claw garnered a portion of the Arizona Department of Revenue’s

Transaction Privilege Tax. The funds were approved in 2014 and were utilized towards expanding the Chinle and Teec Nos Pos, Arizona, instructional sites. “Mr. Claw helped us a great deal and always advocated for the growth of the university,” Guy said. “We will do our best to continue the progress.” Delores Greyeyes, vice chairperson of the NTU board, said, “It has always been his mission to serve his community and his people and that is a very admirable. We were fortunate to work with him. “He was there with us as we confronted challenges in the growth of NTU,” she said. “We’re very thankful for his contributions.” A former delegate on the Navajo Nation Council and employee of the Navajo Nation Division of Social Services, Claw was undecided about running for election as a candidate for the Council. A new Chinle Agency regent will soon be selected and introduced. Information: communications@navajotech.edu.



NAVAJO TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY | COURTESY PHOTO

Navajo Technical University President Elmer Guy on March 7 thanks Harry Claw, right, who served for 10 years on NTU’s board of regents.



COURTESY PHOTO

Diné youth, members of Navajo Yes, are among 50 who received donated bike helmets from ThinkFirst Navajo.

ThinkFirst donates 50 bike helmets

WINDOW ROCK – Recently, Jodee Dennison, director of ThinkFirst Navajo – Eve’s Fund’s Injury Prevention Program – delivered 50 new bike helmets, in three different sizes, to Tom Riggensbach, executive director of NavajoYes in Window Rock, according to a news release from Eve’s Fund. This brings a total of 325 helmets that Eve’s Fund has donated to NavajoYes over the past several years. “We are pleased to support NavajoYes’ Diné Bike Project once again with the mutual aim of keeping kids out on the trails safe at all times,” Dennison said. “What so many people don’t understand are the ramifications of a traumatic brain injury, and the fact that this is almost always preventable,” she said. “The evidence is clear that bicycle helmets can reduce the risk for head injuries by 85 percent. That’s why we aim to teach kids to Think First and use their minds to protect their bodies.” The Diné Bike Project makes restored bikes of all types available to schools, communities and families across the Navajo Nation. Young people receive a bike and helmet, only after providing community service such as restoring trails, repairing

bikes, or volunteering at other youth events. For more information on all of NavajoYes’ health and fitness programs, visit their website at: <http://navajoyes.org>. Each child who receives a helmet will be properly fitted and will be required to pledge that they will “always wear a bike helmet, on every ride, near or far, fast or slow” and will “promise to remind their friends and family to wear one also.” Riggensbach said, “We deeply appreciate Eve’s Fund’s commitment to insuring that all of our young riders are ‘safe riders’ and that they are being protected with helmets. “ThinkFirst Navajo’s helmet initiative teaches kids at a young age that the only way to avoid brain and other injuries while riding on bikes, horses, off-road vehicles, skateboards, or participating in other sports like football and skiing, etc., is to wear protective head gear,” he said. Barbara Crowell Roy, Eve’s Fund president, added, “We have been a proud supporter of many of NavajoYes programs for years, because they share our mission of promoting health and wellness among Native youth with the overall aim of empowering young people

to positively affect the world around them. “We also like the idea that the bike project is encouraging kids to become actively engaged in their communities by working on projects that are important to them,” she said. “In essence, the kids have to ‘earn’ their bikes and helmets, so it becomes very meaningful for them.” Barbara also acknowledged the generosity of individuals and organizations who support Eve’s Fund financially. “We are grateful to the people who believe in the importance of the work we are doing on the Navajo Nation, in our daughter Eve Erin Crowell’s name and memory,” she said. “Without their ‘gifts’ to Eve’s Fund, year after year, these helmet donations would not be possible.” Since its creation in 2005, the ThinkFirst Navajo program has taught more than 50,000 young Native people about injury prevention across the Navajo Nation in the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. A \$10 donation to our ThinkFirst Injury Prevention Program will purchase one helmet and could save a life or prevent a catastrophic injury. Information: evcrowellsfund.org.

2 Diné join Native American Journalists Fellowship

NORMAN, Okla. – Two of 10 students chosen for the Native American Journalists Fellowship class of 2018 are Navajo. Taylor Notah, from Arizona State University, and Benjamin Yazza, University of New Mexico, were selected by the Native American Journalists Association. Other students include Hunter Hotulke (Seminole), Salish Kootenai College; Lydia Fielder (Cherokee), University of Arkansas; Cheyenne McNeil (Coharie), University of North Carolina; Melissa Ellis (Chickasaw), East Central University (Oklahoma); Marissa Johnson (Salt River Pima-Maricopa), Arizona State University; Jarrette Work (A’aaniihnin of Fort Belknap, Montana), University of Nevada, Reno; and Emily Dunford (Muscoogie Creek), University of Oklahoma. The students will travel to the 2018 National Native Media Conference in Miami, Florida, July 18 to 22. NAJA Fellows will work in a joint newsroom with selected National Association of Hispanic Journalists’ students and mentors and can receive 3 hours of college credit. Thanks to the support from sponsors including the San Manuel Ban of Mission Indians and sustaining members of NAJA, all student travel expenses including airfare, food and accommodations are covered by NAJA.