

# Thank you

**Thank you 2023 Partners & Donors for supporting the Southern Oregon University Youth Programs Tuition Assistance program. With your help, last year almost \$456,000 in tuition assistance was awarded to our students!**

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### **There are two ways you can support SOU Pre-College Youth Programs:**

- Endowment Fund
- Tuition Assistance Fund

### **To donate please mail a check to:**

SOU Pre-College Youth Programs  
1250 Siskiyou Boulevard  
Ashland, Oregon 97520

### **Or donate online at:**

[giving.sou.edu/youth-programs](https://giving.sou.edu/youth-programs)

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For more than two decades, the Oregon Cultural Trust has played a vital role in enriching our state's cultural resources, supporting more than 1,600 nonprofits across Oregon. We have woven a unique and awe-inspiring cultural tapestry, united by artistry, defined by stories and guided by wisdom.

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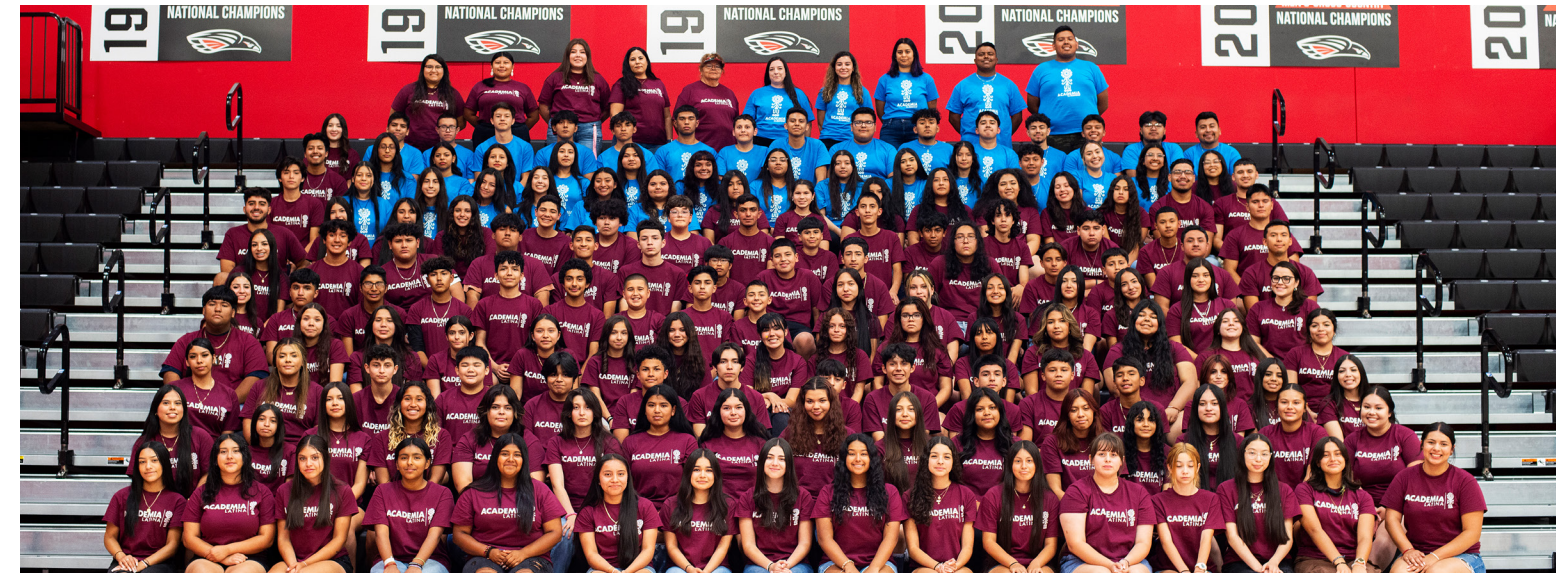
By using the Cultural Tax Credit, Oregonians and the Cultural Trust have awarded close to \$40 million, and counting, to the cultural nonprofits that define our quality of life. Join us by taking your support of Oregon's arts, heritage and humanities to the next level.

### **MAKE CULTURE COUNT.**

**Learn more or donate online at**  
**[culturaltrust.org](https://culturaltrust.org)**



# SOU YOUTH News & Updates 2023



For more than 20 years, Southern Oregon University Youth Program **Academia Latina** has been positively impacting and shattering the barriers that Latino/a/x youth face, and 2023 was no exception. Academia Latina is an exploration of a broad range of classes, lectures, cultural experiences and recreational activities for Latino students. In 2023, students again found Academia Latina exceeded their expectations both academically and socially.

After last year's return to in-person programming, it was refreshing to be able to settle back into our familiar program format. However, we recognize that the impacts of the pandemic and wildfires continue to affect the lives of our participants. In a continuing effort to be responsive to the changing needs of our students, we increased our focus on mental health, added more breaks, and revised our class schedule to prioritize social connections and emotional support for the students.

In a further effort to focus on fully supporting students, we maintained a smaller program size this year, however we slightly increased our capacity to serve a total of 141 participants (with 60% being totally new to Academia Latina!). In an effort to meet the high demand for our program we actively make an effort to accept students that have not participated in our program in the past. Although we recognize that a smaller program is what our students need at this time, we've also seen a surge in interest and the size of our waitlist nearly matched that of our accepted list in 2023. Going forward, we will need to continue to strike a balance between individualized student support and meeting demand for the program.

Academia Latina provides a unique experience for participants in which they can be immersed in a supportive, culturally responsive environment where student success and academic competence are encouraged and expected. Students have the opportunity to explore their identities and build self-confidence while surrounded by fellow students and staff who share a similar culture and lived experience. Students in 2023 expressed they had gained confidence, got out of their comfort zones, and improved their academic skills because of their participation in the program.

At the culmination of this year's program, students connected with community leaders and experienced the importance of networking at our reinstated community banquet. Students were able to showcase and celebrate some of their successes of the week: mastering three different types of Folklorico dances, reading SMART Goals and poems they created and wrote in some of their classes, displaying scientific creations they made in their STEAM Arcade Game class and lastly playing videos that students produced and directed in three different Academia TV videography classes run by Orlando de la Cruz (an Academia Latina Alum and now a longtime instructor of the program).

**Academia Latina me  
ayudo a soñar y pen-  
sar en mi futuro.**

**Academia Latina  
helped me dream and  
think about my future.**

—2023 Academia Latina participant





NATIVE YOUTH SUCCESS

For over 25 years, **Konaway Nika Tillicum** has been serving Native Youth through a culturally responsive academic program that empowers students to access higher education and navigate educational systems, encourages self-determination, and strengthens critical thinking by deeply connecting them to a community that values their aspirations. In recent years we’ve added **All My Relations**, our academic year program supporting Native youth and families. Through programming that includes college-style classes, workshops, holiday gatherings with an Indigenous lens, virtual longhouse nights, and supporting Native American Student Unions across the region, we are supporting the development of academic aspirations and cultivating a closer community among Native families throughout the state. In 2023 we were awarded a grant from the Oregon Youth Development Division to support and sustain this important work over the next two years under the umbrella of **Native Youth Success**. These programs serve students and families from more than 11 Oregon counties using an intergenerational family model that empowers Native youth to value and seek higher education. We take an Indigenous approach to this work, instilling a sense of self-esteem and cultural pride for our students. Ultimately our efforts to improve academic outcomes also work to reduce physical and mental health disparities faced by Native Americans, creating more just and equitable opportunities for our Indigenous youth.

Photo: Students from Konaway Nika Tillicum and the Black Youth Summer Institute joined together to participate in Native Games.

Konaway has helped me wear my heritage with pride and not shy away from Indigenous spaces.

—2023 Konaway participant

EARLY COLLEGE CREDIT PROGRAMS

High school students can earn college credit while still enrolled in high school through Southern Oregon University. Early college credit programs aim to encourage a college-going confidence and boost the likelihood of future success in a post-secondary atmosphere. Earning early college credit not only helps students prepare for the academic rigors of college, but can reduce the time required to complete a degree and can save students and their families future tuition costs.

SOU Pre-College Youth Programs offers two ways for students to access college credit. One way students can get a “jump start” on accumulating credits toward their future degree is through **Advanced Southern Credit (ASC)**. Students take SOU-approved classes offered at their high school and earn credits at a significant savings compared to regular tuition rates.

While ASC is our largest college credit program, SOU’s high school **Early Entry** program offers additional opportunities for high school students to get a head start on college.

We had 5,288 enrollments in dual credit high school classes aligned with SOU during the 2022-23 academic year, supporting students to develop collegiate-level academic skills and acquire college credit at a reduced tuition rate. Last year, program participants saved a total of \$3,282,196 in tuition costs. External collaborations and institutional efforts are further promoting access to ASC via scholarships and tuition waivers. Additionally, we are reducing barriers by introducing new bilingual program information about the benefits of dual credit.

Our students graduate high school with a rich college transcript, giving them an incredible head start toward college success and completion!

—High School ASC Math Teacher

SUMMER CLASSES AND DAY CAMPS

In 2023, our **Summer Better Than Others** day camps and classes proved to be just that! With a STEAM based curriculum, participants were able to spark their imagination and enhance their curiosity. They were able to get their hands dirty while learning the fundamental components of the scientific world. Students explored the creative possibilities of computer programming, and once again, pushed their engineering skills to the limit with LEGO Robotics. There were days full of fun and innovation as animated worlds and comic characters came to life. Art-minded participants were able to try their hand at paper maché, printmaking, clay, and the magical art of wet-felting wool. Students were able to discover tips and tricks of songwriting and spin a story of fantasy and wonder in Sci-Fi Fiction and Fantasy writing. Not to mention, we laughed A LOT as our improv students took center stage. In addition, young chefs were able to unleash their culinary creativity with the help of Ashland’s own Cosmic Muffin.



BLACK YOUTH SUMMER INSTITUTE

In collaboration with the Southern Oregon Black and African American Student Success Grant Team, SOU Pre-College Youth Programs once again hosted the **Black Youth Summer Institute (BYSI)**. BYSI is a residential camp celebrating excellence in African American and Black Youth, grades 7-12. The camp creates an opportunity for students to interact with other students living in Southern Oregon who identify as a member of the African diaspora, and explore a broad range of classes, lectures, cultural experiences and recreational activities in a university setting. Thanks to grantors like the African American Student Success Grant and Southern Oregon Educational School District, the tuition for 2023 was at no cost to students.



“It was what I needed. To be with my people”

—2023 BYSI student

ACADEMY

Long recognized as an outstanding educational opportunity for students in the Pacific Northwest and beyond, **ACADEMY** is a camp experience tailored to the needs of academically talented and highly motivated students who love to learn. Now in its fourth decade, this flagship program gives students a peek at college life, motivating them to reach their full potential. Students that are accepted into the program join us on campus to be challenged by creative and imaginative instructors, peers, and activities. In 2023, students had the opportunity to attend engaging classes in topics such as: Blockprints & Botany, History Through Shakespeare, AI Tech & ChatGPT, Solar Car Creation, Neurology, and more!



“ACADEMY changed my perspective on life”

—2023 Academy student

YOUTH ACADEMIC COMPETITIONS

For decades, SOU has been providing the platform for our region’s best and brightest middle and high school students to participate in quality competitive events that promote intellectual curiosity and academic and artistic skills. This year’s **Best of the Best Art Show** featured the work of talented students from 13 high schools in a variety of mediums in a professional exhibit at the Grants Pass Museum of Art. Teams from 32 middle and high schools once again faced off in a test of knowledge in our **Brain Bowl** competitions. Our 2023 competitions have just culminated with the **Scavenger Hunt** for 20 middle and high schools, where teams displayed their exceptional debate and research skills. We continue to be impressed by our region’s young people.



“SOU Academic Competitions inspire investigation and encourage teamwork!”

—2023 Scavenger Hunt student

2024 Dates coming soon!

We had a great summer and hope you did too. Check back again in 2024.

2024 Dates coming soon!