Indigenous Food Systems Graduate Certificate

The goal of this 12-credit graduate certificate program is to prepare professionals in a variety of disciplines for Indigenous food systems work using Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy. Themes of coursework being designed or envisioned for this certificate include the Buffalo Culture Lifeway Food System, Ancestral Health and Nutrition, Food Sovereignty: Policy and Infrastructure, and Traditional Food System Knowledge of Plants and Animals: plant, processing/preparation, tending the land, buffalo caretaking, and animal knowledge.

Potential research areas include: Cultural knowledge recovery, 21st century policies and infrastructure, wholistic foods systems research.

Students will enter and exit the program as a cohort. Coursework will include the following, based upon an Indigenous appreciation of the cyclical nature of life and learning. Referred to as a “Seasonal Round”, student cohorts will enter the program during the spring semester, completing a 6-credit (or two 3-credit) course(s) covering Indigenous practices associated with Spring and Summer. Students may choose to complete independent study projects during the summer semester in order to continue their practical knowledge acquisition through the summer months. In the fall, they will enroll, again as a cohort, in a 6-credit course covering Indigenous practices associated with Fall and Winter. Successful graduates of each year’s cohort will have the opportunity to mentor cohorts in the following year.

In order to maintain this program’s eligibility for financial aid (for which we intend to apply), it is important that the courses fall within established terms, though there is some flexibility in start and end dates. We are working with MSU Registrars, Graduate Council and the Buffalo Nations Advisory Council to identify possible options for distribution of credits and grading. These, along with pros and cons of each, are as follows:

Course/Grade options:

- One 6-credit course spring-summer; one 6-credit course fall-winter.
  - PROs: only two course registrations for students (simplicity, limits registration fees).
  - CONs: 6-credit course spanning spring-summer extends outside of established spring term (complicates grading and financial eligibility).
  - Possible solutions:
    - use ‘N’ (continuing) grade for spring-summer course to allow students to finish a spring term course during summer session.
    - Build justification into application to Dept. of Education for approval to offer financial aid.

- Two 3-credit courses spring, summer; one 6 credit course fall-winter.
  - PROs: No need to resort to ‘N’ grade (each of 3 courses graded separately within spring, summer, fall established terms.
  - CONs: 3 (instead of 2) course registrations (increases cost to student by $30).
  - Possible solutions:
    - Provide scholarships to cover additional ($30) registration fee; apply for financial aid approval for program.

Prerequisites: Bachelor’s degree.

All courses will be under the NASX rubric at the 500-level. Course development begins under the supervision of an Indigenous Curriculum Committee in winter 2022, with program launch in spring 2023. Students are expected to finish the Certificate in one year.