Native American Student at USU Eastern - Blanding Talks Taking Risks, Following Dreams

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Shannon Tooke, USU Eastern-Blanding student, addresses Utah Legislature luncheon.

Utah State University Eastern-Blanding student, Shannon Tooke, spoke at USU’s recent State Legislator spouses luncheon in Kaysville, Utah, and inspired listeners to pursue what they’re truly passionate about.

“I resigned from a secure government job, left the community I lived in [for] the majority of my life, packed up our belongings…took my daughter with me and moved to another state, all in hopes of achieving my lifelong dream,” said Tooke in her speech. “I knew it was a huge risk. It would mean a new school for both my daughter and I. It meant leaving my husband behind so he could retain his employment as a high school teacher. It has been extremely hard having our family separated for the sake of obtaining my goal.”

Tooke closed by stating that she couldn’t be happier with being a USU student, and is grateful for USU’s regional campus system for providing “essential access to higher education, which gives Native Americans the ability to have a successful future.”

Tooke is the first Native American student from USU Eastern-Blanding to be accepted into the bachelor’s program at USU’s Jon M. Huntsman School of Business. She currently holds a 3.6 GPA and plans to graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in the summer of 2017. In her speech, she attributed her success to USU Eastern-Blanding

“The location of the campus, the community, the atmosphere, and the entire staff are what makes my story and [the story of] other students a success,” she explained. “My campus is sensitive to Native American culture. The staff help transition new students from various reservations into college life, and go out of their way to help. It’s not just academic help—it’s all the little things they do.”

The USU State Legislator spouses luncheon is an annual event hosted by Joyce Albrecht, wife of President Albrecht, and was held at USU’s Botanical Gardens in Kaysville. Students and administrators from USU’s regional campuses and USU Eastern campuses attended the event, which focused on the university’s statewide impact.