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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Unitus Community Credit Union Hosts Western Oregon University Coffee and Connection to Celebrate Future Bilingual Educators***Fourth annual celebration recognizes recipients of Unitus scholarships*

Monmouth, Ore., October 21, 2025 – Unitus Community Credit Union hosted its fourth annual Coffee and Connection gathering at Western Oregon University (WOU), bringing together six students from its dedicated Bilingual Teacher Scholars cohort for an intimate morning of recognition, encouragement, and community.



Held inside the Richard Woodcock Education Center, the event honored future bilingual educators whose lived cultural and linguistic experience reflects the growing diversity of Oregon's classrooms. More than 40% of K-12 students in Oregon are ethnically or linguistically diverse, yet fewer than 15% of their teachers share that background. The Bilingual Teacher Scholars program was created to help change that.

"These scholars are not preparing to teach despite who they are," said Araceli Cruz, Assistant Vice President for Global Diversity and Inclusion at Portland State University, during her remarks. "You are proof that our

stories, our accents, and our identities belong in every educational space."

The Unitus-funded cohort includes eight bilingual scholars, six of whom were able to attend the event. Several shared their personal paths into education.

Scholar Evelyn Estrada, now a senior preparing to teach in Woodburn, credited the bilingual teacher who once changed her own life. "Her support was everything to me," she said. "My goal is to make sure every student feels supported and seen."

Scholar Alessandra Cervantes Ramirez, who moved to the United States alone at age fourteen, said, "This scholarship is not just financial support for me. It is an investment in my future." Unitus President and CEO Steven Stapp reflected on the personal responsibility behind the credit union's commitment. "You said we are our ancestors' wildest dreams," he said, referencing a comment Cruz made. "I stand here, and I am the wildest dream that my ancestors had. We have never wavered on our support for this program. We stand with you not just through this journey here in college, but through your education career."

The Unitus-WOU Bilingual Teacher Scholars partnership provides multi-year financial support, mentorship, and long-term encouragement to future educators whose backgrounds mirror the



communities they will one day serve. Several cohort graduates are already teaching in Oregon school districts, including Salem-Keizer and McMinnville.

About Unitus Community Credit Union

At Unitus, we're dedicated to improving lives in the communities we serve. As a member-owned local credit union, we invest in people by doing the right thing. Through partnerships with nonprofit organizations, we provide support for community groups through volunteerism and financial donations. Our 106,000 members count on us to serve them and their communities; our 300+ employees share that passion for service. Learn about the local impact Unitus makes by visiting unitusccu.com.