FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Spokane County Commissioners Approve EWU/AHANA Grant for Business Incubator Program

SPOKANE, February 9, 2006 – The Spokane Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has approved at $50,000 grant for the Eastern Washington University (EWU) and AHANA “Incubator Without Walls” program. “This program is historic in its collaborative effort to assist small business entrepreneurs in Spokane County in realizing their goals for economic development and job growth,” BOCC Vice-Chair Mark Richard said.

EWU’s Center for Entrepreneurial Activities (CEA) will develop and manage the program that basically serves to consult, educate, guide and mentor clients. AHANA (African American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American) Business and Professional Association will be integral in providing its renowned business development skills to minority communities as a significant component of the program. The overall goal is to revitalize local business centers resulting in the growth of economic activity in the area, increased revenues and profits, and new job opportunities.

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The program uses a building-block approach. The key elements of that approach are described below:

- **Prepare the Community** – providing leadership skills development workshops for local/neighborhood and community leaders, assisting them in strengthening their organizations; developing and/or coordinating with community business associations; and developing Strategic Business Development Plans for the local business centers.

- **Provide Incubator Services** – providing a full range of incubator services to potential or existing businesses within each targeted area. Services will be offered to program enrollees in convenient locations.

- **Provide Continued Support** – both for the incubator graduates and for the local business organizations, assisting to refine their plans and operations and increase their revenues and profits appropriately. Networking and linkages to potential business opportunities for graduates will be continued as part of EWU’s outreach programming.

The “Incubator Without Walls” focuses on revitalizing neighborhoods and small towns, and is designed to target assistance to the needs and characteristics of those localities. “Our partnership with Spokane County will assist in the development of strong community organizations, including local business associations, and to work with those organizations in fostering or attracting new business and strengthening existing ones,” AHANA Executive Director Ben Cabildo said.

For more information on the EWU/AHANA “Incubator Without Walls” program, contact Robert Schwartz, EWU Foundation Distinguished Professor of Entrepreneurship in EWU’s College of Business and Public Administration, at (509) 358-2254 – or Ben Cabildo, AHANA Executive Director at (509) 838-1881.

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