

IMPROVING STUDENT SUCCESS at Tribal Colleges and Universities



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Student Success Initiatives at TCUs: An Introduction

Student success is a primary goal of all institutions of higher education. At Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), unique institutions located in tribal communities primarily serving American Indian students, student success initiatives take a variety of forms.

In 2013, the American Indian College Fund created a three-year cohort of two TCUs, with funding from the Kresge Foundation, to support participation in the national Achieving the Dream (ATD) network. The two TCUs selected to be part of this cohort – Diné College, the first TCU (founded in 1968), in Tsaile, Arizona, and Salish Kootenai College in Pablo, Montana – were provided data and leadership coaching through the ATD network, along with funds to attend the annual ATD national conference. The overall purpose of this work has been to strengthen student success at these TCUs.

Over the three years of this initiative, both of these TCUs have made progress and documented their work on creating the structures to improve student success at their institutions. In addition, a number of TCUs outside of this initiative are implementing their own student success initiatives, many of which are linked to the particular culture and language context in which they are situated. The work of these TCUs on student success can provide instruction and guidance to other TCUs and similar institutions starting or strengthening their own student success initiatives.

To that end, TCUs were invited to put together manuscripts describing their work on student success initiatives for this publication. The central idea is that learning about good practice can bring about good practice. In addition to the two TCUs that participated in the Achieving the Dream network, Diné College and Salish Kootenai College, four other TCUs generated manuscripts for this publication: College of Menominee Nation, in Keshena, Wisconsin; Iłisaḡvik College, in Barrow, Alaska; Leech Lake Tribal College, in Cass Lake, Minnesota; and Sinte Gleska University, in Mission, South Dakota.

Diné College, in *Scaling Up Student Success*, describes their work on improving three primary areas to bring about student success: strengthening support services and instructional delivery; increasing access for students to higher education opportunities; and creating coherence in data collection and analysis across the institution. One important and sustainable outcome at Diné College is the establishment of the Office of Institutional Planning and Reporting, charged with centralizing the collection, analysis, and reporting of data; leading efforts to use data for decision-making across the various departments on campus; and creating a “culture of evidence” within the institution.

Salish Kootenai College has focused their student success improvement work in three major areas: student advising; student “onboarding” (i.e., orienting students to college, the campus, and the work); and strengthening the “integrity and accessibility” of the data the college uses for decision-making. Focusing data work around important questions – for example, *What intervention is most effective for which group of students at what specific points in the students’ college careers? How will the success of the interventions be measured? What data need to be collected to best support students and measure their success?* – SKC has improved the collection, use, security, and integrity of their institutional data, as well as the communication across departments and teams about data. One important lesson shared by SKC is, *Don’t love the problem – Love the solutions*, highlighting the importance of moving from articulating problems and challenges to creating solutions and opportunities.

The College of Menominee Nation (CMN) is focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education and opportunities for its students, by investigating the question, *What factors aid in recruitment and retention of STEM students?* Implementing the STEM HERO Initiative, CMN has set the goal of “recruiting and retaining more American Indian

students in STEM degree programs.” Through outreach to students from kindergarten through high school, transfer agreements with University of Wisconsin campuses, mentoring, innovative classroom pedagogy, and development of independent research, conference presentations, and children’s books about STEM disciplines that incorporate Menominee culture, CMN is developing student success through its STEM-centered efforts.

In Cultural Connections Foster Student Success at Iḷisaḡvik College, the authors describe a holistic student success philosophy focused on incorporating Iḷupiaq language, culture, values, and practices into the everyday work of Iḷisaḡvik College: curriculum, pedagogy, student services, professional development, and institutional activities. Asking the question, *How does incorporating Iḷupiaq values into a college culture support student success?*, the authors conclude that, “By incorporating Iḷupiaq culture, language, values, and traditions into all facets of Iḷisaḡvik College students feel more connected to the institution, more comfortable with education, and passionate about what they are doing for the future of the region.” Student success at Iḷisaḡvik College is defined in both the present – being an integral part of the college community, engaging with the educational opportunities and practices – and the future, as students and graduates can have an impact on the larger North Slope community.

Leech Lake Tribal College (LLTC) faces challenges that other TCUs and similar institutions also work to address: increasing persistence from semester to semester, retention from academic year to academic year, and graduation rates. The philosophical approach implemented by LLTC is based on research showing that “it

is common for Native students to pursue education not only for personal development and achievement but also with the vision of giving back to their communities...We must help them connect education with the achievement of something greater than themselves, to help them see that education benefits their children, their families, their communities, and their nations.” Toward that goal, LLTC has created two initiatives to bring students into the college community: Path to Success, a first-year seminar course, and Jumpstart, a two-week course held prior to the start of the semester. Promising results for these two linked initiatives have driven LLTC to continue to work to improve these initiatives, as ways to promote and generate student success.

At Sinte Gleska University (SGU), there is a sharp institutional focus on the incorporation of Lakota culture into curriculum and classroom practice. In *Waciye Na Hupi: In Their Own Voices*, three SGU faculty investigate and reflect on their own practices, examining the ways in which they incorporate Lakota culture into their own work with students in the classroom. These three reflective pieces provide a window into understanding the impact on student success of what is taught and how it is taught in the TCU classroom.

These six TCUs tell a varied set of stories – of inquiry and investigation, of process and outcomes, of initiatives and data – that comprise an instructive volume on the efforts of these institutions to generate and promote student success. Other TCUs and similar institutions of higher education are certainly working on these same issues of student success; this sharing of stories and highlighting of successes and challenges can serve as guides for institutions starting or strengthening their own student success initiatives.

Diné College: Scaling Up Student Success

GLENNITA HASKEY, Vice President of Student Affairs, Diné College



INTRODUCTION

Diné College was established in 1968 as the first tribally-controlled college in the United States. From 1968 to 1997, the College carried the name, Navajo Community College and later changed its name to Diné College to reflect its aim to develop baccalaureate and graduate-level programs. Today, the college offers two Bachelors programs, 19 Associates Degree Programs, and six certificates.

Diné College is chartered and governed by the Tribal Council of the Navajo Nation and is affiliated with, and accredited by, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The College maintains a multi-campus system with its main campus located in Tsaile, Arizona, and centers located at five (5) geographically dispersed sites in Arizona and New Mexico. At present, Diné College serves about 1,600 full-time enrolled students annually.

Rooted in Diné language and culture, the mission of the institution is to advance quality post-secondary student learning and development to ensure the well-being of the Diné People. Our vision is to improve continuously our programs and services to make Diné College the exemplary higher education institution for the Diné People.

BUILDING TRIBAL COLLEGE SUPPORT

In 2009, an internal comprehensive assessment completed by the Office of Academics and Student Affairs at Diné College revealed that 98% of its students enrolled were American Indians (primarily Navajos), who were identified as being: 1) academically under-prepared for college, 2) experiencing a significantly high failure rate in math course sequences, 3) first-time and returning students lacking test-taking and study strategies; and 4) 88% were first generation students with little or no understanding of academic or degree planning.

In April 2013, Diné College finally took steps to start addressing performance gaps among its American Indian student population and set in motion efforts to increase student success focus. At the time, the Achieving the Dream National Reform Network was capturing nation-wide attention as an organization developed to support two-year community colleges and increase efforts to address common higher education challenges. The American Indian College Fund presented an opportunity for tribal colleges to apply and compete for cost coverage to become an Achieving the Dream member for three years. Diné College submitted a proposal both to join the Achieving the Dream National Reform Network and to the American Indian College Fund to cover the membership fee. The College was approved for both applications and The American Indian College Fund awarded Diné College with cost of participation fees, annual disbursement for participation, and a technical assistance award in the amount of \$65,000 per year, for three years (2013, 2014, 2015).

ACHIEVING THE DREAM

The Achieving the Dream National Reform Network, or commonly just known as Achieving the Dream, is dedicated to helping community college students earn college certificates and degrees. More specifically, Achieving the Dream guides community colleges like Diné College to build, develop, and implement data and inquiry in their institutional efforts to close student achievement gaps, accelerate student success, and “scale up” student support and academic services and programs. Such guidance, transformation, and support was necessary for Diné College to address the needs found in the 2009 assessment. So the college moved forward to: 1) commit, 2) use evidence to improve program and services, 3) engage faculty, staff, administration, and all stakeholders, 4) begin systemizing institutional improvements, and 5) establish a culture of continuous improvement to increase student success on campus.

Upon becoming an Achieving the Dream Tribal College, Diné College aligned their ATD student success initiatives with three (3) of the six (6) institutional strategic goals: 1) Achieve student success through contextual teaching and learning – improve student support services and instructional delivery, 2) Increase student access to higher education and lifelong learning – improve student recruitment, enrollment, and dual credit programs and services, and 3) Promote transparency and accountability – improve data collection and analysis systems and policy coherence.

As an Achieving the Dream institution, Diné College received assistance from an experienced Leadership Coach and a Data Coach to

build a culture of inquiry and evidence, to use data to identify students' academic problems, set curriculum/instruction and student support priorities, and measure the institution's progress toward increasing student success. This kind of institutional data was frequently requested from academic units and other college leadership, but providing timely and accurate data was a challenge as the institution did not have a dedicated department that focused on data collecting or reporting. A major goal under Achieving the Dream was to address the major lack of data so that a "culture of evidence" could be recognized at the college that would allow key stakeholders to have accurate, statistical information to make data-driven decisions. Something needed to be done about data access and it needed to be done quickly.

The College's Vice President of Student Success and Dean of Academics both accepted the additional role of serving as Co-Chairs for the Achieving the Dream Initiative in 2013 and advocated to the administration the need to develop an office of data reporting that would begin collecting, monitoring, analyzing, and warehousing a three-year student cohort baseline dataset at Diné College.

With the support of Achieving the Dream, the Office of Institutional Planning and Reporting (OIPR) was established in late 2013 and staffed four positions to begin the daunting task of creating a foundation of centralizing institutional data and reporting. "Institutional improvement starts with having and knowing the overall mission and learning of the health and wellness of the organization," stated Velveena Davis, Dean of Institutional Planning and Reporting. "Data makes us well informed of areas that we as a College need to focus on for improvement. Most commonly, we are good at collecting data but we fall short when it comes to using the data, sharing it, and applying the information." With the establishment of OIPR, the data team began working on transforming the understanding and need for data among the Diné College staff and faculties. Eventually, the greatest challenge left

to the team was to create a culture of evidence within the institution's operational structure and empower data-driven decision making strategies into its everyday operation. "It's very difficult to change culture but the data team that was put together was up for the challenge that laid ahead of them," Davis said.

MOVING TO CLOSE DEPARTMENTAL GAPS

Once the data team was recognized and established, the Student Services Department began collaborating with the Academics Department to take up the ATD-Student Success Initiatives, largely concentrating on closing departmental gaps to enhance and expand students' preparation for college, increasing students' test-taking and study skills, promoting students' academic success, and ensuring students' progress towards graduation using a degree plan. In addition, the Office of Institutional Planning and Reporting worked on providing around-the-clock data access for institutional leaders to make real-time data decisions using data trends made available to them through data requests or development of data tables made available on the College's network and webpage.

With the implementation and support of the ATD-Student Success Initiatives, the focus of the student support services at Diné College included academic advising, tutoring, counseling, disability services, veteran services, retention services, transfer and career services. The Academic divisions targeted their student success initiatives toward staff/faculty professional development. With the College's commitment and staff hired, Diné College was ready to move forward by the end of Spring 2014 to begin carrying out its devised ATD action plan on closing departmental gaps.

In May 2014, Diné College submitted an Implementation Plan to Achieving the Dream and committed to the following priorities with the listed interventions:

Scaling Up Student Success



- **Year One (2013-2014):** To increase collaborative efforts between Academics and Student Services to design and expand college readiness and student advising programs. Intervention strategies included: 1) the Academic and Student Services departments will engage in planning and designing two college readiness programs for high school students and incoming freshmen students, 2) Student Services' Academic Advisors/ Specialists and Faculty Advisors will collaboratively develop and implement an Advising Handbook to standardize student advising processes and practices at Diné College, and 3) Student Services staff and Faculty will collectively review and assess students' course completions, passing rates, course evaluations, and advising experiences at the end of each academic semester to determine areas of improvement and academic/non-academic program planning.
- **Year Two (2014-2015):** To build first-year program and services that help support students academically to increase student retention rate term to term and year to year. Intervention strategies included: 1) Student Services will identify and hire a First-Year Experience Coordinator to develop first-year programming that will help with transition and retention of new incoming freshmen students at Diné College, and 2) Peer Mentors will be hired within the Student Services department to deliver a peer mentor program, assist with mandatory new student orientations, and to mentor first-year students in building relationships with faculty, campus resources, and students.
- **Year Three (2015-2016):** To adopt and implement a Shared Advising Model across four Academic Divisions to increase overall course completions. Intervention strategies included: 1) Finalize and adopt Academic Advising Handbook and standard operating procedures for student advising, 2) Plan and implement Academic Advising training for staff and faculty, and 3) Modify Academic Advising Syllabus to meet Academic Divisions' program needs. Year Three also included other elements, such as: To increase retention and persistence towards graduation. Intervention strategies included: 1) Standardize reporting procedures and processes for student attendance, 2) Assess student enrollment and failure rates by courses, and 3) Establish Early Alert systems for at-risk students.

ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF EVIDENCE AND SUCCESS

In FY 2013-2014, with the lead of the Office of Institutional Planning and Reporting, Diné College was successful in completing its first collection of data compiling, analyzing, and reporting back to the Achieving the Dream organization. The report data was composed of a three-year cohort baseline data, as required by Achieving the Dream, and provided longitudinal data on the student population at Diné College for Academic Years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013. The purpose of this data collection and analysis was to identify performance gaps and barriers to student success at Diné College. Indeed, with the help of its Data Coach, Diné College's analysis of the data revealed that the College's retention rate was sitting at 42% year to year, compared to the national average for a public two-year institution year to year retention rate of 55%. Diné College felt good about this but needed to dive deeper into the data to understand more about the student population. The College knew that it would be a long time into the future before it could fully understand the use of the data it had, how to apply that data to institutional decisions, and the impact that data would leave on policies and service development. This was only still the beginning.



ACHIEVING THE DREAM EMPOWERED SUCCESS

Throughout the three years of participation in the ATD-TCU Student Success Initiatives, the Student Services Department and Academic Department, in response to continuous data analysis, heightened its current awareness in service need and programs to help students' transition to college and increase their academic successes in terms of student retention and participation in college. Specifically, Diné College focused on the following areas and achieved positive outcomes for students:

ACADEMIC PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT

a. Dual Credit Program – In 2014, Diné College recognized a need for high school students to potentially start college early prior to high school graduation that would decrease a student's college duration time seeking and obtaining an Associate's degree. Therefore, 22 Memoranda of Agreements were established between Diné College and Arizona and

New Mexico high school programs within 11 school districts. Twenty-nine high school students participated in the first Dual Credit pilot program between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014, and 49 dual credit students graduated from high school in Spring 2014 and entered Diné College. The students demonstrated a 92% college-level course completion success rate in Fall 2013 in Reading, Writing, and Math, and 85% in Spring 2014. Today, the Dual Credit program has an estimated enrollment of 259 high school students who participate in the program.

b. Summer Institute Program – An average of 33 first-time freshmen students participated in the Summer Institute Program each year between 2013-2015. The primary goal for the program was to help students learn and understand college expectations and to experience college life prior to beginning their first semester in college. Students who participated in the program earned three college credit hours and had the opportunity to retake their college placement exam aiming to exit one or more pre-college level courses. Both faculty members and student services staff

participated in this program. Significant and positive changes impacted the students participating within the program, allowing most of them to test out of remedial education courses and adapting to the early expectation of time management of a college student, team-building exercises, campus resources, and forming communication and networking relationships with faculty and support services. Of the students who participated in the Summer Institute Program, 97% successfully completed the program.

- c. Advising/Degree Planning Program** – In Spring 2014, the advising team drove more focus into and pursued students at Diné College who demonstrated to have earned 60 credit hours or more towards a degree and aimed to work more closely with them to help begin transition or discussion of transferring to a four-year college and/or identifying a career plan. The focus on aligning advising with degree-planning was to increase graduation rate among students who were nearing program completion and expanding more direct faculty advisement services where needed. Across all six campuses of Diné College, 1,365 students were identified to have earned 60 college credit hours or more; 186 (13%) participated in the Graduation Commencement Ceremony in May 2014 and received their Associate degrees.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

- a. Peer Mentor Program** – In Summer 2014, the peer mentor program was piloted in conjunction with the Summer Institute program. The Peer Mentors were largely responsible for mentoring assigned new incoming students and providing peer to peer advising, counseling, and guiding freshmen students in their transition into college life. What better way to becoming familiar with college life than to hear from an experienced student who attended Diné College before? The mentorship program included familiarizing
- students with campus activities, organizations, resources, and services, and encouraging student involvement. On surveys administered at the conclusion of the program, students rated their experience on a scale of 1-10 (1 being highly unsatisfied and 10 being highly satisfied). An average of 33 students per year from 2013-2015 participated within the Peer Mentor Program and 97% rated the program satisfaction level to be a 9.
- b. Student Learning Workshops** – The Advisors, Counselors, and Specialists at Student Services conducted a minimum of two student learning workshops per semester (between Spring 2014 and Spring 2016) to help students become more engaged and increase college success skills and promote self-awareness. The student learning workshops focused on study skills, how to succeed in college, coping with test anxiety, time management skills, note-taking skills, and use of technology. Twenty workshops were recorded in Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 combined; an average of 15 students attended per workshop.
- c. Student College Tours and Explorations** – College Tours were offered to Diné College students nearing the end of their degree program and approaching graduation. The purpose of the college tours was to connect students to four-year institutions and help them learn of student support resources and degree programs offered at the neighboring colleges/universities (in Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado). An average of 10 students participated per trip in Academic Years 2013-14 and 2014-15. The program allowed students to visit campuses, explore affordability and cost, witness the learning environments, become informed of degree opportunities and program outlines, and hear of resources offered at the visiting campus, providing the opportunity for potential graduates to make well-informed decisions and early connections.

TEACHING EDUCATIONAL GOAL SETTING AND EXPANDING STUDENT SUPPORT INTERVENTION SERVICES

Diné College learned early on that incoming American Indian students were entering college underprepared and knowing little of what to expect of college life after high school. Many of the incoming non-American Indian students were commonly transfer students coming from larger universities out of state and knew exactly what to expect college life to be like. But something needed to be done to expand more awareness about college preparation and readiness among the first-time incoming students, which led to the focus on expanding instruction in educational goal-setting and the introduction of department services offered to students from the moment they enter the College. As such, the following programs were created to support these incoming students:

a. First-Year Experience Program – In Fall 2013, first-time freshmen students' academic placements were reviewed and monitored. Findings indicated that of the first-time entering American Indian students, 71% of the students were placed in pre-college writing courses, 100% of the students were placed in pre-college math courses, and 77% were placed in pre-college reading courses. This prompted the college to begin the initiative to create a first-year experience program that would help first-time incoming students to retest their placement course level and gain student-ready skills, including how to set educational goals and how to identify services that would help support their endeavors away from home.

b. Career and Transfer Service - The Career/Transfer Specialist reported to have assisted students with their applications for admission and housing to transfer to a four-year program; 31% of the students who were assisted had applied to Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona.

c. Financial Aid Awareness/Literacy – The Financial Aid team hosted mandatory financial aid orientation for students (Financial Aid 2013-14 Annual Goal). This resulted in an increase in students' Pell Grant, tribal, and work study scholarships. At the beginning of Spring 2014 semester, 2,001 students (campus-wide) were reported to have contacted the Financial Aid office for college funding support; 1,098 students successfully completed their financial aid applications and 92% received a financial aid award.

d. Student Outreach Services (SOS) - The Student Outreach Team at Diné College – composed of disability services, counseling services, and retention services – served 1,121 students combined between 2013-2015. At the end of Spring 2014, 40% of 1,121 students who were on academic suspension status regained good academic standing by increasing their GPA rate, 65% of students were removed from probationary academic status to good academic standing, and 26% of students who had stopped-out and returned in the spring semester regained good academic status. These were achieved through the SOS team providing counseling services and investing 30-45 minutes per visit with students whom they served.

In addition, the Academic Department had the opportunity to focus on the following and achieved positive outcomes for students:

IMPROVE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Diné College realized that it would not only take the involvement of the Student Success Department to make improvement happen, it would also mean expanding services into the classrooms and making improvements there. There was a lack of faculty development support provided to Academics, and improving technological equipment was hardly a main focus. The following services were created to include Academics within the focus of classroom services, whether through direct or indirect changes:

a. Faculty Professional Development – A challenge was presented that faculties were not given the financial support to seek out professional development to expand to-date knowledge on their teaching subjects. Many had never participated in any professional development travels since beginning employment with the College. This needed to change in order for faculties to sustain up-to-date methods of information and teaching. Six full-time faculty members attended various national/state conferences focused on student advising and pre-college instructional delivery as efforts to improve and support students' learning community and to link "outside of the classroom" learning experiences with the "inside the classroom" academic instructions/curriculum. Such Faculty Professional Development opened opportunities for faculty to become active members of the Advising Task Force at Diné College to address the process and "know how" between Student Success advisors and Academic advisors.

b. Technology Support – A needs assessment for computer equipment was completed in 2013, indicating that the majority of the attending student population said there are never enough computers available for them outside of classroom hours. Therefore, to address the need, Diné College invested in the revitalization of two computer lab centers: the Learning Center and the Residence Life Computer Lab. In an April 2014 report, the Student Residential Life Program indicated that there was an increase of 20% in dorm students utilizing the computer labs in the evenings and weekends, and an increase of 60% in computer usage by students at the Learning Center. Therefore, the computer resources for students increased within the two programs and students had computer access to complete homework and research.

Lastly, the final area of focus was to continue the development and sustainability of the Office of Institutional Planning and Reporting to improve and expand upon the following data organization and reporting efforts: 1) Increased data support for Academics by providing Program Review data to identify program challenges for improvement and areas of strengths, 2) Increased visibility of the Office of Institutional Planning and Reporting by sending representatives to attend chairs' meetings and do presentations across all campuses and sites, 3) Established a standardized data collection process to store and centralize College data, 4) Increased department data awareness regarding Institutional Planning and Reporting services and purposes to the College community, and 5) Produced clean and accurate data through the process of verification and validation, providing training, and building trust relationships with College departments.

THREE-YEAR REFLECTION

Under the umbrella of Achieving the Dream, Diné College has increased self-awareness of internal challenges facing services provided to students, expanded student learning, and created institutional accountability through data collection and reporting.

In the course of a three-year period as an Achieving the Dream Tribal College, Diné College was able to highlight major challenges pertaining to the need to strengthen data structuring, collection, and reporting to better tell the story of student success and challenges.

By paving the way for data initiatives and better analyzing institutional performance and needs, areas of continuing challenges that still exist at Diné College involve the partnership between faculty advisors within each academic discipline to delineate the responsibilities of student services advisors and faculty advisors. This involves a broader effort to expand and involve all campuses and centers. Initiatives such as standardizing an advising handbook to ensure consistency in student advising across campus and providing hands-on training are in the planning stages.

In addition, other future Achieving the Dream initiatives at Diné College discussed between Student Services and Academic Departments are: expanding student tutoring services, offering a College Success course for all students, establishing a college preparatory academy, and adding support structures for Bachelor degree-seeking students.

The services that expanded under the initiatives of Achieving the Dream gave students the opportunities for early introduction to college, strengthened an effort to build students' self-esteem and confidence as they engaged in their college programs, created an effective strategy



for students to teach and learn from one another, and promoted academic success and students' semester-to-semester persistency rates.

Overall, the College's participation in Achieving the Dream and funding opportunities by the American Indian College Fund has been essential in helping Diné College in its data development, implementation, and expansion of service improvements within Student Services, Academics, and the Office of Institutional Planning and Reporting over the course of the last three years. Achieving the Dream has allowed Diné College to recognize and understand the power of evidence and data, and knowing that in order to meet the needs of the ever-changing market and operations of higher education, one must continuously collect data, analyze it, see the story being told, and engage in planning to improve the outcome. For so long

the College based its actions on perception and assumption and didn't recognize the need for data to empower and improve the College's establishment and services. One common goal all higher educational institutions have is to promote and increase student success. Data were and continue to be the key within higher education to keep striving for improvements to match the everyday challenges. Achieving the Dream has allowed Diné College a learning opportunity to use data to drive decision making and assessment of the College's make-up. "I think every tribal college should consider becoming an Achieving the Dream member," Davis stated. "Because you learn to become evidence-driven, thus allowing you to make deeper, stronger, and more powerful decisions based on directional and actual outcomes. You know where to make corrective changes and where to apply improvement to scale up towards student success. With the guidance and shared-learning partnership with other two-year colleges under the Achieving the Dream network, I think it would allow many other colleges to know that we all face the same similar challenges in higher education but as a group, we can all share our experiences and support each other on ways to strive towards improvement to increase student success rate among minority-serving institutions. In Diné College's case, we strive for our American Indian students to be given the best kind of education we can offer based on research and data to keep up with an ever-changing market. We should always strive to help offer the best and greatest services and programs for our American Indian students for they will sustain our future. Achieving the Dream can help support tribal colleges on where to start."

Salish Kootenai College: The Right Data for the Right Intervention



Dozens of potential interventions exist to increase college student success. However, resource limitations require colleges to choose interventions that are likely to produce success for specific student cohorts. Important questions to ask are: *What intervention is most effective for which group of students at what specific points in the students' college careers?* How will the success of the interventions be measured? What data need to be collected to best support students and measure their success? A student success initiative such as Achieving the Dream requires actionable data to support effective decision-making. This piece is intended to provide guidance to other colleges that wish to increase data integrity and access in order to more effectively implement and evaluate student success initiatives.

INTRODUCTION TO SKC

Salish Kootenai College (SKC) is a four-year tribal college located in Pablo, Montana, and a member of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC). Chartered by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council in 1977, the mission of the College is to provide quality postsecondary education for American Indian (AI) students. Annually, SKC enrolls 1000 students in 44 certificate, associate, and bachelor degree programs that are designed to meet critical workforce development needs on the Flathead Indian Reservation and throughout Indian Country.

The diversity of the student body and resource limitations provide challenges to student success initiatives. The student population includes American Indian students from 70 different reservations and 20 different states. Approximately 70% of students are Pell-eligible, 69% are first generation college students, and 65% are nontraditional in terms of age. Students enter SKC with differing educational backgrounds, life experiences and college/career goals, and therefore require different interventions to support their success.

THE DATA INITIATIVE

SKC joined Achieving the Dream in 2012 with the support of the American Indian College Fund. SKC's Achieving the Dream project included three initiatives. The first two initiatives directly impacted students: (1) improving the student advising process, and (2) enhancing the entire new student onboarding process, including new student orientation.

The third initiative, critical to institutional effectiveness and evaluation of the success of the first two initiatives, was the improvement of college data integrity and accessibility. This third initiative became a critical component of all student

success initiatives at SKC: *Improve the integrity and quality of institutional data, thereby providing the right information needed to pick the right student success initiatives and have the data necessary to track their effectiveness.*

While Achieving the Dream institutions have Data Teams that are charged with review of data and provision of recommendations for targeted student improvement, SKC's Data Team has an additional function. The Data Team is charged with improving data integrity and quality through systematic review of existing data procedures and structures. In addition, the Data Team improves existing campus processes by reviewing and recommending changes to established processes such as student admission and employee intake.

The Data Team operates under four operational beliefs:

- (1) Accurate and timely data are critical to institutional function.**
- (2) Standardization of data input and reporting, including use of standardized data coding and a data warehouse, will increase data accuracy.**
- (3) Involving the pertinent departments in planning and decisions concerning data issues will lead to increased engagement in data improvement initiatives.**
- (4) Improved access to correct data will facilitate better institutional decision-making.**

SKC's Data Team is structured to decrease "silos" across campus – i.e., departments and offices working on their own without connection to other departments and offices – and improve communication between various campus entities that collect or maintain data. The Team consists of representatives from the registrar, admissions, and financial aid departments, human resources, the database manager and information technology services (IT), and institutional research (IR). Increased communication among these departments leads to routine problem-solving regarding issues such as new data fields, changes in federal or AIHEC reporting structures, or accreditation requirements. In particular, a strong relationship between IT and IR staff is critical to efforts to provide a robust data infrastructure.

Over a two-year period, the Data Team set and accomplished goals that enhanced data integrity, streamlined various campus processes, and improved data utilization. In biweekly meetings, the Data Team focused on department-level issues, such as transcript records in the registrar's office, as well as systems-level issues that impact the entire institution, such as changes to IPEDS reporting. The Team also clarified issues of data ownership and access, determined training needs, and provided recommendations for revisions of policies or procedures to enhance data quality.

Examples of work over the two years include creation of a data warehouse (a static database) that is updated via a regular sequence of census snapshots and standardization of metrics and timelines for internal documents as well as externally mandated reports. Importantly, the Team also implemented data quality control procedures, including validation processes and error audits. The Team assisted with revision of student intake processes associated with enrollment and registration, developed a tracking system for student recruitment, and moved numerous paper-based processes to online systems. The Data Team was also instrumental in implementation of the Jenzabar Student Retention system.

An additional component of Data Team efforts was consideration of data needed for institutional planning and tracking effectiveness. For example, SKC now collects data on student intent during the admission process by asking students to indicate their reason for enrolling: to update work skills, to complete prerequisite courses prior to transferring to another institution, or to earn a degree at SKC. This information allows the College to better understand patterns of student persistence and implement effective student success services. The College also now tracks certain short-term completions of certifications. For example, Dental Assisting students commonly complete all coursework required for endorsement, but many do not complete general education requirements for their one-year Certificate of Completion. Tracking such completions provides a better picture of the effectiveness of the Dental Assisting Department and improves institutional performance rates when both graduation and other completions are reported as unique but complementary data sets.



DATA TEAM CHALLENGES

Several challenges appeared during the work to increase data integrity and accessibility. When procedures have been in place for many years, change may be perceived as threatening and difficult. Departments may believe that they have ownership of procedures that impact the entire institution. At SKC, creation of multidisciplinary teams to review processes such as new student enrollment and onboarding increased understanding of the issues and provided multi-department collaboration to improve data collection and management. As the Data Team met, over the first year, improved communication resulted in collaboration on other projects. Support from senior college leadership was also critical to the effort, as administration set goals for data access and integrity.

Data security issues also became evident in Data Team work. Providing sufficient access to student-level data while maintaining compliance

with the Federal Educational Right to Privacy Act (FERPA) required careful analysis of the level and amount of data required for campus processes such as student advising and grant reporting requirements. The result was development of a new data security policy that delineates data stewards for types and levels of data and provides processes for requesting data access.

A final challenge is the provision of ongoing training for faculty and staff regarding access and use of data. The Data Team developed several short online trainings concerning FERPA and other data utilization processes; these trainings are now required for incoming faculty and staff members.

Increasing institutional research capacity is a critical challenge to creation of an effective Data Team. Membership in the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) and its regional affiliates provides institutional researchers with an increased understanding of current trends and changes in federal reporting requirements and the national landscape of institutional research. The Data and Decisions Academy, part of AIR, provides online training in multiple aspects of IR function. Likewise, attendance at other professional meetings allows other Data Team members to update skills and provide current, research-based services.

SKC maintains a comprehensive paper-based Facts Book that provides institutional data such as student and faculty demographics, enrollment in academic majors, and graduation data; however, the Team is investigating software systems to automate some reporting functions.

Web-based reporting tools can decrease the amount of time needed for responding to routine data requests, allowing the IR office and Data Team to spend more time asking and answering important questions about student success. Data visualization software can also increase faculty/staff utilization of data, allowing stakeholders to drill down, filter, or create specific views that enhance understanding of issues impacting student success. For example, faculty might check student pass rates in the next courses in a sequence, either suggesting the need for course revision or verifying that students have the prerequisite knowledge and skills to succeed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES

Evaluation of SKC's participation in Achieving the Dream leads to the following recommendations for other institutions engaging in data quality improvement efforts or other student success initiatives.

- (1) Translate institutional leadership to faculty/staff direction:** If college administration works with the Student Success Team to set end-points, the mutually-developed goals will help the team determine actions that lead to desired student success outcomes.
- (2) Allocate resources appropriate to the initiatives:** Almost all student success initiatives have associated costs. Failure to plan and provide for sufficient human and financial resources can impede progress and prove frustrating to teams and individuals working on student success initiatives.
- (3) Allocate time for the work:** Just as it is common to underestimate the financial and human resources needed to start new student success initiatives, it is also easy to underestimate the time the initiatives will require for planning and implementation. Establishing regular meetings at times when the majority of team members could attend proved to be difficult. SKC also underestimated the complexity of implementing student success initiatives that involved multiple departments and procedural changes.

(4) Determine lines of communication and expectations for periodic reporting: Student success initiatives frequently involve a broad team of campus faculty and staff. It is essential to establish methods of recording decisions and a regular reporting schedule. Communication of results to funders, administration, the governing board, and other stakeholders should also be completed on a regular schedule.

(5) Don't love the problem – Love the solutions: Multiple meetings consisted of griping about the problems encountered by students, faculty, and staff. Moving from discussing the problem to proposing solutions required resolve on the part of the entire team and was an important step in the process.

Data quality, data systems integrity, and data access are integral to all student success initiatives. Building strong data systems requires commitment, resources, team work, and technical expertise. Creation and utilization of knowledge is the next step, requiring development of routine processes for data review then determination of relevant actions and evaluation criteria. These efforts are critical to the selection of interventions, determination of whether to scale up or revise initiatives, and creation of systems that enhance overall institutional effectiveness.

CONVERTING DATA TO KNOWLEDGE

Ultimately, the work of the Data Team is intended to lead to better decision-making and increased student success at SKC. Russell Ackoff, an early systems theorist, defined a hierarchy from data to wisdom. While data are the facts acquired through systematic collection, making meaning of the data is required for effective decision-making. In other words, creation of knowledge requires answering the “how” and “why” questions with an understanding of institutional context, comparing data to internal and external benchmarks, and reviewing patterns and trends. While work to enhance data integrity will be ongoing, the Team will be implementing strategies to ensure that college administration has the information and knowledge needed for effective decisions and that faculty members can access data that assist with accurate advising and curriculum revision. Efforts to transform data into knowledge are the next step for the SKC Data Team.

STEM Recruitment and Retention: Student Success at College of Menominee Nation



For many years now, the United States has recognized the need for more technology-focused career preparation. The result has been a stronger focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects in K-12 and higher education curriculum initiatives. In addition to increasing enrollment in STEM-related degrees, there is also a push to increase diversity through an emphasis on recruiting and retaining underrepresented minority students in STEM disciplines. The 2010 report of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) highlights the large performance and interest gap in STEM fields across groups including Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, and women (President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, 2010). Among institutions actively addressing this challenge is the College of Menominee Nation (CMN), a federally-recognized Tribal College and University (TCU) located in northeastern Wisconsin. Here, faculty leaders have developed the CMN STEM HERO (H=Help Others Learn about STEM, E=Explore STEM Education and Career Paths, R=Refine STEM Skills, O=Outreach and STEM Artifact Development) Program with the goal of recruiting and retaining more American Indian students in STEM degree programs.



Above: Student collecting solar energy data.
Right: Student presentation.

CONTEXT

Many barriers exist for American Indian and other Native American students pursuing STEM degree programs, which has resulted in low Science and Engineering enrollment and completion rates as shown in the most recent National Science Foundation's Science and Engineering Indicators report. In 2014, of all American Indians and Alaska Natives enrolled in an undergraduate degree program, only 30% had chosen a Science and Engineering major, which was substantially lower than other underrepresented minorities which ranged from about 40% to 55% (National Science Board, 2016). Furthermore, from 2000 through 2013, of those earning a bachelor's degree, about 1.2% of the degrees were earned by American Indians and Alaska Natives, however, of those

earning a bachelor's degree in Science and Engineering, only about 0.68% of the degrees were earned by American Indians and Alaska Natives (National Science Board, 2016). The College of Menominee Nation and other TCUs are uniquely suited to raising these percentages, because of their capacity for reaching a large number of American Indian students, as well as those non-American Indian students who choose a TCU, as shown below in Table 1. Furthermore, the open enrollment policy of many TCUs results in a higher quantity of underprepared students. Table 2 summarizes placement test results for incoming students, which indicates that 62% of incoming first-time students place into remedial math, providing further evidence that STEM skills, in general, are lacking.

Table 1: TCU Student Enrollment.

Academic Year	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
American Indian Total	14342	14208	13696	13754	13434	13040	15994
Non-American Indian Total	2848	3459	3543	2213	2461	2444	3076
Total Student Enrollment	17190	17667	17239	15967	15895	15484	19070

Source: American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2012.

Table 2: TCU Placement Test Data.

Area	Took Placement Tests	Placed in Developmental Courses	Percentage Placed in Developmental Courses
Reading	4929	2286	46%
Writing	4834	2647	55%
Mathematics	4936	3046	62%

Source: American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2012.



Figure 1: CMN STEM HERO Program Logo.

The question the College of Menominee Nation is attempting to address is as follows: *What factors aid in recruitment and retention of STEM students?*

THE CMN STEM HERO INITIATIVE

The CMN STEM HERO Program began in Fall 2011 with National Science Foundation (NSF) Tribal Colleges and Universities Program (TCUP) and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Minority University Research and Education Program (MUREP) funding received through three major grant awards: the NSF TCUP PEEC (Pre-Engineering Education Collaborative), NSF TCUP CORE (Catalyzing Opportunities for Research and Education), and NASA ESTEEM (Earth Systems, Technology, and Energy Education for MUREP). The College's program is aimed at building interest and student self-efficacy in STEM, in particular for CMN's new degree offerings, an A.S. in Pre-Engineering and A.S. in Pre-Engineering Technology.

The CMN STEM HERO Program's mission statement is as follows:

The College of Menominee Nation STEM HERO Program is an initiative in which faculty, staff, students and alumni of the College, along with community partners, collaborate on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) research, education, outreach, and overall student empowerment. The CMN STEM HERO program is committed to broadening participation in STEM by increasing STEM education accessibility and attainment to underrepresented populations through a focus on cultural and socially relevant topics.

The CMN STEM HERO Program, its logo depicted in Figure 1, is operated under the guidance of three primary directors. Dr. Lisa Bosman, Director of Research and Development, has a Ph.D. in Industrial Engineering and has been with CMN since 2010. Her role in the CMN STEM HERO Program is to develop opportunities, collect and analyze intervention data, and disseminate findings to appropriate stakeholders. Professor Ryan Winn, M.A., Director of Creativity and Inclusion, has taught English, Theater, and Communication at CMN since 2005. His role in the CMN STEM HERO Program is to guide students' application of creative communication



Students working on writing a book.

strategies, which in turn produces engaging artifacts. Professor Kelli Chelberg, Director of Engagement and Outreach, has a Master's Degree in Education and has been with CMN since 2012 as the Field Experience Coordinator for the Teacher Education Department. Her role in the CMN STEM HERO Program is to lead efforts in developing meaningful and mutually beneficial collaborations between CMN and partners in local educational agencies. In summary, the collaboration of these three directors, given their educational and career backgrounds, offers a unique opportunity to develop focused, multi-disciplinary STEM experiences ideal for CMN's target population.

The CMN STEM HERO Program's tagline – "Anyone can be a HERO. What role will you play?" – is designed to express the idea of inclusion; there are many ways in which members of the CMN community can participate in this initiative. Its purpose is to promote recruitment and retention in STEM, regardless of an individual student's desire to personally obtain an education or career in STEM. For example, on one side of the spectrum students who choose a non-STEM major can still assist in program initiatives by mentoring school-age children during STEM-focused events. On the other side of the spectrum students who choose a STEM major can mentor school-age children during STEM-focused events, but also participate in other program activities aimed at providing STEM-related professional development and skill development. The HERO acronym is further explained here.

HELP OTHERS LEARN ABOUT STEM

Target participants for this aspect of the STEM HERO initiative include CMN community members (e.g. students, faculty, staff, alumni) who want to promote STEM mentoring and activities with K-12 students. An example of a mentoring activity is the Renewable Energy Focused After School Program offered by regional YMCAs. This program enables CMN mentors to work with groups of elementary students from at-risk schools in the Green Bay area. The program employs 18 CMN mentors working with two age groups, K-1st and 2nd-5th graders. K-1 children read a Native American engineering children's book that was created by students and faculty at CMN and use LEGO to build renewable energy and engineering-associated structures. The older group uses K'NEX kits (another LEGO-type construction system) to build renewable energy units, such as a solar car (solar), wind mill (wind), and water lift (hydro). In its first five years, the CMN program has made available 63 mentors to work with more than 150 students at five at-risk elementary schools.

EXPLORE STEM EDUCATION AND CAREER PATHS

Target participants for this aspect of the STEM HERO initiative include CMN community members (e.g. students, faculty, staff, alumni) who want to learn more about STEM education and career paths. Example exploration activities include on-campus informational sessions and field trips to colleges and universities engaged in transfer agreements with CMN. In 2011, CMN collaborated with the University of Wisconsin-Madison and University of Wisconsin-Platteville on articulation agreements for guaranteed transfer from CMN into Bachelor's degree programs in engineering at those two institutions. CMN students complete the Associate's degree in Pre-Engineering, a program requiring a high level of theoretical coursework, prior to

transferring to their chosen UW campus. In 2015, CMN collaborated with two other UW campuses, UW Oshkosh and UW-Green Bay, on guaranteed transfer into the Bachelor's degree program in engineering technology offered there. Under these agreements, CMN students complete the Associate's degree in Pre-Engineering Technology, a program requiring a high level of practical coursework and hands-on applications, prior to transferring. In an effort to help students and community members learn more about the programs and opportunities, CMN regularly hosts all four UWs for on-campus informational sessions. Students and community members have also made field trips to the UW campuses, as captured in video highlights at these links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mv5qfiqSI3I>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57C9njU6lg4>

REFINE STEM SKILLS

Target participants for this aspect of the STEM HERO initiative includes STEM students who want to develop the necessary skills and professionalism for successfully entering the workforce or transferring to another academic institution. Example skill development opportunities include a focus on the pedagogy around Flipped Classroom technology and experiential learning, AutoCAD training, and professional development; these concepts are explained below.

In its STEM courses, CMN now employs the Flipped Classroom pedagogy. Here, video lectures are required as "homework" to complete outside the classroom; experiential learning, group work, and problem solving are completed inside the classroom. For example, in Introduction to Statistics, students watch the video lectures and fill in a worksheet as they follow along, which helps promote accountability. Then, in the classroom, students work in groups to solve problems, collect data, and complete data analysis using Excel, all under the guidance of the instructor.

The computer-aided drafting software application, AutoCAD, is used by professional engineers, architects, and surveyors, and is a required skill for most all engineering programs. AutoCAD training provides STEM students the opportunity to increase their interest and self-efficacy in engineering-related software applications and helps build the resumes of students seeking internships in the field.

Professional development training opportunities focus on the softer skills required for students to succeed in completing the degree at CMN, transferring to a Bachelor's degree program, or applying for a job and entering the workforce. Professional development opportunities include Microsoft Office training, resume building, college application process, filling out the FAFSA (Federal Application for Student Aid), internship essay writing, email etiquette, and effective time management.

OUTREACH AND STEM ARTIFACT DEVELOPMENT

Target participants for this aspect of the STEM HERO initiative include qualified STEM students who strive for academic excellence and want to gain experience in research, design, and academic exploration. Example outreach and artifact development activities include children's book development, in addition to independent research and conference presentation.

In Fall 2015, CMN students and faculty developed a series of children's books with American Indian themes and characters. The stories highlight five engineering disciplines (Civil, Electrical, Environmental, Mechanical, and Biomedical) and incorporate the tribal culture and clan system of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin. This set of books, *Future Engineer in Training Series*, is shown in Figure 2. In Spring 2016, CMN students and faculty developed a second set of children's books highlighting renewable energy technologies (Solar, Wind, Hydro, Geothermal, and Biomass). This set of books is called the

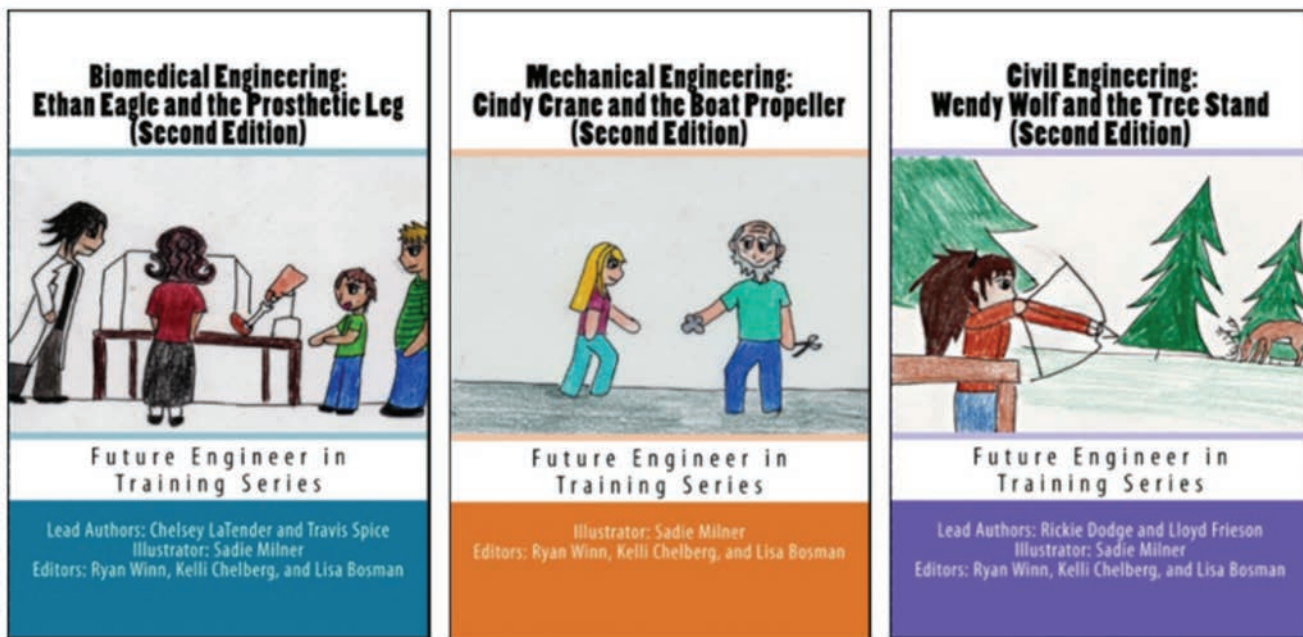
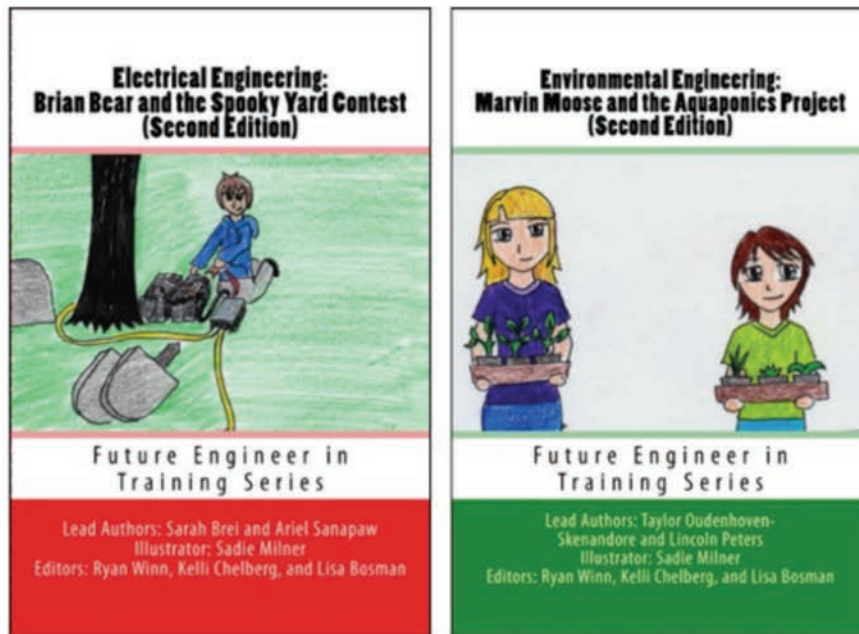


Figure 2:
American Indian Engineering Children's Books
Developed Through CMN STEM HERO Program.

STEM Recruitment and Retention



Renewable Energy Specialist in Training Series. Both sets of books were published using CreateSpace (a free web-based publishing platform) and are available for purchase on Amazon.com. The CreateSpace publishing platform and Amazon marketing platform provide an ideal free option for those wishing to self-publish and increase access and availability of the books. Charges are only incurred when customers make a purchase, and the cost of the book covers the printing and marketing fees.

The book-development activities allow students the opportunity to hone their writing skills while at the same time gaining a better understanding of potential engineering career paths and renewable energy technologies. In addition, student-driven independent research and conference presentations allow students the opportunity to excel in developing technical communication and research skills.

CMN's Solar Energy Research Institute (SERI) was founded in 2014 with the mission of providing CMN STEM faculty and student researchers

with skill development opportunities collecting and analyzing actual data related to solar energy performance and valuation. The current research focus is on building a mathematical model to more accurately predict solar energy performance and valuation over time. The model will assist electrical contractors, insurance appraisers, manufacturers, and homeowners with performance, warranty, and value expectations. Data collection focuses on an experimental design comparing solar panel technologies (monocrystalline vs polycrystalline) and AC to DC inverters (central inverter vs micro-inverter). Additionally, data collection includes performance and weather monitoring. Through SERI, qualified STEM students can work independently with faculty on conference research presentations. In the past, students have presented their research at the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) annual conference and the Emerging Researchers National (ERN) Conference in STEM, both of which focus on undergraduate student research dissemination.

Above: Students designing Lego® constructions.

EVALUATION AND INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

The Framework for Indigenous Evaluation (LaFrance & Nichols, 2009), developed by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, offers an alternative approach to evaluation; focused around four main steps, this methodology places local culture, values, tribal needs, and indigenous ways of knowing at the center of evaluation. First, the story is created, which will explain how the program works and how it reflects core cultural values and needs. Second, data gathering tools are developed as a means to ensure the program is running as intended, according to the story. Third, the program is offered, data is gathered, and the findings are shared with the participants and community. Fourth, the community is engaged and encouraged to carry out similar programs and evaluations.

CMN’s program evaluation and assessment follows this process. At CMN, the story focuses on loyalty to community and family; pride for Earth and a natural connection to nature, creativity and purpose; and a hands-on and engaging

learning environment. As a result, program design and data gathering tools focus on the participant roles of mentoring, team-based projects, and community presentations; the context of renewable energy and engineering for good causes; deliverables including artifact development and application of an extrinsic reward system; and pedagogy focused on experiential learning and accountability.

Assessment data include focus groups, pre- and post-surveys, reflections, pre- and post-mentoring statements, and student enrollment data. The qualitative data obtained from these assessment tools provide evidence of increased participant learning and skill development, along with an enjoyable experience and enhanced interest in STEM. From a quantitative perspective, Pre-Engineering enrollment data are shown below. CMN’s Associate degrees in Pre-Engineering and Pre-Engineering Technology started in 2011 and 2015, respectively. As can be seen in Table 3, initially student enrollment was low, but during the last academic year the enrollment numbers shot up. Unfortunately, due to the limited timeframe, retention data is not available.

Table 3: CMN Pre-Engineering and Pre-Engineering Technology Enrollment Data.

	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Quantity of Students Enrolled	0	2	2	5	20



Statistics class collecting data.

CHALLENGES OF THE INITIATIVE

Initially, the CMN STEM HERO Program’s challenge was figuring out how to motivate students. It quickly became obvious that money from stipends, etc., was not especially motivational. As an alternative, a greater focus was placed on the Framework for Indigenous Evaluation (mentioned above) and the motivation model identified in Figure 3. Specific to the motivation model, the CMN STEM HERO Program and associated activities were modified to encourage (1) a supportive environment, (2) focus on areas where students see value, and (3) activities which promote student self-efficacy. A supportive environment refers to the students’ perceptions related to program dynamics, interpersonal factors, and the nature and structure of communication; a student will be more motivated to pursue the goal in a supportive – rather than an unsupportive – environment. CMN STEM HERO activities encourage a supportive environment by providing clear expectations up front,

incorporating regular communications using a variety of mechanisms, involving students in the decision making process, and applying team-building skills at the start of each activity. Value refers to subjective or perceived high relative value, in that a student will be more motivated to pursue the goal that has the highest value to him/her. CMN STEM HERO activities promote value by connecting activities to the Menominee culture and real world contexts, including a focus on storytelling and creative writing, mentoring and community building, and renewable energy, to name a few. Self-efficacy refers to the belief that one is capable of executing actions which result in a desired outcome, in that a student will be more motivated to pursue a goal believed to be successfully achieved. CMN STEM HERO activities increase self-efficacy by offering low risk opportunities for students to get involved, in addition to a multitude of professional development and skill development experiences.

		Environment is NOT SUPPORTIVE		Environment is SUPPORTIVE	
		DON'T SEE Value	SEE Value	DON'T SEE Value	SEE Value
Student's efficacy is ...	LOW	Rejecting	Hopeless	Rejecting	Fragile
	HIGH	Evading	Defiant	Evading	Motivated

Figure 3: Motivation Model.

Source: Ambrose et al, 2010.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS IN STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES

CMN's experience is that building a successful STEM program has three core cyclical and iterative steps. First, develop the infrastructure and programs. Second, develop and deploy recruitment initiatives. Third, establish retention and completion interventions. At CMN, the first round of this process took about five years, graduating the first Pre-Engineering student in Spring 2013 and the first Pre-Engineering Technology student in Spring 2016. The CMN STEM HERO Program is proving to be an effective way to build and support a successful STEM program. It is, however, an iterative process that is still evolving and that has benefited from the support and collaboration of many other institutions.

In Fall 2016, the CMN STEM HERO Program will offer a Faculty Professional Development Community of Practice in an effort to further increase rigor and accountability for STEM students, preparing students for student successes linked to retention rates, completion rates, and transfer into a bachelor's degree-issuing institution. This Community of Practice is a group of teachers who learn from each other and with each other on an ongoing basis, with the goal of improving their teaching. This forum is not just a study group or reading group; instead, the goal of this practice-based Learning Community is for faculty to learn new approaches to doing their work and then share with others in the group what they learn as they put that learning into practice.

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Iḷisaḡvigmi Iḷisaqtuat Piḷḷautaguurut Iḷuuniagusivut Paamaagikḷugich Iḷisaqamiḡ: Cultural Connections Foster Student Success at Iḷisaḡvik College



Iḷisaḡvik College, which in the Iḷupiaq language means, “a place to learn,” is a unique institution of higher education. Iḷisaḡvik is Alaska’s only Tribal College and independent community college, as it is not affiliated with the state university system. Iḷisaḡvik was incorporated in 1995 with the mission to educate the residents of Alaska’s North Slope, the most northern region in the state and home to the Iḷupiaq Eskimo people. Today, Iḷisaḡvik provides programming throughout the entire state.

Above: Student Forrest Ahkiviana with professor Linda Nicholas-Figueroa.

Opposite: 2015 Commencement.

PEARL BROWER, President, Iḷisaḡvik College
BIRGIT MEANY, Dean of Academic Affairs, Iḷisaḡvik College
JERICA AAMODT, Coordinator of Inupiaq Studies, Iḷisaḡvik College

The longstanding support for formal education was a priority for the first mayor of the North Slope Borough, Eben Hopson, Sr., whose guiding principle was, "Education is the key to success." Mayor Hopson realized that in order for the Iñupiaq people to compete successfully in an increasingly global world, they would need to be firmly rooted in their Iñupiaq cultural heritage as well as to function in a westernized system. With that in mind, he advocated vigorously for a localized school system that incorporated Iñupiaq culture into its curriculum.

The North Slope encompasses eight distinct communities ranging in population from approximately 200 residents in the smallest community of Atkasuk, to approximately 4,000 people in the hub community of Barrow. The population in the outlying "villages," as they are known, is 90% Iñupiaq. In Barrow that percentage is considerably lower: approximately 60% of Barrow residents are Iñupiaq.

Weaving Iñupiaq culture into all aspects of college life is a primary goal of Iḷisaḡvik and its employees. Research suggests that, for Indigenous students, programs placed in a cultural context are perceived to be more comfortable and welcoming. How does incorporating Iñupiaq values into a college culture support student success?



Administratively, Iḷisaḡvik College supports the incorporation of Iñupiaq values into all facets of the institution. In order for students to feel comfortable, and for the institution to truly perpetuate Iñupiaq culture, language, values and traditions, as the mission states, it is imperative for everyone at the College to be committed to this endeavor. The 2016 Iḷisaḡvik College strategic plan articulates the incorporation of Iñupiaq culture as follows:

- **Priority 1, Outcome 4:** Increase overall enrollment of Alaska Native/American Indian students in order to maintain eligibility as a tribal college
- **Priority 3, Outcome 2:** Strengthen and cultivate relevant curricula that incorporate Inupiat culture, language, values, and traditions
- **Priority 3, Outcome 4:** Continue to foster the Uqautchim Uglua Program (Iñupiaq Language Nest)

In addition, Iḷisaḡvik College recognizes the importance of partnerships with organizations that share common goals, such as incorporating culture into curriculum and programming to support Indigenous students. In a recent joint effort with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), Iḷisaḡvik established a career pathway by creating a certificate and degree program for the well-established Dental Health Aide Therapist training. Currently awaiting approval from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, implementation is anticipated to begin in the Fall 2016 semester. In addition, Iḷisaḡvik is partnering with the University of Alaska Fairbanks in offering their Biomedical Learning and Student Training (BLaST) program on site in partnership with Iḷisaḡvik's science program. BLaST supports Alaska Native and American Indian students with research opportunities that are based on local relevant topics supporting Indigenous worldviews and activities. These research experiences are designed to complement their course of study.

The College's administration actively supports travel to North Slope communities by all staff. These trips offer a twofold return: Iḷisaġvik connects with village residents and offers programming directly in the villages; in addition, Iḷisaġvik staff have the opportunity to learn about North Slope communities and their residents, the Institution's primary student population.

Iḷisaġvik creates a learning environment that promotes academic rigor in the context of cultural relevance. The goal is to challenge students academically and prepare them for successful entry into the workplace and/or the pursuit of a higher level degree, but to do so without separating the acquisition of academic knowledge from the traditional knowledge that shapes the context of students' lives: village, family, culture, values, subsistence. Thus, the College infuses the curriculum across the disciplines with Native ways of knowing, Iḷupiaq language, culture, and values.

For incoming students encountering college life for the first time, the Aulaaqisaġunnat, translated as "Seminar for the Start," is a one-credit course designed to help students realize that embarking on the "hunt" for a college degree is not very different from the familiar, seasonal camping trip to hunt for caribou, ducks, or geese. To be successful, both endeavors require planning, basic skills, tools, preparation, and coordination. This short course centers on career exploration, study skills, personal finances, ethics, health and wellbeing, and traditional knowledge, all analogous to the various steps students and their families engage in when preparing for camp.

Wherever possible, faculty utilize place-based and culture-based curriculum to help students connect and apply the newly learned concepts to their own experiences. For example, writing assignments may include reflection on local events, Iḷupiaq values, the meaning of community, dance, and language. As students practice the various modes of writing, drawing upon the familiar first seems to facilitate the transition to more academic, less personal topics. The math curriculum, particularly at the foundational level,

uses the context of traditional activities and objects when solving problems. Calculating how much wood is needed to construct an Iḷupiaq drum is more engaging than calculating the circumference and area of a circle. A recently-created course explores the history of mathematics with focus on different cultures, to include the base 20, Iḷupiaq numbering system.

The examples above represent specific activities that support learning and success in a culturally relevant context. Additionally, college faculty have developed courses with a focus on culture: *Iḷupiaq Internship* provides experiential learning experiences in a variety of settings. *Culture and Management* explores methods and strategies for integrating Iḷupiaq values into team building, daily supervision, managerial processes, and leadership roles. *Alaska Natives in Film* analyzes the portrayal of Alaska's Iḷupiaq and Yup'ik peoples, and Iḷuit in Canada and Greenland, as seen in films from the United States, Canada and Greenland. *Indigenous Sciences and Traditional Ecological Knowledge* explores the ways that tribal peoples around the world have approached some of the classic questions of scientific inquiry.

The very essence of Iḷupiaq Studies is to perpetuate and strengthen the Iḷupiaq language, culture, values, and traditions, which is Iḷisaġvik College's mission. The Iḷupiaq Studies Division facilitates a number of different cultural activities, which demonstrates Iḷisaġvik's role as a cultural center and tribal college in the community. Depending on the cultural activity, a number of different focus areas are addressed, including cultural history, cultural learning, language learning, storytelling, traditional crafts, foods, healing, values, and arctic science.

Iḷisaġvik College emphasizes the need to incorporate the Iḷupiaq Values into all aspects of learning. One way for all instructors to share the importance of these values with their students is by listing them on their syllabus. The syllabus is a guiding document for students throughout a course and a convenient way to reference the values.

Cultural Connections Foster Student Success at Iḷisaḡvik College



Every Friday for an hour, Iḷisaḡvik staff, faculty, and students are encouraged to attend the Iḷupiaq Cultural Hour. The Iḷupiaq Cultural Hour focuses on teaching and sharing Iḷupiaq language, culture, and traditions. The program is facilitated by the Coordinator of Iḷupiaq Studies with support from the President's Office. The Iḷupiaq Cultural Hour connects faculty with local information and experts, so they can incorporate the Iḷupiaq culture into their classrooms. It also allows everyone at the college to learn more about the Iḷupiaq culture. Learning how to pluck, cut, and prepare niḡliq (geese) for soup, playing Iḷupiaq language bingo, sharing Iḷupiaq songs and dancing, doing Iḷupiaq Rosetta Stone language practice, and learning children's songs in Iḷupiaq are only a few examples of Iḷupiaq Cultural Hour topics that were covered in the spring. It is hoped that participants bring home what they learned so traditional knowledge can continue to be passed down.

The purpose of all Iḷupiaq Studies classes is to perpetuate Iḷupiaq language, culture, values, and traditions. Classes connect students with the Iḷupiaq culture, thereby with their Iḷupiaq roots. The College offers an Iḷupiaq Studies Associate of Arts degree, Iḷupiaq Language I &

II Certificate, and an Iḷupiaq Fine Arts Certificate. Course requirements include, but are not limited to, Iḷupiaq language, Iḷupiaq grammar, songs, dances and drumming, drum making, traditional and contemporary skin sewing, carving, Inuit storytelling, North Slope Iḷupiaq history, language, and culture, baleen art, and the Iḷupiaq Land, Values, and Resources cultural summer camp.

An initiative to encourage staff, faculty, students, and guests to learn and practice Iḷupiaq is the creation of the "Iḷupiaq Corner." The Iḷupiaq Corner is a flyer that is posted monthly around campus and outlying Iḷisaḡvik buildings. The Iḷupiaq Corner follows the Iḷupiaq cultural calendar, which illustrates activities people traditionally engage in during each month. Additional content includes a list of associated Iḷupiaq terms and sentences, highlighting an Iḷupiaq value, photos, and an Iḷupiaq and English translation of the month's meaning. It is an effective way for people to see what Barrow and the North Slope communities are all about.

Above: Lavisa Ahvakana cutting maktak (whale blubber/skin).

Iḷisaḡvigmi Iḷisaqtuat Piḷḷautaguurut Iḷuuniaḡusivut Paamaaḡikḷugich Iḷisaqamin

Current and former members of the Iḷisaḡvik College community share their perspectives on the ways in which the connections to culture at Iḷisaḡvik College promote student success:

"Incorporating the Iḷuupiaq Values for student success at Iḷisaḡvik College is a great place to start molding students to be great leaders. These values help build prominent leaders and create a suitable working atmosphere. Iḷisaḡvik College can teach the students the importance of these values to be able to maintain unity and have a sense of balance in all areas of study and in the workforce. The students can instill and pass these values into their own families, friends and place of work. It is Iḷisaḡvik College where I learned about our Iḷuupiaq Values and realized it should be implemented in some workplaces so they can become aware of these distinguished traits and utilize them as well.

- Myrna Loy Sarren, Class of 2013

"The Inupiat values are tied into our culture today. It may not be in everyone's families or everyone's lives but I love that not everyone does everything alone. No one goes out whaling alone; it takes a community to go whaling. Cooperation is the way to survive up here; there is no other way around it. Everyone shares what they have caught with their families. The way that we do show that we care, our compassion, is shown through sharing foods that we have caught, exchanging furs to keep warm in the winter time. What we do catch, we show nature respect and thank them for giving their lives to us so that we can then feed or clothe our families. Knowing how to sew is very important to stay warm up in the North. We respect nature and know there is nothing wasted when we do hunt... Our ancestors made sure that we, Iḷuupiat people, have not lost our language... My dreams are to become fluent and pass it down to my children and to keep it going onto their children... As a young educator of my language and culture, I am doing this with my heart.

- Naomi Aaḡlu Ahsoak, 2016 certificate graduate and Uqautchim Uḡlua teacher

"If our Elders lived by our Iḷupiaq values, they must be very important. The values are similar to other indigenous cultures, so I'm sure anyone can recognize the values in another... From my perspective, they are important because they are qualities in a person who wants a successful life. The values are also qualities in life when someone wants a position in leadership, a boss looking for someone to hire, or values that a parent wants to see grow in their children. Every value is a process to learn and if no one heard the values before, Iḷisaḡvik can teach them with the history behind each. If we were to stop sharing, cooperating, or laughing, life wouldn't be as enjoyable. When we are able to do these, we will begin to feel like family, and that is one of the Iḷupiaq values- Iḷagiiḡḡiḡ, Family and Kinship. That is what building a healthy community looks like, where you can feel safe to share life in an environment that will lift you up. At Iḷisaḡvik, you do feel like family in classes where you can express these values. I felt like family when I was present and that is one thing I miss about taking classes. When you feel like family and included you'll be more likely to succeed and do your best.

*- Jacqueline Tuuḡḷak Edwardsen,
Class of 2013*

"As an Iḷisaḡvik College alumni and current employee, it is very important to me to have been and continue to be a part of Iḷisaḡvik College, who prioritizes our Iḷupiaq, culture, language, values, and traditions. I am very proud to be a part of an institution where I can be who I am, Iḷupiaq. When I was a student, Iḷisaḡvik always emphasized the Iḷupiaq Values in my classes. As an employee, the Iḷupiaq values are part of my daily work. I get really excited when Iḷisaḡvik students, staff, and faculty are passionate to learn more about our Iḷupiaq culture, and to learn more about our people who have inhabited this land for generations. I love to see our students accomplish and learn necessary cultural skills that are needed in the North Slope. To me it is integral that we have an institution that helps connect our own people to their Iḷupiaq roots, because I believe when one is connected to their culture, it helps support student success. I am thankful I get to work with my culture and get to share it!

*- Jerica Aamodt, Coordinator
of Iḷupiaq Studies*

Today, there are many challenges tribal colleges face. At Iḷisaḡvik an important challenge is accreditation. It can be very hard to work within an Indigenous setting, but also have to report to a western accreditation agency. One contributing factor to this tension is the importance the accreditation process places on quantitative data as evidence of success. The struggle that emerges is embodied by the question, *how does one quantitatively assess culture?* In an effort to address this issue Iḷisaḡvik has worked diligently to align the strategic plan with the required core themes. The Board of Trustees has defined student success as students completing courses, programs, obtaining certifications, and taking courses for personal satisfaction. Personal satisfaction includes students taking courses to learn more about language culture and traditions in an effort to become more deeply connected to their cultural roots. That connection is difficult to quantify.

A second challenge is the institutional connection with the community. Education has not always been perceived as a positive force on the North Slope, as a result of children having been shipped out to attend school and not being able to stay home with their families and communities. A generation ago educational programs did not exist on the North Slope; higher education has only been a concept since the early 1980s, and an option on the North Slope through Iḷisaḡvik College since 1995. This means that Iḷisaḡvik is not always looked at positively. Many individuals who hold high positions do not have any higher education, and at times they do not look favorably on the college. Consequently, the younger generation is susceptible to these tensions. However, within the last 20 years, while Iḷisaḡvik has been operating on the North Slope, those views have been changing. In addressing this challenge, Iḷisaḡvik has to be diligent in communications and actions to encourage potential students to the benefits of higher education.

Iḷisaḡvik has taken a holistic approach to support student success, which includes creating culturally relevant curriculum, sponsoring events designed to develop cultural competencies in staff, creating a home-like atmosphere for students, and giving visibility to Iḷupiaq culture throughout campus, all evidence for institutional output. By contrast, assessing student achievement is more complex and challenging. Quantitative data showing completion, persistence, retention, and graduation rates reveal one aspect of institutional effectiveness. However, such quantitative data is not as valuable when attempting to assess cultural identity in students. For example, participation rates at cultural events do not reflect the lens through which Iḷupiaq students view themselves and the world. To that end, conducting surveys, convening focus groups, and gathering longitudinal data about students' performance in the workplace and their engagement in the community are more appropriate and depict a more accurate picture.

Sustainability of these initiatives could be a challenge. Administrative initiatives, such as providing a cultural environment for faculty and staff, travel to the villages, and partnerships with other tribal entities, are perhaps the easiest to sustain because of the inherent Native leadership of a tribal college and because these initiatives require largely logistical effort and resources. The main threat to sustainability might be lack of funding. Sustaining a culturally relevant curriculum may be more challenging, because it depends upon the innovation, vision, and cultural competency of individuals. Faculty create cultural curriculum based on their vision and understanding of the culture. Frequently, mainstream curriculum is adapted and augmented to better serve students. However, it is not common practice for departing faculty members to pass on the entire repertoire of instructional methods and activities to their successor. For that reason, staff turnover could potentially threaten the sustainability of the initiatives.

Cultural Connections Foster Student Success at Iḷisaġvik College



To address the challenge of the lack of language and culture teachers, Iḷisaġvik is working on designing an online distance language learning course that will be available not only for college students, but dual credit students as well. To address one part of this challenge, this past spring semester, Iḷisaġvik hired a non-Native instructor who was not familiar with Iñupiaq culture or traditions. Although it was not his expertise, he brought structure to the course, and invited a number of Iñupiaq guest speakers to share their traditional Iñupiaq knowledge and stories. He recorded each of the guest speaker's stories which will be useful for future classes. With the success of this course, this might be an option for future classes.

Although baleen art is not a lost art, finding instructors willing to teach it is a struggle. One strategy that will be implemented this fall semester is to offer a traditional and contemporary Native foods cooking course instead of baleen art. Cooking is essential and a needed skill in the North Slope community. Since the North Slope is a subsistence community, and hunting is almost all year round, there is a high hope that it will be successful.

In conclusion, Iḷisaġvik College has created the path to student success through cultural connections. By incorporating Iñupiaq culture, language, values, and traditions into all facets of Iḷisaġvik College students feel more connected to the institution, more comfortable with education, and passionate about what they are doing for the future of the region. This is how Iḷisaġvik College defines student success!

Above: Student Andy Piscoya, carving soapstone in class.

Leech Lake Tribal College: The Path to Success



Gaa'Oziskwaajimekaag Gabe-gikendaasoowigamig (Leech Lake Tribal College) is located on the Leech Lake reservation near Cass Lake in Northern Minnesota. Our mission is to provide quality higher education grounded in Anishinaabe values. Each year we serve approximately 500 students from the Leech Lake and Red Lake reservations and surrounding areas, 89% of whom are Native American. The college was founded in 1990 and at first offered only extension courses in cooperation with nearby universities. Now we are a fully accredited institution with nine associate degree programs and two one-year diploma/certificate programs. In May (2016), we graduated a class of 43 students to add to our total of 535 graduates.

Above: First JumpStart class.

MELANIE WILSON, Director of Assessment & Institutional Research,
Leech Lake Tribal College

JOANN STUTE, Faculty, Leech Lake Tribal College

A report on the demographics of first-year college students in the U.S. states that three-fourths of these students are white, are 18.7 years of age on average, have completed high school within the previous five years, and come primarily from upper or middle-class families (American Council on Education, 2013). In addition, according to this report, 80% never stop out of college (i.e., leave college at any point during the pursuit of their degree) but continue on to earn their degrees. By contrast, the average age of a tribal college student is 30 (National Endowment for Financial Education, 2015). Only 44% are 16-24 years of age; the majority are between 25 and 49, and the remaining 8% are over 50 (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2014b). Many of our tribal college students are returning after time away from formalized education. A majority of our students fall into the category of first-generation college students. They share characteristics reported by the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report on first-generation students. According to the report, first-generation college students are more likely to be older, have lower incomes, be married and have dependents (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). At LLTC, our average student age is 28, and 87% of our students receive financial aid (Leech Lake Tribal College, 2015). We do not process student loans, so most of this aid is in the form of Pell grants and scholarships.

One of the biggest challenges our college faces is how to counteract low persistence from fall to spring semesters, low retention from year to year, and low graduation rates. In 2015, the American Institutes for Research reported that Minnesota's high school graduation rate of Indigenous students was 42%, while the state's overall graduation rate was 77% (Midwest Comprehensive Center, 2015). According to a study of first-year college students, Indigenous students have the lowest level of retention after the first year of college (Stewart, Lim, & Kim, 2015).

Hooker and Brand (2010) suggest that the path to college graduation for these first generation students must start early, as early as high school, if possible.

Youth need early opportunities to complete college-level work, navigate college campuses, and understand how the structures, opportunities and demands of higher education differ from those of high school. Academic success behaviors, which include study skills, self-monitoring, and other effective learning habits, as well as social and emotional maturity, are also critical components of college knowledge. (p. 78)

While research tells us that the average first-time freshman in the U.S. is concerned about paying for college, finding an affordable place to live, being successful in their courses, and finding a topic of study that will lead to a job and a satisfying life, Native students are thinking about all of this and more. They often come to college with dependents to support, extended family responsibilities, and transportation issues (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2012).

There are currently 37 tribal colleges and universities; several are located in counties listed among the top 10 most impoverished counties in the U.S. (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2014b). Since many tribal colleges serve large reservation areas without adequate public transportation and do not offer student housing (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2012; His Horse Is Thunder, 2012), the combination of challenges can be overwhelming. Yet students keep coming. They come to college with many of the same fears and hopes and dreams as other students in mainstream institutions. In addition, research has shown that it is common for Native students to pursue education not only for personal development and achievement but also with the vision of giving back to their communities. That is one of the keys to the retention and persistence of Native students. We must help them connect



JumpStart classroom.

education with the achievement of something greater than themselves, to help them see that education benefits their children, their families, their communities, and their nations. But the responsibility is not all upon them. Tribal colleges must provide educational opportunities grounded in the values of their tribes, in the languages they speak, and in the nations they are working to build.

Collectively, these 37 tribal institutions compose AIHEC, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, whose vision is to create “strong sovereign nations through excellence in tribal higher education” (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2014b). The goal of tribal colleges is to help Indigenous American students overcome their challenges and redress their educational deficits in culturally supportive environments (sovereign nations through excellence in tribal higher education” (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2014a).

It is for these reasons that Leech Lake Tribal College tested two connected initiatives to prepare new students during their first semester of college on campus. First, we developed a freshman seminar course, Path to Success. Second, we used this course as a basis for the development of Jumpstart, a two-week, three-credit course held immediately before school starts. The aim was to prepare students and create cohorts that would provide peer-to-peer support throughout their time at LLTC. One of the benefits of a course such as this is that “students share personal experiences that allow them to become well acquainted with one another. The class itself

creates a ‘home’ for the students as they adjust to college” (Allen, 2004), a phenomenon we have observed. Both courses have been through numerous iterations as we evaluate and improve the programs each semester using data on student retention and persistence and student and instructor feedback. The qualitative feedback, especially, has highlighted for us the importance of reaching students on a deeper level through inclusion of more culturally relevant content.

LLTC is proud to have been a recipient of the Woksape Oyate grant from the American Indian College Fund, which allowed us, over a five-year period and in our own unique way, to improve our retention efforts for first-year students and beyond. The grant was largely focused on retention by improving math and English skills through the establishment of a learning center on campus. Since that time, the learning center has grown and flourished and helped countless students be academically successful through one-on-one peer and professional tutoring. The idea for Path to Success came out of the activities funded through the grant. Path to Success is offered every fall and spring semester, and Jumpstart has been offered every summer since 2013.

In the beginning, we created a one-credit freshman seminar course offered over five weeks three times per week during the first part of the fall semester. Its original goals were simply to familiarize students with the campus and talk about study skills. After the students completed the course, they no longer had that formal support network. Next we took it a step further, and during the summer session, we combined Path to Success with English. The class was separated into two groups. One group took developmental English skills, and the other took English Composition 1. This was a six-week session meeting three hours a day, five days a week. Providing two levels of English enabled us to move students from one English section to another as needed. In the fall of that year we combined Path to Success with developmental English with the idea in mind that students could save Pell money by not having to take developmental

The Path to Success



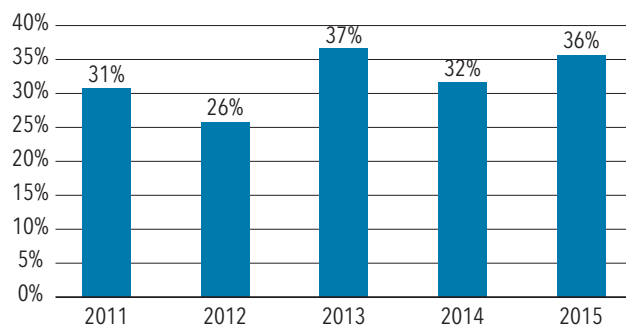
English, and we made it a three-credit course continuing throughout the semester. Students' lifetime eligibility for Federal Pell Grants is 12 semesters, about six years (Federal Student Aid, 2016). Developmental courses are paid for with Pell monies but do not contribute credits toward a student's degree program. A study from the American Association of Community Colleges stated that about 60% of community college students need at least one developmental course (Dembicki, 2012). At tribal colleges the need for developmental courses tends to be significantly higher. In fact, LLTC's placement test scores showed that more than 90 percent of our students need developmental math and/or English. Adding the developmental reading and writing portion to Path to Success allowed us to meet two needs: we could save the students' Pell money and extend the course past the first five weeks, allowing us to maintain a more formal level of support throughout the first semester. At the end of the semester, we hired a consultant to evaluate the class to determine if the course was reaching its goals of preparing students to be successful in college and English 101.

The course description included the incorporation of language and culture, and while a lot of good came from this course, a lack of cultural connection was noted. Results of the survey led to many improvements, including: changing the speakers and what they focused on; choosing indigenous authors for reading assignments; looking at aspects of college life, such as time management and wellness, from an indigenous perspective; and examining traditional knowledge with an eye to modern expectations of college students. The class also adopted historical lessons on the boarding school era. We adopted a new book for the reading component of the class, *Two Old Women*. The story recounts an Athabascan legend of two old women surviving alone in the wilderness of Alaska. Students were able to draw parallels between the Athabascan values and beliefs and the seven Anishinaabe values upon which LLTC is founded.

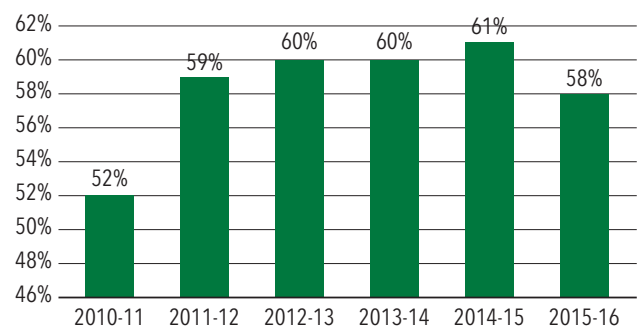
Above: JumpStart rope course challenge.

Figure 1: Annual Retention and Persistence Rates at LLTC.

Retention



Persistence, Fall to Spring



In the next incarnation of Path to Success, we decided to add a pilot - a two-week, full-time, intensive learning experience offered before classes started in the fall. We called it Jumpstart. Our first cohort in 2013 was made up of 22 students from the new men’s and women’s basketball teams. The intention was both to test whether giving students a “jumpstart” on their education resulted in higher success and retention rates and also to give the newly-created basketball teams an opportunity to bond. It had the added benefit of allowing students to complete three credits before the regular semester, so they could take nine credits and still be considered full-time students. This course, while offered in the two weeks prior to fall semester, is considered part of a student’s fall term enrollment because it was held within the 14-day window allowed by the federal financial aid guidelines.

The two-week Jumpstart program began and ended with a drum ceremony, and each day started with a prayer and talking circle with a college elder speaking about a different Anishinaabe value. The standard topics were also covered, and time was set aside for team building activities. The persistence rate for this group was 74% from fall to spring semester of that year. The overall persistence rate that year

was 60%. The first Jumpstart group experienced 71% retention, has had two graduates, and six students were still enrolled in spring 2016.

That year, our overall retention jumped from 26% to 37%. Looking at the data, we didn’t know if the apparent success of the Jumpstart program was a by-product of the extra support and camaraderie that the basketball team experienced, or whether we would see similar results with other students. So we looked at the success of the next two Jumpstart cohorts as a comparison. They were only partially made up of basketball players after that first year. If they were successful, too, then we were onto something.

In Fall 2014, the second Jumpstart cohort consisted of 14 students, only four of whom were on the basketball team. This group had 57% persistence from fall to spring semesters and 57% retention. This was considerably lower than the first Jumpstart group and the results were varied. This group had higher retention than the overall school population that year (36%) but lower persistence than the overall school population (61%).

In Fall 2015, we again registered a mixed group of 14 students, six of whom were basketball players. This group had 64% persistence from fall to spring semester compared to the overall persistence rate of 58%. Their retention remains to be determined, but at the end of the Spring 2016 semester, six of the 14 were already registered to come back in the Fall 2016 semester.

In Fall 2015, for the semester-long sections of Path to Success, we increased the course offerings to three sections. We also formally put in place a policy making Path to Success (or Jumpstart) a required course for all incoming freshman within their first two semesters. We had discovered over time that a troubling number of students who had dropped, withdrawn from, or failed the course were waiting until just before graduation then requesting special permission to waive the course. When we made the course mandatory, we had to add sections at different times and on different days to meet the needs of our students. Now, in the fall semester, Sections 1 and 2 are offered three times per week for one hour on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and Section 3 is offered twice a week in the evenings for 90 minutes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. In the spring semester, two sections are offered twice a week. One meets during the day, and the other meets in the evening.

We collected and analyzed data about the time of day the class is held, how often the class meets, the number of students in the class, and the content of the course to determine what effect these might have on grades and withdrawals. We were able to draw several correlations from the data. The first was a positive relationship between small class sizes and both final grades and the number of withdrawals. Not surprisingly, 15 students or fewer in a class resulted in higher grades and fewer withdrawals. We also found that classes meeting in the evenings have the highest pass rate, followed by afternoon classes, then morning. The last correlation was very surprising. We discovered that when we had added English to the curriculum, we lost students, and grades suffered. Our intentions of saving the students from having to use Pell dollars on developmental English by offering an English component to Path to Success had backfired. In evaluation, we determined that there simply wasn't enough time to include everything a freshman seminar course should have included and adequately cover English skills, too. We were

overloading the students, and instead of being supportive, the class just added more work to their course loads. We decided, in the Fall 2015 semester, to bring back developmental English as a separate course and focus Path to Success squarely on what the name suggests: helping students be successful.

Further analysis may show us how to better replicate the success of the basketball teams' Jumpstart in the summer of 2012 and throughout that following year. We have also had our first PSEO (Post-Secondary Enrollment Option) high school students take the Jumpstart course in their junior or senior years to prepare them for taking their first courses, and their experience remains unexamined. These are dual enrollment students from local high schools.

Future plans for Path to Success include introducing a first-year experience textbook and scheduling more tribal college faculty to speak on our different programs of study. With numerous instructors, more emphasis will be placed on a standardized curriculum and assessments. We have also discussed incorporating periodic surveys into the Path to Success curriculum to ensure retention and that we are meeting students' needs. We are continuously improving and learning what it takes to enhance students' persistence and retention rates. A system is being put in place to collect data on why students withdraw, when they dropout, and if they are also withdrawing from other courses at the same time. Whatever changes we do make, one thing will remain the same – our goal so elegantly stated by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium: to preserve Indigenous nations and promote their tribal identities, Indigenous languages, and unique values through culturally sensitive practices and curricula infused with tribal significance (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2012).

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Waciye Na Hupi: In Their Own Voices at Sinte Gleska University



INTRODUCTION

September 3rd, 2016, marks the 161st anniversary of the Blue Water Massacre where General William S. Harney (known to the Sicangu as “Woman Killer”) ordered his troops to attack a peaceful Sicangu village while he talked with the leaders under the auspices of a white flag. While many escaped, more than 86 were killed, and many women and children were taken hostage and force-marched to Fort Laramie, Fort Randall, Fort Pierre, and several other illegally-positioned military outposts throughout the Lakota territory.

Above: SGU student at the butterfly garden in Sioux Falls.

Inset: SGU students with Joseph Marshall at the Little Big Horn Monument.

LISA KRUG, Faculty, Sinte Gleska University
SAMMIE BORDEAUX-SEEGER, Faculty, Sinte Gleska University
MARY HENSON, Faculty, Sinte Gleska University

In 2016, these bands' progeny, our SGU students, have successfully lobbied to change the name of the highest peak in their sacred Black Hills from Harney Peak to Black Elk Peak. Nicholas Black Elk was a Lakota holy man whose spiritual teachings were chronicled in John G. Neihardt's internationally renowned biography, *Black Elk Speaks*. Black Elk's famous vision of Crazy Horse was experienced on this same peak.

As every culture knows, nothing is more important to the well-being of the people than the recognition of the valor of their ancestors and the preservation of their sacred sites. Sinte Gleska (Spotted Tail), the man for whom the University is named, showed a great deal of valor at the battle on the Blue Water north of Ash Hollow in Nebraska Territory that September 3rd, 1855, in protecting his family and fighting off the enemy after being severely injured. One of the results of this battle and his subsequent surrender and imprisonment is that he became convinced of the need for the education of his tribe for their own survival. Their continued survival is the reason we teach here and why we continue to argue for appropriate education for Sicangu students.

We at SGU believe that what we teach and the way we teach are directly connected to student success. One of the questions students are asked on course evaluations is, *Did you find Lakota culture incorporated into your course material?* Even though teaching about Lakota culture is SGU's vision, Lakota material is often segregated to Lakota-specific classes rather than incorporated into the main curriculum. At faculty development meetings and in faculty surveys, the question is asked again: *How do I add Lakota content to a math or science or accounting class?* We have long been reading, practicing, and refining place-based education and would like to present some of the ways we have found to include Lakota culture in our classes.

LEARNING TO TRUST: BRIDGING THE GAP LISA KRUG

The vision and purpose of TCUs (Tribal Colleges and Universities) throughout the United States is to promote Native education as a necessary component of sovereignty. The very existence of TCUs is evidence of that continuity of culture and language, spirituality, homeland preservation, economic vitality, and education – all criteria in the United Nations' definition of a sovereign nation. Therefore, it is critical that all teachers of Native students commit to finding ways to promote and defend the voices of the people they serve.

Since before the 1800s, Native nations have been saddled with the Eurocentric expectation to be independent and assimilated. With that came immense pressure to adopt the materialistic ideal of individualism and competition. There was the underlying assumption that this was best.

Paramount, too, in the push for assimilation came the antiquated notion that the written word was the most sophisticated form of teaching and learning, a notion that is most evident in the dividing of history between prehistory (i.e., before the advent of the written codex) and history. In so doing, almost 90 percent of human history is delineated to the time of prehistory, and more importantly, those cultures which did not develop a written language and codex were marginalized with such labels as "primitive" and "prehistoric."

Consequently, the myth that oral cultures cannot write (or worse, will *not* write) is perpetuated by the very discipline I teach. I am continually addressing this in the classroom by challenging Native students to prove it wrong. One of the things I repeat over and over is that history is often written by the mainstream culture and that story will be the one told *unless* they as indigenous/Native people out-write them.

I focus on the history classes I am teaching and the response (or lack thereof) in the writing required in the class. A block that seems to continue to prevail in getting participation in writing is the same now as when I first started at SGU, and it is twofold. First, some of the participants have been convinced that the way they expressed themselves was somehow *wrong*. More than likely this was because their story or essay did not follow a linear pattern of thinking but a more circular pattern – a traditional Lakota oratorical pattern.

The other reason that writing is often a minimal response is that the participants don't think their writing matters or that their voices will be heard. Some would call this a defeatist response while others might deem it apathetic. It might come, too, from their own families' experience with signing papers – especially treaties. It is not enough to just say I understand this. I need to acknowledge it and work to try to convince students it does matter.

Bridging the trust gap between instructor and student is difficult at best during a semester. Bridging the trust gap in terms of respecting and honoring individual voice in that time is even harder and cannot be done without the students sharing their first writing samples and discussions as to what might be affecting their successful completion of them. I continually remind students that American History and World History don't have to be something foreign. Rather, their indigenous voices and narratives are critical to the understanding of both.

I do not teach writing *per se*; I teach history with a writing component. Rather than simply assigning what I call "busy work," I strive to develop writing that will engage the participants in the learning process, calling the short papers required in the classes "Writing to Learn" papers (a term I was taught and trained in by the National Writing Project early on in my career at SGU). The purpose of this assigned writing is to engage and challenge the participants to think critically and analytically about the subjects to be covered in a given unit, not merely regurgitate archival information onto a paper. Additionally, the participants are given choices (usually four, at least) in the questions to be answered or the statements to be responded to for that unit – thus allowing their voice to be part of the process.

When the first "Writing to Learn" papers in my history survey classes were minimally responded to, I began the next week's classes with a discussion as to what might be getting in the way of doing the writing for the class. I found myself asking the class, "What makes writing in a history class a problem for you?" Informal discussion resulted in some of these responses:

In Their Own Voices at Sinte Gleska University



"I think I worry too much about getting the answer right, and for most of these topics there is no right answer. I don't trust my own answers and couldn't find an answer in the book so I just did not do the essay."

"I spend so much time re-writing because what I say never seems to sound right. I give up after a while and just don't finish the paper."

"I don't really trust that you want to hear my opinion. I've had teachers tell me before that they want me to give an opinion. Then, when that opinion doesn't match theirs, I got a really bad grade."

It wasn't and seldom is a question of knowledge or of literacy; it is the trust in self that I believe comes from the lack of trust in the person reading their work – hearing and respecting their voice. The way that history is taught will never reflect the diversity of the world without the involvement of indigenous peoples in the writing of that history. This is especially critical in academic arenas involving people whose ancestral/family academic experience was born out of oppressive assimilation techniques. I do have some documentation that I think supports my intent of this project.

I have been taking classes for a long time and this was the first time that I really was allowed to examine the contributions of the indigenous people – especially our people – to the rest of the country's history. I have always been proud of my culture, but the way this class started by looking at the Native peoples of North America before Europeans really reinforced this pride.

Doing the research and writing about the first encounters between the Native peoples and Europeans was not easy for me, but yet it is part of who I am because I am of mixed blood heritage. I cannot just focus on my Native side and ignore the impact of the Irish in me as well. I have more pride in the survival of both sides of my family because I realize that is what brought me here. To think that one side was all good and one side was all bad is to deny half of who I am.

Above: Lisa Krug discussing the Buffalo soldiers who were stationed at Fort Niobrara, near Valentine.

Waciye Na Hupi



SGU students constructing tipis on campus.

WACIYE NA HUPI: EMPOWERING NATIVE STUDENTS TO WRITE WITH THEIR OWN VOICES SAMMIE BORDEAUX-SEEGER

In his book, *Removable Type: Histories of the Book in Indian Country, 1663-1880*, Phillip H. Round points out the importance of Native writing and the way that Native people have responded to writing throughout history. He points out that books and literacy were viewed both as an opportunity and a threat. It could be said that this reaction is the same in approaching history classes and writing within those classes at TCUs – as both opportunity and threat. Only, from what I have witnessed, the threat comes first and then the opportunity once the trust gap is bridged.

In the fifteen years I have taught English at Sinte Gleska University, I've spent a great deal of time observing how students learn and write, what they expect from an English class, and how having a Native instructor teaching English changes the dynamic between teacher and student because it is paradoxical for a Native instructor to teach the language of the oppressor. I have thought that what I teach and the way I teach it has to meet the larger needs of the tribal community in order to prevent the further mistreatment of Native people at the hands of the dominant culture; or to put it another way, we have to learn how to read the treaties, documents signed in Crazy Horse's lifetime which remain in effect today. The Ft. Laramie treaties of 1851 and 1868 were signed to provide access to the land in the Powder River country (sections of current South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Montana) in exchange for health care, education, annuities, and land and water rights for the Lakota "as long as the grass shall grow."

I've looked at dozens of developmental writing textbooks and thought about what I want my students to know when they leave my classroom, ready to step into their first college-level class. I want my students to be able to write paragraphs using complete sentences, and write essays with transitions and clear organization, a thesis and supporting evidence. They should feel competent to complete assignments they are given, understand the writing process and be able to use it to accomplish writing goals.

This still didn't quite sum up what I wanted my students to know when they left my class. It addressed skills, but not the crux of what college writing is, which is mostly analysis and argument – being able to make a point and defend it with evidence. I saw my students leaving my class with a specious understanding of sentences, a vague idea of what a paragraph should do, and a lack of confidence in their writing because they weren't invested in it. It had no clear purpose for them, and it felt incomplete. There was a sense that writing was both mysterious and dangerous, and my students only wanted to do enough writing to get by and no more.

I began revising my course syllabus six years ago, about the time Sicangu author Joseph Marshall III was chosen as the One Book South Dakota author for his novel, *The Journey of Crazy Horse*. I chose it as the one novel I require my students to read each semester, and this was when I began to discover that every kind of essay we English teachers try to teach our students in college is contained in this book. It was an epiphany.

For example, the first thing I have my students do in class is write an Introduction of Myself as a way of developing a biography for their American Indian College Fund scholarship applications, which is the second assignment in my class each semester. We study the introduction of the book, which leads to the thesis statement, which is that the story of Crazy Horse is a hero story. This is the point where I introduce students to the work of Joseph Campbell, the Monomyth, and we talk about hero stories and the hero's journey, and how college is a journey, and we begin to compare Crazy Horse to Harry Potter and Luke Skywalker and Katniss Everdeen.

Chapter One is a good place to talk about birth stories. Everyone has a birth story, whether they are young mothers telling about giving birth or young men talking about their mothers. We are writing memoirs, but we are also studying creation stories. We move on to talk about writing as an act of creation, engaging the left and

right brain, the ritualism of writing, and the early writing of the Lakota, which are cave drawings, winter counts, and painted parfleches.

We move on to Chapters Two and Three, where we start to compare and contrast Crazy Horse's childhood to our own and discover that bullies have been universal down through time, and we study archetypes. We talk about the process analysis essay in Chapter Three as well, because Marshall has written an entire process analysis essay about how to build a traditional Lakota bow in Chapter Three, and so on throughout the book. There is a compare-contrast essay. There are four reflection essays where the author moves from third person voice into first person. The book is rich in metaphor and simile, in prosaic language, in oral history and in narrative and traditional storytelling. There are chapters with samples of clear research and chapters where we study the Fort Laramie Treaties and a chapter where we explore the effects of the Blue Water Massacre on today's legal status of Natives and jurisdiction on the reservation and the Seven Major Crimes Act. The book, in twenty-eight chapters, is a complete Lakota world that begins with childbirth and moves on to hero stories, death, and legend. The book is the perfect textbook with which to teach developmental English to freshmen at a tribal college.

In Power and Place: Indian Education in America, by Vine Deloria, Jr. and Daniel R. Wildcat, Deloria states that the important thing in Indian education is

providing a context from which what is taught and the process by which it is taught makes sense. That is to say, the proper context of Indian education should be whatever existing conditions are plus the traditional manner in which the Tribe has faced its difficulties. In other words, the proper context is the history and culture of the tribe, regardless of the present location of its membership. (p. 83)

Waciye Na Hupi



Deloria is making the point that we can't start with students where they are, in their current condition, which in many cases on reservations is in the context of poverty. He is saying we have to take students and place them in their actual context, which is within the history that brought them to where they are now, while still considering the future generations who will come after them. We have to stop thinking of education as something that belongs to an individual student and instead as something that belongs to the collective tribal nation. This is what *The Journey of Crazy Horse* helps my students learn and talk about, and using the book, for me, is a way to approach writing in the classroom, not as a Native person teaching the language of the oppressor, but as a Native teacher arming my students with the language in its proper context so they are prepared for defending our *Oyate* (nation).

Among the things that are important to the English language learner in a tribal college setting is reconciling the fact that they are entering a journey themselves, one which will change them – perhaps not always in good ways, because change is scary. By enrolling in college a Native

student is taking on a new role within the *Oyate*, one of scholar and thinker. Often it can seem confusing and alarming because part of what makes us a member of our *tiospaye* (family) is not our education, but our rejection of the education of the colonizer. Being cognizant of this, I set out to find ways to negotiate that process with a curriculum that is culturally appropriate, relevant to students, and gives them an entry into their educational journey that is empowering.

Teaching outside the box, or in this case, outside of a regular developmental course textbook, has enriched my classroom in innumerable ways, the least of which is that I have been able to effectively translate our history as told by our own people into a curriculum that makes sense for a tribal college English classroom.

In return, I read papers from my students that are richer, deeper, and more thoughtful than before I introduced them to Marshall's book. The ability to make an argument, to defend that argument, and to do so because it is important to the writer is the outcome I have been seeking.

Finally, they are speaking and writing *waciye na hupi* (in their own voices.)

Above: SGU Students work on iPads.

Opposite: Student art show.

TEACHING WRITING IN TWO WORLDS: HOW I LEARNED TO LIVE ON THE REZ

MARY HENSON

My Introduction to Literature class is fashioning the characters of Hamlet from gingerbread and comparing Rez life to the Elizabethan world. Little Thunder uses a garlic press to create Ophelia's hair; Long Crow pokes dots through a paper pattern of Laertes. I carve the word HAMLET into the teeth of a skull. Elk Looks Back reads Laertes' warnings about the prince to his sister.

"Then weigh what loss your honor may sustain/ if with too credent ear you list his songs,/ or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open/ to his unmastered importunity. He's telling her the prince will pop her cherry then drop her like a hot rock!" Elk Looks Back says. "That is so Rez!"

Everyone laughs. A short discussion follows about disappearing young men. Two Elk points out that Laertes himself is about to abandon Ophelia as he goes off to school. Wilson starts talking about a movie recently shot in Pine Ridge called, *Songs My Brothers Taught Me*:

Irene Bedard plays the mother, who seems to have been deluded by the new man she is with, and there is this scene exactly! The older brother is about to leave town, so he is giving baby sis some advice. Their real father is dead. Man, you could go on and on comparing it to Hamlet.

For twelve years, I have taught literature and writing classes at SGU, and I hope my students have learned a third of what I have – beading, star quilting, jingle dress, doll, and moccasin making, and the best way to de-quill a roadkill porcupine. I've learned to build (and to spell) tipi. I have read papers on gabubu (skillet) bread, *wojapi* (fruit pudding), *wasna* (a dried mixture of buffalo meat and chokecherries), *timpsila* (wild turnip), sage, and *asampi wigli* (fry bread). I have been to school ceremonies, and I have eaten

buffalo stew, buffalo burgers, buffalo tongue, buffalo kidney, buffalo *taniga* (tripe), and the epitome of any Rez gathering, decorated sheet cake.

At my students' request, the two courses available in Native American Literature have been expanded to seven: Fiction, Poetry, Contemporary, Historical, Children's, Famous Speeches, and Theater Literature (both plays and film) by Native American authors.

Whenever we examine the works of indigenous authors, we also view films, eat foods, listen to music and examine the arts from the time and region of the subject. Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues* is about a Rez band, and comes with a CD of the fictional group's music. We compare it to his film, *The Business of Fancydancing*, about a Native American two-spirit poet who has been "off-Rez" for years. We watch *Crooked Arrows*, about the sport of lacrosse, while reading about Carlisle Indian School's first football team in *The Real All Americans*, and then peruse fashion magazines while reading about the fictional fashion models in Joseph Boyden's *Through Black Spruce*.

As we have discovered, many Native American authors explore more than one genre. In addition to writing fiction, Louise Erdrich and N. Scott Momaday write poetry and nonfiction and they paint. Joy Harjo does all that while playing killer saxophone and discussing Native American music's influence on jazz.



The inclusion of multiple sensory elements is always part of the course. Students in the Native American Children's Literature course make their own children's books. In other courses we redesign book covers, create publicity posters, plan complementary meals (including gingerbread), make masks, draw storyboards and visit sites corresponding to those of the works we are reading. We have recreated the winter tipi environment of the storytelling scene from Ella Cara Deloria's *Waterlily*. And on one occasion, managed to visit the John G. Neihardt state historic site in Bancroft, Nebraska, honoring Black Elk.

All these selections, and more, have grown out of interactions with my colleagues, students, librarians, staff, and AIHEC Knowledge Bowl books. My research has also included conversations with Native American authors, actors, directors and visual artists I've met.

I place a great deal of importance on reading in my writing classes. I tell the students that my three favorite ways to improve writing are by reading, writing, and discussing both.

The most popular essay we read in my Freshman English Composition classes is "Nature," by Luther Standing Bear, which is taken from his book, *Land of the Spotted Eagle*. Standing Bear, former Carlisle student, actor and onetime Oglala tribal president, wrote this comparison of Native and Euro-American culture while living in Rosebud. It has the added benefit of using Lakota terms. Rather than doing grammar exercises in the classroom, I have the students compare English conventions to Lakota. "Nature" provides an excellent opportunity to look at translations and root words. For instance, in one place, the phrase *Wakan Tanka* is translated as "Big Holy," and in another as "Great Mystery." These translations make my students laugh out loud.

They agree that *tanka* does mean big or great, and then we discuss word order. Most of them have learned that Lakota is "backward." I tell them that in fact *many* languages use the noun first, adjective second order. They are surprised to find that many of them still think in Lakota order even when they don't speak the language.

The preferred translation, my students agree, of *Wakan Tanka* is Great Spirit. The genius of Standing Bear's essay is that it describes and defines cultural differences while at the same time showing firsthand examples of how these differences are wrapped in the languages themselves.



This is where I remind students to take their required Lakota language classes sooner rather than later. I tell them I have taken five Lakota language classes as well as the Lakota History and Culture and Lakota Thought and Philosophy courses they are required to take. I also remind them of the many videos to be found on the SGU website where language instructors, past and present, give detailed explanations of these concepts. I tell them to never take a fifty-year-old white lady's word on Lakota culture, because – well, I've just lied about my age, haven't I? The explanation of *Wakan Tanka* given by the late Albert White Hat, author of *Reading and Writing the Lakota Language*, is fifteen minutes long. He explains that the connotation of *wakan* is something able to either give life or take it away. He said that the western connotation of "holy" or "sacred" is something that is either knelt to or placed above the rest, and that the Lakota do not think this way.

The correct denotation of *wakan* can be explained by splitting it into parts. *Wa*, most often translated as sacred, spiritual – something not seen, but felt. *Kan* means moving. So you have a moving, emotional as well as physical, spiritual presence that can give life or take it.

The importance of comparing the structure and meaning of Lakota and English shows how each culture is imbued in the languages. Equally important, the comparison demonstrates that correctness is not arbitrary, and helps students to apply the rules they know, and research the ones they've forgotten to ensure clarity in their own work.

In addition to writing formal papers, I have students keep journals summarizing and/or critiquing the reading assignments. This helps them observe and absorb various writing techniques. I also ask them to read one assignment per week aloud to someone and note the reaction, which is good for all participants. The journal also gives me a good way to judge which essays they enjoy.

Focus on discussion seems to work well with people who have an oral tradition, as I do, and Socrates liked it. Dr. Christopher Emdin, professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, in his book, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...and the Rest of Y'all Too*, refers to "reality pedagogy," and the "co-generative" classroom. I call it, "how am I going to learn anything if I'm doing all the talking?"

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