Promoting Native American Recruitment and Retention in Higher Education

20th ANNUAL STUDENTS IN TRANSITION CONFERENCE
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Tell me and I'll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I'll understand.

Native American Saying

Many thanks to:

- Keaka and Rachel Hanamaikai

- Jordan, Analisa and Justin Allison

- Nathan and Tanya Hanamaikai

- Brad Miller

- Mona Green

- And dozens of other Natives who made much of this happen

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Significance of the Study

- Native American students are the most likely racial/ethnic group tracked in post-secondary American education to:
  - Be affected by poverty
  - Have limited access to educational opportunities
  - Be required to take remedial course work

- In addition, they are the least likely to graduate from college.
  - the most likely to be required to take remedial course work and to have low academic achievement.
  - only 15% of those entering college earning a bachelor's degree within six years.

Significance of Study

- The unemployment rate for Native Americans was almost 18% in 2010, about twice the rate for whites (U.S. Census 2010).
  - Rates of 45-90% unemployment on reservations depending on remoteness

- 2.9 million people identified themselves as American Indian (AI) or Alaska Native (AIAN) in the U.S. during the 2010 census
  - Another 2.3 million identified themselves as AI or AIAN in combination with one or more other races
  - 23% lived below the federal poverty level, compared to about 15% for whites
  - per capita income for this group was $15,671 versus $26,059 for the U. S. overall

Significance of Study

- For Native Americans
  - The suicide rate is over twice that for any other ethnic group.
  - Deaths related to alcoholism are four times as common as the U. S. general population.

Significance of Study

- We made the assumption that poor educational outcomes are related to these unfortunate economic and psychological outcomes for Native Americans

- Our scholarly effort was focused on improving educational outcomes for this group by providing information technology training opportunities, job development and by improving recruitment and retention at a large open enrollment university in the intermountain West

Overview of the study

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- This is a longitudinal study that began fall semester 2009 and is on-going
- A literature review was completed during spring semester 2010
  - Mosholder, R. and Goslin, C. (2013), Native American College Student Persistence, *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *15(3)*, pp. 307-322
- A National Science Foundation (NSF) grant was approved fall semester 2010
  - $875,000 grant approved for a study and program entitled "Cyber-Infrastructure Team Implementation Project: Native American Regional IT Development Project (NA-CIT)", Mosholder, R., Principle Investigator and Project Director

Overview of the study

- A qualitative research study was conducted spring 2011
    - Mosholder, R., Waite, B. and Goslin, C. (2013), Negotiating understanding: Considering Native American attitudes about Higher Education in a Eurocentric context, *Academia Journal of Education Research, 1(5),* 85-96.

- A second qualitative study was conducted spring 2012
    - Mosholder, R., Waite, B. and Goslin, C. (2013), Examining Native American Recruitment and Retention in Higher Education, *Academia Journal of Education Research, 1(5),* 72-84.

Overview of the study

- A one year extension to the NSF grant was approved during the fall of 2012, $106, 416 remained, Mosholder, R., Principle Investigator and Project Director, and Goslin, C., Co-Principle Investigator.

- A mixed methods study was conducted during spring semester, 2013
    - Mosholder, R., Waite, B. and Goslin, C. (In preparation), Examining Native American Recruitment and Retention in Higher Education

IT and business skills training from January 2011 and on-going

- Initially funded by the NSF grant and benefitting from donations of time, space, equipment and training and certification software
  - Native general manager, recruiters and mentors
    - Western Governors' University Model
  - On-line training supported by active mentoring
  - So far -
    - Over 2300 enrollees
    - Over 1700 completions
    - 911 "high stakes" certifications
    - 206 advanced certifications
    - 126 jobs

Literature Review

Five factors emerged from the literature that support Native American student persistence in post-secondary education

- skill development
- family and peer support
- appropriate role-models
- awareness and use of financial aid
- a culturally sensitive school environment.

First qualitative study

⚜

- The purpose was to inform the development of a recruiting and retention program for Native American students at an open enrollment teaching university with a total enrollment of about 29K.
  - About 15,000 18-24 year olds live within an 8 hour drive
  - Open enrollment is assumed to be an advantage because of typically poor K-12 education for Native Americans
  - While still greatly under-represented enrollment for this group grew from 265 (fall 2010) to 335 (fall of 2012)

Research Questions

- RQ 1. What are the perceptions of the Native American students in our institution about education and their institution and how do they compare to the perceptions of Native American students a year ago?

- RQ 2. What has been the impact of curricula and programming to improve recruitment and retention of Native American students at our institution?

Study Methodology

- We endeavored to be culturally sensitive

- We used a Grounded Theory approach to theory expansion (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

- Three data sets created during two consecutive spring semesters (2011 and 2012).

- Multiple evaluation techniques were used.

Results from spring 2011:

- Through the three data collection methods, *surveys, interviews,* and *observation*, 6 main themes emerged:
  - *The need for more activities that bring the students, their families and communities together.*
  - *The Native American student community is fragmented. Native Americans don't know or interact with many other Native American students.*
  - *Native Americans should be mentoring*

Results from spring 2011:

- *Parents and elders do not understand the nature of the commitment necessary for Native American student success and, therefore, put pressure on the students to attend to home and community activities at the expense of school success.*

- *New Native American students need more explanation on course and institutional requirements.*

- *New students could benefit from constant and consistent reminders through multiple modalities of course requirements and relevant student activities.*

Changes, additions and extensions in 2011-2012

- Working with Native students, faculty and advisors
  - Two new curricula and an embedded mentoring program
  - Presentations by successful Natives with national reputations
    - An astronaut, film makers, comedians, spiritual advisors
  - A career and elders night for local successful Natives
  - Financial aid night
  - Job fairs
  - A basketball tournament
  - Support for the Powwow and Buffalo dinner

Second qualitative study

- Conducted during the spring of 2012
  - The same instrument and methods were used
  - The intent was to evaluate the impact of the changes and additions made both at the university and in the surrounding communities

Results from spring 2012:

Through the three data collection methods, *surveys, interviews,* and *observation*, 6 main themes emerged:

- *Theme 1 - College education is important (challenging, rewarding) and supported by parents.*
- *Theme 2 - Almost all of the students felt they fit in at the university.*
- *Theme 3 - Organizations and programs that help Native American students feel like they fit in, help them feel like they belong, and give them strength.*

Results from spring 2012:

- *Theme Four – The students suggested additional activities and events that would help recruitment and retention.*
- *Theme Five – The students commitment to help their tribe both by choice of major and by returning to the reservation after college was somewhat less than what would be assumed based on the literature.*
- *Theme Six – Distance education, despite its potential advantages, is not a preferred approach to learning*

Student Statistics

	Fall 2010	Fall 2012	% Inc.
Total number	25,841	28,883	+11
Year to year % retention	62	61	-2
Total Natives	265	335	+27
Year to year retention	74	77	+4

Changes, additions and extensions in 2012 - 2013

- Working with Native students, faculty and advisors
  - Presentations for the entire Native community
    - by successful Natives with national reputations
      - Sam McCracken – GM of Nike's N7 Program
      - film maker Travis Hamilton
      - Singer/comedian James Bilagody
  - Second annual job fair
  - Second annual Native basketball tournament
- Alumni Reunion and Dinner
- Native American Alumni Association formed

Mixed methods study –spring 2013

- Factors that appear to positively effect retention based on previous studies and the literature
  - Mentoring of Native American students be other Native Americans
  - A perception by Native American students that they, their traditions, values and communities were valued and respected
  - Adequate communication to facilitate awareness that the first two factors were in place
  - Adequate preparation or remediation to enable academic success at the post-secondary level
  - Sufficient resources to pay for school and living expenses

Issues from limitations and future research opportunities

- A lack of large scale quantitative studies and the need for statistically significant evidence

- A desire to disaggregation of the data by category to look for differential effects

- A desire to measure the effectiveness of our programs in bringing about desired ends, i.e. increased recruitment and retention

Opportunities from the literature

- Realizing hope and dreams – cultural wealth
- Funds of knowledge
- Choosing a career that helps other Natives
- Cultural congruence
- Academic preparation
- Finances

Methods

- Survey and research question development
  - Questions were developed by one of the researchers based upon the limitations and future research opportunities noted in the previous two studies and those noted from a new review of the literature
  - The questions were independently evaluated and adjusted by the other two researchers as a check for consistency with the concepts identified
  - Native American Student Researchers (NASRs) evaluated the adjusted list to ensure cultural relevancy and appropriateness for the target population.

Research questions

1. Feeling that you and your community are welcomed and valued encourages persistence.

2. Participation in activities and designated spaces increase a sense of community and acceptance.

3. Mentoring increases a sense of community and acceptance.

4. More effective communication is associated with more mentoring and participation in activities.

5. Adequate preparation and money are needed for retention.

6. There will be differential effects of one or more of the hypotheses based upon one or more of the categories tracked, i.e. age, gender, marital status, an/or number(s) of children.

Survey questions 1-6

1. My home community knowledge and experiences are recognized and valued at UNIVERSITY. (funds of knowledge view)
2. Being a student at UNIVERSITY will help me realize my hopes and dreams.
3. UNIVERSITY has the course work, activities, and programming needed to attract large numbers of Native students
4. UNIVERSITY has enough space dedicated to Native students to attract large numbers of Natives here.
5. Technological communication with and among Native students is pretty good at UNIVERSITY.
6. UNIVERSITY and other Native students do a good job of communicating through "the grape vine" at UNIVERSITY.

Survey questions 7-11

7. Native students feel welcome and valued at UNIVERSITY.

8. The parents and elders of Native students feel welcomed and valued at UNIVERSITY.

9. The Native community is very involved with the course work, activities and programming at UNIVERSITY.

10. There are enough activities and programs that compliment regular classes, but aren't part of them, to attract large numbers of Native students at UNIVERSITY.

11. There are enough activities and programs outside of regular classes to attract large numbers of Native students at UNIVERSITY. There are enough courses, activities and programs at UNIVERSITY to help me make a career choice that takes into account cultural influences.

Survey questions 12-16

12. There are enough courses, activities and programs at UNIVERSITY to help me make a career choice that takes into account cultural influences.

13. My academic background strongly prepared me to be a student at UNIVERSITY.

14. The various ways that I was prepared for the transition into UNIVERSITY strongly set the stage for my success.

15. There was enough outreach towards me during my transition into UNIVERSITY to help me be successful here.

16. There was sufficient guidance during my transition into UNIVERSITY and I was able to make a good match between my desired schedule and the available courses.

Survey questions 17-22

17. I have strong mentoring and advising relationships at UNIVERSITY and I am able to get the direction that I need to be successful.

18. I have a very active social life at UNIVERSITY despite my need to commute to school and home and work, and to take care of my family.

19. I have enough money to pay for school at UNIVERSITY and get my degree in a reasonable amount of time and at the same time take care of my family when and if I need to.

20. I know enough about financial aid and how to get the loans, grants, and scholarships that I need to get my degree at UNIVERSITY in a reasonable amount of time.

21. I feel comfortable in applying for scholarships and grants and applying for the loans that are necessary for me to get my degree at UNIVERSITY in a reasonable amount of time.

22. I know a number of supportive staff and faculty members at UNIVERSITY and I have good relationships with them

Population, data collection, and sample

- A list of students identifying themselves as American Indian/Alaska Natives was obtained from the Institution Research Office
  - 328 names (168 female; 160 female)

- The survey was administered by Survey Monkey
  - NASRs promoted it
  - Participants earned a chance to win an Apple iPad with Retina display Wi-Fi 16 GB – 4th generation.
  - A five point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) was used with the 22 survey questions

Data analyses

- Survey responses were analyzed using multiple regression analyses and Pierson correlation analyses.

- A focus group script was developed based on the relationships discovered

- The NASRs recruited two groups of students who had taken the survey to explore their interpretations

- Two researchers took field notes and the discussions were recorded, transcribed and coded.

Results of the Third Study

⬧ Descriptive statistics are presented first

⬧ Quantitative and qualitative data are presented by Research Question

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 – descriptive statistics			
Respondents/ Population (%)	130/328(40%)		
Age (%)	18-24 =56 (43%)	25 and older = 74(57%)	
Gender (%)	Male = 71 (55%)	Female = 59 (45%)	
Number of children	None = 86 (65%)	One = 14 (11%)	Two= 11 (9%)	3 or more = 20(16%)
Tribe/group	Dine/Navajo = 70 (54%)		45 others (maximum/group = 4

RQ 1

welcome and valued ➡ increased persistence

Ind. Var.= SQ1 (home comm. know. valued); SQ7 (students welcome &valued); SQ8 (elders welcome & valued); SQ (Nat. comm. involved)

Dep. Var. = SQ 12 (enough courses and activities for career)

Table 2 – Multiple regression analysis results

Survey Question	B	SE β	β
8	.337**	.129	.367
9	.249**	.092	.271
Notes - *significant at the p<0.01 level; **significant at the p=0.01 level			

Q8: parents and elders feel welcomed valued
Q9: the native community is very involved

Focus group results for RQ1

- We explored the significant relationship of parents and elders being valued, Native community involvement and courses and activities that enhance culturally influence career selection
  - 10 of 14 planned to return, the most common reason being to graduate. Comments included:
    - "Yeah I plan on coming back. I'm coming back because of the opportunities I have here"
    - "I like (university); it is a really good school I feel a lot of connection."

RQ 2

activities & space ➡ increased community & acceptance

Ind. Var.= SQ3 (attractive programming); SQ4 (enough dedicated space); SQ11 (enough outside activities)

Dep. Var. = SQ 1 (funds of knowledge)

Table 3- Multiple regression analysis results			
Survey Question	B	SE β	β
3	.226**	.111	.209
4	.352*	.112	.313
Notes - *significant at the p<0.05 level; **significant at the p=0.01 level			

SQ3: attractive programming
SQ4: enough dedicated space

RQ 2

activities & space ⟶ increased community & acceptance

Ind. Var.= SQ3 (attractive programming); SQ4 (enough dedicated space); SQ11 (enough outside activities)

Dep. Var. = SQ 7 (welcome and valued)

Table 4– Multiple regression analysis results			
Survey Question	B	SE β	β
3	.191*	.094	.271
4	.403**	.090	.367
Notes - *significant at the p<0.05 level; **significant at the p=0.01 level			

SQ3: attractive programming
SQ4: enough dedicated space

Focus group results for RQ2

- These two sets of analyses lead to the conclusion that feeling welcome and valued, having home knowledge be respected, and having enough dedicated space are all important for creating a sense of community and acceptance. We explored this conclusion in the focus groups.

  - Much of the discussion focused on the Multicultural Center (MC) which had made an effort to hang Native posters and artifacts

Focus group results for RQ2

- Comments included:
  - "They brought down half of the posters and put up Native posters too. (Now) the MC is a place for gathering between classes
  - "MC really helped with that (making friends) because when I came here I knew I wasn't going to know anybody" but he found new friends.
  - "what I see when I come to the MC is the students helping each other"

Focus group results for RQ2

- Other spaces were utilized too
  - "I invite people to the library for Navajo tea parties…prior to closing." Lots of Native students show up including many who are Native but from other tribes
  - Several students mentioned congregating at other students' houses.

Focus group results for RQ2

- There was a strong sense of community expressed by the students in both groups that was focused on the campus but extended beyond.
  - "I don't have to leave campus experience camaraderie, but could "get (her) relationships here on campus"
  - "I have more of a social life when I come to school".

- This is a dramatic improvement from two years from the spring 2011 study (two years prior)

RQ 3

mentioning ➡ increased community & acceptance

Ind. Var.= SQ15 (outreach during transition); SQ16 (guidance during transition); SQ17 (mentoring relationships)

Dep. Var. = SQ 1 (funds of knowledge); SQ7 (welcome & valued); SQ8(elders valued); SQ9 (Native community involvement)

Table 5– Multiple regression analysis results			
Survey Question	B	SE β	β
16	.278*	.087	.305
17	.331*	.088	.359
Notes - *significant at the p<0.01 level			

SQ16: guidance during transition
SQ17: mentoring relationships

Focus group results from RQ3

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- What these data indicate is that there is a moderately strong association between feelings of community and acceptance, guidance during transition, and mentoring relationships. We explored this in the focus groups:

  - "Honestly, Natives are too shy to talk to each other. You (the current member of the community) have to be the aggressive one and say 'hey'. They look at you and turn and look down. You have to be the one to be more welcoming to them".

Focus group results from RQ3

- A student mentioned a girl she hadn't seen for a long time. "Recently we invited her out to hang out with us. She was going to go home back to (the reservation), but she said since you guys wanted to hang out with me I wanted to stay longer".

- Although there have been efforts to establish formal Native lead mentoring programs and to hire Native American counselors, the students in the focus group expressed a strong preference for informal mentoring approaches

Focus group results from RQ3

- "The formal mentoring I'm not too sure about. The informal part I have learned a lot".

- "I agree on informal. I don't go to counselors unless I really have too. I ask my friends what are good classes to take. Questions I should be asking a counselor, I ask my friends. I prefer it that way because they had experiences with the teacher. They know how they are treated as a student. A counselor wouldn't help me that way".

- "The trust aspect is a big part of it. It's an informal mentorship. We can ask each other questions"

RQ 4

effective communicati ➡ mentoring & participation

Ind. Var.= SQ5 (tech communication); SQ6 (grapevine)

Dep. Var. = SQ 17 (mentoring relationships)

Table 6 – Multiple regression analysis results			
Survey Question	B	SE β	B
6	.281*	.115	.269
Notes - *significant at the p<0.05 level			

Q6: communication through the grapevine

RQ 4

effective communication ➡ mentoring & participation

Ind. Var.= SQ5 (tech communication); SQ6 (grapevine)

Dep. Var. = SQ 12 (enough course activities to make career choice)

Table 7 – Multiple regression analysis results			
Survey Question	B	SE β	B
7	.410*	.087	.462
Notes - *significant at the p<0.05 level			

SQ5: using technical communication

Focus group results from RQ 4

- Only communicating through the "grapevine" (SQ 6) was significantly associated with mentoring and advising (SQ 17) and it is a moderately weak association.
  - When 'enough course activities to help me make a culturally related career choice' (SQ 12) was used as the dependent variable a strong correlation with using technological communication (SQ5) was revealed.

- These relationships were explored in the focus groups
  - we asked about communication, whether it occurred through the grapevine or technology and how that related to students feeling valued.

Focus group results from RQ 4

- The Native students saw technical and word-of – mouth communications as being intermingled and both were important in establishing and maintaining their community. Among the comments were:
  - "I think where it starts is in the MC, we talk about it. It branches and people tell each other."
  - "Everything comes from the word of mouth especially with Native American people".
  - "I get everything word of mouth, I heard it from you guys before I see it on Facebook or from emails".

RQ 5

adequate preparation and money are needed

Table 8 – Pearson correlation table for research question five					
	SQ 13	SQ 14	SQ 19	SQ 20	SQ 21
SQ 13	-				
SQ 14	.611**	-			
SQ19	.217*	.267**	-		
SQ 20	.101	.234**	.511**	-	
SQ 21	.145	.315**	.615**	.511**	-
Notes - ** significant at the p=0.01 level (2 tailed) *significant at the p=0.05 level (2 tailed)					

SQ13: academic background; SQ14: prep for transition; SQ19: enough money; SQ20: knowledge of financial aid; SQ 21; comfort in applying

Focus group results from RQ 5

- Measures of preparation are moderately related to measures of having knowledge of financial aid and having enough money.
    - people who are prepared academically seem to be a bit better off financially than those who are not prepared.
    - could come from underlying socioeconomic causes rather than specifically from preparation
    - students that come from better funded schools that prepare them better may be wealthier than those from poorly funded schools.

Focus group results from RQ 5

- We asked about how students get money to pay for school in the focus groups. The students viewed the financial aid challenge as solvable through the contacts in their community
  - "It goes back to non-formal mentorship. People hanging out in the MC help each other out and tell each other about scholarships."
  - "I know a lot of my friends who are Natives don't hunt or scholarships because they don't really know how to get scholarships."

Focus group results from RQ 5

⟡ "It's like when we work together with the AIS (American Indian Service) Scholarship. We know the deadline. One time at the very last day when it was due we got everything done and all carpooled over to the AIS office together. We just help each other out. The question comes up all the time, 'Do you have a ride to AIS'? 'Do you need a ride to AIS'? 'Who needs a ride?'"

RQ6 – differential effects

⁌ There were no differential effects noted based on any of the categories.

⁌ In the focus group we asked in the majority Dine group excluded other tribes and groups. All agreed they did not

⁌ One student commented: "I think we bond together because we all go to school together. The idea, that whole tribal mindset we have, that we have to be bonded to a group. So we either are part of it or we are not. The majority of us are part of a group".

Student Statistics

	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	% Inc.
Total number	28,883		
Year to year % retention	61		?
Total Natives	335	521*	+56
Year to year retention	77		?

* Note – there were also 37 high school

Conclusions

- A notable increase in the Native student population at (university) from 265 to 521 during the course of the study

- A dramatic improvement in the perceptions of Native students at (university) about their feelings of belonging, their sense of community, their opportunities for involvement, and their beliefs about the acceptance level of Native American traditions and values.

Opportunities for improvement

⬩ More effective formal mentoring and student services effort. Student comments about the staff in this group included:

  ⬩ "I honestly don't know them"

  ⬩ "I don't trust them. Not like personally trust them"

⬩ A more effective recruiting effort at key events

  ⬩ "Honestly I've been to the Navajo Nation Fair and I haven't seen a presence".

Opportunities for improvement

- A need to have activities that extend into the community
  - "We can do a Native culture night. I think a cultural night that would emphasize on the Navajo's and the people of the Southwest. We could talk about the Code Talkers, know traditional hairstyle and tell people we didn't live in Teepees. I think a lot of people don't know of what we were capable of".
  - "We could show people about our traditions like blue corn mush. And have a Grandma here and teach us how to weave. That would be cool".

Lasting impact

- A strong and vibrant Native American student community

- A view of UNIVERSITY by the Native American community as being open and accepting

- A Native American alumni association devoted to raising money for programming and continuing programs like the quarterly scholarship search

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