



# Project Success:

Improving Persistence and Completion  
of Native American Students

# 01 | Foreword

Thirty-five accredited Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) operate in the United States. Most students who attend these unique, tribally and federally chartered institutions are American Indian or Alaska Native—populations that have been significantly underserved by the U.S. higher education system. In April 2017, through the Project Success initiative led by the U.S. Department of Education’s office of **Federal Student Aid (FSA)** and **Ascendium Education Group**, TCUs were offered a suite of services and supports to help improve student persistence, retention, and financial management skills. These supports presented an important opportunity to strengthen the success of TCUs in serving their students.

Through the project, managed by **Ascendium Education Group**, TCUs had the option to select one, several, or all the services, some of which support students directly, such as funding for emergency aid and paid internships, an online financial literacy tool for students, and curriculum and supports to implement a new math curriculum and pathway. Administrative capacity building services empowered TCUs with evidence-based strategies, skills, and information to better serve students. In addition, TCUs were able to access national surveys which leverage the student voice in ways that can inform academic and administrative policies, processes, and procedures that impact students. They were also able to join the nation’s largest educational reform network, through which they received coaching to build cross-campus data capacity and to implement evidence-based

reforms. TCUs also attended learning events, provided by the partner organizations, that would inform their student success work.

TCUs have taken full advantage of the services and have made strong advances since 2017 in providing just-in-time financial support for students to keep them from dropping out of school, increasing opportunities for career experience for students, reforming teaching and learning math strategies, building a data-informed culture, and implementing evidence-based reforms. This has been a balancing act for many TCUs, whose overstretched staffs already juggle myriad responsibilities. Accustomed to creative distribution of tasks and driven by the urgency to serve their students and communities, TCUs continually adjust and absorb new tasks as needed to strengthen their student success agendas.

This document contains stories from 20 of the TCUs that have been engaged in this work.

TCUs are unique educational institutions—they provide a quality education to students; they work to preserve and revitalize their respective tribal language and culture; and they empower strong families and resilient communities. Education at TCUs occurs from an Indigenous perspective—a worldview that ensures relevancy to their tribal communities and broadens the impact of their programs. We have learned much from this partnership in how to support all students. We are confident you will be inspired by their stories.

**Carrie Billy**, President and CEO  
American Indian Higher Education Consortium



**Dr. Karen Stout**, President and CEO  
Achieving the Dream



**Project Success** is an initiative administered by Ascendium Education Group on behalf of its partners and the U.S. Department of Education. Ascendium provided coaching and funds for all emergency aid grants for students, paid internships for students, and a portion of all Project Success activities. Ascendium also offered GradReady® and Cohort Catalyst as part of a complete portfolio of evidence-based programs to support Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) in increasing graduation and retention rates and improving cohort default rates.

Under Project Success, the following four organizations worked together to support 35 Tribal Colleges and Universities. Ascendium managed the overall project, providing funding, critical guidance and coordinating support to the other partner entities.



**Ascendium Education Group** is the nation's largest federal student loan guarantor, a leading postsecondary education philanthropy and a provider of student success services for postsecondary institutions. Ascendium, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, provides information, tools and counseling to help millions of borrowers nationwide avoid default and keep the door to re-enrollment open. Ascendium's philanthropic mission is to elevate opportunities and outcomes for learners from low-income backgrounds so they can better achieve postsecondary educational and career success. To learn more, visit [ascendiumeducation.org](http://ascendiumeducation.org).



Achieving the Dream™

**Achieving the Dream** is the national, nonprofit leader in championing evidence-based institutional improvement. It leads and supports a national network of community colleges to achieve sustainable institutional transformation through sharing knowledge, innovative solutions and effective practices and policies leading to improved outcomes for all students. Achieving the Dream now leads the most comprehensive non-governmental reform movement for student success in higher education history. Together with its Network of 277 institutions of higher education, 75 coaches and advisors, and numerous investors and partners working throughout 44 states and the District of Columbia, it is helping more than 4 million community college students have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams. ATD's work is informed by ATD's experience with hundreds of community colleges of all institutional types and incorporates recommendations from our nation's best higher education experts on practices that are known to produce better outcomes for all types of learners.

During the two and a half years of Project Success, 33 TCUs have received coaching and network services from Achieving the Dream designed to help them build their data capacity to assess student needs, monitor student progress, evaluate policies and practices, and inform decision making and allocation of resources. In addition to building data capacity, TCUs have leveraged ATD network resources to help identify key areas for improvement and to begin implementing interventions designed to increase the retention, persistence and graduation rates for all of their students.





The Carnegie Math Pathways (CMP) at **WestEd** is a networked improvement community that unites researchers and practitioners around a mission of empowering all students to reach their college and career goals by transforming their mathematics learning experience. Together as a community we have developed and continue to refine course materials and professional learning opportunities within a framework of ongoing measurement and continuous improvement across the network. The CMP network has launched two suites of courses—Quantway and Statway—that form the centerpiece of the network’s efforts. These research-based designed courses combine contextualized curricula and embedded social-emotional student supports, and their implementation is supported through faculty and institutional coaching, and classroom and institutional data analytics.

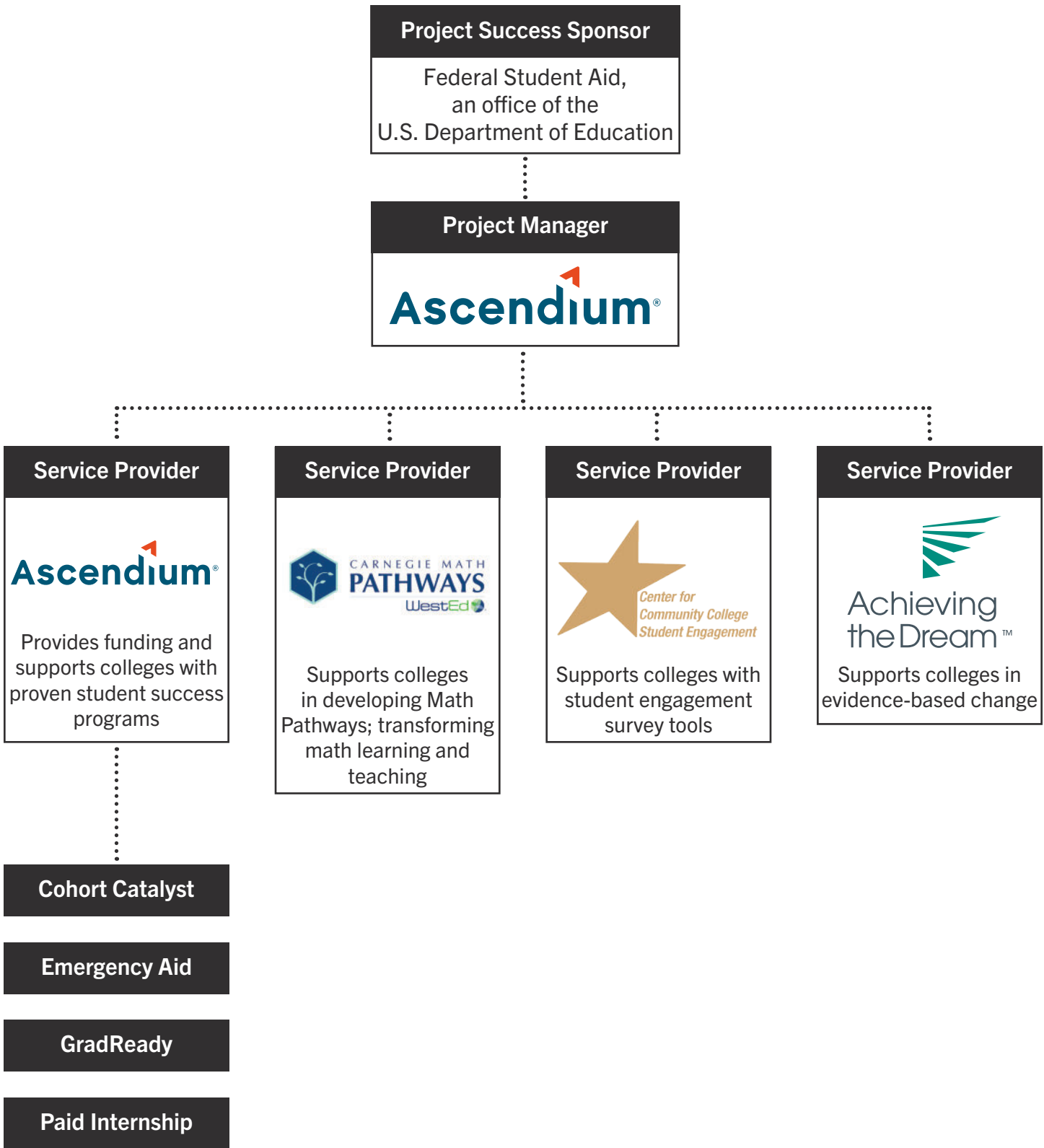
Through Project Success CMP has established a thriving network of TCUs committed to making mathematics education empowering and relevant for Native students. In addition to providing each school with access to CMP curricula, student supports, and faculty and institutional support resources, it is supporting the faculty and administrators in this network to connect, collaboratively learn, and make decisions together on how to strategically implement math pathways redesign and transform math learning in a way that is meaningful to their TCU contexts.



The **Center for Community College Student Engagement**, a service and research initiative of the College of Education at The University of Texas at Austin, provides important information about effective educational practice in community colleges. The Center assists institutions and other stakeholders in using data from surveys to inform discussions that can lead to increased student success. These surveys are the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE), Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), and Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE). The Center has surveyed students from 969 colleges across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and beyond. The participating colleges have a total enrollment of 6,443,948 credit students, represented by over three million student respondents to the surveys.

The Center assisted tribal community colleges in using data to promote improvements in student learning, student success, and completion. This was accomplished by tribal community colleges administering three engagement surveys (SENSE, CCSSE, and CCFSSE) and participating in a data workshop.

**The Project Success partners express their deep gratitude to Federal Student Aid and Ascendium Education Group for their continuous support to the partner organizations throughout Project Success.**



Thirty-five TCUs are participating in Project Success. Twenty contributed stories to this publication. Through the case studies, one can see how each TCU participating in Project Success started to build the important parts of capacity that are essential to moving completion forward. Common and important themes include:

- Use of the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT) to help identify areas of opportunity, especially in building data capacity and strengthening the use of technology (the ICAT Tool is a self-assessment that helps colleges and universities identify strengths and areas for improvement across seven capacity areas: Leadership and Vision, Data and Technology, Equity, Teaching and Learning, Engagement and Communication, Strategy and Planning and Policy and Practices. Results help colleges and universities identify strengths, discuss areas in need of bolstering and generate actionable ideas that align with student success goals);
- Broader use of data to inform decisions among faculty and staff and improve assessment;
- Tracking of student progress and use of data to identify students requiring additional supports;
- An increase in campus-wide engagement and collaboration in student success work;
- The positive impact of emergency aid support on student retention;
- Enhancements to first year programs to improve student engagement;
- Leveraging technology to streamline processes; and
- Engaging the student voice in adjusting services for students.

## Contributors

Yatty Mohammed

Kathy Adair

Lisa Azure

Scott Friskics

Casmir I. Agbaraji

Constance Frankenbery

Odawa L. A. White

Patricia Whiteman Runshim

Paul M. Robertson

Stuart Young

Anita Hanson

Lacey Azbell

Tammi Jalowiec

Elijah Hopkins

Justina Wilhelm

Bill Briggs

William O. (Bill) Sayre

Geraldine Sanapaw

Phil Baird

Vikki Howard



The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) comprises the nation's 37 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). Founded in 1973 by the first six tribally chartered TCUs, AIHEC's vision is strong sovereign nations through excellence in tribal higher education. AIHEC is at the center of virtually all effective public policy development on American Indian higher education issues at the tribal, state, and federal levels. Often through our extensive network of partner organizations and experts, AIHEC conducts research, including TCU specific data collection, and works to build the data collection and research capacity of TCUs. AIHEC leads the nation in initiating and managing innovative and comprehensive programmatic initiatives that foster high-quality, culturally grounded practices in areas critical to Native student success and tribal nation building. AIHEC works to promote and strengthen Indigenous languages, cultures, communities, and tribal nations; and through our unique position as the nation's sole organization created by and for TCUs, AIHEC serves member institutions and emerging TCUs through direct technical assistance, advocacy, partnership creation, resource sharing, and continuous improvement strategies. Today, 37 TCUs operate more than 75 sites and campus across 16 states, serving more than 130,000 American Indians, Alaska Natives, and other rural community residents. AIHEC is their collective spirit and unifying voice.

## Tribal Colleges and Universities: Educating, Sustaining, Innovating, Engaging

Over the past 50 years, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) have emerged onto the U.S. higher education landscape nurtured by, and in turn, nurturing, the land, language, culture, and distinct people who created them. TCUs were established for two reasons: (1) the near complete failure of the U.S. higher education system to address the needs of—or even include American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs); and (2) the need to preserve our culture, language, lands, and sovereignty. The goal: to build our own education system founded on our ways of knowing, traditional knowledge, and spirituality. The vision: Strong Sovereign Nations Through Excellence in TRIBAL Higher Education.

Each TCU was established and chartered by its own tribal government or the federal government and is governed by a board of community/tribal members. Each TCU is designed to serve the needs of Native students and to provide a culturally grounded higher education curriculum based on the worldview of the college's founding tribe and community.

Located in some of the most impoverished and remote regions of this country, TCUs have grown from one institution in 1968 to 37 TCUs today, operating more than 75 campuses in 16 states. TCUs serve students from more than 230 federally recognized tribes. In the state of Montana, where each of the seven federally recognized tribes has its own Tribal College, 50 percent of all American Indians enrolled in higher education attend a TCU. In total, Tribal Colleges serve about 130,000 AI/ANs each year in academic and community based programs.

TCUs are accredited, place-based public institutions of higher education, chartered by federally recognized Indian tribes or the federal government. They are committed to improving the lives of AI/AN students

through tribal higher education and to working with their respective tribes to ensure self-sufficiency for Native people. All TCUs offer certificates and associate degrees; 16 TCUs offer bachelor's degrees, and 5 TCUs offer master's degrees all taught from a foundation grounded in our tribe's distinctive and resilient worldview. TCUs are the best experiment and experience in American Indian self-determination, and they have much to share.

All too often, however, mainstream America hears only of the challenges facing Indian Country: high unemployment, high school drop-out rates<sup>1</sup>, poverty, alcoholism, suicide, abuse, and more. These challenges are real and serious. But they are not insurmountable, and they do not define Native peoples. At Tribal Colleges, hope defines us: it is our ability to reach back and draw from our history, our respective cultures, and our languages, to shape a foundation for a better world on our own land. Tribal Colleges are catalysts, transforming our vision into reality.

Yet, TCUs often face tenuous financial situations, such as insufficient funding from the federal government, which provides TCU operating funding due to binding treaty obligations with federally recognized Indian tribes, the trust responsibility, and the exchange of more than one billion acres of land. Inadequate support compared to other institutions of higher education seriously threatens efforts by the TCUs to attract and retain AI/AN students and high quality faculty, to hire grant writers with the ability to compete against Research 1 institutions, and to learn about and adopt innovations in instruction, data collection, and management strategies required to maintain accreditation with regional accrediting bodies. TCUs grapple with these issues on a daily basis, but still they are succeeding. TCUs are changing the lives and futures of students and their families for generations



to come through a holistic and supportive educational environment that is culturally based and relevant to our students and their families. They are building stronger and more prosperous Tribal nations through the restoration of our languages, community outreach programs and applied research on issues relevant to our land and our people, workforce training in fields critical to our reservation communities, and community-centered economic development and entrepreneurial programs.

TCUs are transforming our education systems training early childhood educators, successfully managing once failing Head Start programs, rebuilding schoolhouses and children's lives, reforming K-12 science and math programs and providing summer and Saturday enrichment alternatives, preparing an American Indian K-12 teacher workforce, and transforming Native language instruction at all levels. TCUs are growing a Native health care workforce from behavioral health to emergency room nursing to serve our people and provide care in our language and according to our customs. In fact, two Tribal Colleges lead the nation in preparing and graduating American Indian nurses. Before Oglala Lakota College in South Dakota launched its nursing program, none of the nurses employed by the Indian Health Service to work on the Oglala reservation were American Indian. Today, more than 50 percent of the nurses on our reservation are American Indian, and 85 percent of them are graduates of Oglala Lakota College. On the Turtle Mountain Chippewa reservation in North Dakota in the early 1970s, less than a handful of teachers were American Indian. Now, largely through the work of Turtle Mountain Community College's teacher preparation program, 285 (95 percent) of the area's 300 elementary/secondary teachers are Native.

Perhaps most important, TCUs are actively and aggressively working to preserve and sustain their own tribal language and culture. All TCUs offer Native language courses. Aaniiih Nakoda College in Montana runs a K-6 language immersion school right on campus. At the White Clay Immersion School, children learn the White Clay language and culture in addition to core subjects.

True to their mission, TCUs work tirelessly on all facets of tribal Nation Building, from helping to restore tribal identity and self-esteem within students through educational environments that are culturally-based and uniquely relevant to our students, to building stronger and more prosperous Tribal nations. In short, TCUs are transforming families, communities, and tribal nations, one student at a time.

## End Notes:

1. American Indians have the highest high school drop-out rate in the country: a 2010 study of 12 states with high Indian student enrollment showed that 83 percent of Anglo high school students complete high school, but less than 60 percent of all Native students graduate. On some reservations, the high school drop-out rate can be as high as 80 percent.

## The American Indian College Fund Perspective

I began working for the American Indian College Fund in October 2013. A few weeks after starting I was given the task to develop protocols and processes to demonstrate student scholarship recipient success. This meant the development of scholarship recipient persistence and graduation rates. It also meant that I had to find information and data to adequately describe scholarship recipient progress to completion.

In my previous work I had become aware of the services provided by the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). I knew I would need these to be able to complete my task. At that time, there were only seven tribal colleges and universities submitting enrollment and graduation data to NSC. A large majority of our scholarship recipients attend Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). The lack of TCU reporting limited our ability to capture an adequate picture of the progression of our students to completion because the data was not available. So, the College Fund developed strategies to encourage and support TCUs to pursue agreements with NSC. We knew well the potential benefits to TCUs and the College Fund should all TCUs submit enrollment and graduation data to NSC.

National Student Clearinghouse not only provides critical program tracking data for TCUs and

organizations like ours, they produce research for all to utilize. These are housed in their online Research Center. The College Fund has referenced NSC reports to guide and assist our work around student completion and success. To date we have utilized frameworks that have been useful in researching time to completion, graduation and persistence rates, transfer and mobility, and college completion. TCUs will do well to utilize these resources and to tailor inquiries along the same lines developed at NSC.

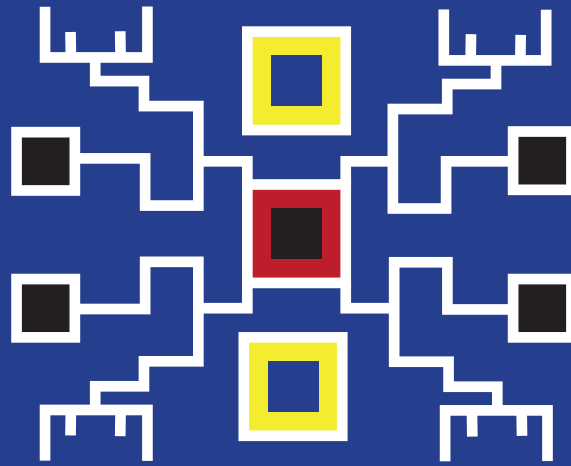
Currently, 22 TCUs submit tracking data to NSC with 30 submitting enrollment and graduation data. The College Fund is seeing the impact of their data submissions in our work. We have developed a stronger picture of the pathways to completion and success of our scholarship recipients. We also see TCUs utilizing this data to strengthen the story of their impact. The data allows TCUs to make a stronger case in the role they play in American Indian Alaska Native college student success and in the long run, how this success plays in Native Nation building. In a few short years all TCUs will submit data to NSC, bringing the opportunity to show larger TCU impact across all TCUs and the communities they serve.

**Dave Sanders**

American Indian College Fund



AMERICAN INDIAN  
COLLEGE FUND  
EDUCATION IS THE ANSWER



Changes throughout Aaniiih Nakoda College's (ANC) integrated planning and assessment processes have increased the use of student data to advance the college's student success agenda. With respect to planning, ANC launched the development of a new five-year strategic plan by using student success data as the springboard for campus-wide planning discussions.

**The new plan, which began in the fall of 2019, includes student success as one of three institutional goals.**

The new plan will begin in fall 2019, including student success as one of three institutional goals. Many of the specific strategies for achieving the student success goal focuses on enhancing students' first-year experiences. The strategies were developed through a data-driven gap analysis of first-year programs and services currently being offered. The plan for evaluating success in implementing these planning initiatives is now fully aligned with the revised institutional assessment framework, which now relies exclusively on data related to student learning, student achievement, student perceptions, and student participation as its key performance indicators. Finally, the new strategic

plan includes mechanisms for sharing institutional effectiveness data across campus to more effectively inform decision-making at all levels of the institution. All these changes are building data capacity and were carried out under the guidance of the Achieving the Dream coaches.

In addition to these broad, campus-wide efforts to foster a culture of evidence throughout the institution, ANC has also addressed growing data capacity needs through two targeted approaches. First, the college invested in intensive professional development for key producers of student success data: the registrar and institutional research staff. This was necessary due to the retirement of the college's long-time registrar and staffing changes in these key positions. The college also brought faculty and student interns into the process of gathering and analyzing student success data through specific research projects addressing institutional priorities.

Looking to the future, ANC is eager to implement data-informed revisions to its first-year student experience outlined in the college's new strategic plan. Student success data gathered during the past year are also utilized to pursue additional funding to increase resources and staffing needed to help our students succeed.





Bay Mills Community College (BMCC), like many other institutions, continues to collect myriad data on a regular basis. The issue has been that the data is collected by various individuals depending upon the need and intended usage. Data traditionally was not shared unless an individual tracked down the person who collected the data and specifically asked for it. The college's involvement with ATD and the efforts of our coaches, provided an opportunity to see the benefits of looking at our data. Now we strive to systematically collect and share data monthly through our enrollment management committee.

We began holding monthly enrollment management committee meetings, with sub-committees responsible for collecting and sharing data related to enrollment, persistence, graduation, employment, and student services offered. The addition of these meetings improved communication across departments and created a mechanism for sharing data and examining processes that involved all. As a college community, we knew from the ICAT results that communications were one of the capacities we needed to work on. The committee has been the venue that allowed us to improve this capacity.

Like many TCUs and community colleges, BMCC quickly realized the need to improve data capacity. Looking at the future prompted the leadership to identify an administrative assistant, who works in the President's office and charge this person with the task of collecting and maintaining cohort data. The ability to look at longitudinal cohort data provides us with a snapshot of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that can be addressed systematically. For example, we are currently working on several areas that will improve student success. First, after mapping our admissions process, we began reviewing student services to determine the efficacy of our efforts regarding tutoring (face to face and online), workshops, transfer trips, and other areas.

**Our plan is to streamline services to better meet the needs of all students in the most cost effective manner.**

Second, we recognize that we need to actively work with our growing online student population to ensure their success. Our student success journey has a good start and we will continue to help our students.

Cankdeska Cikana Community College (CCCC) is a tribal community college located on the Spirit Lake Nation in Fort Totten, North Dakota. Our student success efforts have been enhanced through participation in Project Success and Achieving the Dream (ATD). The ATD coaching experience has been invaluable, resulting in an action plan to increase capacity to institutionalize meaningful opportunities for student success.

Our action plan resulted in streamlined advising and registration processes and implementation of a cohort model to engage and support students, not only with academics but with non-academic and financial concerns.

**Many students received emergency aid funds through Project Success, making it possible for them to stay in school and pursue educational goals. These students may not have been able to persist otherwise.**

Carnegie Math Pathways (CMP) implementation provided added learning paths for faculty training and student materials. Students underprepared for college math reduced time spent in developmental math, decreasing student costs and time required to meet educational goals.

CMP surveys document positive change in student comfort levels in learning math, collaborative work with peers and instructors, and a decrease in stereotype threat. Our students stated: “I liked the investment of the class to help each other.” and “Teachers are free to help you more instead of standing up there.”

A data plan was established to facilitate student success efforts. A data summit was held which improved attitudes among staff towards the importance of using data in decision-making. The positive response resulted in ongoing communication of data between staff and departments. Measures have now been established to help best determine the effects of our student success efforts. A future data summit is planned to analyze measures and inform further action.

ATD team activities have yielded new ideas for increasing student success and emphasized the value of contributions from people with varying areas of expertise. It has been a rich and diverse process. The work with ATD, CMP, other tribal colleges, and universities has given our student success work direction and focus and established collaborative efforts both internally and externally with other institutions.





Chief Dull Knife College is a community based, land grant, and tribally controlled community college established to provide quality educational opportunities to residents of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation and surrounding communities. Inspired by Chief Dull Knife's determination, our mission is to provide Northern Cheyenne culturally influenced education through quality life-long learning opportunities.

Our student success work has focused on the design and implementation of a split semester of two eight-week sessions. The change aspired to lower the number of credits so students could apply more attention to the subject and complete more course work. The goals were to lower the withdrawal rate, and to increase course success rates which should increase retention. Fortunately, this initiative was driven by the faculty with staffing in place for the switch to the split semester. The Fall 1 and Spring 1 sessions increased the course success rate above our previous three-year benchmark and decreased course drops by 10 percent. The Fall 2 and Spring 2 sessions did not meet projections as course drops increased by 4 percent. This was caused by students taking both split semester and full 16-week credit loads.

Faculty suggested tweaks to the schedule for spring, based on in classroom observations and student surveys which improved the Spring 1 result. Students have always been given the opportunity to provide input. We adjusted based on their comments. Students

said they needed a break from one 8-week session to the next, and a two-day break was implemented. With analysis of the withdrawals, the initiative raised questions about how to address this trend and we are continuing to adjust.

The ICAT assessment data guides us to advance student success and was used to build the action plan for the split semester. Data were requested and information, including analysis from an external evaluator, were used to evaluate and make decisions on the split semester courses. The use of data has been emphasized and a new position of a director of Institutional Research has been created.

**An important lesson we have learned is that there are student success champions at the college and this work has identified their efforts, so now we can offer support and share their achievements.**

Another significant lesson from the focus on student success is that you must be able to take the financial risk to support student success efforts. The investment in making change may cause initial challenges that must be addressed so having a focus on making long term improvements to our processes is essential.

In Fall 2017, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College (FDLTCC) administered the ICAT survey. The results indicated a clear consensus that better work needed to be accomplished in data-driven actions, confirming the need to hire an institutional researcher, which was completed in Summer 2018. Since then, we utilized data to inform student success initiatives and disseminated related information campus-wide. We repeated the survey in Spring 2019 and results confirmed the improvement through the structural change. The hire of an institutional researcher position has increased our capacity to review data, report to campus, focus on results, and make evidenced-based decisions. In August 2018, the college held a Data Summit. Discussions included the equity gap between Native and non-Native students seeking an Associate of Arts degree; this led to creating specific programming aimed at decreasing the gap. In 2019-2020, we will improve engagement, communication, and broaden our efforts with public and campus-wide presentations of institutional data.

The institutional researcher deployed skill sets necessary to positively affect research skills across campus; beyond the college's student success projects. For example, faculty from specific disciplines requested course-related data as they work on fine-tuning learning outcomes and academic program coordinators now have data sets, they will consistently track between program review cycles. The presence of institutional research has informed the college's enrollment management planning and staff responsibilities. The college has used admissions and enrollment data to become organized, intentional, and focus on converting prospective students to enrolled students. We expanded our efforts to increase student retention by regularly tracking and contacting Fall 2018 students who had not enroll in Fall 2019. The full impact will not be known until registration is complete in Fall 2019.

We recently became part of ATD's Serving Native Students with Holistic Student Supports project.

The following goals were identified:

- Identify areas of improvement in key Student Services offices
- Advising Re-design: Identify areas of improvement in advising and career counseling
- Encourage A.A./undecided students to participate in My First-Year,
- Scale up existing Mid-Term Grade Report to all students, and
- Improve mentor/mentee Initiative.

**We believe the work we have accomplished with our ATD coaches over the past two years has helped lay a strong foundation and has given us better direction regarding student success.**

We learned that our retention goals cannot be accomplished without campus-wide engagement and developing new ways to work with our students. In Spring 2019, we merged three committees devoted to student retention and added new members to strengthen cross-functional and cross-hierarchical participation. Our newly formed Student Achievement and Retention (StAR) Committee has 29 members and is ready to continue student success discussions.

There is more work to be accomplished to create buy-in from staff and faculty, however, many students participate in retention activities. We believe this will lead to more Native students completing degrees and reaching the educational goals they set for themselves.

The actions above flow directly from that initial ICAT finding in data and technology and demonstrate the practice of data-driven decision making, emphasis on continuous improvement, and the alignment of decision making with strategic planning goals related to retention.

Fort Peck Community College (FPCC) worked closely with the Achieving the Dream (ATD) leadership and data coaches to develop and refine a three-year Student Success Action Plan guided by a student success vision statement with two priorities. The process of developing the action plan enhanced collaboration within administration and extended to the greater campus community because of the structure provided by the ATD coaches. An immediate result was collaboration and teamwork, which replaced departmental silos. Consistent and meaningful discussion helped build upon a culture of student success and provided a stronger sense of direction. The ATD coaches provided invaluable perspectives and mentorship throughout the process.

The college's leadership and data teams recommended a new position to assist in data-driven decision making to FPCC President Gourneau. In Fall 2018, the assessment officer position was created to support a culture of evidence-based decision making. The position is responsible for assessing ways to utilize existing systems and make recommendations regarding professional development and new data software system integration. The assessment officer is considered the "hub" to facilitate data collection, assessment, make recommendations to administration, and report monthly to the college's Board of Directors.

One of the next steps on our student success journey is to firmly place student success within our institutional strategic planning. We are currently in the process of overhauling the strategic plan for the next five years. Beginning with Fall 2019, we will begin implementing priority two of the Student Success Action Plan, which is to "enhance the student experience, pre-enrollment through graduation." One of the action steps under this priority area is the newly created Student Success Mentor Program, where all full-time employees are assigned various students from a cross section of academic disciplines helping to foster a sense of community and student success campus wide.

Our Student Success Vision Statement:

**Fort Peck Community College is a safe and welcoming community for students to achieve academic, career, and cultural goals.**

Stemming from our ICAT Assessment and Community Café dialog, Iḷisaḡvik College created a First-Year Experience coordinator to support students. This position will help first-year students with advising and guidance that will in turn support degree and certificate completion.

The college will be implementing a First-Year Pathway program in Fall 2019.

## **Students will have a holistic cohort-based experience that will inform and support the rest of their higher education journey.**

We have taken an “all hands-on deck” approach to ensure we are fully prepared. We have also reviewed our student process from application to graduation and made impactful changes to eliminate barriers to student success. This included changing the timeframe when students receive their bills, providing internship opportunities and support, and improving cross-departmental communications.

The college has embraced the support of ATD to help enhance our student success. This has allowed our institution to eliminate silos and strengthen our

communications cross-departmentally, as well as upward and downward communications. The change was driven from feedback from staff and undertaking an in-depth review of processes with the support from our ATD Data and leadership coaches. The college has been working towards improved assessment strategies with ATD’s input. This has resulted in purchasing WEAVE assessment software, faculty and staff working towards institutionalizing, and homogenizing assessment that addresses the needs of our Indigenous population. We also improved our data collection, analysis, and dissemination by creating user-friendly fact books. We eliminated data that was not useful and changed our reporting process timelines.

Through the ATD journey, we have identified that technology is a critical component for our student success. We have identified the need to improve our technology plan, student information systems, and overall technology capacity that we currently have and need. Iḷisaḡvik College has been awarded the ATD Holistic Student Support grant and we are excited to continue to pursue our endeavors to improve student success.

In summary, we are extremely grateful to have the opportunity to be a part of ATD. We are committed to continue the process to improve our student success.



The Institute of American Indian Arts has benefited from its involvement in Achieving the Dream through Project Success.

We have been particularly successful at building community-wide awareness about student success and engaging students, faculty, and staff in developing specific projects aimed at improving the student experience. For example, students expressed that they would like more spaces on campus for rest and relaxation. So, a continuing education class was offered where students learned to build wooden chairs, and then the chairs were distributed around campus as gathering places.

Building a culture of evidence-based discussions and decision-making has also been an important goal at IAIA. Although the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) has been able to produce a lot of important information over the last few years, faculty and staff have sometimes not been sure how to use it. As a result, OIR has modified its processes for analysis. Rather than developing information up front, OIR is

now engaging groups in conversations about what they would like to know, and then presenting the information to them. Involving everyone in discussing data needs as well as data analysis has promoted more interest in and use of data. The institution has also been able to provide OIR with additional funds to hire a contractor who is working on advanced projects such as predictive modeling of persistence and a propensity score matching study of tutoring.

**Freshmen retention rates are now showing small gains in improvement, and we will be focusing on how to maintain and improve that trend.**

We will continue to focus on community engagement and the inclusion of as many stakeholders as possible. We want to analyze our predictive model in more detail, share the results with the community, and develop targeted programs that help students succeed.





Little Priest Tribal College has implemented structural and process changes in support of its student success agenda. We have been more astute in fostering a culture of evidence at our college with guidance from our coaches since joining ATD. In June 2019, we hired an individual as our institutional research and data analyst. This individual has been able to hit the ground running and generates data for us to review and make better decisions for planning the future. So far, this has been a very positive outcome and change. With the addition of the institutional research and data analyst position, we can centralize data collection, management and reporting such as IPEDs, AIHEC, and AIMS.

Our college has been trying to be proactive in responding to the growing need for data capacity by providing professional development training to various departments; Business Office, Enrollment Management, Financial Aid, Institutional Research, and Student Support Services. They will be going through some training to take advantage of our new campus management system, Campus Café and its abilities in generating reports.

In addition, the Fall 2019 orientation was redesigned to make the experience more accommodating for our

students. This new process will be held in the hallway in front of the Admission/Enrollment Office, Business Office, and Financial Aid. Faculty advisors will be available in the classroom upstairs. We want this to be a one-stop shop process.

**We are hopeful that this new orientation setup will be more engaging for our students.**

Our college has an open-door concept where students are welcome to voice their ideas, opinions or concerns, and these are later discussed at the weekly executive council meetings to address any issues or concerns that may arise. Students are also invited to attend our monthly all staff meetings to voice their ideas and suggestions.

We understand that not all students will persevere, and there is a little bit of a heart break for us when we see a student flounder, where we want them to succeed more than they want for themselves. But when they come back to us, we will still persevere, and we will tirelessly offer assistance and guidance to them.

The success of students, the well-being of their families, and their development of a Nation Building view are widely held beliefs of Leech Lake Tribal College. This is evidenced in the college's mission statement, the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT) results, and the Higher Learning Commission reviews. The values have been activated and strengthened through broad engagement resulting in a Student Success Action Plan based on analysis of data related to student persistence, retention and graduation rates. Our caring culture has now been empowered to improve student outcomes through structural changes that include the reorganization of campus committees to improve campus communication and moving assessment and data from the institutional effectiveness committee into the hands of faculty and staff. The change developed from the new use of data was shared in many formats such as the Assessment Days, In-service days, and group discussions surrounding results of ICAT, SENSE, and CCSSE. Nation building, at the heart of the college, has also been reflected in the Student Success Action Plan. One example is that the weekly Ojibwemowin language learning gathering has partnered with SNAP-Ed to increase attendance and participation of community members. The heartfelt beliefs in the college's purpose are empowered through communication, use of data, and strategic planning pertaining to student success and nation building strategies.

Data capacity has been strategically enhanced. In 2019, the college filled the position for the director of Institutional Research to help build capacity and literacy at the college around student success analytics. The college also presented the CCSSE results at various college events, specifically with full-time faculty so they could gain a more in-depth understanding of how student engagement is significant toward being successful in and out of the classroom. In the early stages of development, the college created an in-house advising and early alert process. It informs advisors and faculty if students are at risk of not being successful in a class.

Next steps on the student success journey include developing the Action Plan in online programs. A mandatory Distance Learning Orientation for new students has been implemented and support services are now available through the new position, online distance education coordinator. The Action Plan also addresses Academic Program Review. One outcome of the review process was the recommendation of the new position of the reading and writing tutor coordinator. The college will continue to develop data-based strategies to help students and faculty improve success in gateway courses. Finally, several next steps are planned for the area of student support services including the new Orientation, Advising, and Registration Experiences survey to be administered the third week of the semester and to communicate, evaluate and utilize the over 300 responses received from the Community Needs Survey implemented in Summer 2019. The college commitment to student success recently has been strengthened by receiving two AICF grants related to the Action Plan goals to increase enrollment: the Think Indian Marketing grant and the College Readiness program grant that helped implement the summer 2019 seven-week college readiness program for 14-17 year-old students.

**One important lesson learned is that communication is critical to moving the work forward on campus.**

Despite being a small institution, silos can exist. Improving information sharing by updated committee structure, a new monthly assessment newsletter, and social media engagements have helped gain buy in and will continue to move the student success work along. Next steps will be to strengthen teaching and learning by helping faculty understand and use data-based learning assessments like CCSSE to provide evidence of continuous student success improvements.

In 2017, the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College used the Achieving the Dream's (ATD) Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT) to identify strengths and areas needed for improvement. As a result of the ICAT along with recommendations provided by ATD coaches, an immediate necessity was to shift the attitudinal focus on increasing data capacity at all levels of the institution.

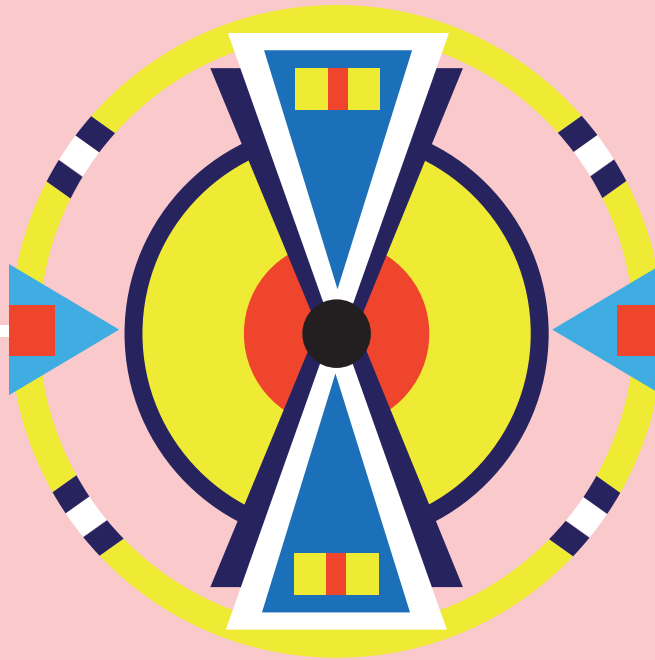
A new dean of Institutional Research and Effectiveness was hired in 2018 to develop resources for institutional assessment to better inform faculty, staff, and administration in making effective curricular and co-curricular decisions. For example, executive staff receive weekly student enrollment reports and accurate persistence, retention, and graduation data is available to faculty and staff. Other examples of data gathering and reporting include an analysis of course performance, administration of surveys on communication, leadership, and focus groups.

Another area, moving forward, is to strengthen the institutional focus on student success and engagement. In lieu of the first day of classes, an orientation is now required for all students to attend. College staff and faculty have seen a 150 percent increase in orientation attendance.

Also, 102 applicants were served by the college's Emergency Aid Program and over \$32,500 was awarded to students. Some examples of emergency expenses funded to students have been vehicle repairs, tires, childcare, computer repairs, food, and housing. According to a summary completed in 2018, students receiving emergency aid had a 91 percent retention rate.

The next student success journey is implementing and using Canvas as our new Learning Management System (LMS) for the 2019–2020 Academic Year. The need for a new LMS became apparent in discussions among executive staff. The college sought a more intuitive software for faculty, staff and students. The LMS will also facilitate use of the early alert and attendance systems. The goal is to streamline the early alert process through the Student Success Program director. Currently, student affairs staff complete all academic advising.

**Another student success goal is to develop an academic advising model that incorporates a strong collaboration among faculty and student affairs staff.**



In the beginning with participation with Achieving the Dream (ATD), Little Big Horn College surveyed all employees and select students with the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT). The ATD team came up with priorities they would like to have implemented on campus and these priorities were placed in the Student Success Action Plan. Priority number one is to promote student success, we will establish an intrusive advising process for well-advised students who possess program and career pathway knowledge, make educated decisions, and demonstrate self-sufficiency. Advising will be done by highly trained and intrusive academic advisors: faculty and staff members. This resulted in staff and students concerned about better advising. The second priority in our plan is implementing Information Technology Development for Student Success.

From these priorities, the college staff and administrators have implemented online advising. We used the Jenzabar system in the past years and added an advising module to better serve the students, staff, and faculty. This proved to be a good decision on our part. We already had the program, we just implemented an additional module that was available but not used by our institution.

This has proved to be a success with everyone on campus and has eliminated procedures that required paper copies. Our applications are now submitted online, and other aspects of paperwork will soon be available in an online version. Registration of classes is also done online, previously our institution had faculty and advisors submit paper copies as well, until we implemented the advising module. This has helped faculty administer online supplementation of their own classes. Jenzabar trainers were brought in throughout the Fall 2018 semester to help the institution get familiar and implement the use of these new modules. Staff responsibilities were added and included faculty, registrars, and Admissions Office.

**We are continuing to familiarize ourselves with the new modules and a more efficient admissions and advising process.**

We are learning as we go, but this was a great decision for our institution.





The College of Menominee Nation moved their student success agenda forward by defining success, increasing their use of data and expanding the use of their student's input.

College of Menominee Nation introduced Project Success and its initiatives using a gallery walk. They made posters giving highlights of each program. Staff were encouraged to ask questions or leave comments by having sticky notes and pens by each poster. At this gallery walk, participants were asked to define student success on large size printed posters. The college's Achieving the Dream core team analyzed the results by counting the number of times words appeared and placed them in categories together. This data was used to write our first student success definition:

**The College of Menominee Nation is deeply committed to student success as defined as students engaged in nation building through the accomplishment of individualized academic, career, and personal goals.**

The college built data capacity when they purchased Microsoft Power BI to build interactive data dashboards. They started with an enrollment dashboard that showed their historic enrollment by term and included demographic information. A survey was included within the dashboard to encourage staff and faculty to give feedback for improvement.

The success with this dashboard prompted the development of four additional dashboards to assist with academic program review. Dashboards were developed to display course success for gateway and emphasis courses, attendance, and first term grade point average. The faculty were able to view the data for the entire college and then click on the major they are reviewing.

The dashboards continue to be reviewed and feedback from faculty and staff is encouraged for continuous quality improvement. The college has committed to expanding use of dashboards to encourage faculty and staff use.

Moving forward, the college is currently in the process of working with our Student Information System (SIS) to collect the students' personalized student success statement. The goal is to capture students' statements within our Student Information System (SIS), so it is available to the student achievement specialists and faculty. They also want to analyze the statements and the results of achieving the goals they set for themselves. This will help the college have another metric of success, this one built around the student. Most importantly, this will give the students a voice in their journey at the college.



Based on guidance from our Achieving the Dream (ATD) coaches, we have made structural changes to our new student orientation, Raven Ready. We have changed the format to include small groups, campus tours, an Information Technology session, a family session, and we made the orientation mandatory. Furthermore, we are seeking orientation delivery options to students that enroll late or enroll for the spring and summer trimesters.

We have been focusing on identifying at-risk students earlier by utilizing multiple measurable factors which include high school attendance, reviewing high school transcripts to identify the number of math courses the student took in high school, and high school grade point average. Furthermore, we are in the process of developing intake surveys to gain better understanding of our students early and identify high risk students early on.

In response to the growing need for data capacity, we have purchased new software to assist in analyzing data we currently have. In addition to the software, we are utilizing reports from our Student Information System in ways we have not done before. We have considered hiring a new employee who would focus solely on data analyzing and presenting to the college, but at this time data is an additional duty for a few of our current employees. As part of our ATD work, we have created a data committee to discuss and share results of different data points across the college.

We are gathering and utilizing data to promote and enhance the first-year student programs. By placing the data on program flyers, we encourage attendance because students see how the program has already benefited other new students. We are in the process of developing intake surveys to identify at-risk students early. The intake surveys will be provided to students in the Student Success Center where new students receive advising. We are also purchasing career and skill assessments for students to gain a better understanding of their skills and interests. This assessment would offer students a guide toward deciding on a major and career. Furthermore, the Office of Admissions is developing a student pathway handout which gives students a visual of their academic journey at the College of the Muscogee Nation (CMN).

### **Ensuring students feel connected to their campus during the first year is essential to their success.**

Student engagement opportunities during the first year, especially during the first trimester, help students feel connected and give them a positive outlook on their experience. The earlier students are aware of campus resources, the better informed they are to make positive decisions about their college career. By making changes inside and outside the classroom, CMN is supporting students and preparing them with the skills they need to complete their education and be successful after graduation.

Navajo Technical University (NTU) has fostered a culture of change by refocusing on its own Office of Institutional Research and Reporting (OIRR) department and becoming an active member of the National Student Clearinghouse. The need for data has been acknowledged by students, staff, faculty, and community, and it is now one of NTU's strategic priority. The university has used data for various reasons including making changes to our program offerings, namely the CAD program. NTU has shifted data driven initiatives from outsourced consultants to hiring a full-time staff for assessment. Internal data collection and evidence has become vital in our expanding institution. Through holding data events to inform faculty and staff about useful ways to leverage data and through committee work, NTU has implemented changes such as closing certain programs that were not doing well.

While we understand that student retention and graduation rates are contingent upon various elements, students' interest to complete their degree requirements are often contradictory to what NTU is striving for. A recent study shows the many reasons why students withdrew from their classes or completely withdrew from the university. Many of these reasons can be expected from a rural, open-institution, and tribal university, withdrawing due to lack of transportation, lack of on-campus housing, or family responsibilities.

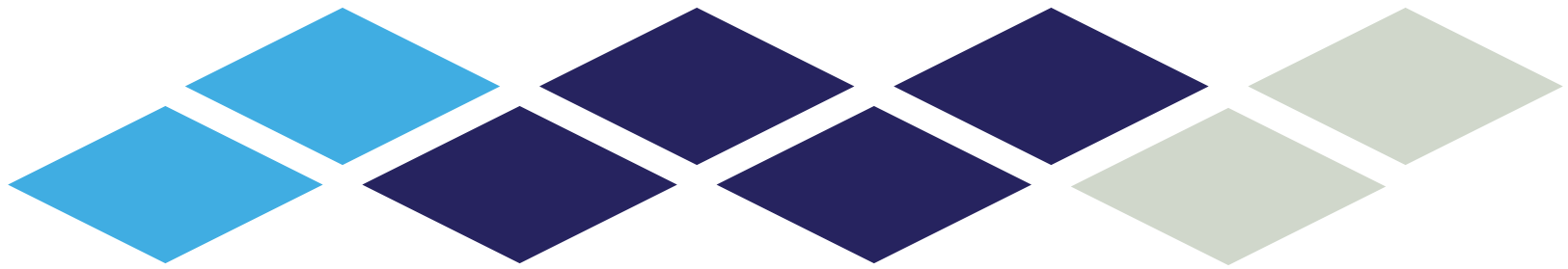
NTU normally has high enrollment of non-traditional students, single parents with dependents or students requiring developmental courses before enrolling in higher level courses needed to complete their degree. This often leads to students not completing within the normal time of completion and eventually lowers the overall graduation and retention rates. To focus on improving student persistence and completion rates, we launched a spring 2019 student satisfaction survey to hopefully understand what students need to feel a

sense of belonging. Our mission, vision, and philosophy are to create a sense of belonging and inclusion. We hope to use this new-found data to stimulate and encourage students to complete their degree requirements on time. In addition, NTU receives input from the students for implementation of its strategic plan by having a series of listening sessions.

To meet the growing need for data capacity, two more support staff will be hired for the Office of Institutional Research and Reporting, as well as an individual who will be overseeing the National Student Clearinghouse report. A data dashboard will be implemented to help with general data collections.

Other changes we have implemented include services that directly assist students. NTU offers developmental courses (English, mathematics, and science) in the summer with a tuition waiver. Full-time students taking 12 to 15 credit hours pay a flat tuition rate. Additionally, a completion support program was implemented for students who owe tuition and fees, to pay off their debt with on-campus jobs. Career Services has been able to offer more internships through Project Success. NTU is reviewing its internship process and thinking about ways to improve the student classroom to career pipeline. A major hurdle is recruiting employers to present to students on campus and to connect students with employers on and off the Navajo Nation. This coming semester, NTU will be reviewing academic internships for each degree program to make corrections and improve databases of employers for each academic discipline.

**Providing emergency aid such as gas cards has been very helpful to some NTU students, who commute over 100 miles round trip each day to class.**



It takes a village, an earth lodge village, for our Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College (NHSC) students to THRIVE in a college ready, career prepared, and data savvy environment. The grass-covered, earthen lodge was used for centuries by the Mandan (Nueta), Hidatsa, and Arikara (Sahnish) people. Our Earth Lodge Model focuses on values such as leadership, community, and respect which supports our structural changes. Our Achieving the Dream coaches teamed up with students, faculty, staff and community to implement these changes.

We have made leadership changes that include regular executive administration and staff meetings. An online collaboration tool, Monday.com connects budget and data to strategic plans to update the board of directors. Cross-campus teams review risk reports of individual student success and evaluate needs, while emphasizing growth, another earth lodge value. Identified needs are met with wrap-around resources that promote student success and assist in college readiness, from a model we developed called THRIVE:

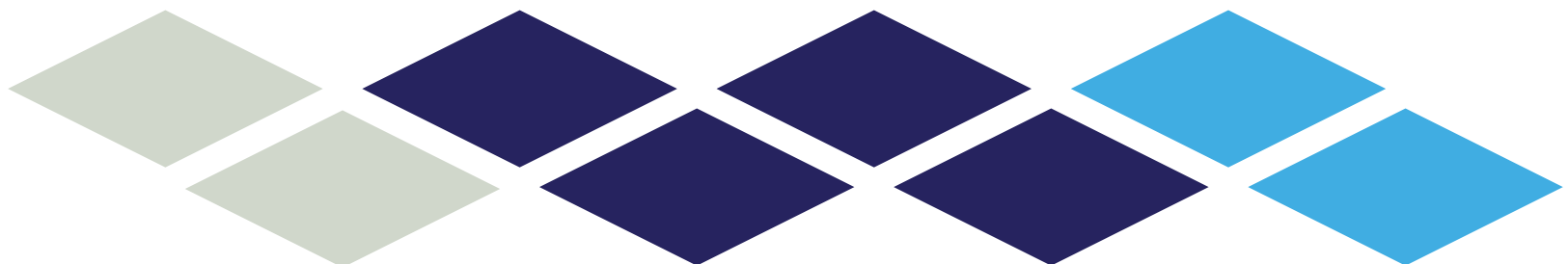
T - Tuition & Finances  
H - Health & Wellness  
R - Resources & Supports  
I - Instruction & Academics  
V - Vocation & Career Paths  
E - Extracurricular & Events

The need for career preparedness has led to focused academic advising. More advising was identified as a need in our 2017 SENSE survey results where, 41.8 percent of NHSC students never utilized academic advising services, although 67.2 percent reported that they were aware of them. In addition, low Fall to Fall retention rates prompted the implementation of a modified First Year Experience that includes students paired for math and English.

Our newly created director of Institutional Research and Evaluation and Student Success Alumni Veterans Enrollment coordinator positions are instrumental in compiling and openly sharing critical student data, such as placement test scores. By identifying the story, the data reveals we are building data savviness.

**Lessons learned include using round tables versus surveys to hear students' voices, thus promoting communication and refining students' definition of success.**

We are continuing our journey with help from our newly awarded Holistic Student Support grant, which includes intentional, full-circle academic advising, a redesigned First Year Experience, strategic scheduling, and community-based outreach. Students are living the Earth Lodge Model and persisting, one successful semester at a time.





Established in 1970 on South Dakota's Rosebud Sioux Reservation, Sinte Gleska University (SGU) has experienced many changes in higher education. The most recent institutional development has been to address student success factors through participation in the Achieving the Dream (ATD) network.

The university began examining its capacities and resources through its accreditation self-study in 2017. A consultant was hired to facilitate institutional movement toward data collection and analyses. There were monthly faculty meetings and quarterly "All Campus Assessment Roundups" for all staff. These events focused on identifying key factors impacting student success. The completion of the ATD Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool provided stakeholder input about SGU's priority areas: student enrollment, retention, persistence, and math proficiency. In 2018–2019, an update of the strategic plan was completed based on continued data collection, needs assessment, and the work of a broad-based planning team. The plan includes the mentioned priority areas and was approved by the board of regents.

An Institutional Effectiveness Committee was established as a clearinghouse for assessment and student success planning. This group comprised of various committee chairpersons, evaluate student input through course evaluations and co-curricular

evaluations. An Institutional Effectiveness director and dean of students positions were created. These positions have exercised strong leadership along with faculty committees to increase data collection capacities. The university is successfully on board with the National Student Clearinghouse and is leveraging data from various databases such as IPEDS.

There have been some important lessons learned. Professional development is important for adaption to change as not all faculty are willing to change. Trends and issues in higher education are impacted by what is happening in the K-12 education systems. A stronger interaction with local schools is necessary to anticipate the needs of Generation Z learners. This suggests that the assessment work to be done cannot be carried by one person or one department.

**A team effort is needed to better prepare for college readiness and the higher education experience.**

In the future, SGU will continue to grow its institutional capacities, ideally with continued support of the ATD and its coaches who have proven to be invaluable for our student success agenda. Networking with other tribal colleges and universities has also been beneficial for sharing our collective work.

Tohono O'odham Community College (TOCC) implemented overall organizational change as part of its student success efforts.

A structural change that was undertaken to flatten out the hierarchy at the college involved several actions over a period of around a year. This included elimination of three vice president positions and replacement of those with deanships. In addition, several positions identified as director level were repurposed to coordinators.

Along with the structural change in the organization chart, the college moved to be more inclusive in its decision-making bodies, involving persons below the level of director in many of the meetings. The name of the meetings was changed to Administration Meetings, usually made up of top management and Leadership Meetings were added including personnel from all levels in the college.

A premium on transparency includes regular distribution of meeting notes so that others across the College can be aware of changes that are coming and decisions that are made. Much more needs to be done in this area and there is always the potential for better communication. Some have remarked, in the wake of the changes, that morale on campus is improved.

These changes tie directly into the college's student success agenda. On a regular basis, bi-monthly and sometimes weekly, issues related to student success are discussed in a round-table format. Among the important changes directly related to student success that have been discussed and included in initial planning, is a move to incorporate faculty into advising for students who have 30 or more semester units. That is a matter still in process but in Fall 2019, faculty will be assigned students according to their majors. They will be required to advise those students and the advising process will be complementary to that provided by our professional advisor.

### **The results included cost-savings, more open communication, and some progress removing silos.**

Two examples of how TOCC increased their data capacity and culture of evidence involve addressing student transportation and math pathways. The college is located on the northeast side of the Tohono O'odham Nation. The Nation is 2.78 million acres or around the size of the state of Connecticut. Many of our students do not have vehicles and there is no public transportation. We want our students to have access and need to do that to increase enrollment. As we considered the problem, it came to us that we had a transportation effort that we had implemented but that it was operating in a data scarce environment. So, we did a transportation survey with our student body.

We gathered information on their schedules, the timing of their transportation needs, and the areas they were coming from. We used that to coordinate the schedule involving four vans running to the four directions. We adjusted our schedule accordingly and changed the direction and timing of our van service. Our usership data indicates that we still have a long way to go to increase users of our transportation services. We are going to collect more data to find the best solution. TOCC participates in the Carnegie Math Pathways and has done so since Fall of 2018. We have analyzed the data from those new classes and compared it to the longer pathway we previously had. The results, admittedly early, show significantly higher passing rates for both developmental and college math courses than the longer pathway we have been using. At this point, students are accomplishing in one year what they had previously done in two years.



We are committed to advancing along the path toward better and open communication and are united in not wanting to go back to being defined as “operating in silos.” To that end we will continue to meet regardless of hierarchy and will commit to ensuring that we operate transparently. The college community and the broader community will be afforded regular and consistent opportunities to learn about the comings and goings at TOCC.

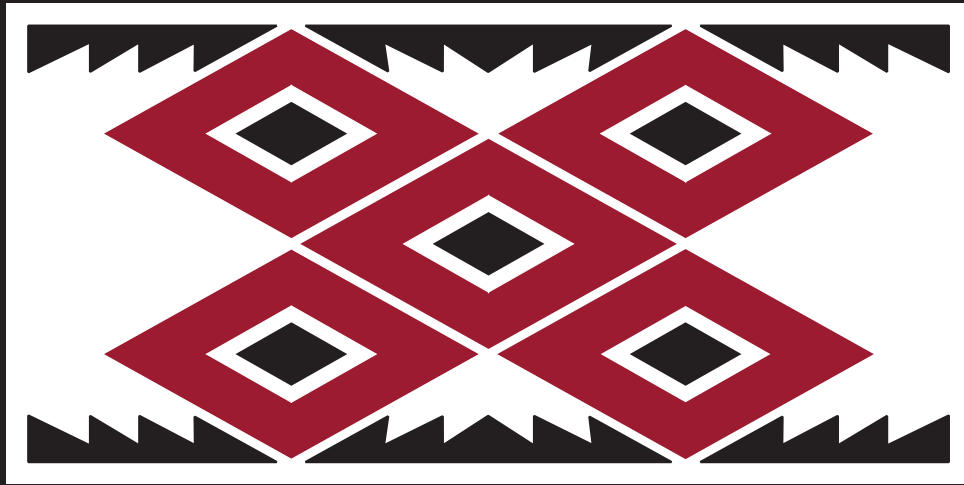
## **Data are going to continue to play an important part in decision making at the college.**

The importance of data was clear given the literature and the obvious need. The power of data was clearer during the July 2019 Board of Trustees retreat after the Institutional Effectiveness (IE) office presented some basic information kicking off the event.

IE presented a basic demographic profile “fast facts” and data including graduation and retention rates from IPEDS. The presentation set the tone for both days. Board members and other participants repeatedly returned to this data, citing our retention figures accurately but with an insistence that though our numbers were not poor from the perspective of peer institutions, they were not acceptable.

That retreat and the data that drove it have informed subsequent gatherings of administration and leadership teams. It has moved us to take a more critical look at what questions we should be asking to retain our students. One administrator emphasized that it is more productive to work to retain the students that we have than simply to recruit new ones. It was pointed out that the effort would benefit students and the college.

Further discussion about data and our need to retrieve it led to two different suggestions. One is that we plan to identify a consultant who can stand ready to provide us with answers to the more complicated data questions we may have. The individual would have access to our data management system, Jenzabar. The other is that we will acquire needed software including Tableau which can pull data from Jenzabar and has enough power to enable us to query with regularity.



United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) focused its student success agenda priorities on class attendance, mitigating reasons for student attrition, and providing high quality financial aid services. The Jenzabar retention system serves as an important web-based tool that allows faculty and staff who work with students to collaborate on student case management. Actions in the form of alerts, follow-up assignments, and interventions are being tracked and communicated with appropriate personnel to provide support as needed.

In the Fall of 2018, UTTC updated configuration of the retention system to set up alerts that specifically identify attendance, academic progress concerns, and notify students when alerts regarding academic performance or attendance concerns are sent out. Faculty and counselors were very engaged in the process, submitting a total of 1,822 actions that semester. Faculty and staff consistently utilized the retention system throughout the term with an average of 162 actions weekly, tapering off near finals to about 50 weekly. We believe this contributed to an increase in Fall to Fall retention rates from 33 percent in academic year 2017-2018 to 51 percent in 2018-2019. There is evidence to support this in the retention system data.

The average grade point average (GPA) of students who had actions submitted was 1.12, suggesting that the students who needed assistance were those who received alerts and interventions. Over half (53 percent) of these students successfully completed the term with a mean GPA of 2.0 or better. The data suggests there may be a point of diminishing return for per-student actions. Successful completion rates (term GPA of  $\geq 2.0$ ) significantly decrease for students who had more than 10 actions.

**Our adoption of Microsoft Power BI provides interactive data visualization and allows us to identify trends and patterns of student characteristics in ways not possible with spreadsheets.**

These are shared with stakeholders to allow exploration of institutional data. As a result, UTTC has created a Student Activities and Retention coordinator position.

We will be engaging faculty, staff, and students through various data walk exercises to gain their insights toward continued redesign of student success supports through the Holistic Student Support initiative.



## The Little College that Could — Does!

Like many rural tribal colleges, finding the right staff is a challenge. At White Earth Tribal & Community College (WETCC), we experienced three presidents during our time in Project Success. While this level of leadership and staff turnover could be viewed as a barrier at our college, it was an opportunity to discover what needed to be different, and to innovate how we serve students. The level of staff turnover our college experienced might create stagnation and reactionary progress towards students, but we continued to build. Three aspects of our culture helped us move forward.

First, everyone is very dedicated to our students and our community. This fundamental part of who we are helps us maintain focus on making student success a priority. Second, amid all these changes we invested in a new student information system. Previously, our data had to be managed on various spreadsheets which made it difficult to complete reports in a timely manner. While the transition was painful at times, we understood that to get data on our students we needed to be able to access information in an efficient manner.

Finally, we began to see that our structure had no middle management. As a result, when someone left the college, there was no one that could step in. Each time there was turnover in staff it was like starting over again. This revelation prompted us to re-structure some positions to create a layer of staff that could be trained and cross-trained. During our time in Project Success we used our coaches to understand student processes and to create written operating procedures. We recognized the danger in having only one person understand a job function with no written procedures.

**While our progress may not be seen in traditional metrics, our transformation is quite visible to those of us in the college.**

We are confident that we can increase student success and are adamant about setting up the infrastructure needed to help students—no matter who is on staff. We are the college that does—regardless of the changes that may occur.

**Carnegie Math Pathways**

“Before this class, I didn’t really think of myself as a math person, or a person who was capable of learning how to do math... I started in the course and it changed the way I thought about math people and being able to do certain things in math.”

Joseph Summers, Student/Quantway Student Tutor  
College of Menominee Nation

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“Students have become more committed to each other’s success. They do work in groups, even outside the Statway classroom in their other courses.”

Faculty Member  
Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College

.....

“I feel more comfortable asking questions and find myself being more confident in math, something I have never been in the past.”

Student  
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College

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**Emergency Aid**

“As a returning student, I find myself with many obstacles that seem overwhelming at times. I believe the Emergency Aid Grant helped me in the biggest way possible. Without it, I don’t know how I would have been able to continue as a perfect attendance student, due to my transportation problems.”

Student  
Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College

.....

“The emergency assistance program helped me stay in school, it has made all the difference. Access to this program is the only reason my family was able to pay rent last month. Without it, we might have received an eviction notice and I honestly have no idea what I would be doing right now. I do know, however, that should an eviction notice have come, it would have taken my full attention and I would have dropped out of school and frantically taken any job to keep my family from becoming homeless.”

Student  
Bay Mills Community College

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**Paid Internship**

“My Fall internship consisted of researching three areas for the Leech Lake Tribal College. The three areas were: bringing in an American Indian Business Leadership club into LLTC, partnership with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe to facilitate training session with their many branches, and visiting with other community and tribal colleges to find out how and if we could make our college better in any way. This was a very enjoyable assignment and I thoroughly enjoyed visiting other community colleges to scope out different ways they did their programs. I had to conclude that Leech Lake Tribal College has much to offer as I compared them to Red Lake Nation College, White Earth Tribal and Community College, and Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College.”

Student  
Leech Lake Tribal College





In 2017, **25** TCUs completed the SENSE survey.

In 2018, **22** TCUs completed the CCSSE and CCFSSE survey and in 2019, **14** TCUs completed CCSSE.

Since 2017, Carnegie Math Pathways has partnered with **19** TCUs to implement Quantway or Statway math pathways options for their students.



As part of Project Success, Ascendium Education Group awarded funding to **33** TCUs to implement emergency aid programs that offered small grants to keep students in school when they encountered financial challenges.

As part of Project Success, Ascendium Education Group awarded funding to **30** TCUs to create and expand paid internship opportunities for students.

As part of Project Success, TCUs were invited to provide their students access to GradReady®, Ascendium Education Group's online financial wellness program which includes financial wellness learning and activities. **20** TCUs participated in GradReady.



Achieving the Dream's annual DREAM conference convenes **2,300** experts, policy-makers, investors, thought-leaders, and practitioners from more than **300** colleges throughout the country who gather to engage in an exchange of ideas about evidence-based reform strategies. **128** participants from TCUs attended the 2018 DREAM conference. In 2019, **130** participants from TCUs attended the DREAM conference.



When Project Success began **19** of the **35** accredited TCUs were reporting to the National Student Clearinghouse. Today, **30** are reporting the National Student Clearinghouse.

Achieving the Dream's Institutional Capacity Framework (ICAT) is a comprehensive approach to addressing the emerging needs of the field to improve success results for all students, especially low-income students and students of color. **33** of the **35** TCUs completed the ICAT survey within the first year of Project Success and used the assessment to build action plans for their student success work.

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