



Between the fall of 2019 and spring of 2022, through the Serving Native American Students with Holistic Student Supports project, six Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) began redesigning the student experience through the development of a customized holistic student supports framework. This approach emphasizes the need for institutions to deeply understand their students and then collaboratively redesign services that are critical for the success of every student. The colleges participated in a community of practice with other TCUs in the project and received intensive, customized coaching from Achieving the Dream to strengthen their capacity to serve students in their communities. The overarching goal of the project was to help colleges dismantle barriers in structure, policy, and practice to make it easier for students to identify and access academic and nonacademic supports in a timely manner to support completion of their college goals.

A Focus on Closing the Enrollment Funnel Gap


Focusing on student success requires that colleges look at the student journey both into and through their institutions. As Ilisaġvik College began assessing their data, leaders quickly realized they had a major gap in their enrollment funnel. More than 50 percent of the students who invested the time and energy to fully complete an application never registered for class. To tackle this pressing issue, the college formed an enrollment management team that sought to shift the thought process from asking, “Are our students college-ready?” to “Is our college student-ready?”

This new mindset prompted Ilisaġvik to identify and solve various issues students were encountering. The college:

- Launched an online orientation to ensure all new students had consistent information to start successfully

College Information

- Tribally chartered by the North Slope Borough (Inupiat)
- Location: Utqiagvik, AK
- As of 2020–21, IC offers nine associate degrees, one bachelor’s degree, 26 certificates, and 13 endorsements
- Deployed a Student Information System that offers online registration and enables students to manage more of their own schedule
- Redesigned the first-year program to help students feel more connected to the college sooner and get the supports they need to persist
- Created a pilot Student Mentoring Advocating Referring Total Success (SMARTS) to identify at-risk students and intervene early, powered by a new early alert technology



Achieving the Dream (ATD) is a partner and champion of more than 300 community colleges across the country. Drawing on our expert coaches, groundbreaking programs, and national peer network, we provide institutions with integrated, tailored support for every aspect of their work—from foundational capacities such as leadership, data, and equity to intentional strategies for supporting students holistically, building K-12 partnerships, and more. We call this Whole College Transformation. Our vision is for every college to be a catalyst for equitable, antiracist, and economically vibrant communities. We know that with the right partner and the right approach, colleges can drive access, completion rates, and employment outcomes—so that all students can access life-changing learning that propels them into community-changing careers.