



**UNITED TRIBES  
TECHNICAL COLLEGE**

**Achieving  
the Dream**

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.

## Leveraging an Intake Survey to Get to Know Students Better, Faster

A key aspect of a holistic approach involves understanding students' needs and then proactively connecting them to supports. United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) values the importance of providing students with timely access to the individualized supports needed to thrive, but they found identifying each student's needs early in their academic experience challenging. To help solve this issue, UTTC designed and implemented a new-student intake survey.

UTTC's intake survey invites new students to articulate their strengths, potential challenges, and other perspectives of interest to the college. With these insights in place, UTTC advisors can home in on the needs of each individual student rather than prescribing generic direction and next steps.

The survey includes questions designed to gather both general information and tailored insights from UTTC's unique student

### College Information

- Tribally chartered by the United Tribes of North Dakota
- Location: Bismarck, ND
- As of 2020–21, UTCC offers 14 associate degrees, four bachelor's degrees, three certificates, and one diploma

population. For example, since Native Americans define kinship broadly to include everyone in the tribe, the survey asks students to indicate if they are caretakers for a family member or friend. In addition, the survey asks about factors such as certificate completion goals, food security issues, housing and transportation concerns, and whether the student has access to reliable networks for support and assistance.

Given that emailed surveys often go uncompleted, UTTC has found success by having the students meet face to face with their first-year advisor to complete the intake survey as part of their academic success plan. These in-person conversations make students more comfortable and allow advisors to gain deeper insights into their well-being.

While the insights gleaned from UTTC's intake survey have proven extremely valuable for first-year advisors, their usefulness extends throughout each student's academic lifecycle. By selectively sharing pertinent information with additional advisors, UTTC can now easily and quickly enlist faculty, academic, and wellness support resources based on each individual student's needs.

## Creating an Enrollment Process Flowchart to Identify Vital Gaps

To try and understand their enrollment process, the leadership team of United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) documented their existing process using a graphical depiction of the first steps in the student's journey, from initial interest in attending to being registered for classes. This approach helped them visualize the numerous, extensive, and sometimes overly complex paths each student had to traverse to enroll as a student at the college.

The impact of understanding the student experience has led UTTC to make a number of changes to their design that include:

- Identifying and removing unnecessary complexity from the enrollment process
- Determining and fixing steps where students were most commonly getting stuck
- Ensuring there was someone assigned to own and manage each step of the process
- Identifying gaps in the process that were not previously noted
- Increasing communication efforts across campus so all entities were familiar with the process and knew their role in the student journey
- Growing enrollment through focused attention on admissions and onboarding

UTTC's enrollment process improvements have increased year-over-year spring enrollment by 43 percent.

**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.