

# Montana University System Tribal Relations Report Outline

## 1. Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and System Activities

- a. Strategic Planning for Diversity training for Montana University System was held June 1 & 2, at The University of Montana Missoula, presenting an integrated approach to developing and sustaining a diverse academic community, with a focus on the controversial diversity-related issues that inevitably arise. Designed for college and university faculty, deans, provosts, and other academic administrators; student affairs staff; and other campus leaders who have programmatic responsibilities related to planning for campus diversity. Participants had the opportunity to explore a unique diversity framework consisting of fourteen variables, review approaches for assessing the diversity climate of a campus, explore the vision and rationale for strategic planning for diversity, analyze and address various forms of external and internal resistance to diversity programs and policies, develop a coherent approach to addressing the political issues and conflicts that arise as a campus becomes more diverse, and learn from the Evergreen experience, where for fourteen years retention of underrepresented groups has been higher than for dominant group students. Faculty were **Dr. Art Costantino** who is vice president for student affairs at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington and **Dr. W. Terrell Jones** who is the vice provost for educational equity at Pennsylvania State University.
- b. All seven tribal colleges sent faculty and staff to various Transfer Initiative FLOC meetings to help align their courses with those offered within the MUS. To ensure these preliminary efforts reach fruition, all seven tribal colleges have finalized their participation in a comprehensive articulation agreement with the MUS that will validate the equivalency of courses offered throughout the system with those offered on their campuses. These agreements will solve a long-standing barrier to tribal students seeking to transfer into MUS institutions.
- c. The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education is pleased to announce that Cassandra (Kasie) Murphy-Brazill has been hired as the new Director for American Indian and Minority Achievement. Kasie began her position on February 1, 2010. Kasie bring a strong educational and experiential background and an enthusiastic commitment to increasing American Indian and minority achievement and participation in Montana's public higher education. She is looking forward to the opportunity to work with campus, tribal and community educators on important access, retention, and awareness programs and issues.

## 2. Montana State University Bozeman

- a. A record 105 Native American students received bachelor's and master's degrees during Montana State University's 114<sup>th</sup> commencement ceremonies, set for May 8 in Bozeman. The number of Native American graduates increased nearly 60% from last year, when 21 Native Americans graduated from MSU and has nearly tripled in the last decade. Many of the graduates this spring were enrolled in MSU's Indian Leadership Education and Development (ILESAD) and Early Childhood Education Distance Partnership (ECEDP) programs. Both programs provide access to degrees for Native American students throughout Montana who have historically been underserved.
- b. In 1996, a partnership between an MSU faculty member and members of the Crow Nation developed into the successful community-based research project, *Messengers for Health*. The *Center for Native health Partnerships* developed out of this success and grew the engaged work to reach statewide and into new areas of health. The mission of the *Center for*

- Native health Partnerships* is to create an environment to improve Native American health through community-based participatory research. The goal is to change the way that health research has historically been conducted with tribal nations by bringing together communities and researchers to establish trust, share power, foster co-learning, enhance strengths and resources, and examine and address community identified needs and health problems. Funding for research projects is equitably shared between university and community partners. The recent selection of Alma Knows His Gun McCormick, *Messengers* Project Coordinator, for the full nomination for the 2010 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Community Health Leaders Award and *Messengers for Health* being selected as a semifinalist for the Harvard University Honoring Nations award give testimony to the continued impact of these projects. Recently, a new position of Director of Native American Partnerships was developed at MSU and the first director, Bill Yellowtail, was hired. Yellowtail has a long history of partnership development and upper-level administrative experience and was most recently the Katz Endowed Professor of Native American Studies at MSU. Among other duties, this new position is responsible for facilitating grant and contract-funded partnerships between MSU and Montana Native American communities, tribal colleges and governments, and promoting a unified and cohesive portfolio of MSU services for Montana Native American communities. See <http://cnhp.montana.edu/>
- c. Dr. Michael Vogel, Extension Housing an Environmental Health Specialist, recently received HUD funds to create the national Tribal Healthy Homes Assessment, Mitigation, and Training Center at MSU. The goals of the Healthy Homes grant are to build capacity in Native American communities to work with housing and health agencies on how to do assessments, outreach, and education—more of a holistic look at their home environments. Vogel and associates will be conducting health assessments of 500 homes over the next two years. They will leave each homeowner with a summary of the assessment, which also includes recommendations and resources for help in mitigating problems. This is only the most recent funding for work with the tribes and the tribal colleges with which Mike Vogel is involved. See <http://tribalhealthyhomes.org/>
  - d. The AIRO (American Indian Research Opportunities) program, part of a consortium of MSU and seven tribal colleges worked to increase the number of American Indian students in biomedical research careers by providing the students with research experiences motivating them to pursue biomedical research careers. Up to 45 students will participate in 6-10 week summer research programs offered on campus.
  - e. The Yellowstone Writing Project Summer Institute, a four-week intensive teacher workshop focused on writing and the teaching of writing has recruited 16 teacher-participants from throughout the region, including two from reservation schools (Browning and Lame Deer). The project hopes to build a network of Native American teachers who can address the particular challenges of teaching writing in such settings.

### **3. Montana State University Billings**

- a. MSUB maintained articulation agreements for transfer of credits with tribal colleges throughout Montana (Little Big Horn College, Chief Dull Knife College, Blackfeet Community College, Fort Belknap College, Fort Peck Community College, Salish Kootenai College, Stone Child College).
- b. MSUB continued implementation Chief Dull Knife College to offer a 1-credit transition course to students transferring from a tribal college to a four-year university. The course is designed to better prepare American Indian students who transfer from two-year programs at the tribal college to four-year programs at MSU Billings.

- c. With Billings School District 2, MUSB has continued working toward development of an American Indian education center that would focus on improving educational attainment levels for American Indians in Billings from primary school to college and beyond.
- d. Continued support of the American Indian Business Leaders (AIBL) club, which has advising in the College of Business. The MSU Billings students involved in AIBL in Spring 2009 won first place in a national competition for its business plan.
- e. Since 2007, the university continues to foster dialogue between itself, IBM and the tribal colleges in the area (Little Big Horn College and Chief Dull Knife College) on potential technology/education relationships.
- f. American Big Sky Projects located in the College of Education continues to “grow” American Indian teachers. This program provides grant-funded support for American Indians who are pursuing undergraduate teacher preparation and licensure.
- g. The American Indian Outreach Office hosted the Stepping-Up American Indian Youth Leadership training in April 2010 on the MSUB campus for computer labs and Native American games.
- h. The American Indian Outreach Office launched the American Indian Peer Mentoring Program that includes completely on-line mentoring service for all American Indian students at MSUB.
- i. Reno Charette represented MSU Billings at the University of Montana dedication of the Bonnie Heavy Runner Gathering Place in the new NAS building. Reno presented an embroidered Pendleton blanket from MSU Billings and served as the emcee for the event.
- j. MSUB established the Diversity Center. Located in the Liberal Arts building and associated with the American Indian Outreach Office, the center is dedicated to fostering a campus climate that welcomes diversity through educational, cultural and social programming activities to assist in the recruitment, transition, retention, and engagement of minority students. The center held a Native Student Day for prospective students in March 2010. The coordinator is Tammy Rea.
- k. Dr. Jeff Sanders and Reno Charette have provided training for organizations in the Billings community including:
  - Community Crisis Center
  - CASA
  - Big Brothers and Sisters
  - Bross Peace Seminar at Rocky Mountain College
  - Family Support Network
  - MSU Billings University Police Department
  - MSU Billings Student Opportunity Services
  - MSU Billings Student Affairs staff

#### **4. Montana State University Northern**

##### Northern Central Montana YouthBuild Construction Trades Program - Fall of 2009

North Central Montana including Hill and Choteau counties, specifically the town of Havre and the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation located 35 miles south of Havre, are served through this program. This project serves both rural and Native American communities. The program serves at risk youth ages 16-24 through a one (1) year program that trains students in all aspects of the construction trade industry including electrical, plumbing, sheet metal and carpentry/construction through a college-accredited and registered apprenticeship training program. As part of the education program, students build modular homes during the required lab courses under supervision of certified course instructors. During the summer portion of the program, the modular homes will be moved to Rocky

Boy's Indian Reservation housing sites designated for disabled, low-income families. Students receive training for laying foundations, house moving, and house connections during this portion of the program. The project is conducted in part on the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation and will serve members of the Chippewa Cree people by providing at risk Native American youth access to the program and by providing ADA compliant housing to low-income Native American families for home ownership. A total of 80 participants will be served by this program during the two years of operation. Upon completion of the program, each student will earn a high school diploma (GED credential), up to 24 college credits in the building trades program including electrical, plumbing, sheet metal, construction, and carpentry, and completion of 10 related training course requirements for the State of Montana Registered Apprenticeship Training program in electrical, plumbing, and sheet metal. Each student will have multiple pathways after completion of the program including finishing his/her two-year degree, placement in an apprenticeship program, or job placement as a construction day laborer.

Gear Up - Ongoing continues to grow each year. In June 2009, we hosted both a Middle School and High School Gear Up Super camp for 157 participants. In June 2010, we expect 170 participants. 2010 marks the 4th year Northern has hosted the Gear Up camps.

Tribal College Partnerships - Ongoing Our Tribal College partnerships continue to remain strong. Transfer agreements are currently being updated and prioritized as necessary. Our established transfer agreements combined with recruiting initiatives and coordinated efforts make transitioning to MSU-Northern an almost seamless process. Fort Belknap will transition 14 students for fall 2010 in Nursing, Education, Computers, and other majors.

Indian Education Professional Development Grant (IEPD) - Ongoing We are continuing the IEPD Grant with Stone Child College. There are currently 14 students attending full-time in Education programs.

## **5. The University of Montana Missoula**

- a. Dedication of the Payne Family Native American Center. On May 13, 2010, The University of Montana celebrated the completion and opening of The Payne Family Native American Center—the first of its kind at any American university. The public was invited to join tribal leaders and community, state, and campus representatives for the event, which included many Native American traditions to honor and dedicate the new center.
- b. Pharmacogenomics Research in Indian Country. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) are collaborating with pharmacogenetics researchers at the University of Montana and the Montana Cancer Institute in Missoula in a battle against cancer. Tribal members are donating blood samples to researchers who are studying the genetic variations present in Native American populations that may carry the potential to impact responses to common cancer treatments. This groundbreaking research is high0tech, state-of-the-art, 'pharmacogenomics', or the study of how genetic factors may influence responses to medication treatments.
- c. The Regional Learning Project, based in Continuing Education, worked with the Indian Education Division of OPI to create a new website ([www.montanatribes.org](http://www.montanatribes.org)) comprised of video clips from interviews conducted with tribal elders and educators throughout the state over the last eight years. Organized around the Essential Understandings, it provides teachers and citizens an engaging way to increase their comprehension. The Regional Learning Project also completed two volumes of a new series of classroom DVDs with teacher guides — *Tribal Perspectives on American History*. Montana tribal representatives are featured in both volumes. The project website, [www.regionalllearningproject.org](http://www.regionalllearningproject.org) has links to these educational resources.

- d. The Journalism School is the home for Reznet – a training and mentoring program for American Indian college students in Montana and around the country, and a Native American news, information and entertainment Web site. <http://reznetnews.org/>. The intent of Reznet's training and mentoring program is to produce more Native American professional journalists. To date, Reznet has helped train and place more than 7 percent of the 284 Native journalists at mainstream daily newspapers nationwide. Former "reznetters" work as professional reporters, copy editors, videographers and photographers at news organizations ranging from The Washington Post to the Cherokee Phoenix to the Great Falls Tribune and The Associated Press.
- e. The Native American Studies (NAS) Department worked with other departments and institutions to promote Indian Education for All (IEFA), both by volunteering as individuals for committees devoted to promoting IEFA and through class offerings. This work served tribes in part by educating Native American students about past and present cultural, legal, political, and economic issues of critical importance to their home communities. IEFA also taught non-Indian students about these issues, contributing to greater cross-cultural sensitivity and cooperation in Montana. Dr. David Beck, Dr. Wade Davies, Dr. Angelica Lawson and Dr. Kathryn Shanley all contributed to statewide discussions with other state and tribal universities and colleges in Montana regarding IEFA. NAS professors participate in these efforts as part of their expected service as University of Montana faculty members and do so without outside funding sources or individual payment.
- f. Indian Law Clinic. Established in 1980, the Indian Law Clinic at the University of Montana is designed to provide students with practical experience regarding Indian law issues. Its work focuses on issues and problems affecting tribal governments, justice systems, and Indian people. The Indian Law Clinic is currently working with the Blackfeet Nation to help in the revision of business codes, as well as providing comments on drafts of the constitution undergoing the Blackfeet Constitution reform process. The Indian Law clinic is drafting wills for the tribal members on the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Reservation as an educational outreach project due to the American Indian Probate Reform Act (AIPRA, 2004), which went into effect June 2006. The clinic will also assist the Montana Wyoming Tribal Judges association with their training conference in June 2010 in Billings, Montana.

## **6. MSU Great Falls**

- a. During the 2008 fall semester, the College Recruitment Office visited several tribal high schools including Browning High School and Heart Butte High School. The schools were invited to participate in several 2009 spring semester events at MSU-Great Falls COT including the Skilled Trades Career Fair, College Bound, Health Care Career Fair, College in a Day, Health Science Open House, and Graphic Design presentations

## **7. Flathead Valley Community College**

- a. Two Medicine Lake Singers and Dancers perform at FVCC. The Two Medicine Lake Singers and Dancers presented a powwow demonstration at Flathead Valley Community College on September 24, 2009. Hosted by Blackfeet Nation tribal members with Joe McKay as the master of ceremony, Floyd Rider as the elder dancer and Ray Croff as the drum leader along with the Two Medicine Lake Singers and Dancers. The event showcased the teachings of Native American culture through traditional and contemporary dancing, beautiful regalia and group singing on the round drum. Open to the public, the event was held in the large community meeting room inside the Arts and Technology Building on the FVCC campus., Proceeds from the event benefit the multicultural affairs program at FVCC.

- b.** FVCC awarded a \$2,200 scholarship to an FVCC Native American student to apply to the cost and credits of attending the FVCC Bali, Indonesia, study abroad trip. Dates of travel were March 18 to April 15, 2010. It was intended that the recipient of this scholarship was to be directly involved in developing future scholarship funds for Native American students to participate in a cross-cultural, indigenous academic experiences. The recipient will be required to attend a minimum of six fundraising and/or fundraising event experience. The recipient of this scholarship will be expected to draw personal contrasts and comparisons between the two distinct traditional cultures and then express them in lecture format.

Ultimately, this program is intended to benefit both cultural groups (Native American and international host culture) engaged in the immersion experience.