



MSU Billings Native American Achievement Center
Sunny Day Real Bird, Director of American Indian Outreach

2024 AIMA Recommendation Action Plan
(Updated from June 2024)

Montana State University Billings/City College AIMA Recommendations Action Plan

	Action Plan	Next Steps	Person Responsible	Implementation Date
Recommendation 1: Retention and Graduation Council	The Retention and Graduation Council developed a five-year retention and graduation plan (2022- 2027). The plan sets five- year and annual targets for retention and graduation rates. A. Establish & Share Goals: Define specific, measurable retention and completion goals for American Indian students. B. Current Initiatives: Offer culturally relevant programming and events to foster a sense of community. Ensure access to financial aid and scholarship resources tailored to American Indian students. C. Integration of Tribal Partnerships: Partner with Tribal College Presidents & Tribal Education Directors to create a seamless	Monthly meetings	-Sep Eskandari, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs -Kim Hayworth, Vice Chancellor for Student Access and Success -Stephanie Cowen, Director, Student Services, City College -Laura Gittings-Carlson, Director of Advising and Student Support Services/TRIO -Sunny Day Real Bird, Director of American Indian Outreach for Native American Achievement Center -Lingya Ma, Data/Research Analyst, Institutional Research -Anna Talafuse, Assistant Professor, College of Business -Heather Thompson-Bahm, Department Chair, Business, Construction, Energy Technology, City College	Ongoing

	transition pathway for transfer students.			
Recommendation 2: Senior level point of contact	Regular updates provided to Chancellor's Cabinet, Jacket Leadership Team and the Provost Council.	Meetings occur bi-weekly and monthly.	Dr. Kim Hayworth, Vice Chancellor for Student Access and Success (SAS) & Director of American Indian Outreach, Sunny Day Real Bird	Ongoing
Recommendation 3: Department points of contact	Develop a clear and accessible list of department points of contact dedicated to supporting Native students on campus.	Annually reconfirm points of contact to account for departmental changes.	Financial Aid -Alora Blue, Financial Aid Specialist, (406) 657-1780, alora.blue@msubillings.edu Advising Center -Bryan Grove, Assistant Director, (406) 657-2169, bryan.grove@msubillings.edu Disability Support Services -Greg Gerard, Interim Director of Disability Support Services, (406) 657-2283, greg.gerard@msubillings.edu Student Health Services -Jerry Girard, Student Health Director, (406) 657-2153, jerry.girard@msubillings.edu Admissions Kealy Dowd, Associate Director of Recruitment, (406) 896-5910, kdowd@msubillings.edu Housing and Residence Life -Kathy Kotecki, Dean of Student Engagement, (406) 657-1696, kkotecki@msubillings.edu Human Resources -Paula Highlander, Human Resources Director, (406) 657-2117, paula.highlander@msubillings.edu Employment and Career Services Dr. Becky Lyons, Director of Career & Employment Services, (406)- 657-2168, blyons@msubillings.edu	Ongoing
Recommendation 4: Collect/Share/Analyze quantitative and qualitative data to guide and improve American Indian enrollment and student success.	Overall American Indian Info available to MSUB Campus: -OCHE Generated Data/Reports -MSUB Internal Aggregate Reports -American Indian Enrollment, Retention & Graduation Rate info. part of standard internal reporting	A. Semester reports on NA enrollment, retention, and graduation sent to admin. & Department Chairs. B. *Utilize data to make informed decisions & impact	Responsible Office: Information Tech. -Sunny Day Real Bird, Director of American Indian Outreach, (406) 657-2144, 2630 Normal Avenue -Joann Stryker, Institutional Research Director (*link 3) (406) 247-5752 303 McMullen Hall	Ongoing

	Detailed Student Level Info. 1. APEX Advisor/Enrollment several reports-student level data-enrollment, class list, not returning 2. Possible Modifications to Support AIMA. Add an American Indicator to record. 3. Argos American Indian Outreach Application-provides American Indian student list with contact information 4. Add Hoc Requests via online form (*link 1)	Strategic Plan		
Recommendation 5: Request campuses consider how to include American Indian voice in the search process when hiring campus leaders and assess leadership candidate's knowledge and experience working with American Indian students, faculty and staff.	Training and Orientation: -Develop interview questions that specifically address candidates' experience and understanding of working with American Indian students, faculty, and staff. -Offer cultural competency training for all search committee members to ensure a respectful and informed hiring process.	Develop Interview Questions and Evaluation Criteria: A. Collaborate with American Indian representatives to draft interview questions focusing on candidates' experience and initiatives involving American Indian communities. B. Establish clear criteria for evaluating candidates' responses and experiences. Cultural Competency Training: A. Provide resources and support for ongoing learning and sensitivity.	-Paula Highlander, Director of Human Resources, (406) 657-2117, paula.highlander@msubillings.edu -MSUB DEI Committee	Make necessary adjustments based on feedback and changing needs to ensure continuous improvement.

Recommendation 6: Provide annual professional development opportunities for all faculty and staff in the areas of Indian Education for All, American Indian culture and cultural sensitivity and the history of Montana's First Peoples.	OCHE version of a Higher Education IEFA. Providing annual professional development for both faculty and staff. A. Awarded grant to hire Faculty Liaison to offer ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty to enhance their cultural competence and awareness.	Work with Chancellor's Cabinet and HR to ensure every staff member completes the IEFA module.	-Paula Highlander, Director of Human Resources, (406) 657-2117, paula.highlander@msubillings.edu -Andrea Aebersold, Executive Director of Center for Teaching and Learning, (406) 657-247-5720, andrea.aebersold@msubillings.edu	Ongoing A. Academic Year 204/2025
Recommendation 7: Dissemination of professional development	The action plan is to seek support from Chancellor, Provost & Vice Chancellors to support 3, 4 & 5.	All new hires will view the higher ed. version of IEFA as part of new employee onboarding for all faculty and staff.	-Paula Highlander, Director of Human Resources, (406) 657-2117, paula.highlander@msubillings.edu -Supervisors	Ongoing
Recommendation 8: Strategy to Leverage Apply Montana and FAFSA Completion Initiatives to Support American Indian Students in Accessing the Montana University System	To improve access to the Montana University System for American Indian students, we will leverage Apply Montana and FAFSA completion initiatives. Our strategy includes partnering with Tribal education offices, local and tribal high schools, and community organizations to raise awareness and conduct informational sessions. We will provide one-on-one assistance through dedicated support lines and offer user-friendly guides. Staff and volunteers will be trained to ensure effective support. A tracking system will monitor completion rates, and follow-up communications will ensure timely submissions.	Work with TRIO Educational Opportunity Center and Office of Admissions. - Establish Partnerships - Create Resources - Plan and Conduct Outreach Events - Implement Tracking System - Follow-up Communications	TRIO Educational Opportunity Kimberly Kost, Academic Counselor, (406) 657-2182, Kimberly.kost@msubillings.edu -Laura Gittings-Carlson, Director of Advising and Student Support Services/TRIO, (406) 657-1668, l.gittingscarlson@msubillings.edu	Ongoing

Recommendation 9: Strengthen Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Develop Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) systems, structures, and processes to serve the campus community equitable through coordinated strategies to improve student retention and graduation rates.	Monthly meetings	-Ana K. Diaz, Ph. D Associate Professor, Philosophy Department of English, Philosophy, and Modern Languages, (406) 657-2923 -Jennifer Lynn, Ph. D Associate Professor, Department of History, Director, Women’s, and Gender Studies Center, (406) 657-2922 -Sunny Day Real Bird, Director of American Indian Outreach, (406) 657-2144, 2630 Normal Avenue	Ongoing
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*Link 1: <https://msubillings.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV38BBK33FrAhAll>

*Link 2: Joann.stryker@msubillings.edu