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Native American-Serving, Nontribal Institutions (NASNTIs) Survey of American Indian/Alaska Native Students in Higher Education

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WICHE
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

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Executive Summary

As the population of the United States grows more diverse, so do our institutions of higher education. Native American-Serving, Nontribal Institutions (NASNTIs) assist in educating the growing number of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students entering postsecondary education.

The findings presented in this survey analysis use information gathered from NASNTIs to formulate baseline data about these institutions and the students that they serve. It is the first WICHE survey of NASNTIs that seeks to paint a more vivid picture of the achievements and challenges of these institutions serving AI/AN students in higher education, where often little to no data are available to assist them. Survey data includes graduation and retention rates, as well as information not commonly collected, such as best practices for AI/AN student success and relationships with tribal communities that are often adjacent to these largely rural institutions.

The quantitative results from the survey focused on establishing baseline data on key student success measures – graduation, retention, and remediation rates. These data identified the range in current student success measures across the participating institutions. The data also identified gaps between AI/AN student graduation and retention rates and their White peers, as well as higher rates of participation for AI/AN students in remedial education. Although these data did not result in discernable patterns across each measure, they are useful benchmarks that will help the project team learn more about student success throughout the project.

The qualitative data gathered showed the unique nature of NASNTIs that have historic missions to serve AI/AN students and emphasize the importance of diversity in their missions and core values. The majority of institutions have embraced completion goals and are testing a variety of common high impact educational practices mixed with more localized approaches to aid in the success of AI/AN student achievement. Although cultural barriers exist for these students at largely public state colleges, institutions strive to reduce them through a variety of methods and interventions. Through increased communication and collaboration these NASNTIs can learn from each other and grow as they strive for academic success by sharing and creating best practices for AI/AN student attainment.

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Introduction

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) initiative titled *Reducing the Postsecondary Attainment Gap for American Indians and Alaska Natives: Linking Policy and Practice* seeks to expand educational opportunities and improve educational attainment of AI/AN students enrolled at NASNTIs through collective impact efforts. The goal of the initiative is to engage NASNTIs in a new consortium through networking and engagement strategies to support their efforts to increase AI/AN students' attainment rates and to formulate collective strategies to drive supportive policy implementation at the state and federal levels. Essential to these efforts are collecting institutional data and broadly disseminating institutional results. WICHE conducted a survey in early 2018 to gather baseline data related to AI/AN student attainment, policies, and best practices at Native American-Serving, Nontribal Institutions that will inform potential shared measurement systems, a key element to building collective strategies. These systems can improve the quality and credibility of the data collected as well as increase effectiveness by enabling institutions to learn from each other's successes and challenges around increasing attainment rates of AI/AN students.[1]

To improve support and outcomes for AI/AN students, institutions must understand where they are starting from and what specific challenges they face. However, numerous scholars have cited issues of data invisibility that continue to plague Native [American /Alaska Native] higher education despite numerous calls for action from education advocates across the country.[2] An objective in the WICHE project over the next three years is to enable NASNTIs to increase the available data for AI/AN students in higher education through intentional data collection as a community of practice – including a focus on data use, data gaps, assets, and proposed solutions to missing data elements. WICHE will build upon the data with input from the NASNTIs over the three-year project, so that there is increased data capacity regarding AI/AN students in higher education and a shared measurement system, which is essential to improving student outcomes and closing equity gaps.[3]

Background

The 2008 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965 included the granting of a special designation for institutions that have an undergraduate enrollment of at least 10 percent AI/AN students and that qualify for Title III status under the U.S. Department of Education.[4] The resulting designation - Native American - Serving, Nontribal Institutions - currently applies to 25 two- and four-year institutions that are commonly public and often located in rural and remote areas of the country adjacent to tribal nations.

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Data Collection Process

A total of 17 of the 24 identified NASNTIs responded to the WICHE survey, for a 68 percent response rate (see Appendix A for a list of the 17 NASNTIs). The institutions were almost split evenly between two-year (47 percent) and four-year (51 percent) institutions. The four-year institutions included one doctoral, four masters, and four baccalaureate institutions. They represent eight states: Alaska, Colorado, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Utah. Over half (53 percent) of the responding institutions are in Oklahoma. Five states in the WICHE region are represented among the NASNTIs (Alaska, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, and Utah).

The survey included 25 questions that captured both qualitative and quantitative data about the institutions. Participation in this research project was completely voluntary for the NASNTIs. There are no known risks to participation beyond those encountered in everyday life. Participant responses will remain confidential and data will only be reported in the aggregate, along with that of other NASNTIs.

Results and Analysis

The survey of NASNTIs included questions related to student outcomes, including graduation, retention, and remediation rates by race/ethnicity. These data provide insights about AI/AN student progression at NASNTIs compared to other population groups and help identify disparities in student outcomes. The analysis that follows includes descriptive statistics about the median and range (maximum/minimum) rates of outcomes that NASNTIs currently achieve with AI/AN and White students. These data, along with the robust qualitative responses from institutions, will help inform future discussions with NASNTIs in the project, such as goal-setting and establishing additional student success metrics. Survey results will also serve to increase the limited available data about AI/AN students in higher education.

Graduation Rates

Of the 17 responding institutions, eight are classified as public, four-year institutions and reported graduation rates based on 150 percent of typical completion time (within six years for students pursuing a bachelor's degree).[5] As shown in Table 1, across all institutions, the median graduation rate for AI/AN students attending public four-year institutions was 32 percent, which is lower than the national average graduation rate for AI/AN students (41 percent).[6] There was a range of 39 percent across the institutions, from 50 to 12 percent. The median graduation rate for White students attending the reporting institutions was 40 percent, which is 8 percent higher than AI/AN students. It is important to note that the institution with the highest AI/AN graduation rate also had the largest gap between White and AI/AN students (21 percent). The smallest gap was 3 percent.

Table 1: NASNTI Graduation Rates of Responding Institutions

FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

	AI/AN	White	Gap
Median	32%	40%	8%
Maximum	50%	72%	22%
Minimum	12%	17%	5%
Range	39%	55%	16%

TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

	AI/AN	White	Gap
Median	19%	29%	10%
Maximum	60%	61%	1%
Minimum	0%	5%	5%
Range	60%	56%	4%

Ten public two-year institutions reported graduation rates based on 150 percent of typical completion (which is within three years for a full-time student pursing a certificate or an associate degree).[7] The median graduation rate for AI/AN students attending these institutions was 19 percent compared to a median graduation rate of 29 percent among White students—a gap of 10 percent. Graduation rates at the reporting institutions ranged from 60 to 0 percent, with the majority of institutions reporting graduation rates between 15 and 32 percent. The institution with the highest reported graduation rates also had the smallest gap (1 percent), while the three largest gaps between White student graduation rates and AI/AN student graduation rates were at institutions with below average graduation rates. The median two-year graduation rate for AI/AN students at NASNTIs is 5 percentage points higher than the national average for public two-year institutions of 14 percent.[8]

Retention Rates

Seventeen NASNTIs provided retention rate data for both White and AI/AN students for Fall 2012 through Fall 2016—eight four-year institutions and nine two-year institutions. A five-year average was calculated with the available data for each institution.[9] The median reported retention rate for AI/AN students at four-year institutions was 62 percent, which was 6 percentage points lower than the reported median retention rate for White students (68 percent). Average reported retention rates among AI/AN students at four-year institutions ranged from 79 to 44 percent. One institution reported a higher AI/AN retention rate, on average between Fall 2012 and Fall 2016, compared to White students. Among the other seven institutions, AI/AN retention rates ranged from 20 percent to 1 percent lower than White students. The median retention rate of 62 percent for AI/AN students is slightly lower by two percentage points, than the national average of 64 percent.[10]

The median reported retention rate for AI/AN and White students was lower at two-year institutions compared to four-year institutions, 44 and 52 percent, respectively. Reported retention rates for AI/AN students attending the nine two-year institutions ranged from 55 to 25 percent, on average between Fall 2012 and Fall 2016. One institution reported a higher retention rate of AI/AN students compared to White students, while all other institutions reported retention rates 1 to 14 percent lower than White students. Similar to four-year institutions, the national average retention rate at two-year institutions (47 percent) was slightly higher than two-year NASNTIs.[11]

Table 2: NASNTI Retention Rates of Responding Institutions

FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

	AI/AN	White	Gap
Median	62%	68%	6%
Maximum	79%	84%	5%
Minimum	44%	64%	10%
Range	35%	21%	14%

TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

	AI/AN	White	Gap
Median	44%	52%	8%
Maximum	55%	61%	6%
Minimum	25%	28%	3%
Range	30%	33%	3%

First- to second-year retention is a commonly used measure of student success, and those students who start their second year have been found to be more likely to persist to graduation.[12] Accordingly, it may be expected that those institutions with higher retention rates would also have higher graduation rates. Among four-year institutions that participated in the survey, the three institutions with the highest retention rates also had the highest graduation rates. However, the pattern was different among two-year institutions. Among the three institutions with the highest graduation rates, two had retention rates below the average for participating two-year institutions.

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Remediation Rates

Twelve NASNTIs reported remediation rates for AI/AN and all students for the past five academic years (2012-13 to 2016-17). Based on these data, a five-year average was calculated for each institution. The median average remediation rate for AI/AN students was 44 percent, which was 4 percent higher than the reported median for all students attending these institutions.[13] There were differences in remediation rates between four- and two-year institutions. The median reported remediation rate at four-year institutions was 44 percent for AI/AN students compared to 39 percent for all students. Remediation rates for AI/AN students attending four-year institutions ranged from 5 to 67 percent. The median reported remediation rate for AI/AN students attending two-year institutions was 51 percent, which was eight percent higher than the reported remediation rate for all students during the same period (44 percent). Remediation rates for AI/AN students at responding two-year institutions ranged from 18 to 77 percent, which was a wider range than remediation rates for all students.[14] Although participation in remedial education has been shown to correlate with reduced student completion, there was no discernable pattern between remediation rates and retention and graduation rates.[15] For example, institutions with low remediation rates also had low graduation rates, while there were institutions that had above average remediation rates that had above average graduation rates.

Responding institutions were asked "how they define remediation services." There was considerable variation among NASNTIs in how students' needs for additional academic support were addressed. One institution does not offer remedial education and two other institutions only mentioned using co-requisite or co-curricular models. Of those institutions that do offer remediation, placement is largely determined by ACT/SAT scores with the use of ACCUPLACER to further test students' skill levels. There are a variety of methods that institutions use within remediation services, such as embedded tutoring, fast track sequencing of remedial courses for students that scored high in ACCUPLACER, and courses emphasizing skills for college success. One institution offers specialized services for AI/AN students through its Native American Support Center or Tribal Studies programs.

NASNTIs with low remediation gaps, with less than 5 percent differences in remediation rates between AI/AN and all students, have implemented some traditional models of remediation services, such as supplemental tutoring and co-curricular offerings. Some of the NASNTIs with the highest overall remediation rates for both AI/AN and all students offered developmental courses. Of note is that one NASNTI's five-year average remediation rate for AI/AN students was lower than its rate for all students.

The student success measures included in the survey did not result in identifiable patterns of difference in performance among the institutions. While there were institutions that had low remedial rates and high retention and graduation rates, there was a significant amount of variation in student success measures at individual institutions and across the participating institutions. Future surveys will seek further insight into this variability and make deeper connections between current implemented strategies and student outcomes.

Top Majors of Study

The 17 responding institutions each reported between six and 10 top majors of study for AI/AN students, for a total of 164 responses. Among the top five majors that were reported by the institutions, Business Administration was the most commonly cited major for AI/AN students (16 responses). Other top five majors included: Education, General Studies, Criminal Justice, and Nursing (Table 3).

Table 3: American Indian/Alaska Native Top Five Majors of Study

Field of Study	Number of Responses
Business Administration	16
Education	15
General Studies	11
Criminal Justice	10
Nursing	9

Mission and Composition of Student Body

Diversity at NASNTIs is demonstrated in rich historic missions, core values, and increasingly large numbers of students of color attending these institutions. A majority of institutions (88 percent) responded that their NASNTI designation or commitment to AI/AN students is reflected in their mission, vision, and/or core values, either fully or somewhat (Table 4). Most institutions site commitments to AI/AN in the mission statements or core values, such as one, for example, that *"promotes diverse students, aligning pedagogy to traditional Native American values, needs, and learning styles."* Other exemplary mission statements include language describing the institution as founded on the *"rich educational heritage of the Cherokee Nation,"* as prioritizing *"foster[ing] tribal relationships,"* and as *"honoring the region's indigenous cultures."*

Table 4: Institutional Designation or Commitment to AI/AN students

Q1: As a designated Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution (NASNTI) is your designation or commitment to American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students reflected in your institution's mission, vision, and/or core values?		
Yes: 7	No: 2	Somewhat: 8

Almost a quarter of the institutions (four) have more than one minority status and are therefore designated both a NASNTI and a Minority Serving Institution (MSI), in which 50 percent of the student body is comprised of minority students.[16] One institution is on the cusp of having more than one status with a student body comprised of 47 percent minority students. Two institutions noted that their Hispanic and AI/AN student enrollments exceeded 50 percent, which combined to qualify them as MSIs.

Completion Goals

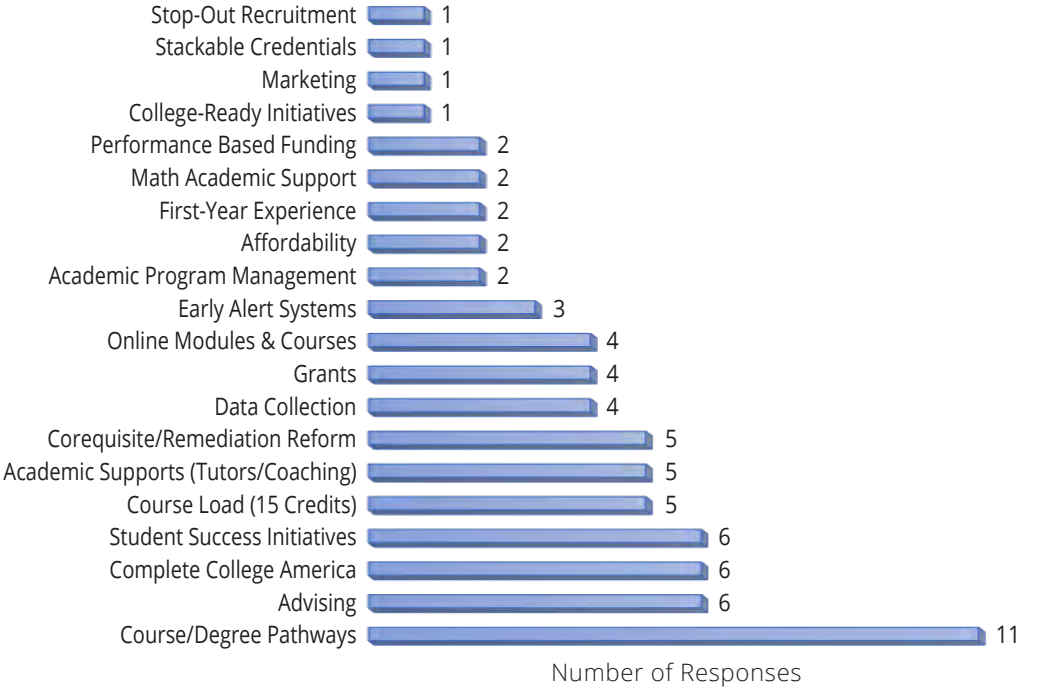
Three quarters of the NASNTIs have adopted completion goals for their students (Table 5). Of the institutions that have adopted completion goals, the majority are using data-driven methods that establish graduation goals and measure yearly benchmarks. For institutions that have AI/AN specific completion goals, they seek to either increase the overall graduation rate or narrow the gap between White (non-Hispanic) and AI/AN students. Some strategies that are commonly used are co-requisite models of course delivery to increase persistence in gateway courses, cultural activities, and peer mentoring. Institutions identified their NASNTI, Title III grants as supplementing efforts to promote degree completion on their campuses. The NASNTIs that replied "no" either had unofficial completion goals or had them under development.

Table 5: Percentage of NASNTIs with Student Completion Goals

Q4: Has your college/university adopted completion goals for its students? If so, what are those goals and your timeline for achieving them?	
Yes: 13 (76%)	No: 4 (24%)

Eighty-eight percent of the responding institutions are in states in which the state government has adopted goals for improving student attainment, with institutions responding by adopting a variety of strategies. Figure 1 details the diverse strategies adopted by the institutions, representing well-known national initiatives, such as Student Success Collaborative and Complete College America, as well as more localized approaches.

Figure 1: NASNTI Institutional Strategies for Increasing Completion Rates



Degree pathways is the most utilized tool, although institutions varied widely in their approach including focuses on: completion of math gateway courses, semester-to-semester maps, default semester schedules for each degree, *Jobs for the Future*, and an equivalent project that bridges career technical courses to a certificate and Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree. Localized approaches included initiatives to recruit students who have temporarily stopped out or dropped out, and college-ready initiatives in the high schools to reduce remediation in postsecondary education.

Table 6: Percentage of NASNTIs with Completion Goals for Minority Students

Q6: As a follow up to the previous question, does your college/university have specific completion outcomes for minority students?		
Yes: 5 (29%)	No: 10 (59%)	Not Answered: 2 (12%)

Responding institutions that have completion goals for minority students (Table 6) use performance metrics related to increasing completion rates, retention rates, and grade point averages. Most have utilized their NASNTI Title III grants to target specific completion outcomes for AI/AN students and to develop and pilot services for low-income and AI/AN students that are locally relevant to their student body. One campus, with a student body that is comprised of 86 percent AI/AN students, created an online student support system that utilizes an "early alert system" model to define quality interventions to increase the academic success of its AI/AN students. Respondents that do not have specific completion outcome goals for minority students tend to engage in holistic approaches for all students and utilize data analytics to address student completion issues through participation in national organizations, such as Complete College America (CCA) or the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Persistence and Completion Academy.

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Barriers to Completion

The barriers to degree completion for AI/AN students identified by NASNTIs revealed considerable commonality and demonstrated which barriers have the highest impact on student completion. Table 7 provides the most frequently mentioned barriers that have an impact on degree completion. Financial barriers were identified most often by institutions as having the highest impact on college completion. Some financial barriers mentioned included: 1) students working more hours that lead them to struggle with their commitment to education; 2) supporting a household while attending school, 3) students coming from communities that have poverty rates up to three times the national average, 4) difficulty navigating the scholarship and financial aid process, 5) rural students that have above-average financial needs, and 6) financial stress.

When considering all responses related to barriers to degree completion (including those identified as having the highest impact), financial barriers was the second-most cited barrier with academic preparation being the most frequent factor that prevents or interrupts degree completion. Academic preparation barriers identified included high levels of remediation in reading/writing and math, lack of study skills for college rigor, challenges related to the need for academic and student support that create extra barriers preventing students from making effective use of available college/university resources, and inadequate math and science preparation.

Table 7: Barriers to AI/AN Student Degree Completion

Q7: Identify barriers to degree completion for AI/AN students based on their work with them, in order of highest to lowest-impact in order to formulate collective strategies to drive supportive policy implementation at the state and federal levels.

Most Frequently Mentioned Barriers	Number of Responses
Academic Preparation	17
Financial Barriers	15
Family Obligations	13
Lack of College-Going Knowledge	6
Cultural Barriers	5

The third-highest barrier to completion identified by responding institutions was family obligations. Institutions responded that AI/AN students juggle many family obligations, have higher absentee rates, and struggle to re-engage in coursework when they return to campus. Respondents stated that AI/AN students often support their extended family and when emergency situations arise (such as loss of a loved one, a job loss, and/or health issues) they sometimes must place their education at the bottom of the priority list. Within this scope of barriers, other issues, such as childcare/family struggles, work/life balance, living away from home and community, and financial stress were also identified as issues affecting degree completion. Along similar lines, some institutions noted that a lack of family support for the college going member could impact student completion. Responding institutions also identified transportation issues, such as lack of gas money, unreliable transportation, or a lack of transportation, as being among the highest barriers to completion.

Taken together, the barriers to academic success identified by NASNTIs reveal that AI/AN students struggle to meet basic needs, especially in terms of finances and transportation, in their efforts to fully engage in college. In addition, family obligations appear to be particularly high priorities for AI/AN students and present specific conditions for the NASNTIs to address. While many NASNTIs are pursuing various high-impact educational practices to increase academic attainment for AI/AN students, many of the barriers described as most commonly affecting AI/AN students' progress fall outside of teaching and learning related interventions.

Professional Development

Respondents overwhelmingly expressed a need for professional development opportunities with other NASNTIs and provided a number of specific areas of interest. Foremost, NASNTIs were interested in learning about strategies to improve AI/AN student success. There was specific interest in services being utilized by AI/AN students to meet their academic needs, strategies to address socioemotional needs of AI/AN students struggling in postsecondary education, and models of effective advising for AI/AN students. Respondents also saw a need for discussion of how to effect long-term change with an AI/AN student population by emphasizing self-reliance, and strategies to support AI/AN students in first year transitions (Table 8). Other areas of interest to explore further related to academic success, such as effective strategies to improve degree completion, retention, and persistence.

For academic program professional development, institutions identified a need for more information in areas such as culturally responsive pedagogy and curricula, learning strategies, developing a survey of AI/AN-focused programs at NASNTIs, implementing eLearning courses in remote/rural areas, and increasing faculty involvement.

Responding institutions also identified cultural awareness and cultural barriers as a third potential area of professional development, with possible webinars focused on the following topics: 1) cultural traditions, 2) campus involvement, 3) strategies to address cultural barriers, 4) culturally relevant role models with a history of college success, 5) challenges of cross-cultural negation needed for success of predominately non-Native campuses, 6) facilitating mentoring, and 7) better understanding of AI/AN students for faculty and staff at NASNTIs.

Table 8: Issues Identified for Future Professional Development and Exploration

Q18: Each year of the project, we plan to convene leaders of NSIs and host webinars regarding issues that are unique to serving high numbers of AI/AN students. What issues would your institution prioritize for discussion with other NSIs?

AI/AN Student Success
Academic Programs/Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
Retention Strategies
Cultural Awareness/Cultural Barriers AI/AN
Student Motivation
Institutional Financial Resources
Partnerships
Academic Preparation
Tribal Relations
Student Financial Barriers/Financial Literacy
AI/AN Higher Education Policy

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Respondents were asked about future professional development opportunities that would be most valuable to improve AI/AN attainment rates. Table 9 shows that NASNTIs have a desire to develop and share best practices related to AI/AN student success with each other. There are a variety of areas of best practices that the group would like to develop but further review and prioritization of the areas is needed, due to the large number and variety of responses given by NASNTIs. Data analytics is clearly an area of commonality for professional development, particularly for data mining related to decision-making, and for the ability to create effective strategies for AI/AN students. The desire for increased networking and collaboration among the NASNTIs in areas such as pursuing grant opportunities, leveraging state/federal resources, and transferable degrees was the third predominant area that would be most valuable to NASNTIs.

Table 9: Frequently Mentioned Professional Development Topics

Q21: What types of information or professional development opportunities would be most valuable to your staff interested in improving AI/AN attainment rates (e.g. sharing best practices, effective policy development, using big data, etc.)?

Best Practices	Instructional strategies, retention/completion, coaching and advising, STEM education, developing new strategies, enrollment management, regional workforce needs
Utilizing Big Data	Data mining (analytics), identifying AI/AN achievement gaps, decision making, identifying effective strategies, and qualitative/quantitative data collection
Financial Resources	Grant opportunities, partnering for efficiency, leverage state federal resources, grant-writing instruction, understanding T3 NASNTI grants
Culturally Appropriate Pedagogy	Curriculum development, appropriate speakers
Instruction	Online learning, technology use, eLearning
Collaboration	Network and relationship among NASNTIs, funding opportunities, partnerships with K12, tribal, transferable degrees
Increased Involvement	Family support, campus, effective communication, faculty engagement
Policy Development	Effective policy development and institutional support
Diversity/Inclusivity Training	Staff, faculty, teaching cultural awareness
Financial Literacy for Students	How to fund college and manage financial resources
Career Setting	Job market trends, career and goal analysis
Residency vs. Commuter	Student needs and associated outcomes

NASNTIs also expressed interest in collaborations with other MSIs to share effective strategies related to AI/AN student-success approaches, surveys of graduates, creating a database of best practices and policies, programs for first-year college students, designing better academic programs to foster AI/AN degree attainment, developing tribal partnerships, strengthening relationships between secondary schools and postsecondary institutions, early intervention strategies, and surveys of successful AI/AN graduates about how they overcame educational challenges to achieve academic success.

These findings indicate that with their strong interest in AI/AN student success, coupled with their desire to share best practices, NASNTIs can build a community of interest through their shared expertise and experiences. Future planned professional networking opportunities provided through the WICHE initiative will allow NASNTIs to learn from each other, while further contributing to the scarce body of knowledge about AI/AN student achievement.

State/Federal Policies

As part of the project, WICHE plans to analyze institutional, state, and federal policies related to AI/AN student degree attainment. A total of 64 percent of the respondents said that they would find sharing best practices related to policies for underserved students, particularly AI/AN students, as the most beneficial. Also of particular interest were federal policy issues regarding IPEDS data disaggregation, better understanding of financial aid policies, and staying current with federal policies overall, especially those that may impact federal funding opportunities. An additional area of interest was the creation of institutional policies that promote cultural responsiveness, both in and out of the classroom; guidance in implementing culturally specific goals for institutional mission, vision and values; and anti-bias training.

Tribal Relations

Responding institutions were asked if they have a local Tribal Advisory Committee or Tribal Relations Office. Forty-one percent of the NASNTIs have an American Indian Advisory Council/Committee. Advisory committees either served overarching purposes or specific ad hoc functions. Committees are commonly comprised of local tribal members who represent tribal government offices, such as the tribal education departments or tribal language and cultural departments. Two exemplary models of committees and structures that were shared are:

- An American Indian Advisory Committee (AIAC) established in the 1980s. The committee is advisory to the chancellor and meets on campus with the chancellor, other administrators, faculty, staff, and student representatives at least twice per year. The AIAC is comprised of educational leaders in the state, including a former tribal education director, the former directors of Indian Education in state K-12 school districts, the director of Native American Student Services at a private college in the state, and the former TRIO Student Support Services Coordinator at a nearby tribal college. Some of the members are the institutions' alumni and others have children that attended the institution. The AIAC is committed to the educational

attainment and success of Native American students at the institution. They have identified support for indigenous language revitalization as their highest priority for the campus.

- Another institution utilized: 1) 2008-11 Advisory Committee on Promoting Native American Achievement through the College's Health Care Programs; 2) 2011-15 Fast Forward Native American Advisory Council; and 3) 2017-21 Guided Pathway for Students: Career & Transfer Connections Advisory Council. Stakeholders on these advisory councils were from other four-year institutions, the college's in-house faculty/staff (i.e., Native American Center, Library), and members of area tribes. Issues addressed included: computer-assisted learning (for students to become familiar with learning platforms such as CANVAS and Blackboard) or having access to the internet for online learning, test-taking curriculum (specific to certification for health or education majors), advising students from day one to graduation/transfer, difficulties of maintaining a cohort, student workshops on financial aid, test-taking, technology, and online course support.

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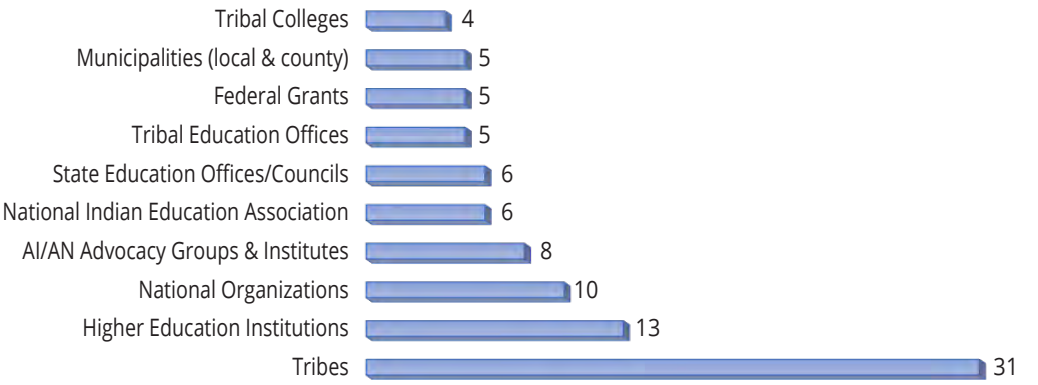
Niche Analysis

Some survey questions were designed to assist in the development of a niche analysis that will continue to be refined over the course of the WICHE project to understand where NASNTIs fit in the higher education and policy environment among organizations working to improve AI/AN student educational attainment. NASNTIs as a subgroup of the larger minority-serving institution umbrella have yet to define their unique fit into this group.[17]

The niche analysis will collect and identify partners in this work for NASNTIs, the institutions that currently serve large numbers of the AI/AN students in higher education and to raise stakeholders' awareness about them and the students they serve. This will be particularly relevant in the higher education policy arena where AI/AN education policy is determined mainly by federal agencies, such as the Department of Interior, with little to no interaction with state policymakers or policy-setting related to public institutions. The niche analyses will enable NASNTIs to begin to collectively formulate a strategy by identifying key partners, should they desire to mobilize and add their voices to the national dialogue regarding minority serving institutions. Over time, this effort could lead to heightened awareness and collaborations among policymakers, education institutions,

federal agencies, state agencies, education advocacy organization, higher education policy community and tribal communities with the overarching goal of improving AI/AN students' educational attainment.

Figure 2: Organizations that NASNTIs Work with to Improve AI/AN Student Success



The survey asked NASNTIs to "list the organizations that they work with to improve AI/AN student success." By far, tribal nations were the lead partners in this work, as approximately 14 tribal nations were identified and were cited three times more frequently than any other organization (Figure 2). Notably, too, many of the tribes identified do not have a Tribal College. Those responding institutions with nearby Tribal Colleges tended to identify them as partners for MOUs and articulation agreements. The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) stood out as the national organization that institutions most frequently work with. Tribal Education Departments were also identified, primarily as sources for financial aid advising and consultation. Other higher education institutions were also commonly mentioned resources for NASNTIs, especially those offering specialized STEM programs and Diversity and Access Centers. Lastly, a variety of national organizations were mentioned, such as the Student Success Collaborative, Center for Digital Storytelling, American Association of Community Colleges, and the Native Alliance Against Violence. Most NASNTIs have staff members who attend the American Association of State Colleges and Universities or the American Association of Community Colleges annual meetings.

Over half of the NASNTIs have various partnerships with other NASNTIs or Tribal Colleges and Universities (Table 10). Oklahoma has the largest number of NASNTIs and uses a listserv for inter-institutional communications. Other NASNTIs have 2+2 transfer arrangements, teacher training grants, articulation agreements, and federal grant partnerships. In addition, three NASNTIs participate in the Navajo Nation Teacher Consortium. All the identified organizations and institutions involved in American Indian and Alaska Native postsecondary education will be part of the Niche Analysis.

Table 10: Successful Partnerships with other NASNTIs or Tribal Colleges & Universities

Q22: Please describe any successful partnerships or general coordination that your institution currently has or has had in the past with other Native-Serving Institutions or Tribal Colleges and Universities.

Respondents with other NASNTI or TCU partnerships or collaborations	11
Respondents without other NASNTI or TCU partnerships or collaborations	3
No Response	3

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In sum, these findings show that NASNTIs have a wide variety of partnerships with Tribal Nations and other organizations interested in serving AI/AN students that are uncommon to most institutions of higher education. This project premises that NASNTIs can and should galvanize this larger network by combining resources, knowledge, and expertise to both increase recognition and knowledge about AI/AN education successes and overcome the unique challenges AI/AN students face in higher education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The NASNTIs that participated in the survey have a strong desire to work together to share best practices related to better serving AI/AN students in higher education. While the data reported in the survey shows a number of barriers and ongoing challenges, they also indicate progress for AI/AN students at some institutions, which can be a benefit to others. For example, the graduation rate gap between AI/AN and White students at one bachelor-granting institution among the NASNTIs is only 1 percent, which would indicate that other institutions might be able to emulate some of the best practices used at that institution. The median graduation rate at the two-year NASNTIs was five percentage points higher than the national average. Retention at one of the bachelor's degree-granting institutions was higher for AI/AN students than for White (non-Hispanic) students. Challenges persist with remediation, as AI/AN students are overrepresented in remedial instruction at all of the NASNTIs. These quantitative benchmarks will support the analysis of student outcomes throughout the project and can be used to demonstrate institutional progress in utilizing student success strategies.

Responding NASNTIs identified several common barriers to student-attainment and degree completion that demonstrate the need for further discussion and information sharing, so the institutions can focus on specific topics for professional development and the discovery of effective practices. Many respondents noted that federal financial assistance provided through discretionary Title III grants have supplied NASNTIs with resources that would otherwise be unavailable to them to develop and pilot additional services to increase AI/AN student success. Continuation of the Title III grants is essential to NASNTIs' individual and collective ongoing efforts to improve AI/AN postsecondary attainment.

Going forward over the next three years, it will be advantageous for NASNTIs and WICHE project staff to determine the criteria to assess and define "best practices." In addition, two future survey ideas were proposed by respondents: 1) develop a survey of AI/AN-focused programs at NASNTIs that infuse cultural relevance into the curricula; and 2) Develop a survey of successful AI/AN graduates to ascertain the successes and challenges they experienced in completing their degree. Interestingly, these recommended investigations would result in increased knowledge to underpin and validate curricular and other supports for AI/AN student success in higher education.

The survey findings demonstrate that NASNTIs share a strong commitment to AI/AN student educational and career success. Through collaboration and collective action, they can build a body of knowledge on effective student-centered education practices and policies that will improve AI/AN students' academic outcomes and better acknowledge and value their cultural heritage, knowledge, and abilities.

Endnotes

[1] Mark Kramer, Marcie Parkhurst, and Lalitha Vaidyanathan, "Breakthroughs in Shared Measurement and Social Impact," FSG Social Impact Advisors, 2009.

[2] Lorelle Espinosa, Jonathan M. Turk Jonathan, and Morgan Taylor, "Pulling Back the Curtain Enrollment and Outcomes at Minority-Serving Institutions," American Council on Education, 2017; and Braybow, Bryan, "Hiding in the Ivy: American Indian Students and Visibility in Elite Educational Settings," 2004; and Stephanie Fryberg, Nicole Stephens, "When the World is Colorblind, American Indians are Invisible: A Diversity Science Approach," 2010.

[3] John Kania and Mark Kramer, "Collective Impact" *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2011.

[4] U.S. Department of Education, title III, Part A, Sec 319 of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, as amended 20 usc 1059f, https://www2.ed.gov/programs/nasnti/legislation.html.

[5] Institution classification is based on data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data.

[6] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2002 through Spring 2013 and Winter 2013-14 through Winter 2015-16, Graduation Rates component; and IPEDS Fall 2009, Institutional Characteristics component. (This table was prepared October 2016.)

[7] One institution that serves both baccalaureate and associate seeking students reported both two- and four-year graduation rates.

[8] Lauren Musu-Gillette, Cristobal De Brey, Joel McFarland, et al, "Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2017," National Center of Education Statistics, NCES 2017-051, US Department of Education, July 2017.

[9] Two institutions reported data for less than five years. An average was calculated based on the data provided.

[10] National Center for Education Statistics, "The Condition of Education," 2017 Spotlights, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_tsc.asp.

[11] IBID.

[12] Lorenzo Esters, "Five Key Measures of Success in the First Year of College," Strada Education Network.

[13] The remediation rates for all students includes AI/AN students as well as students from all other populations.

[14] A national comparison of remediation rates for AI/AN students was not available.

[15] Bridget Terry Long, "Addressing the Academic Barriers to Higher Education," Brookings Institute, 2014.

[16] Minority-Serving Institutions—NCES has determined that each of the colleges and universities on this list reported an enrollment of a single minority group, as the term "minority" is defined under § 365(2) of the HEA (20 U.S.C. § 1067k(2)) [1], or combination of those minority groups, that exceeded 50 percent of its total enrollment.

[17] IPEDS data retrieved November 2017, *Source: NCES, IPEDS, Fall Enrollment 2015*.

Appendix A:

List of Participating Institutions in the WICHE Survey*

Carl Albert State College
East Central University
Fort Lewis University
Kodiak College
Montana State University Northern
New Mexico State University, Grants
Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College
Northeastern State University
Northern Oklahoma College
San Juan College
Seminole State College
Unversity of Minnesota, Morris
University of North Carolina, Pembroke
University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma
Utah State University Eastern - Blanding

* Two institutions chose not to be identified in this report.

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