

AN ACADEMIC PLAN
For Indian Education for All
For the Montana University System

In developing an academic plan concerning Indian Education for All for the Montana University System, the Board of Regents:

- recognizes that Article X of the Montana Constitution affirms “. . .the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians” and commits the State “. . .in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural heritage.”
- recognizes that Section 20-1-501 of the Montana Codes Annotated (MCA) requires the K-12 community to teach all students about “. . .the cultural heritage and contemporary contributions of American Indians, with particular emphasis on Montana Indian tribal groups and governments.”
- recognizes that, in the view of many policymakers, the expectations of Section 20-1-501, MCA, are not as clear cut and determinable so far as the Montana University System is concerned.
- recognizes that a comprehensive Policy Statement on American Indian Studies was adopted by the Board in 2000, despite the uncertainty noted above. That policy statement “. . .willingly accept(s) and fully commit(s) to the obligations and responsibilities with regard to Indian education mandated by Article X of the Montana Constitution and MCA 20-1-501. . .”
- recognizes that the Policy Statement does not specifically address the issue of **academic programs or research** concerning Indian Education for All, however, except for a broad statement that directs academic leaders to “. . .ensure that the curriculum is enhanced by the infusion of content that fosters multicultural awareness. . .”
- believes, therefore, that a more focused plan concerning undergraduate programs, undergraduate curriculum, professional development activities and Montana University System research is appropriate.

The plan establishes priorities, set out in the order of their importance. The priorities are as follows:

- 1) **Priority Number 1:** Because Section 20-1-501 MCA requires the K-12 system to provide education concerning the cultural heritage and contemporary contributions of American Indians, with particular emphasis on Montana Indian tribal groups and governments, all teacher education programs in the Montana University System have an obligation to ensure that their pre-service teachers have acquired the knowledge, skills and dispositions to meet that statutory mandate. At a minimum, that obligation includes instruction in the seven essential understandings, developed by the Office of Public Instruction (OPI), so that pre-service candidates are prepared to incorporate that material appropriately into their classrooms or their work in the K-12 system. As OPI and its educational partners develop new content standards, with Indian Education for All imbedded throughout those standards, the preparation of pre-service teacher candidates will increase significantly. Teacher education programs are already acutely aware of this responsibility, and many of them have taken important steps to prepare

their students. All teacher education programs are urged to keep abreast of these changes and to incorporate appropriate material into their educational curriculum as the Indian Education for All project evolves at the K-12 level. Eventually, it may be appropriate to develop a special permissive endorsement or teaching minor in Indian Education for All, in consultation with the appropriate K-12 partners.

- 2) **Priority Number 2:** Because of the expertise and research activities in place on many of the campuses, the Montana University System should play a leadership role in providing in-service educational opportunities for K-12 teachers, staff and school boards on the subject of Indian Education for All. The campuses of the Montana University System should also provide professional development opportunities for all of its academic personnel, so they are prepared to do their part to advance the educational goals of Article X, Section 1(2) of the Montana Constitution.
- 3) **Priority Number 3:** Every campus of the Montana University System is expected to comply with Montana Board of Regents' policy 303.5, which requires that each of those institutions must ". . .offer a formal course of American Indian study developed with the advice and assistance of Indian people." Minimum compliance with this policy means that every campus must offer one course, at least once a year, in its schedule of classes. The course should be based on the seven essential understandings developed by the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI), with particular emphasis on Montana Indian tribal groups and governments. Those understandings are appropriate, since full implementation of Indian Education for All in the K-12 system is several years away, and most students who enter the Montana University System for the foreseeable future will not have that comprehensive preparation.
- 4) **Priority Number 4:** To honor the spirit of Article X of the Montana Constitution and its educational goals, and to advance the intent of Board of Regents' Policy 1902 on Minority Achievement, which established a goal for higher education "to enhance the overall curriculum by infusion of content which enhances multicultural awareness and understanding," every campus of the Montana University System should attempt to supplement the K-12 Indian Education for All mandate with its own postsecondary coursework. That could be done in a variety of ways, including the specific course described in Priority Number 3, multiple course offerings, campus-specific general education requirements, learning outcomes that are imbedded throughout a program of study, degree-specific requirements, postsecondary coursework that builds on the K-12 Indian Education for All experience and so on.
- 5) **Priority Number 5:** In carrying out its important research function, when that research involves Indian tribes or Indian people, campus personnel in the Montana University System must be respectful and sensitive. To ensure that appropriate behavior:
 - researchers must follow relevant tribal laws and customs in conducting their research in tribal communities;
 - every institution conducting such research must adopt a policy concerning indigenous intellectual property rights; the policy in place at The University of Montana-Missoula should serve as a model for campuses that do not have such a policy currently; and

--every institution must recognize that Indian people are a vulnerable population, as that concept is defined by Federal law, and must conduct the work of its institutional review board accordingly.

Since the Montana University System is not anticipating additional funding for this plan, its priorities must be implemented with existing resources. Any priorities requiring an additional fiscal commitment on the part of the campuses can only be implemented through the reallocation of existing resources. Priorities 1, 3 and 4 may require that reallocation.

In addition to these five priorities, the Montana Board of Regents should establish a process to remain informed about Indian Education for All in Montana. To that end, the Board

- endorses the continuation of an on-going work group on Indian Education for All, similar to the group that developed this plan. One of its responsibilities should be a process for monitoring the provisions of this plan.
- supports the exploration of options to establish an external Indian Education for All advisory group for the Board of Regents and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, including the appropriateness of utilizing the tribal college or tribal elder meetings held at least once a year at The University of Montana-Missoula and Montana State University-Bozeman.

This plan should not be considered the final word on the subject of Indian Education for All in the Montana University System. This academic plan should be re-evaluated as the K-12 program evolves and matures, and as new revenue sources become available for this effort.