

# The University of Montana's Key Imperatives for Excellence in Native American Education

President's Native American Advisory Council  
2021

## Background and Significance

Native American (American Indian, Alaska Native, & Native Hawaiian) students, faculty, and staff at the University of Montana represent a vital part of the campus community. Diversity matters and enriches the educational environment of academic excellence for everyone. However, Native Americans are earning advanced academic degrees at a much lower rate than their non-Native counterparts, and are subsequently underrepresented in workforce positions that require such degrees. As a public institution in the State of Montana that benefits from and values indigenous perspectives, and as an educational institution committed to the success of Native students, we aim to do better by promoting academic equity for Native Americans.

The following represents a collaboration between UM faculty, students, staff, administrators, campus community members, and Native American community members. This document outlines six key imperatives in UM's efforts to become a model of excellence for Native Americans.

## Overarching Goals

The University of Montana will:

- Be a model for Native education nationwide by preparing, supporting, and learning from our Native students, faculty, and staff.
- Acknowledge the uniqueness of our Native populations; incorporate Native cultural knowledge and historical experience into our curriculum, pedagogy, and administrative approaches; cultivate reciprocal collaboration with Tribal communities and ensure pathways to the University and into meaningful careers.
- Create systems of support and enrichment aimed at providing opportunities to achieve excellence for Native Americans at UM.

## Key Imperatives

1. Perform foundational quantitative and qualitative data collection, allowing for informed assessments of Native student experiences at UM, as well as use of those assessments to design and refine the programming outlined below.
  2. Offer robust and inclusive engagement activities to create a strong sense of community for Native students at UM.
  3. Provide comprehensive support services to empower and assist Native students in navigating their UM education.
  4. Incorporate knowledge of Natives cultures and histories into UM’s curriculum and student support services.
  5. Collaborate with tribal communities — particularly tribal colleges — to support and build educational pathways for students to achieve their education goals.
  6. Develop opportunities for novel scholarship, creative works, service, and teaching collaborations for Native students, staff, faculty, and alumni at the University of Montana. Emphasize in particular career readiness and internship/externship support for Native students.
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### Key Imperative #1

*Perform foundational quantitative and qualitative data collection, allowing for informed assessments of Native student experiences at UM, as well as use of those assessments to design and refine the programming outlined below.*

#### Current Assets

Existing Initiatives and Programs
American Indian Student Services annual reporting
Native American Studies program review
Native American Student Advisory Council survey
Annual Climate Survey (students)
Annual Employee Engagement Survey (employees)
Annual Faculty Survey of Administration (Faculty)
OCHE dashboard

## Proposed Activities

Strategy	Key Actions	Accountable Owner	Supporters
Perform annual assessment of Native student experience and success to identify effective engagement programs and existing needs	<p>Collect data and anecdotal evidence</p> <p>Plan and Implement a study of Native American student financial aid, use of the NA tuition waiver, higher education support, and UM scholarship resources</p> <p>Identify units already collecting data</p>	Vice Provost Student Success (co-curricular)	<p>Student Support Units</p> <p>American Indian Student Services</p> <p>Native American Studies</p> <p>Financial Aid</p>

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## Key Imperative #2

*Offer robust and inclusive engagement activities to create a strong sense of community for Native students at UM.*

## Current Assets

Existing Initiatives and Programs
<p>American Indian Student Services</p> <p>Diversity Advisory Council</p> <p>Native American Studies</p> <p>Kiyi Student Group and Pow Wow</p> <p>American Indian Business Leaders</p> <p>Pacific Islanders Club</p> <p>Willow Project (Native Faculty)</p> <p>LEARN Missoula</p> <p>GEAR Up</p> <p>College of Humanities and Sciences first-year seminar</p> <p>UMCH Endowment Fund Program</p> <p>Native American Studies Scholarship Initiative</p> <p>Native American Natural Resource Program</p> <p>Soup Wednesdays</p> <p>Study Jam</p>

Peer Mentoring Program  
 HCOP  
 MT AIMS  
 Native American Youth Conference  
 NAS and Indigenous Conference  
 Welcome Back, Student Honors Achievement, and Graduation Events  
 DiverseU  
 Upward Bound/TRiO  
 SEA Change Director  
 American Indian Support and Development Council  
 Native American Student Advisory Council

Proposed Activities

Strategy	Key Actions	Accountable Owner	Supporters
Establish a suite of first-year experiences tailored specifically for incoming freshman and transfer Native students, including programming to serve non-traditional students and students with families	Tailored welcome activities  Study tables and tutoring, by subject  FY Seminar Class (reimagined)  Mentoring  Orientation (week long or over 3 days)  Life Skills	Vice Provost Student Success (co-curricular)  Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (curricular)  Brian Reed and Shannon Janssen (for FY Seminar)	Student Support Units  Director of New Student Success
Establish the Payne Family Native American Center as a center of community for Native students, faculty, and staff and for NAS-related academic event programming. Provide for a functional home away from home with a robust dedicated PFNAC support and	Locate student support activities in PFNAC according to a regular schedule  Include a community presence, i.e., All Nations Health Center  Develop programming that integrates the PFNAC Planetarium	Vice Provost Student Success (co-curricular)  College of H&S/Provost (academic)	Student Support Units:  American Indian Student Services  Native American Studies

social space for Native students & NAS students.			
Establish an endowment for the Kyiyo Pow Wow and associated programming surrounding this event			
Faculty and Staff mentorship and outreach with students	<p>Create incentives and supports to have faculty and staff partner with students in various departments across UM campus</p> <p>Provide faculty development opportunities around mentorship activities</p>	<p>Vice Provost for Academic Affairs</p> <p>Vice Provost for Student Success</p>	Amy Kinch (OOLD)

Long-term Outcomes

<b>Outcomes</b>
Increased enrollment of Native students
Improved retention rates for Native students
Improved graduation rates for Native students
Expanded enrollment and supports in a wider variety of degree programs across UM campus

**Key Imperative #3**

*Provide comprehensive support services to empower and assist Native students in navigating their UM education.*

Current Assets

<b>Existing Initiatives and Programs</b>
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American Indian Student Services  
 Native American Studies  
 Tribal Outreach Specialist  
 Diversity and Inclusion Position (Branch Center, TBD)  
 Diversity Advisory Council  
 TRiO  
 SEA Change Director  
 GEAR UP  
 Kiyo Student Group and Pow Wow  
 American Indian Business Leaders organization and activities  
 Native American Law Students Association organization and activities  
 College of Humanities and Sciences first-year seminar  
 UMCH Endowment Fund Program  
 Native American Natural Resource Program  
 Peer Mentoring Program  
 Native American Student Advisory Council organization and activities

Proposed Activities

Strategy	Key Actions	Accountable Owner	Supporters
Increase funding, support, and sharing of resources for AISS and NAS	Explore the feasibility of a Homeland in-state tuition initiative  Create a yearly plan and budget for campus-wide student welcome and celebration events		
Secure more scholarships for Native students; include funding for conferences, internships, workshops, and emergency aid	Monitor use of current scholarship funds  Work with the UMF on regular contact with current donors		Director of Financial Aid
Improve and expand advising support for Native students (using	Establish full-time coordinator and advisor serving Native students in any major	Vice Provost for Student Success	Office for Student Success  American Indian

<p>an IEFA lens)</p>	<p>Establish a regular, rotating advisor presence in the PFNAC Fully fund NAS Program Coordinator / Advisor position Monitor advising orientation across campus to enhance awareness of Native students' needs and foster appropriate referral.</p>		<p>Student Services Native American Studies Advising Centers</p>
<p>Ensure robust financial aid and scholarship mentoring and support for Native students</p>	<p>Identify a financial aid contact for Native students, i.e., someone with specific knowledge of the issues and opportunities that impact Native students</p> <p>Establish a regular, rotating financial aid expert presence in the PFNAC</p> <p>Provide Financial Aid sessions for parents and new incoming students throughout the year</p> <p>Create a yearly assessment of financial aid resources utilized by students</p> <p>Create systematic scholarship information workshops</p>	<p>Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management</p>	<p>Director of Financial Aid American Indian Student Services NAS Program Coordinator / Advisor DHC Scholarship &amp; Internship Coordinator</p>
<p>Establish the Payne Family Native American Center as a center of community for Native students, faculty, and staff as well as NAS students, faculty, and staff. Provide for a functional home away from home with a</p>	<p>Locate student support activities (advising, financial aid workshops, scholarship workshops, tutoring, etc.) in PFNAC according to a regular schedule</p> <p>Include a community presence, e.g., All Nations Health Center</p>	<p>Vice Provost Student Success (co-curricular) Dean &amp; Provost (academic)</p>	<p>Student Support Units American Indian Student Services Native American Studies</p>

robust dedicated PFNAC support and social space for Native students			
Analyze successful student support programs (at UM and elsewhere) to determine new strategies that would work well at UM (e.g., MSU COOP and UND's RAIN Program)	,	Vice Provost for Student Success	Student Support Units

Long-term Outcomes

Outcomes
Increased enrollment of Native students
Improved retention rates for Native students
Improved graduation rates for Native students
Expanded enrollment and supports in a wider variety of degree programs
Expand network of Native role models at UM on campus at faculty and staff levels

**Key Imperative #4**

*Incorporate knowledge of Natives cultures and histories into UM's curriculum and student support services.*

Current Assets

Existing Initiatives and Programs
AIMA Initiative IEFA in Montana Training Indigenous Mentoring Program Native American Studies



General Education X (Global and Indigenous) courses  
 Willow Project (Native Faculty)  
 Native American Natural Resource program  
 College of Health Diversity Programs  
 Elouise Cobell Culture and Land Institute  
 American Indian Governance and Policy Institute

Proposed Activities

Strategy	Key Actions	Accountable Owner	Supporters
Further embed Native ways of knowing into all curricula (with the help of IEFA, AIMA, and on-campus expertise)	<p>Embed into New Faculty Orientation</p> <p>Provide on-going professional development for faculty and staff to promote curricular revision</p> <p>Increase NAS faculty to provide service across campus (e.g., ASCRC, Gen Ed committee; IRB, etc.)</p> <p>Identify faculty champions in colleges</p> <p>Identify model courses that have successfully integrated Native ways of knowing and IEFA practices</p> <p>Enhance NAS curricular capacity to teach more general education courses</p>	<p>Provost</p> <p>Faculty Senate</p>	<p>Office for Organizational Learning and Development</p> <p>Faculty experts</p> <p>Tribal Outreach Specialist</p> <p>NAS Chair</p>
Support ongoing employee education informed by IEFA	<p>Embed into New Employee Orientation</p> <p>Involve NAS faculty to provide expertise in IEFA subjects</p>	<p>Associate Vice President for Human Resource Services</p>	<p>Office for Organizational Learning and Development</p> <p>NAS Chair</p>
Support research and scholarship education for UM	<p>Work to enforce adherence to the UM Indigenous Peoples Research Policies and Procedures</p>	<p>Office of Research</p>	<p>Graduate School</p>

faculty and staff working with Indigenous people	<a href="https://www.umt.edu/research/compliance/IRB/indigenous.php">https://www.umt.edu/research/compliance/IRB/indigenous.php</a>  Enhance graduate student opportunities to study NAS subjects and learn Indigenous Philosophy and Methodology		
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Long-term Outcomes

Outcomes
Incorporate knowledge of Native American cultures and histories into all aspects of students' UM experience.
Enhanced knowledge of the Indian Ed For All essential understandings regarding Native American people
Curricular expansion throughout campus to incorporate knowledge of Native American histories and cultures as well as of Indigenous methodologies in research
Enhanced understanding of ourselves at UM regarding issues related to diversity and inclusion of Native American students, faculty, and staff.
Better support and mentoring structure for Native faculty through increasing Native faculty presence through pedagogy and service to campus.

**Key Imperative #5**

*Collaborate with tribal communities — particularly tribal colleges — to support and build educational pathways for students to achieve their education goals.*

Current Assets

Existing Initiatives and Programs
Tribal College Tour, Spring and Fall 2+2 Programs with SKC and BCC Common Core (not adopted at all TCUs) American Indian Governance Policy Institute Elouis Cobell Land and Culture Institute Native American Studies Graduate Study Planning (Henry Luce Fdn.) Tribal Outreach Specialist

Collaborative Languages Project  
 Precision Medicine Project  
 Sister Nations Empowerment Program  
 Tribal College Faculty Development Workshop  
 National Native Children’s Trauma Center  
 All Nations Health Center

Proposed Activities

Strategy	Key Actions	Accountable Owner	Supporters
Establish new 2+2 programs with tribal colleges	Catalogue and disseminate all current 2+2 programs; follow up with faculty who attended 2+2 workshops in fall 2020	Vice Provost for Academic Affairs	Tribal Outreach Specialist
Establish connections between UM faculty and tribal college faculty	Connect faculty at UM and on tribal college campuses through 2+2 program planning  Connect faculty at UM and on tribal college campuses who teach similar courses (syllabus exchange, class outcome design, transfer of credits, etc.)	Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (co-curricular)	Tribal Outreach Specialist
Provide students at tribal colleges with exposure to UM programs and guidance in transferring	Refine the Tribal College Tour and expand outreach opportunities		Tribal Outreach Specialist  Director of Admissions

Long-term Outcomes

Outcomes
Collaborative learning and engagement with Tribal colleges.
Improved retention rates for Native students, faculty, and staff.
Enhanced Interunit collaborations at UM and throughout the MUS for promoting Native student success best practices.
Increased quality engagement and collaboration with tribal communities across the state, including

the Tribes higher education departments.

Better understanding of ourselves at UM regarding issues related to diversity and inclusion of Native American students, faculty, and staff.

## Key Imperative #6

*Develop opportunities for novel scholarship, creative works, service, and teaching collaborations for Native students, staff, faculty, and alumni at the University of Montana. Emphasize in particular career readiness and internship/externship support for Native students.*

### Current Assets

Existing Initiatives and Programs
Dedicated scholarships and Fellowships Native American Studies speaker series American Indian Student Services Experiential Learning and Career Success (ElevateU) MUS American Indian Tuition Waiver Native American Natural Resources Program HCOP

### Proposed Activities

Strategy	Key Actions	Accountable Owner	Supporters
Establish career preparedness programming for Native students, from first year through graduation	Deliberately design ElevateU with Native student exposure and participation in mind (enhanced strategies to reach Native students for internship opportunities and study abroad)	Vice Provost for Student Success	Experiential Learning and Career Success NAS Program Coord/Advisor Director Global Engagement Office
Through ElevateU, provide opportunities for paid internships/externships available to Native students	Develop partnerships with employers to provide dedicated internships/externships for Native students  Develop cohort of Native undergraduate and graduate	Vice Provost Student Success	Experiential Learning and Career Success American Indian Student Services Native American

	students to conduct research through the AIGPI and, ultimately, through the Cobell Institute		Studies
Develop methods to improve rate of Native hires in faculty, staff, and admin. positions	Develop financial resources dedicated to increasing workforce diversity	Provost Deans Human Resources	NAS Chair
Support Native faculty and staff with equitable compensation commensurate with regional and national institutional trends	Provide professional development resources to help provide workforce incentives for Native faculty and staff (travel supports, creative scholarship, professional fees, & culturally appropriate leave or support mechanisms)	Provost Deans Human Resources Supervisors	

Long-term Outcomes

Outcomes
Improved retention/graduation rates for Native students
Increased internship placement for Native students
Successful job placement for Native students
More diverse faculty and staff at UM
More equality in compensation and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff
More Native role models for students
Enhance UM Brand as a place to study Native American and Indigenous subjects in a culturally appropriate and efficacious manner
Enhance UM Brand as a place to study Native American and Indigenous land/culture issues and policy and governance issues.
Establish UM as a leader in cutting edge research regarding Native American governance and policy as well as GIS land and culture studies.
Contribute to strengthen tribal communities by assisting Native American language revitalization and maintenance efforts in Native communities
Enhance UM presence as serving the health needs of Native American communities and training professionals in those fields