

# **Miles Community College**

## **Diversity Action Plan for 2009**

### **Goal 1: To enroll and graduate American Indians and other minorities in proportion to their representation in the state's population.**

Miles Community College is located in eastern Montana very near three of Montana's Indian Reservations: Crow, Northern Cheyenne, & Fort Peck. Although we encourage all American Indians to enroll at Miles Community College, we respect and honor their right to receive instruction at their Tribal College. However, we do recognize that Montana's Indian population is not represented in higher education in the proportion they are present in the state's population. Institutional research at Miles Community College has revealed that American Indians come to college already at risk due to pressures not felt by Caucasian students. For this reason, Miles Community College is determined to provide an environment that is supportive and conducive to learning not only for American Indians but all students with minority status.

Miles Community College markets its programs and services over a 5 state area. American Indians from Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana and Canada are recruited and encouraged to apply. Miles Community College is an open enrollment institution. Prospective students who have the ability to benefit are not limited or denied admission for reasons involving race or ethnicity. Programs and services designed to help students such as developmental education, tutors, & other support services also help anyone of any race or ethnicity. Many of these services are offered at no charge which further illustrates our intent to help all comers.

Miles Community College is in the process of applying for a Student Support Services TRIO grant which is intended to help first generation college students, students from households of low income, and students with disabilities. These populations often contain minority and American Indian students. The resources that the grant will provide will allow Miles Community College to ramp up activities associated with retention, good academic standing, and graduation for American Indian students and students with minority status.

Miles Community College supports multicultural activity on Campus and in the community of Miles City. The College often hosts community events for the community at large and in many cases allows the student body to attend at no cost. The College has formed and continues to support the Multi-Cultural club. Chaired by Robin Gerber, Faculty member and Darren Pitcher, Vice President of Student Success, the club continues to build awareness of all heritages and cultures represented by the Miles Community College student body.

Providing funding for American Indians is an area that has received a considerable amount of attention this year at Miles Community College. Collaborative efforts by the Vice President of Student Success, Financial Aid, and the MCC Endowment and Development Office have led to actions associated with scholarship creation and other financial resources being set aside specifically for American Indians. Although some details have not been ironed out as yet,

the group remains vigilant and is confident that these opportunities will be available to American Indian students in the future.

**Goal 2: To increase the employment of American Indians and other underrepresented minorities in administrative, faculty and staff positions to achieve representation equal to that of the relevant labor force.**

Miles Community College follows all state and federal laws in regard to hiring practices of new employees. The College publically states that it is an equal opportunity employer. It is the philosophy of the College to encourage all qualified applicants to apply. Presently, Miles Community College employs a small percentage of American Indians. Many employees claim some amount of American Indian blood but at percentages that are too low to allow tribal enrollment. The College administration acknowledges that an American Indian presence on campus would provide opportunities for support and mentorship to the American Indian population. For that reason every effort is made to encourage American Indians and people with Minority status to apply when positions are available.

Miles Community College was honored to have Dr. Joe McDonald, President of Salish Kootenai College as their 2008 Commencement speaker. Dr. McDonald has had ties to Miles Community College for many years and has been a champion in providing leadership to the American Indian community in Montana specifically in the area of higher education.

**Goal 3: To achieve the overall curriculum by infusion of content which enhance multicultural awareness and understanding.**

Robin Gerber has incorporated American Indian history into many of her classes and is able to convey historical information about Miles City which is considerably rich in American Indian history. Her efforts have led to the development of a culturally sensitive campus and a deeper understanding of American Indian Heritage by fellow faculty, staff, and students.

Efforts will continue at Miles Community College to develop and maintain a comfortable social environment on Campus, the community of Miles City, and surrounding area. The Multi-Cultural club has several events planned in the coming months. A flag ceremony will take place in January that will celebrate the cultures of different counties represented by students at Miles Community College. Tribal Flags for American Indians will also be included as they are seen as their own Sovereign Nations. Cultural and Tribal information will be on display as well as ethnic food and items specific to each Nation.

Plans are also in the works to collaborate with Montana State University – Billings to bring American Indian presentations to the Miles Community College campus. Utilizing an already strong program allows Miles Community College the ability to raise awareness and understanding of the American Indian presence in Montana. Miles Community College will continue to respond to the goals set forth by the Board of Regents in regard to increased diversity. The College supports these actions and will make every attempt to promote a supportive and welcoming environment for all American Indians and students with minority status.