

American Indian and Minority Achievement and K-12 Partnerships Director

AIMA Council

The AIMA Council met on February 25, 2016 in person in Helena and then again on April 18, 2016 via conference call.

The Council approved the following goals:

- 1) Improve human capacity building and the development of relationships and rapport with our students to ensure an environment where students succeed.
- 2) Increase Student Access
5% of all enrollees in the MUS are American Indian
- 3) Increase Student Retention
52.6% of full time freshmen return for 2nd year (4 year)
48.4% of full time freshmen return for 2nd year (2 year)
- 4) Increase Student Completion
3.9% of all MUS undergraduate completions (246) are American Indian
- 5) Improve Tribal College to MUS relations
- 6) Grow availability of data

The primary emerging themes for each meeting were:

- 1) How do we ensure IEfA is happening by design on each of our campuses?
- 2) How can we cultivate campus community and culturally responsive staff on each of our campuses?
- 3) How can we ensure greater opportunities exist around dual enrollment for American Indian students across the MUS?

The July meeting will be focused on 1) reaching our urban American Indian students; 2) the Campus Climate Survey work (an AIMA requested research study as reported to the BOR in November); 3) follow up on IEfA by Design in the MUS; and 3) recommendations made by the American Indian Scholar liaisons in regards to comprehensive student services and orientation.

Tribal College and American Indian Scholars Report April 2016

Between March 31 and April 6, Dr. John Cech, Commissioner Clayton Christian and AIMA Director Angela McLean traveled to six of Montana's seven Tribal Colleges to meet with college Presidents, their administrative teams and on a couple of visits, their students. The conversations were engaging and forward thinking around all things student learning and success.

The most common themes of discussion included: 1) Common Course Numbering; 2) National Student Data Clearinghouse; and 3) Tribal College Work with Complete College America around Math Pathways. The OCHE team is now working with Little Big Horn College President on follow up with each of the TC Presidents at their May meeting on these respective pieces.

There was significant conversation with several of our Tribal Colleges around 2+2's. Fort Peck Community College noted that since the early 2000's they, in partnership with MSU-N have graduated

over 100 teachers. This was powerful as we visit about growing the educator pipeline and also providing opportunities for our American Indian students to graduate in fields that allow a student to return home.

Another common theme was the need for a “meeting space” for our American Indian students on campus. Conversation here focused on a comfortable, relaxing space that allowed for support, comradery and even the ability to heat up lunch in the microwave. This theme was echoed by our students when they met at Montana State University for the Inaugural American Indian Scholars Orientation.

Inaugural American Indian Scholars Program

Presently American Indian students constitute only 5% of our student population in the Montana University System (MUS). OCHE is concerned about the low number of American Indian students attending our colleges and universities, along with the low retention and completion rate for our American Indian students. Presently, only 52.6% of American Indian students return for a second year at their starting institution in the MUS. When compared to the overall MUS retention rate of first-time, full time freshman students of 76.7%, the number of American Indian students returning for their second year of higher education is concerning. Additionally, only 3.9% of all MUS undergraduate completions (246) are American Indian.

These numbers demonstrate that significant work must be done to support, build rapport with and assist our American Indian students at every turn. In an effort to advance the support for our American Indian students THIS current semester (Spring 2016,) Commissioner Christian and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education seek to engage our campuses within the Montana University System in the first ever Montana American Indian Student Scholar Program.

The Commissioner sought liaison’s in each of the MUS campuses to identify currently enrolled American Indian students for this unique pilot designed to provide support for American Indian students and their families.

Each of the MUS and Community College campuses submitted names for program liaisons.

There were 43 student scholars identified by the following institutions:

University of Montana

Missoula College

Montana Tech

University of Montana Western

Montana State University

Montana State University Northern

City College

Great Falls College

[Inaugural American Indian Scholars Luncheon](#)

On April 12, the Scholars orientation took place at Montana State University. Richard White of MSU welcomed students to the campus. Dr. Walter Fleming also welcomed the students and thanked them for their leadership. He also spoke to the evolution of American Indian Studies in the MUS as well as the evolution of IEfA across Montana. Dr. Caires also MSU spoke to the history of student activism on American campuses and how major changes have occurred as a result of student involvement. He challenged the students through this effort to create the change they want to see. Additionally, AIMA Director McLean spoke with students about the “why” behind the importance of their work and shared key data points.