

Policy Statement on MCA 20-1-501ff American Indian Studies

The Board of Regents of the Montana University System and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education willingly accept and fully commit to the obligations and responsibilities with regard to Indian education mandated by Article X of the Montana Constitution, MCA 20-1-501ff, and Board of Regents Policy 1902. The Board of Regents recognizes (1) that campus communities must promote multicultural diversity for the benefit of all students; (2) that campus academic leaders will ensure that the curriculum is enhanced by the infusion of content that fosters multicultural awareness; and (3) that the participation and achievement of American Indian students should be, at a minimum, equal to their representation in the state's population. The Board also recognizes the need to significantly increase the number of American Indian faculty, staff, and administrators. To that end, the Board pledges its cooperation with the Board of Public Education, the Office of Public Instruction, Indian tribes, and American Indian Tribal Colleges. The Montana University System will create a comfortable and welcoming environment for American Indian students and staff and will provide professional development and educational opportunities so that students and staff of the university system will have a better understanding of American Indian culture and history.

The Board of Regents believes that its conscientious attention to these matters will emphasize their importance to members of the system and therefore will require periodic reports from its campuses and universities on progress in meeting the requirements of Article X, MCA 20-1-501ff, and Board of Regents Policy 1902. The Board commits itself to the careful and public review of those reports. The Board of Regents also expects the Commissioner of Higher Education to ensure that attention to these obligations and goals are incorporated into the personnel evaluation of senior administrators in the Montana University System. The Board of Regents recognizes the special role of teacher training in these issues and therefore instructs the Commissioner of Higher Education to ensure that teacher education programs are contributing to the fullest degree possible to improving the educational achievement of Montana's Indian students.

Action Plan

1. Periodically monitor progress

Annual reports to Board of Regents every July to include information on BOR policy 1902 and responses to this action plan

2. Review existing policies and consider new policies.

Staff in OCHE continues to work on this review.

3. Public Awareness Effort.

A series of joint communiqués by Commissioner and State Superintendent are contemplated.

4. Tribal State cooperative agreements.

Information about existing cooperative agreements has been collected and a model dual admissions agreement has been drafted and disseminated for campus use in cooperation with the state's Tribal Colleges. Presidents and Chancellors have been encouraged to pursue such agreements with Tribal Colleges.

5. Professional Development

Baseline data reported in July 2001, along with plans for increases.

6. Required coursework in Indian education.

Committee noted below will submit a recommendation to the Commissioner of Higher Education.

7. Committee on teacher education.

Presidents have agreed to appoint a Committee to study teacher education, required coursework in Indian education, and the recruitment of Native American teachers.

8. Class 7 certification.

The Commissioner of Higher Education continues to support Class 7 certification, as necessary.

The Deputy Commissioner will survey all campuses of the Montana University System to determine what research expertise and resources are available for the study of Indian languages. The Deputy Commissioner will also determine what are current practices with regard to the awarding of credit for proficiency in Indian languages and determine if any BOR policies are necessary or desirable. Report from the Deputy Commissioner in July of 2002.

9. Hiring American Indian faculty, staff, and administrators.

Annual reports in July of each year.

10. Increase enrollments of American Indian students.

Annual report in July of each year.

11. Campus action plans for diversity.

Annual reports to July BOR meeting

12. American Indian Fee waiver

The BOR and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education have vigorously defended the American Indian Fee waiver against statutory, constitutional, and political attack in the past and will do so again in the future if necessary. The American Indian Fee waiver continues in the FY 2002-3 operating budgets of the Montana University System and in the budget request for the next biennium. In the past decade the Montana University System has increased its dollar investment in the American Indian Fee Waiver by 185%.

13. Statutory appropriation for non-beneficiary students at tribal colleges.

The Commissioner of Higher Education has supported this item during the last three legislative sessions and the Board of Regents and the Board of Education will be asked by the Commissioner to include this item in their 2004-2005 Executive Budget Requests.

14. Communication mechanism between BOR/Office of the Commissioner and Indian tribes and tribal Colleges.

Staff in the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education is developing a plan to formalize and expand existing communication mechanisms.

15. Budget for American Indian/Minority Achievement

Budget is safely in the base.

16. Units of the University system encouraged to observe American Indian Heritage Day (the 4th Friday of September)

For the first time last Fall The Commissioner requested this observation from all of the Presidents and the Chancellors. Response was very positive.

Last Updated May 1, 2003