

**UCLA**

**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

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**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1kx3x3xf>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 44(1)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

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**Publication Date**

2020

**DOI**

10.17953/aicrj.44.1.akee\_stewart-ambo\_torres

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# Commentary on the Recruitment and Retention of American Indian and Alaska Native Students in California Postsecondary Education Institutions

*Randall Akee, Theresa Stewart-Ambo, and Heather Torres*

On October 15–16, 2019, the American Indian Studies Center and interdepartmental program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) convened a two-day symposium, “Lighting a Path Forward: UC Land Grants, Public Memory, and Tovaangar” (“Lighting a Path Forward”), organized by Professor Mishuana Goeman, special advisor to the UCLA chancellor on Native American and Indigenous Affairs. On October 15, three panels discussed UCLA’s centennial anniversary with respect to California Indians, the current state of relationships and projects between tribal communities and University of California institutions, and future innovative practices working with tribal communities. On October 16, symposium participants and facilitators explored three policy topics related to American Indians and Alaska Natives, the state of California, and its university systems.<sup>1</sup> The three policy topics were divided into separate workshop tracks. Track 1 was titled, “Creating Guidelines for Community Engagement Classes in the UC/Working with Tribal Communities”;

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Track 2, “Recruitment and Retention of American Indian/Alaska Native Students”; and Track 3, “Determining Cultural Affiliation toward Repatriation and Cultural Heritage Protection.” The authors facilitated workshop Track 2 and this commentary will therefore highlight the discussion and outcomes of “Recruitment and Retention of American Indian/Alaska Native Students.”

In Track 2, we engaged twenty different individuals drawn from various post-secondary educational institutions and Indigenous communities and nations across California. The purpose of our track was to engage practices already in place for recruitment and retention policies for the American Indian and Alaska Native population in postsecondary institutions in California. We also aimed to identify important gaps and areas for improvement. We started the session by introducing ourselves and our work as scholars, administrators, and community members to gauge the level of knowledge and experience in the room. Our track was composed of American Indian and Alaska Native and non-American Indian and Alaska Native individuals with a wealth of professional experience and employment in American Indian and Alaska Native education, with some working entirely in the California Community College (CCC), California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) systems. Introductions were followed by a brief review of the role of facilitators and participants, as well as the purpose of the day’s discussion.

In the morning session of Track 2, we identified broad topics, concerns, and issues. Students from UCLA School of Law’s Human Rights in Action clinic provided a summary of selected existing research, outlining four primary themes related to the recruitment and retention of American Indian and Alaska Native students in postsecondary educational institutions. The four themes, gleaned from the students’ review of the literature, were (1) community; (2) academic and application support; (3) financial aid; and (4) data collection and analysis. These themes were derived from observing recurrent topics and words in the literature. The law students also shared a newly created chart listing existing recruitment and retention efforts across the UC, CSU, and CCC campuses based on existing online documentation and resources (see appendix). Session facilitators provided the students with suggestions and guidance in the collection of this information in the weeks leading up to the convening in order to create these documents. All literature reviewed in preparation for Track 2 was also available for participants’ viewing before the symposium.

## OVERVIEW OF THE QUESTIONS

As outlined above, Track 2 of “Lighting a Path Forward” focused on the recruitment and retention of American Indian and Alaska Natives in the UC, CSU and CCC systems. The UCLA American Indian Studies Center and program provided discussion questions for Track 2:

- (1) What do admissions officers throughout the UC system need to consider?
- (2) What do faculty and campus administrators need to know to ensure the success of students?

(3) What are some best practices in American Indian and Alaska Native recruitment and retention?

In facilitation, these questions were reframed as an open brainstorm of issues affecting recruitment and retention, which were later filtered for small group discussion and proposal of policy interventions. The group's methodologies are discussed at greater length later in this commentary.

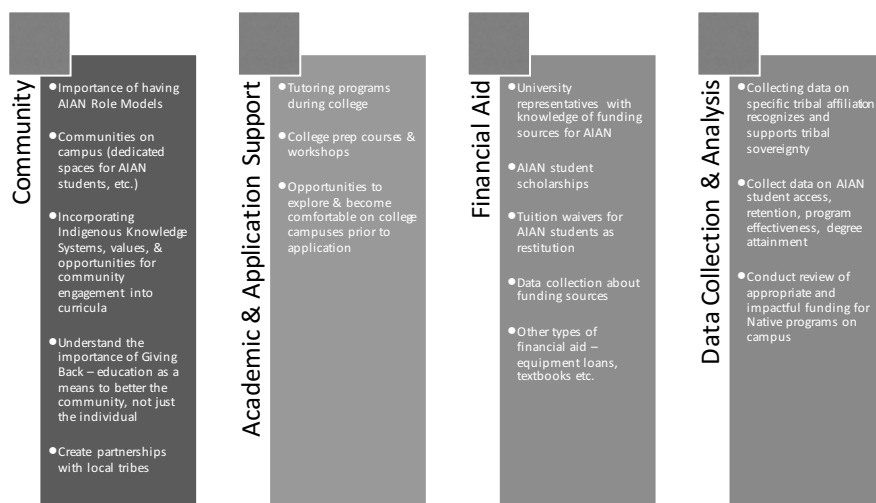
The goal of this commentary is to provide university systems and individual institutions in California with policy and practice recommendations that usher campuses into a new era of serving American Indian and Alaska Native students. Universities continue to falter in meeting the academic, social, cultural, financial, and personal needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students. This can be distinguished by the perpetually stagnant (and at times decreasing) number of American Indian and Alaska Native matriculants across university systems, particularly in California. For example, according to a report by the California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center at CSU San Marcos, the number of American Indian and Alaska Native first-time, full-time freshmen enrolled across the CSUs declined from 365 in 2008 to 142 in 2009, and never fully rebounded, with enrollment hovering at 151 students in 2015.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the UC system enrolled 161 first-time, full-time freshmen in 2008. While enrollment for American Indian and Alaska Natives increased the subsequent year (2008) to 209 students, it later plummeted to 125 students in 2015. Similarly, the 2004 graduation rates for American Indian and Alaska Natives in four, five, and six years from UC campuses was 48 percent, 69 percent and 71 percent respectively, often lower than, or tied with, African American/Black and Chicanx/Latinx students.<sup>3</sup> Based on these numbers, it is evident additional efforts are needed to improve the access, transition, experience and outcomes of matriculating undergraduate and graduate students, including the management of student data. Moreover, it is urgent to address American Indian and Alaska Native student needs, with calls for minor adjustments to ongoing practices and major interventions for others. This commentary offers suggestions for both.

## BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Broadly speaking, literature on American Indian and Alaska Native students in post-secondary education continues to be scarce compared to other underrepresented populations. Quantitative research frequently reduces American Indian and Alaska Natives to an asterisk (discussed more later), whereby these students are unable to be shown in descriptive statistics and rendered "statistically insignificant" in demographic reporting.<sup>4</sup> While there is increasing qualitative research on this topic, as quantitative analysis is often lacking due to the paucity of data, scholars argue that existing literature on college retention and completion often fails to address the unique political, social, and cultural factors impacting American Indian and Alaska Native undergraduate and graduate students.<sup>5</sup>

A review of selected existing literature on recruitment and retention, literature that looks more closely at the political, social, and cultural factors impacting American

Indian and Alaska Native students, produced the following key themes shown in figure 1 below: Community; Academic and Application Support; Financial Aid; Data Collection and Analysis. Students from UCLA School of Law's Human Rights in Action Clinic provided the summary of these key themes from the selected literature. We used this summary of concepts and themes to guide the discussion with our participants in Track 2. Our intention was to provide a brief overview on these topical



areas that offer some foundation for the following discussion of policy and practice recommendations. A visual of the key themes and concepts are provided below.

For a more in-depth review of literature, we direct you to a recently published report on American Indian and Alaska Native student access, transition, belonging, and completion by Indigenous higher education scholars Nicole Alia Salis Reyes and Heather Shotton.<sup>6</sup>

## COMMUNITY: CREATING A COMMUNITY FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS ON CAMPUS AND CONNECTIONS TO OTHER INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

If we are to situate American Indian and Alaska Native students within academia, it is important to first acknowledge that US colleges and universities were not constructed with Indigenous students in mind, but rather are an extension of settler colonialism.<sup>7</sup> Many American Indian and Alaska Native students experience dissonance when attending college because the environment is inherently different and unfamiliar.<sup>8</sup> Multiple factors influence students' success once in college, including role models, campus space,<sup>9</sup> and giving back to one's community.<sup>10</sup>

Research indicates that welcoming and nurturing environments for American Indian and Alaska Native students are an essential component of ensuring their success.

Additional research indicates faculty and staff are a critical part of student success.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, peer-to-peer relationships help students develop a sense of belonging on campus.<sup>12</sup> Campus spaces such as multicultural or American Indian and Alaska Native-specific student resource centers also help in fostering students' sense of belonging.<sup>13</sup>

Connection to community has also been identified as a key element of students' motivation and success. Termed in the literature as "giving back," this is a rich area of scholarship arguing that despite hardships, American Indian and Alaska Native students pursue and persist in college because of their desire to give back to American Indian and Alaska Native communities broadly, and tribal communities specifically.<sup>14</sup>

### *Academic and Application Support: Enhancing Academic Support for Current Students and Admissions Support for Prospective Students*

In 2019, the American Indian College Fund (AICF) issued a Declaration of Native Purpose in Higher Education. Having gathered educators from across the nation, the AICF offered a poignant declaration on American Indian and Alaska Native rights to education, stating, "We believe that Native American students have a right to a higher education and to attend any college or university of their choice."<sup>15</sup> As strategies to implement this declaration, the AICF offered to examine and expand curriculum offerings to include American Indian and Alaska Native knowledges; connect recruitment, admissions, and matriculation for American Indian and Alaska Native students from all geographic locations, whether on-reservation, urban, or rural; and remove obstacles to enrollment like discriminatory admissions policies.<sup>16</sup> This call for a clear path to enrollment and graduation responds to the need expressed in the literature for both application support and academic support in order to address recruitment and retention issues facing American Indian and Alaska Native students.

There are myriad factors affecting American Indian and Alaska Native students' college success, such as schooling environments from pre-K through 12th grade, socio-economic status, gaps in college readiness and preparedness, and finances.<sup>17</sup> To address those challenges, American Indian and Alaska Native communities and organizations have focused on developing American Indian and Alaska Native college access and college student support programs. College Horizons, Inc. has distinguished itself as an organization offering two American Indian and Alaska Native undergraduate and graduate preparation programs that expose students to campus life, introduce students to institutional representatives, and assist students in application preparation.<sup>18</sup> Participation in such programs has been noted to support students' transition into their first year of college and instill a culture of giving back.<sup>19</sup> It is critical to consider opportunities for students to engage in giving back when providing academic support to American Indian and Alaska Native college students, whether through mentorship of younger students or breaking stereotypes. For example, at UCLA, several student-run American Indian and Alaska Native support systems engage American Indian and Alaska Native students in student retention efforts through peer mentorship,<sup>20</sup> and also assist in recruitment efforts in partnership with the UCLA Native American admissions recruiter by offering tutoring services and college preparation workshops.<sup>21</sup>

Several other examples can be found across the CCC, CSU, private, and UC systems (see appendix).

A strong institutional commitment to consistently and appropriately fund programs is an important component to designing and implementing academic and application support programs. Programs should (1) be funded based on community impact;<sup>22</sup> (2) work with American Indian and Alaska Native nations throughout design and implementation;<sup>23</sup> and (3) value and utilize American Indian and Alaska Native social and cultural capital, including campus American Indian and Alaska Native staff and faculty.<sup>24</sup>

### *Financial Aid: Addressing Issues of Financial Aid and Postsecondary Education Costs*

The rising costs of higher education create access barriers for students across the country, which are compounded by families experiencing slow rates of household income growth and expansion of wealth inequality.<sup>25</sup> Literature targeting the financial aid experiences of American Indian and Alaska Native students is limited.<sup>26</sup> However, the availability of financial aid and knowledge of how to access financial aid have been shown to be factors affecting access to higher education for American Indian and Alaska Native students.<sup>27</sup> These factors underscore the importance of academic and application support, including information on financial resources. This can include employing staff who know about funding sources for American Indian and Alaska Native students and also examining how the institution communicates those sources (i.e., expanding beyond internet-reliant media).<sup>28</sup>

Additionally, current literature details financial aid practices colleges and universities can implement to assist American Indian and Alaska Native students. Possible assistance can include tuition waivers for American Indian and Alaska Native students<sup>29</sup> and establishment of institutional scholarships as a direct response to institutions benefiting from land grants and the dispossession of tribal lands.<sup>30</sup> These efforts are in addition to federal, state, and tribal governments continuing to offer aid currently accessed by American Indian and Alaska Native students, including federal and state need-based and merit-based grants, federal work study, and tribal scholarships.<sup>31</sup> Types of financial aid should also go beyond tuition and fees, given that despite such aid students struggle to meet basic living expenses and other school-related expenses such as books, technology, supplies, and transportation.<sup>32</sup> Some programs serving American Indian and Alaska Native students are able to offer textbooks for students or assist with a textbook-loaning service.<sup>33</sup> Overall, more data is needed to understand and meet the financial needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students more fully.<sup>34</sup>

### *Data Collection and Analysis: American Indian and Alaska Native Postsecondary Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting*

Jameson D. Lopez and Scott C. Marley point to the many complexities of data collection on American Indian and Alaska Native in postsecondary educational data.<sup>35</sup> In

the application process, there is a need to collect data on students' tribal affiliation—data that follows the student from the system level to campuses. This initial collection would aid in the subsequent analysis of applicants, admits, enrollees, retention and graduation. At the moment, no public/standardized practice to track American Indian and Alaska Native students exists. As a result, student numbers are inconsistent year to year. Additionally, students who self-identify as American Indian and Alaska Native but are not identified as American Indian and Alaska Native by their institutions do not receive information about services essential to their success.

Moreover, the transition of campuses to Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), particularly in California and across the UC, complicates the tracking of American Indian and Alaska Native students who identify as multi-racial, in this case Hispanic or Latinx and American Indian and Alaska Native. Consequently, students who identify as two or more races, one being American Indian and Alaska Native, students may not be counted as American Indian and Alaska Native nor will they receive institutional services information where applicable.

Last, there is a need to conduct a system and campus level assessment of American Indian and Alaska Native campus services, as well as examine how this populace is experiencing their respective campuses. Reported in the Diverse Learning Environment survey conducted at UCLA, American Indian and Alaska Native and Black students reported greater experiences of discrimination and bias compared to white students. This same study also showed that American Indian and Alaska Native students self-reported the highest level of negative cross-racial interactions and experiences of harassment.<sup>36</sup> This report is one of the few that contains separate information for American Indian and Alaska Native students. Other system-wide and campus-specific surveys, such as the University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES), do not yield high enough response rate from American Indian and Alaska Native students to be included as a separate group for analysis. As such, how American Indian and Alaska Native students experience campus life, particularly in the UC and CSU systems, is poorly understood.

## FACILITATION METHOD

Using the literature presented to guide our conversation, we invited participants to identify existing topics, concerns, and issues that affect recruitment and retention for American Indian and Alaska Native students in postsecondary institutions. These topics were connected to professional experiences that participants face working as student affairs practitioners, university faculty, and staff. Using Post-It notes, participants were asked to list as many of their concerns and place them on the board at the front of the room for collective sharing and review. As the three track facilitators, we organized those notes under several broad categories such as data collection, campus climate, student development, retention and graduation, and outreach.

Once this was complete, we asked the participants to vote (two votes each) for their two highest priority issues. The purpose of voting on issues was to focus the conversation on a couple of important topics for the remainder of the workshop.



Ultimately, the group came to agreement on the following eleven topics (with a few modifications of topical placement):

1. Data collection (3 votes)
2. Indigenous-centered (1 vote)
3. **Institutional support (6 votes)**
4. Campus climate (2 votes)
5. Educational faculty and Campus (4 votes)
6. Community space
7. Safety (0 votes)
8. Research collaboration (0 votes)
9. **Student success and development (5 votes)**
10. Retention (0 votes)
11. **Access, outreach and recruitment (5 votes)**

The three topics that received the highest vote counts were “Institutional support,” “Student success and development,” and “Access, outreach and recruitment.” With a tied vote count, “Student success and development” and “Access, outreach and recruitment” were categorized as “Student Support” for group discussion.

We separated the participants into two groups in order to discuss “Institutional Support” and “Student Support” for the remaining time. We discussed and recommended strategies to address the topics of institutional and student support for recruiting and retaining American Indian students. Each group worked collectively at a round table and devised or described existing programs or strategies related to these topics. The two groups reached a consensus regarding the pressing issues for American Indian and Alaska Native student recruitment and retention on postsecondary campuses. Our group members identified various methods to address these concerns and issues. It was important that all participants be able to participate, contribute, understand, and agree with the offered solutions and methods developed by the group. For every concern, a solution was offered that paralleled the literature or had some grounding in existing practices. In the cases where there was limited literature, such as the development of tribal liaison positions, solutions were offered based on existing programs at institutions or from participant experiential knowledge.

Once the work was independently completed in each group, the two groups reported their findings and recommendations. Although the groups were separated topically, the reports from the two groups overlapped on many aspects of strategy and methodology. Finally, we shared our full set of findings to the entire group of symposium attendees, including those who worked in Track 1 and Track 3. The following policy and practice recommendations stem from participants’ discussion and also incorporates scholarly research and exemplar practices.

## RESULTS AND OUTPUT

The two reports on interventions from both discussion groups, “Institutional Support” and “Student Support,” were merged to create a final table of interventions. The table is organized into five topic areas, grouped by the facilitators for ease of use. Those topic areas are “Campus Space or Location;” “Employment or Positions;” “Funding Requests and Training;” “Data or Information Changes;” and “Community Engagement.” The term *intervention* was selected by facilitators to highlight the necessity of “preventing” or “altering” a current course of action, in this case American Indian and Alaska Native recruitment and retention, through practice and policy changes. This term also draws in early, intensive, and continuous intervention student-retention models and strategies.<sup>37</sup> Under each topic a specific intervention is introduced, followed by a justification and strategy to approach for implementation.

### *Campus Space or Location*

This topic area refers to the necessity of having a dedicated space or location for American Indian and Alaska Native students to gather, to study, and to have events specific to their needs in these postsecondary institutions.

TABLE 1  
IMPORTANCE OF DEDICATED AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE SPACE

Intervention	Justification	Strategy
AIAN Student Resource Center and a Dedicated Indoor Space	To strengthen AIAN students' sense of belonging and recognize that they conduct themselves in a familial style.	
Outdoor Space	To connect AIAN students to campus and provide off campus community access to campus.	
Kitchen Space	To address food sovereignty and insecurity; provide the opportunity to revitalize or retain traditional diets; and acknowledge cultural connections to food and gathering.	Chancellor to determine space and facility management. Capital campaign for Central Development.
Technology Space	To increase academic confidence and security; provide support for collective and collaborative research; and ensure access to learning materials (e.g. printing, computers, internet).	
AIAN Student Housing Facilities in a Living and Learning Community	To implement a high impact practice for AIAN student success.	

### *Employment or Positions*

This topic area focuses on the role that faculty and staff play in improving the recruitment and retention of American Indian and Alaska Native students.

TABLE 2  
THE ROLE OF FACULTY AND STAFF IN AIAN RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Intervention	Justification	Strategy
Elder in residence	To foster essential intergenerational connections important to identity formation; emphasize and respect the traditional role of education; connect students to a local tribal community and reinforce familial connections.	Connect to local and other tribal communities.
Mental health/behavioral counselor	To improve the mental and physical health of students through traditional and/or culturally relevant/centered methods of care especially when attached to the AIAN Resource Center.	University of California Office of the President (UCOP) mandated more mental health officers. There should be more AIAN hired. Chancellors on each campus.
Academic counselor	To improve the academic performance and navigational experience of students through culturally relevant and specific academic support services.	Identify existing resources at the institution-level for adding this position at partial time or full-time.
Financial aid counselor	To improve the financial security of students and ease communication to tribal governments and AIAN non-profit organizations with an individual steeped in protocols and knowledge and AIAN aid resources and procedures.	Identify existing resources at the institution-level for adding this position at partial time or full-time.
Data analyst	To provide university personnel data on applicants, admits, enrollment, retention, and completion. Individual knowledgeable/trained/ specializing in the complexities of tribal and self-identification.	UCOP already conducts data analysis for the entire system. This would require further advocacy efforts for the UCOP to provide additional data, reporting and information on the current status of AIAN students.
Multi-level Staffing (Director, Assistant Director)	To respond to land-grant obligation to work with diverse AIAN students and communities; strengthen alumni relationships; provide students work opportunities during their time on campus.	Chancellor.
Professional Development for Staff	To promote AIAN professional development; value staff; ensure staff productivity in their capacities; increase staff wellbeing.	Chancellor.
Develop ally training	To enhance cultural competency of staff; increase support and maximize the assistance from diverse groups; improve the overall campus climate for AIAN students; advance campus diversity equity and inclusion commitments.	Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Office and Tribal communities.
Dedicated AIAN Admissions Recruiter	To provide a connection to AIAN communities, families, and networks; communicate cultural connections.	Approach to enrollment management; Vice President of enrollment.
Appoint a faculty member as Special Advisor to the Chancellor (housed at the level of the chancellor) and a full-time staff member to facilitate development of nation-to-nation relationships with local and other Native tribes	To respond to land-grant obligation to serve the public good by serving Native nations and Native students; in particular, the Tribe associated with the lands occupied by the institution.	Chancellor.

Intervention	Justification	Strategy
Tribal Liaison	To increase the information flow and communication between the university and local tribal communities and tribal nations.	Chancellor and UCOP; Reporting to the Chancellor.
Tribal Advisory Council on which the Liaison and the Special Advisor will serve, along with other local tribal and Native community leaders	To meet Land-grant obligations and honor the land and people; increase and demonstrate accountability to the local community; enrich the diversity for the campus as a whole; develop pathways to postsecondary programs.	Chancellor and UCOP; Reporting to the Chancellor.

### *Funding Requests and Training*

This topic area relates to the crucial need for funding to support activities as well as the training requirements for existing university staff and administrators. Interventions include training that institutions should regularly offer to tribal communities.

TABLE 3  
TRAINING NEEDED FOR UNIVERSITY STAFF AND ADMINISTRATORS AND  
COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Item	Justification	Strategy
Permanent Funding	To ensure continuity and not rely on grant funding; show institutional commitment.	Chancellor and UCOP.
Programming Budget	To provide programs to support the students and the space (both cultural and/or academic).	Chancellor and UCOP.
Resources for fees and housing	To support student recruitment, retention and success.	Approach University Development and Financial Aid.
Tuition waivers for California AIAN students from all California tribal nations, regardless of a tribe's federal recognition status	To respond to Land-grant obligation to serve AIAN nations and communities, particularly the Tribe associated with the lands occupied by the institution.	Chancellor and UCOP.
Cluster hire of AIAN faculty	To help with creating critical mass, recruitment and retention of AIAN students who need faculty mentors and role models.	Chancellor and Provost.
College 101 Training for Tribes that discusses financial aid and fellowships	To enhance tribal-university- relationships.	Program staff and Financial Aid.
AIAN 101 professional development training for ALL staff especially Faculty and Counselors	To improve the experience and success of existing AIAN students on campus.	Cross-collaborations pushed by Administration, across Academic and Student Affairs divisions; Mandatory training.

## Data or Information Changes

This topic area addresses the need for improved data and information for American Indian and Alaska Native students. The lack of accessible and timely data in addition to definitional differences make it quite difficult to assess program effectiveness and overall success in recruitment and retention of American Indian and Alaska Native students.

TABLE 4  
THE NEED FOR IMPROVED DATA AND INFORMATION FOR AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE STUDENTS

Item	Justification	Strategy
Academic Data	To assess progress and allow for early intervention; demonstrate need for funding of student services.	UCOP Data.
Additional question on the system-wide admissions application about how AIAN applicants want to be identified	To have more accurate counts of AIAN student applicants and understanding of AIAN students and their tribal/community affiliations.	Enrollment Management or Director of Admissions.
Annual data regarding all students who list AIAN or AIAN and another race	To have more accurate counts of AIAN student numbers that will aid in documenting students' success and in retention.	UCOP Data.

## Community Engagement

This topic area addresses the reciprocal nature of the relationships between the university and American Indian and Alaska Native communities and/or American Indian and Alaska Native nations.

TABLE 5  
RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS: THE UNIVERSITY AND AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE COMMUNITIES AND/OR NATIONS

Generate protocols for appropriate interactions with AIAN Nations	To demonstrate respect, cultural competency and acknowledge land-grant obligations.	Campus Government/External Relations.
Adopt a community-approved land acknowledgment statement involving local tribe(s) and staff such as a Tribal Liaison and/or Tribal Advisory Council	To demonstrate respect, cultural competency and acknowledge land-grant obligations.	University-wide, Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Office.

## MATRIX OF EXISTING AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE PROGRAMS

In the attached appendix, we provide the matrix assembled by UCLA Law School students for existing American Indian and Alaska Native programs within California institutions of higher learning. This information was compiled from online resources

at the institutions' websites. The matrix compiles results for the UC, CSU, a couple of private institutions, and community colleges. The matrix contains information, where available, on the American Indian and Alaska Native program name, existing recruitment efforts, year program started, and location of recruitment efforts (organizationally). These institutions were selected because they serve the largest proportion of students in California, as these are the public institutions of higher education. We have included private institutions with a known reputation for serving the American Indian and Alaska Native student population and for having existing programs and/or services. The chart should be useful for researchers, policymakers, and educators seeking to examine the types of programs and services already in place at institutions of higher education in California. Of note, the campuses of CSU San Marcos and UC Davis were often referenced during group discussion as campuses successfully implementing some of the identified interventions. Of course, this chart only represents the best available information at the current time and will be subject to change over time.

## CONCLUSION

Our commentary is intended to accomplish several tasks. The first was to identify important and recurrent themes in the existing academic literature on recruitment and retention of American Indian and Alaska Native students in higher education. Through a survey of selected literature that looks more closely at the political, social, and cultural factors impacting American Indian and Alaska Native students, four common themes emerged and grounded our workshop track discussions. The themes focused primarily on different types of support that are required to improve American Indian and Alaska Native recruitment and retention. The first was the importance of creating a community for the American Indian and Alaska Native population in these spaces. The second was a need for institutional academic support and admissions support. The third theme focused on financing support for these endeavors. The final theme was the importance (and the lack of) data to identify trends and changes in enrollment, application, and graduation for these otherwise-overlooked populations.

The second task was to engage the participants in our workshop and collect their thoughts and input on best practices for improving American Indian and Alaska Native recruitment and retention in California institutions of higher education. We identified five areas where specific program and policy interventions would lead to improved American Indian and Alaska Native recruitment and retention. The first area focused on dedicating campus space for the American Indian and Alaska Native population and for hosting events and activities. The second area focused on increasing and improving staff and faculty on campuses for American Indian and Alaska Native programs and services. The third area for intervention focused on increasing funding mechanisms for American Indian and Alaska Native students to attend and graduate from these higher education institutions. The fourth area focused on the need for better and timely data to assess changes in this population in a consistent manner over time and educational institutions. Finally, the fifth area focused on community engagement and involvement in various aspects of recruitment, programming, and event planning.

Finally, we have provided an initial overview of existing American Indian and Alaska Native programs and services at the various UC, CSU, private, and CCC institutions in California. While this is not an exhaustive list, it provides some basic information on currently existing programs and services for American Indian and Alaska Native student populations advertised on their respective websites.

## NOTES

1. We use the terms *Indigenous*, *Native*, *American Indian*, *Native American*, and *Indian* interchangeably to refer to the peoples Indigenous to what is now the United States. Scholars, educators, and other Indigenous people have not agreed on how to use these terms.

2. Joely Proudfit and Theresa Gregor, *The State of American Indian and Alaska Native Education in California 2014*, California State Department of Education, The California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center, California State University San Marcos, [https://www.csusm.edu/cicsc/projects/projects\\_docs\\_images/CICSC\\_2014\\_Education\\_Report\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.csusm.edu/cicsc/projects/projects_docs_images/CICSC_2014_Education_Report_DOWNLOAD.pdf).

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Beyond the Asterisk: Understanding Native Students in Higher Education*, ed. Heather J. Shotton, Shelly C. Lowe, and Stephanie J. Waterman (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2013).

5. Jameson D. Lopez, "Factors Influencing American Indian and Alaska Native Postsecondary Persistence: AI/AN Millennium Falcon Persistence Model," *Research in Higher Education* 59, no. 6 (2018): 792–811, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-017-9487-6>; William G. Tierney, *Official Encouragement, Institutional Discouragement: Minorities in Academe—The Native American Experience*, Interpretive Perspectives on Education and Policy series (Greenwich, CT; Ablex Publishing Corp., 1992); Stephanie J. Waterman, "A Complex Path to Haudenosaunee Degree Completion," *Journal of American Indian Education* (2007): 20–40.

6. Nicole Alia Salis Reyes and Heather J. Shotton, "Bringing Visibility to the Needs and Interests of Indigenous Students: Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice," (Association for the Study of Higher Education and the National Institute for Transformation and Equity, 2018), <https://cece.sitehost.iu.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Bringing-Visibility-to-the-Needs-and-Interests-of-Indigenous-Students-FINAL-2.pdf>.

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Name of College/ University	Type	Name of Program	Recruitment Efforts	Retention Efforts	Nature of Organization?	Location of Program	Year Start	Best Practices
UC Berkeley	UC	Indigenous and Native Coalition (INC) Recruitment and Retention Center, formerly known as Native American Recruitment and Retention Center (NARRC)	Collaborative events with organizations such as the Native American Health Center, Intertribal Friendship House, and the American Indian Child Resource Center	Establishing a support system at Cal by providing safe spaces on campus as well as collaborating with other on-campus organizations (See INC)	Originated by student organization, now university supported with full-time staff members	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	1991	Partnerships, support systems, safe spaces
UC Davis	UC	The American Indian Recruitment and Retention (AIRR) program of the Student Recruitment and Retention Center (SRRC); Native American Academic Student Success Center (Native Nest)	Rancheria and Reservation Outreach Trips, Community Center Outreach, Tutoring, and Annual Native Youth Conference	Native Welcome Orientation, Day of Indigenous Resistance, Native Leadership Retreat, Native Film Festival, Workshops; Tutoring, academic advising, emotional well-being and support, community and physical space	Student-led recruitment and retention efforts with a faculty director; Staff director with other staff from other campus departments	Student affairs	1998; 2016	Annual Native Youth Conference, community events, community outreach
UC Irvine	UC	American Indian Resource Program	Native American Outreach Officer housed on Admissions Office	Native American Student Organizations, academic programs	University supported program	Center for Educational Partnerships UCI School of Education	2007	Native American Land Recruitment and Admissions Brochure (including land acknowledgement), student organizations, academic programs
UCLA	UC	American Indian Recruitment (AIR)	Student outreach, Weekly Sites, Higher Education Awareness, and Community College	Retention of American Indians Now! (RAIN!)	Student initiated, student run project sponsored by the American Indian Student Association funded by student referenda monies	Student organization under Community Programs Office in Student Affairs	1990	Student outreach and retention support and programming
UC Merced	UC	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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UC Riverside	UC	NASP – Native American Student Program	High school and middle school outreach visits; College Information Day; College Exploration Day.	A "circle of support dedicated to academic, social, and personal success of Native American students"	University supported program	Student Affairs	1980	Support systems (social and academic); community outreach and engagement
UC San Diego	UC	Intertribal Resource Center	Building partnerships with local Native communities and create educational and social support and programs on campus	N/A	University supported program	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	2016	Community partnerships and student outreach
UC San Francisco	UC	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
UC Santa Barbara	UC	American Indian Culture and Resource Center	Early (Academic) Outreach Program	Student programming and planning under AICRC	University supported program	Student Affairs	N/A	Outreach conference, academic programs, resource center
UC Santa Cruz	UC	American Indian Resource Center	Scholarships and academic programs	American Indian Resource Center; cultural events, and academic programs	University program with student internships available	Division of Student Success	2003	Scholarships, academic programs, and cultural events
CSU Bakersfield	CSU	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CSU Channel Islands	CSU	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CSU Chico	CSU	Office of Tribal Relations	American Indian Summer Institute, Education fairs	Student organizations, Native Graduation	University office	Separate from admissions, Office of the President	2018	Support systems (social and academic), Tribal partnerships, Land Acknowledgement
CSU Dominguez Hills	CSU	American Indian Institute	Community Partnerships	Student organizations and community events	University program	Separate from admissions, Center for Service Learning, Internships & Civic Engagement	2011	Community partnerships, Community events

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CSU East Bay	CSU	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CSU Fresno	CSU	Native American Initiative	Native American Youth Conference; Community partnerships; Reach out to Native American students through partnerships and collaborations with Rancherias, school districts, and tribal agencies serving Native American students; Develop and maintain support networks	Develop and maintain support networks within the university and the Native American community; Host community events; Cultivate home away from home; Provide academic monitoring	University Program	Separate from admissions, Student Affairs - Outreach and Special Programs	2014	Support systems (social and academic), Community events, Cultivating home away from home
CSU Fullerton	CSU	No current program, but a 2019 student body resolution calling for Native American Recruitment, Retention and Support	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CSU Humboldt	CSU	Native American Center for Academic Excellence - multiple programs: Indian Tribal Education and Personnel Program (ITEPP) Indian Natural Resource, Science and Engineering Program (INRSEP)	N/A	Academic programs, professional development, job placement, and community events; Academic advising; Cultural resource center; Home away from home	University Cultural Center	Separate from admissions, Under Dean of Students	1979	Academic and career advising, Support network, Cultivating home away from home, Connection to Native American Studies
(Humboldt cont'd)		Education Opportunity Program (EOP) and other university departments	University commits to American Indian College Motivation Day; Local Native American Admissions Counselor	Humboldt State offers extensive personal support, mentoring and tutoring for Native students.	N/A	Includes Admissions	N/A	Academic programs, financial assistance, mentoring, and tutoring

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CSU Long Beach	CSU	American Indian Student Services	Plan and implement outreach activities; Monitor and assist in the processing of financial aid and Bureau of Indian Affairs grants; Provide admissions support	Provide advising and counseling support; Student Life and Development advisor to student organizations; Serve as a liaison to campus offices on American Indian concerns; Coordinate advising with Education Equity programs; Maintain an American Indian events information; Coordinate the Puwungna Student Cultural Resource Center for activities and meetings	University program	Separate from admissions, Office of Student Life and Development	N/A	Admissions support, Support system (social and academic), American Indian Studies Department connection
CSU Los Angeles	CSU	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CSU Maritime Academy	CSU	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CSU Monterey Bay	CSU	Native American Advisory Council	N/A	To provide community and support for students; To build community and continue campus relations with tribes; To advise campus administrators on issues relevant to the support of Native students, faculty, staff and alumni.	Cross-campus group of students, staff, faculty, and community members	N/A	N/A	Support system
CSU Northridge	CSU	American Indian Student Association	Promote recruitment, retention, and motivation for all American Indians to attend CSUN or any higher educational institution	Support groups and up to date open forums to consider contemporary concerns of all First Peoples	Student Organization	Student organization affiliated with American Indian Studies program	1969	Support systems (social and academic), Connection to American Indian Studies

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CSU Pomona	CSU	Native American Student Center	Hosts tribal groups and organizations and also attend local Native community conferences and educational events to show Cal Poly Pomona offers a home-away-from-home for all Native students; Summer NATIVE Pipeline program	Academic, organizational, and personal advising; A community space for students to study, meet between classes, and build community; Printing and wireless connection; Multimedia center, equipped with TV and DVD; Scholarship announcements and fellowship opportunities; Native Grad	University program	Separate from admissions, Office of Student Life and Cultural Centers	N/A	Community partnerships, support systems, Cultivating a home away from home, Native American Studies Minor
CSU Sacramento	CSU	Native Scholars & Transition Program	Supporting and guiding students through the admission process, transitional student support through summer programming, learning community offerings for Native students at both the upper division and lower division levels	cultural programming, college motivation days, college and community resource fairs, program celebrations, and social and student support gatherings	University Program through the Office of Student Affairs	Separate from admissions (part of student affairs)	N/A	Academic support, cultural programming, social support systems, college awareness
CSU San Bernardino	CSU	First Peoples Center	Native American Outreach Counselor	San Manuel scholarships; Frances D. Morongo scholarship. Peer mentors first meet students during our First Peoples Coyote Rising summer bridge program. The summer bridge program is designed for incoming Native American students to support their adjustment into CSUSB.	The mission of the First Peoples Student Center is dedicated to supporting the academic achievement and personal success of First People students while promoting and celebrating your traditional heritage at California State University San Bernardino. Part of the student union.	Admissions office.	Unknown.	Peer mentoring, transition programs; scholarships.



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CSU San Diego State University	CSU	American Indian Recruitment (AIR) Program	The AIR Program is a non-profit with a location on the campus. It serves many different institutions in southern California.	N/A		Partnership with the Dept. of American Indian Studies and the AIR program.	N/A	Tutoring, mentoring, college awareness
CSU San Francisco	CSU	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CSU San José	CSU	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CSU San Luis Obispo	CSU		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CSU San Marcos	CSU	Tribal Engagement Initiative	At CSUSM, we have made reversing these numbers a priority and the Tribal Initiative is making progress. As a result, CSUSM has exponentially increased recruitment and retention of students from this traditionally underserved student population.	Participation in the academic setting, involvement in the university community, and social and relational experiences outside of class	University Program	Part of admissions	2007	Partnership, Native Advisory Council, Land Acknowledgement, American Indian Studies department, Tribal Liaison
CSU Sonoma	CSU	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CSU Stanislaus	CSU	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mendocino College	Public CC	Native American Student Resources Center	Assistance with Admission Process Assist with Financial Aid (FAFSA, Fee Waiver, etc.) Assistance with Tribal Education Funding and Scholarships	The NAPMP is a peer-to-peer model designed to facilitate the successful transition and retention of prospective and current Native American students.	College Program	N/A	N/A	

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Sacramento City College	Public CC	Native American Student Development and Success	Native American Student Development and Success staff reach out to our local and surrounding Native communities, high schools, elementary schools, and community events.	N/A	College Program	Separate from admissions	N/A	Land Acknowledgement, Annual Events, Partnerships (American Indian Summer Institute), Student support network
Pitzer College	Private	Pitzer College's Native Initiatives	The Native Youth to College Program is a college preparatory experience for Native American high school students in 9th-12th grades, designed to motivate them to complete high school. Indige-Nation Claremont Scholars mentoring program to help in applying to college.	The Elders in Residence Program brings American Indian elders to campus for hands-on workshops, presentations and discussions, to answer questions, offer support, or just listen. Grandmother Garden at Pomona Farm.	Community Engagement Center	Separate from admissions		
Stanford University	Private	Native American Cultural Center	Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions Officers on staff. Two separate positions.	Extensive Programming on campus throughout the year.	Admissions Officers	Part of Admissions		
University of Redlands	Private	Native Student Programs	Assistance with Admission Process, Multicultural Recruiter liaison, Assist with Financial Aid (FAFSA, Fee Waiver, etc.) Assistance with Tribal Education Funding and Scholarships, Local tribal partnerships, Host outreach events and	Advises Native American Student Union, Sponsoring on campus events for student body and surrounding tribal communities, Mentor and advise students, Offer community engagement opportunities with surrounding tribes	University Program	Separate from Admissions, College of Arts and Sciences	2011	Community events, Community outreach, Partnerships with local tribes, Scholarship for Native students, Student support network, Application fee waiver, Native American Studies Program

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