STUDENT SUCCESS AT TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

American Indian Higher Education Consortium

Strategies that Work

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Tribal Colleges and Universities are unique institutions that combine accredited education, personal attention and cultural relevance, in such a way as to encourage American Indians, especially those living on reservations, to overcome the barriers to postsecondary education.

AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

Cover photo courtesy Mark Lewer, Leech Lake Tribal College.

Contents

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Introduction

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) serve some of the most impoverished and disenfranchised communities in the United States (His Horse is Thunder, 2012). Deeply committed to providing the best possible higher education to their respective communities, these institutions strive to foster environments that are supportive and encouraging. The majority of these higher education institutions are located in extremely rural America and provide higher education access to over 80 percent of Indian Country (2009–2010 AIHEC AIMS Fact Book). TCUs are designed as open-admissions institutions that provide higher education embedded in the Native culture and values of the chartering tribal government. In 2009–2010, student enrollment was reported at nearly 20,000 students (2009–2010 AIHEC AIMS Fact Book).

The United States has recognized that the need to increase retention and graduation rates is one of the greatest single challenges facing American higher education including TCUs and other minority serving colleges. Several years ago, the Alliance for Higher Education (Alliance) was formed to address issues at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). Its membership included the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) whose members are the TCUs; the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) whose members include the colleges and universities where there is a considerable Hispanic enrollment known as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs); and the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO) whose members are the predominately and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). This Alliance is important as it allows these colleges to join forces in a concerted effort to address the issue of student success at their institutions. A review of the literature revealed that a number of student success strategies have been developed with varying degrees of success at MSIs and mainstream colleges and universities.

With support from the Walmart Foundation to address retention and student success at TCUs and other MSIs, this Alliance or Collaborative used a mentor-mentee relationship among and between institutions. While mentor colleges had demonstrated successful strategies to retain and graduate students, during the course of the Project it was agreed that all participating colleges learned from one another. In the beginning phase of the Collaboration, AIHEC identified two mentor TCUs, Institute of American Indian Arts (Santa Fe, NM) and Leech Lake Tribal College (Cass Lake, MN). This number was expanded to three mentor TCUs in the second phase by moving Sitting Bull College from a mentee college to a mentor institution. The mentee TCUs included Fort Peck Community College (Poplar, MT), Stone Child College (Box Elder, MT), Ilisagvik College (Barrow, AK), and initially Sitting Bull College (Fort Yates, ND).

This monograph illustrates some of those success strategies identified by the six TCUs participating in this initiative and also shares the list of additional strategies they implemented.

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Planning is a critical component of any successful enterprise including higher education institutions. One of the most important lessons learned through the Walmart Student Success Collaboration was the need for clear and measureable retention plans. Every higher education institution is expected by its respective accreditation agency to have a current institutional strategic plan. This strategic plan provides a road map for the college with clear, targeted, and measurable goals. It is essential that at least one of the strategic goals is devoted to student success. A retention plan that identifies specific strategies, responsibility, frequency, targeted number of students, and clear measurements of results is subsequently developed from this strategic goal.

Philosophy of Student Success

Once the specific student success strategic goal is identified and articulated, it then becomes necessary for everyone to come together to develop a "philosophy of student success" that is inclusive of all departments and employees. Frequently, one person is assigned "retention" as a responsibility and often this person does not have the level of authority to require the types of activities and data reports from all areas of the college that are essential to student success. While it is important to have a person/ office responsible for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data, it also has to be clear that retention is everyone's responsibility. Several colleges have developed slogans to reinforce their philosophy, e.g., DeKalb Technical College's "student success is everybody's business" (2011, Gordon) or Middlesex Community College's "everyone teaches-everyone learns." (2014, conference discussion).

The six TCUs participating in the Walmart, AIHEC, HACU, and NAFEO Student Success Project articulated specific strategic goals that included:

1.   Identify successful intervention strategies for supporting student success;

2.   Disseminate and support implementation of successful intervention strategies;

3.   Build a community of practice among participating AIHEC tribal colleges on student success;

4.   Institutionalize retention and student success as a high priority across the tribal college partnerships; and,

5.   Institutionalize implementation of best practices for student success in tribal colleges.

Definitions and Baseline Data

Once the objectives that will facilitate the achievement of the strategic goal of student success are identified, the baseline data must be established with clear definitions to insure accurate comparisons. For example, there are institutional definitions of retention and persistence which differ from those used by the U.S. Department of Education for its IPEDS report and vary from the definition used by AIHEC's AKIS/AIMS project. The definition for retention used by IPEDS is, first-time, full-time students who have never attended any other higher education institution and this is measured from one fall term to the next fall term (downloaded March 3, 2014-IPEDS). The definition for persistence is, all full-time degree seeking students attending college and measured from fall term to spring term. AKIS/AIMS' definition is similar to the IPEDS except it includes transfer students in its calculations. The determination of the college's retention and persistence rates for the past year provides an excellent starting point to begin tracking this data. The determination of retention and persistence rates will allow the college to establish measureable targets for future years. For example, if the retention rate was 30 percent in the last academic year, a targeted increase to 35 percent in the next year and a target of a five percent increase each year thereafter can be measured and will allow the college to establish measurable targets for future use.

The literature is rife with examples of successful retention strategies (2012, Hurtado, Alvarado, and Guillermo-Wann; 2005, Baily and Alfonso; 2000, Low; 1987, Chickering and Gamson) including those identified and implemented by the six TCUs participating in the Walmart, AIHEC, HACU, and NAFEO Student Success Project. Identifying specific strategies and determining any measureable outcomes that can provide evidence of their contributions to student success would be the next step in this process. The identification of other retention strategies through the literature or by the examples of peer colleges would allow the expansion of strategies with the expected results.

This process to identify successful retention strategies also requires the articulation of retention priorities at the institutional level, program level (e.g., environmental science, Indigenous studies), cohort level (e.g., first-time freshmen or transfer students), and course level (e.g., developmental education classes, gateway classes, first-year experience class). Once these priorities are established and baseline data are determined, targeted outcomes for future years can be included with measureable data. Student satisfaction is also an element that should be factored into this process. These priorities and target setting for future years requires the input of everyone campus-wide. It also requires a means of holding everyone accountable in meeting these targets.

Accountability is an essential factor; without it, this simply becomes an exercise in futility. An annual campus-wide retreat to review and analyze the data allows the information to be discussed and used for decision-making in the improvement of the college. Sitting Bull College focused its efforts to develop and implement an enrollment management plan over the course of this project. What follows is a description of their efforts to provide an example of this process.

Enrollment Management Plan

In an effort to increase student retention, SBC established an enrollment management plan that would take the enrollment and retention of students to another level. According to Don Hossler and John P. Bean (1990), enrollment management is defined as "an organizational concept and a systematic set of activities designed to enable educational institutions to exert more influence over their student enrollments. Organized by strategic planning and supported by institutional research, enrollment management activities concern student college choice, transition to college, student attrition and retention, and student outcomes. These processes are studied to guide institutional practices in the areas of new student recruitment and financial aid, student support services, curriculum development, and other academic areas that affect enrollments, student persistence, and student outcomes from college" (Hossler and Bean, 1990, p. 5).

Through the efforts of the Walmart Student Success Project, attention was focused on the development of an effective campus-wide retention plan in 2011–2012. SBC developed a draft of an enrollment management plan in 2004 and continued to work on the document through 2008. The draft was used as a starting point for enrollment management services; however, it languished without identifying a person or unit to be responsible for the plan or to ensure that the objectives were being carried out. The retention plan evolved in 2012–2013 to a fully developed campus-wide enrollment management plan. The College's Student Life Committee is responsible for oversight of the plan. This standing committee is made up of personnel from both student services and academic affairs.

SBC Enrollment Management Mission Statement

SBC's Enrollment Management Plan outlines the active recruitment, enrollment, retention, and matriculation of a diverse student body. The Enrollment Management Plan supports the SBC 2012–2017 Strategic Plan. The plan covers marketing, recruitment, retention and completion, financial aid, professional development, and data analysis to drive decisions and to insure accountability of student services.

The following benchmarks were established for SBC's Enrollment Management Plan:

- Increase new student enrollment by 50 per year.

- Increase fall-to-fall retention rates by two percent per year.

- Increase fall-to-spring persistence rates by two percent per year.

- Increase graduation rates by two percent per year.

In order to achieve the established benchmarks the following goals and objectives were established:

Marketing Goals

1. To develop and implement a comprehensive marketing plan through 2017.
   a. Develop a campaign to brand SBC.
   b. Determine the most effective means for marketing SBC.
   c. Revamp SBC website.

Recruitment and Enrollment Goal

2. To establish and maintain a recruitment plan that will increase new students by 50 per year through 2017.
   a. Complete a demographic study of serve area.
   b. Increase enrollment of current high school graduates.
   c. Increase enrollment of current GED graduates.
   d. Create and increase the number of programs/activities that will increase the male student enrollment.
   e. Develop articulation agreements between other ND TCUs for transfer students into bachelor and future master's programs.

Retention and Completion Goal

3. To establish and maintain a retention plan through 2017.
   a. Provide an effective first-year learning experience.
   b. Provide an effective integrated and coordinated advisement program for all students.
   c. Improve engagement of all students.
   d. Create improved communication of events/activities and important dates between the college and the students.
   e. Provide services for students at risk.
   f. Increase availability/access to support services offered to McLaughlin & Mobridge sites.
   g. Increase student opportunities for external experiences.

Student Financial Management Goal

4. To establish and maintain a student financial management plan through 2017.
   a. Increase the financial literacy of students.

b. Assist students with setting financial goals.

c. Increase the number of scholarships awarded to students.

d. Increase the number of students completing financial aid before classes begin.

Professional Development Goal

5. To implement and maintain a professional development plan for staff and faculty on effective practices in retention and persistence through 2017.

a. Provide resources for faculty and staff to attend first-year learning experience conferences.

b. Provide resources for faculty and staff to attend advising conferences.

c. Provide resources for faculty and staff to attend recruitment and retention conferences.

d. Provide resources for faculty and staff to attend assessment conferences.

Data Collection and Reporting Goal

6. To establish and maintain an effective data collection and reporting system through 2017.

a. Develop tools to effectively track data collection.

b. Maintain a central repository system.

c. Complete an annual report that is shared with the college community.

In order to track the results of the established goals and objectives of the Enrollment Management Plan, the College developed a reporting process similar to what has been used for the past ten years for the assessment of student learning. This includes establishing a measurement tool for each objective by answering four questions:

- Who will do it?

- What will be done?

- How will it be done?

- When will it be done?

A measureable goal (expected results) is established for each measurement tool. Once the measurement is completed the actual results are compared to the expected results. This is followed by a comparison with the actual results, with the final step of providing a recommendation or action for the following year. In the spring of 2013,

the Enrollment Management Plan was added to the academic assessment reporting process. This action assured the inclusion of both academic and student services in an assessment reporting process that is institution-wide.

A complete example is as follows:

Recruitment Plan Goal 2: To have established and maintained a recruitment plan that will increase new students by 50 per year through 2017.

Objective	Measurement Tool (who, what, how, when?)	Measurement Goal (expected results)	Findings (actual results)	Action or Recommendation
To increase enroll-ment of current high school graduates.	Student Services will complete the following recruit-ment activities with high school students each year: College Awareness on campus visits. Send thank you cards Visit High Schools/Recruitment Fairs Brochures/Alumni Posters at each school on and near reservation boundaries Sunday/Summer Academies HS graduate schol-arship School counselor awareness sessions Visits to schools during parent teacher conferences Dual credit/dual enrollments	At a minimum 300 high school contacts will be made in a year resulting in an additional 10 high school graduates selecting SBC the following fall term.	The following contacts were made with high school students: 10/24/12: College Aware-ness 30 11/7/12: WHS COMPASS 18 11/15/12: SRHS Transition 24 12/7/12: WHS College Fair 60 1/10/13: SRHS FAFSA tour 23 2/19/13: McL FAFSA tour 3 2/20/13: WHS Recrt. Visit 8 2/27/13: SolHS Recrt. Visit 4 3/6/13: SRHS College Fair 54 3/27/13: SCRUBS Fair Mob. 17 4/9/13: SRHS SBC summit 22 4/1/13 Solen FAFSA tour 25 Total = 288 (Duplicated) 2013–2014: Fourteen high school graduates out of 100 from Standing Rock Schools selected SBC.	Continue with current recruitment activities, along with developing five new recruitment activities. Plan to hold several bridge programs for the summer 2013. Other suggestions are to have SBC graduates and cur-rent students speak to HS students about their SBC experiences.

After review of this objective, SBC did not meet the expected results. Therefore, at a planning meeting for recruitment, additional activities were planned for 2013–2014 to have more frequent contact with high school students on Standing Rock and surrounding communities. This included a College Fair for parents, juniors and seniors. The College Fair included a showcase of SBC's programs of study. It provided information about college admission, financial aid, and scholarships. Other activities included setting up college information booths at parent-teacher conferences, sporting events at local high schools, along with revamping and more use of social media.

An example of a retention objective is as follows:

Retention Plan Goal 3: To establish and maintain a retention plan through 2017.

Objective	Measurement Tool (who, what, how, when?)	Measurement Goal (expected results)	Findings (actual results)	Action or Recommendation
To improve engagement of all students.	The retention committee will coordinate the following events/activities throughout the academic year: Student Summit	50 percent of current students will attend the student summit with an overall satisfaction level for the summit at 3.5 on a five point Likert type scale.	Fall 12: 78 students or 28 percent of student body attended with an overall satisfaction rate of 4.4. Spring 13: 115 students or 45 percent of student body attended with and overall satisfaction rate of 4.3. It was predicted that the poor turnout for the fall semester for the student summit was due to circumstances beyond the college's control. During a seven week time period there was an average attendance drop of 7 percent from fall 2011 to fall 2012, with a high of 10 percent difference and a low of 5 percent difference.	The Student Life Committee is recommending the continuation of two student summits, one in the fall on a Tuesday and one in the spring on a Wednesday. As a way to increase attendance, it was decided to change the day from Tuesday in the fall to Wednesday in the spring. Based on the 2013 Noel Levitz survey the largest gap between the 2011 and 2013 surveys was that students generally know what is happening on campus. The gap was .43 percent. Therefore, the Student Life Committee has determined that communication will be the selected topic for the fall 2013 summit.

For the fall 2013 student summit, 141 students were in attendance, 54 percent of the total students. A motivational speaker was provided for the summit who focused on "Success as a Choice." The speaker discussed with the students that words have different meanings and that the use of negative words can prohibit the communication process and also the ability to achieve success. Therefore, as a means to have effective communication leading to success, words such as can't, won't, shouldn't, and so forth should be avoided. The students rated the benefit of the fall summit speaker on a scale from one-to-five, resulting in a 4.2 with an overall rating for the summit of a 4.5.

As a result of this Enrollment Management Plan, SBC has made substantive changes including policy changes to advising, first-year courses, counseling, and student activities. The Walmart Student Retention grant allowed for professional development opportunities for both first-year faculty and student support staff. In addition, most importantly, the grant required SBC to stay on task. Too often in tribal colleges, faculty and staff have many responsibilities and at times important items are left on the back burner. The grant required SBC to stay focused and stay on task. Even though a large amount of work was completed in a short period of time, SBC still has to refine the process to ensure that data are collected and analyzed in order to make sustainable changes that will contribute to student success.

Conclusion

In order for a college to be successful in retention efforts, at a minimum, colleges need to have a clear retention plan that provides baseline data and establishes targeted, measureable goals for student success. Once this has been developed and implemented, a companion and more expansive, institution-wide process would be the development and implementation of an enrollment management plan. These processes enable colleges to track student data in meaningful ways to inform and support data-driven decision-making for stronger TCUs.

Endnotes

1. See the Higher Learning Commission's Criterion Five-Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness (January 2013) and the Northwest Commission on Universities and Colleges' Standard Three-Planning and Implementation (2010).

2. Refer to www.aihec.org and then Student Success Portal for examples.

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Faculty Engagement[1]: Making the Difference in Student Success

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Student retention continues to be a growing issue on college campuses (Bryant and Bodfish, 2014; Carey, 2005; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005; Sternberg, 2013; Swail et al., 2003; Tinto, 1997) including at TCUs. Most tribal colleges are open-admissions higher education institutions with missions that address the unique cultures and languages of the chartering tribal nations (Boyer, 1997). These colleges strive to foster environments that are infused with native culture and strong faculty/staff-to-student ratios which facilitate intensive student support. Even with a strong student-focused environment, a major challenge for TCUs is to meet or exceed their goals for student retention and subsequent graduation. Stone Child College is no exception; the student retention rate presents an ongoing challenge. The SCC retention rate in 2010–2011 was reported at 43 percent (SCC Institutional Data 2014). Stone Child College's administration and faculty determined that this retention rate was unacceptably low, and they vowed to address this issue.

Guided by recent research (e.g., Guillory, 2009; Guillory and Wolverton, 2008; Huffman, 2008; Miller and Murray, 2005), SCC became determined to address this concern. The Walmart Student Success Project presented an opportunity to do so during the fall of 2011. The project was a part of a larger pilot group of six tribal colleges in the Walmart Student Success Collaboration funded by the Walmart Foundation. The goal of the Walmart Student Success Project was to identify and implement student success strategies at MSIs in higher education around the country. The tribal colleges were 6 of 18 MSIs who participated in the overall project. The TCUs through its national organization, AIHEC worked in collaboration with HACU and NAFEO; the latter, worked with HBCUs. An aspect of the grant was to develop mentor/mentee relationships between mentor TCUs who had experienced success in student success strategies, and mentee TCUs who proposed to strengthen their student success efforts.

Stone Child College was assigned as a mentee to Leach Lake Tribal College (LLTC). The mentor colleges were selected based on evidence of strong student success programs. The mentor/mentee relationship was designed to share what was successful in an effort to replicate these strategies on the mentee campus. It was critical that the mentor and mentee institutions had a clear understanding of the services in place, resources available, and challenges found on the respective campuses. It was determined that it was necessary for each college to visit the other to gain insight into the other's uniqueness and facilitate discussions of student success strategies which held potential for implementation or adaptation at the other institution.

It became apparent that LLTC and SCC had many similarities that quite possibly impacted student success. Both colleges are two-year community colleges which are located in very rural geographical areas (LLTC is in Cass Lake, MN, with Bemidji, MN, the largest community in proximity to them, and SCC is located at Rocky Boy Agency, MT, with Havre, MT, located 35 miles away). No student housing exists on either campus so students must live in the community or commute great distances. There is no campus food service on either campus which requires students to make other arrangements for meals. Student activities were limited on both campuses. The student body of both campuses are also quite similar with a majority of the students being Native American. Many students are also first-generation college students and under-prepared for the academic rigor of college. Both colleges are also located in relatively high poverty communities as well. All of these factors create significant challenges for students.

During the first visit to LLTC, it was evident to SCC that it needed to engage faculty in a different manner in order to improve rapport and to find a means to effectively communicate across the campus at all levels (e.g. with and between students, faculty, staff, and administration) on a regular basis. An effective communication strategy was observed in which the group experienced a noon gathering for LLTC's students, faculty, and staff. This noon event provided announcements about important pending due dates and academic information while everyone enjoyed a meal provided and prepared by staff and faculty, including administration. Leach Lake Tribal College explained that each faculty and administration member paid for and prepared this meal for the students, SCC was struck by the willingness of faculty and staff to do this, and the personal touch this created with their students left a positive impression on SCC. From experiencing this warm, yet informative experience, SCC

Stone Child College

Stone Child College (SCC) is a tribally controlled college located on the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation in north central Montana. This reservation is the home of the Chippewa Cree Nation and is comprised of a land base of 108,000 acres and a tribal enrollment of approximately 6,000 members with a vast majority of residents American Indian (Montana.gov 2014).

According to Stone Child College 2013–2014 data reports, SCC had a spring 2013 semester enrollment of 212 students, and is considered a small tribal college. Student demographics have slowly been changing. Student retention has increased from 43 percent in 2010–2011 to 54 percent in 2013–2014. Persistence (continuation from fall semester-to-spring semester) has increased even more dramatically since these two student success strategies were implemented. Persistence was 53 percent in 2010–2011 and in 2013–2014 it is reported at 76 percent. This is quite an improvement and data are expected to result in greater retention and completion rates.

Leach Lake Tribal College

Leech Lake Tribal College (LLTC) is a tribally controlled college located on the Leech Lake Indian Reservation in northern Minnesota. Founded in 1990 to serve the Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) people of the Leech Lake Indian Reservation, LLTC offers postsecondary education grounded in the language, history, and culture of the Anishinaabe.

The reservation is comprised of 602,889 acres with 14 to 22 people per square mile. Leech Lake tribe reports just over 7,000 tribal members with approximately 3,700 residents on the reservation.

According to Leech Lake Tribal College 2013-2014 data reports, LLTC had a spring 2013 semester enrollment of 248 students, making it a small tribal college.

began incubating the idea into what became known as Monday Drum (explained in detail in following paragraphs). From this one act of hospitality, faculty engagement with students on an informal level has definitely increased, as well as, engagement with peers, staff members, and administration.

A second strategy, mid-term advising, was revealed as the SCC group continued with a tour of the student services department. Through a simple discussion about student retention, the SCC group was reminded about the importance of mid-term advising. Stone Child College staff and faculty had personal experience with this strategy in their own undergraduate studies, but had not thought about implementing this for SCC. As a result of this visit, the SCC group realized a need to develop a mid-term advising strategy designed to increase student retention. Research also supports strong advising initiatives to improve retention (Alberts, 2006; Doubleday, 2013; Noel-Levitz, 2009; Nutt, 2003; Ohrablo, 2014). Two very successful strategies were born out of this first campus visit between the mentor and mentee: Monday Drum and Mid-term Advising and Madness at SCC.

Monday Drum, a student engagement activity, begins each Monday at SCC with a Native American drum group drawing the student body, faculty, and staff into a central meeting place. Once all are gathered, local singers open the gathering with a traditional tribal song, followed by announcements, and student recognitions, then by prayer. A meal prepared by faculty and staff is provided, and the students and elders go through the food line first, followed by staff and faculty. The cultural use of prayer, blessing, and inclusion of all who are present made this one of the highest ranking retention activities on a student survey administered every semester. This activity resulted in additional people joining the tribal drum group with special tribute songs for birthdays, veterans, and other special occasions.

There has been additional cultural teaching on speaking the Chippewa-Cree language and understanding tribal ceremonies. Sometimes everyone just enjoys eating together and other times the meal precedes additional activities such as encouraging high academic standards by presenting a "student of the month" award or praising students who have achieved in other ways such as winning AIHEC competition awards. Often students and faculty are encouraged to join in fun games or short advising strategies targeted to increase student and faculty engagement. Stone Child College encourages visitors to take part in the event and requested visits are planned around Monday Drum whenever possible.

Although Monday Drum was designed to increase across-campus communication and draw the students together with faculty, an unplanned outcome was the camaraderie that developed among the cooking teams. For example, one group always does a chili contest, another does hot ham and cheese sandwiches, while a third is known for their wonderful soups, and so forth. Student suggestions are taken seriously and participation is strongly encouraged. Since everyone eats, everyone is encouraged to participate in the preparation, including students. This participation creates a sense of belonging and responsibility as well as ownership of the activity. It is also very reflective of the tribal gatherings and events. Maintenance staff and students set up tables and many pitch in to clean up afterwards. From this one act of hospitality, faculty engagement with students on an informal level has definitely increased as well as engagement with peers, staff members and administration.

The food and drums draw students on a weekly basis but they stay and visit, ask questions, and tease one another. Faculty, staff, and students stay informed about what is going on during the week. In addition, faculty members get opportunities to touch base with students they have not seen in a while and they get to know students who may not have taken their classes. Through this engagement, students see their faculty and college administrators as approachable people. It also fosters a climate that facilitates communication at the institutional level and at the personal level among and between students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community members.

Another measure of evidence that the Monday Drum is having an impact is through the cultural teachings. Stone Child College staff, students, and faculty hear an increased usage of Cree greetings, more traditional foods are being included in the meal, as well as students are sharing verbally their appreciation of culture being included. Traditional meals and teachings are included close to holidays and an explanation about the cultural significance is included before the meal is served. Not only have faculty expressed appreciation for these teachings, but many students also have shared an appreciation of the teachings and the opportunities it opens for discussion with their instructors. Students expressed enjoyment that faculty joined in the learning of the language and culture, and they have expressed that out-of-class involvement fosters greater trust in the classroom leading to increased learning. (Seventy eight percent of SCC's faculty are from mainstream culture and only one instructor is a Chippewa-Cree tribal member.) Stone Child College faculty expressed increased rapport with their students as well as

having a greater understanding of the students' background and world. Students seem to feel ownership in this activity and it is probably because many student suggestions are included. Staff and faculty have been strongly encouraged to include students in the planning of meals and activities, serving, and cleaning up. From this weekly lunch, students express that they feel more engaged and connected to the institution when they completed the end-of-semester survey.

Current survey data gleaned from the "Stone Child College End-of-Semester Student Retention Survey" which was administered fall 2012, spring 2013, fall 2014, and spring 2014, shows students ranking Monday Drum as the most popular and most attended strategy. Additional data collected in the same survey reveal that 84 percent of SCC students report they heard about events, activities, and important due dates at Monday Drum. As evidenced through analysis of sign-in sheets, students also tend to stay on campus for this event that in turn leads to increased attendance in classes and possibly increased course completion. Stone Child College shows an increase in attendance in Monday afternoon classes, compared to the same afternoon classes on Wednesday. Generated from this activity, a newsletter was created and posted as a continuation of disseminating weekly information. This newsletter is an example of an additional successful student retention strategy gleaned from the greater collaboration among the six tribal colleges and it has proven to be successful at SCC too.

The second strategy inspired by the mentor college was an event called Mid-term Advising and Madness. Springboarding from the enthusiasm of Monday Drum, mid-term advising launched into a half-day retention strategy consisting of not only advising, but a fun meal (like the taco cart), culminating with "Madness." This engagement activity starts with establishing teams made up of students, faculty, and staff who compete in crazy games to become the next "Stone Child College Mid-term Advising Champions." This much-coveted award earns each winning team member a specially designed hoodie commemorating the event. Not only is this an advising activity, but it is also a way to increase student/faculty engagement outside of the classroom. Students have commented, "I love that my teacher put her running shoes on and was part of our team," and "I've never laughed so hard as when my math teacher was slurping Jell-O." Faculty and students, young and old, look forward to competing semester after semester. Not only has this helped build cohesiveness between students and faculty, but has pulled the faculty and student services department together as a team working to increase student persistence. The success of this event was apparent immediately by the large number of students who met with their advisors. Data are collected at a faculty focus group discussion a week or two after the event.

From faculty comments, mid-term advising was moved to one week before mid-terms since faculty expressed how helpful it was to have students become aware of their grades; if students knew where they scored earlier (i.e., before mid-terms), maybe they would take mid-term tests more seriously. Having completed several semesters with the earlier time slot, faculty continue to report the strategy very effective and recommend that it continue, as evidenced in the minutes of faculty meetings preceding

and following the strategy. Due to its effectiveness and strong faculty commitment, it has become a regular part of the academic department. Current data show an increase in student persistence over the last three years from 53 percent to 76 percent. Both faculty and staff praise this strategy for its effectiveness in helping students complete courses and for giving a much needed boost of enthusiasm in the middle of a semester.

One of the more interesting aspects is the positive effect these strategies have had on faculty attitude and motivation. This was a bottom-up process that began at the Retention Committee level. It was an organic process that not only increased student persistence positively; it also increased the positive synergy between departments as they worked together to create a student-centered environment actively engaged in increasing student retention leading to increased graduation rates. Through personal invitations to join and help with these two inclusive activities, all departments became engaged in the student retention effort. Administrators, faculty, staff, and students not only work alongside one another, but converse about retention issues and ways to solve them.

Last, but not least, participation in the Walmart Student Success Collaboration began to foster a culture of evidence at SCC with an increased focus on collecting data to see if implemented strategies actually increased student retention. Retention Committee members began asking, "were they (retention strategies) worth the time, effort, and money to implement them?" From these questions, committee members developed skills such as clearly defining the objective and designing the tools to gather data to evaluate the strategy before the event happened. After the event, members gathered to look at the data, questioned the validity of the data, and finally, by a group consensus, determined what the data indicated. Retention Committee members became responsible for collecting the data for the events they were part of and reporting data to the institutional research department. They learned to take a great idea generated through brainstorming and turn it into an effective strategy. Sometimes they struggled with understanding the data and worked together to increase the depth of data throughout the project. They overcame saying "we can't, to "we can" even when the data had to be collected by hand.

Data collection that once seemed overwhelming due to the lack of experience and technology skills, became possible through discussions and calls to other collaboration members who had more experience and success in collecting data. Through this organic process, an attitude of perseverance prevailed and excitement grew in the committee to want to know what really works on campus to retain students. From these data, best practices for SCC were identified and built into budgets, even after the grant period ended. Although there is still much work to be done in this area, the aforementioned strategies have become part of institutional processes and will continue, with new ones added, to empower SCC students to graduate with degrees. Through degree attainment, many doors which were previously closed will open, giving way to new goals and successes. Hopefully, some of those students will return to SCC to continue the work needed for them to be successful in their journey toward degree attainment.

Some of the conclusions that can be drawn from SCC's experience are that the less formal interaction of the Monday Drum has encouraged faculty to interact with students outside of class thus building greater rapport and trust. In addition, it has provided opportunities for faculty to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the Chippewa-Cree tribal culture and how they and their students can share common aspects of the culture. Students are able to observe faculty learning tribal language words and phrases which conveys additional acceptance and support. They feel a sense of connection as faculty share in their struggles with learning a different language and culture. This conclusion takes into consideration Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) findings that students may interact with faculty because they and the faculty share values and an orientation toward academic activity, and Lotkouski, et al., (2004) research that among the seven factors that improved student retention were academic self-confidence, social support, and social involvement.

Endnotes

1. While faculty engagement is a term that is defined by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2005) which describes the collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial use of knowledge and resources, it is used in this article as a means of fostering interaction between faculty, students, peers, staff members, administration, cultural leaders, and community members.

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First Year Learning Experience Course at Two Tribal Colleges

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Introduction

Sitting Bull College began offering a freshmen student success course in the fall of 1996 as a requirement for all certificate and degree seeking students. The rational for the course was to provide first-time freshmen along with transfer students who did not have a similar course, the opportunity to learn and adopt strategies to be successful in college and life. The course was titled, Psychology of Student Success. Topics for the course included critical thinking skills, career planning, time organization, test-taking techniques, communication skills, study techniques, question-asking skills, library use, and personal issues that many college students face. The course traditionally was taught by the academic and career counselors.

Over the lifespan of the Psychology of Student Success the topics for the course remained the same, but the course also became a venue for various activities, presentations, and surveys. In 2003, the course replaced the College's traditional one-day orientation program, so at various points in the course, individuals from academics and student services would present at class sessions information about policies and services for students. The problem with the course being used as an orientation was lack of consistency in scheduling individual presentations across sections of the course and from semester-to-semester. In addition, there was criticism from students and faculty who indicated that the course content was more like a high school course than a college course. Furthermore, even though

Sitting Bull College

Sitting Bull College (SBC) is a tribally controlled college located on the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation. This reservation encompasses a vast land base of 2.4 million acres and straddles the states of North and South Dakota. It has a population of 8,217 of which approximately 78 percent of the residents are American Indian (Census 2010). The reservation is nearly the size of the state of Connecticut but with fewer than four persons per square mile as compared to 4,845 persons per square mile in Connecticut.

Guided by Lakota/Dakota culture, values, and language, SBC is committed to building intellectual capital through academic, career and technical education, and promoting economic and social development.

According to Sitting Bull College's 2013 Self-Study, SBC had a spring 2013 semester enrollment of 254 students, and is considered a small tribal college. Student demographics have slowly been changing. During the fall 2003, 76 percent of the student body was female as compared to the spring 2013 in which 60 percent of the student body was female. The average age of SBC students in the fall 2003 was 34 and in the spring 2013 was 29.

students were advised to take the course during their first semester at SBC, many students waited until later in their education program with some waiting until right before graduation.

Finally, an examination of the completion rates revealed that about two-thirds of the enrolled students completed the course. The completion rate in fall 2010 was 39 percent and 33 percent in spring 2011. The low completion rates coincided with two other related major challenges in student retention for SBC: keeping students all semester and keeping students from semester-to-semester. Sitting Bull College was experiencing a low retention rate of first-time freshmen. Institutional statistics indicated that while the overall persistence rate (students enrolling in the fall and returning the following spring semester) for the college was almost 60 percent, the retention rate was less than 30 percent for first-time freshmen. Anecdotal evidence suggested that in many required classes, the dropout rate was at or near 50 percent each semester. For example, in Comm 110 Speech, enrollment for spring 2011 numbers dropped from 46 to 26. Class attendance was a pervasive problem in classes at SBC. According to 2010–2011 institutional assessment data, there was a direct correlation between attendance, grades earned, and grade point average. In essence, poor attendance leads to poor retention which in turn affects graduation rates (see Table 1). At this point, SBC realized that it was time to quit talking and take action.

Table 1: Correlation of Grades to Attendance (Spring 2011)

Semester GPA	Average Attendance	Number of Students	Percent of Group
4.00	87%	49	16%
3.99–3.00	81%	104	35%
2.99–2.00	72%	43	14%
1.99–1.00	58%	18	6%
.99–.01	48%	17	6%
0.00	23%	69	23%
Total		**300**	**100%**

Time For Change

The need to take action aligned with the application and selection of SBC for the Walmart AIHEC HACU NAFEO Student Success Collaborative Project in the summer 2011. Sitting Bull College's Student Success Collaborative Project followed the framework identified by Tinto (1999): expectations, advice, support, involvement, and learning. Sitting Bull College believed that improving the way in which expectations are communicated, student advising is conducted, support services are operated, student involvement or engagement is created, and learning is structured collectively should produce more positive student attendance and persistence. A mentor/mentee model was used by the Walmart Collaborative. As a mentee institution in phase one, SBC was

mentored by the Institute of American Indian Art, a tribal college located in Santa Fe, NM, that offers degree programs similar to those at SBC.

As a result of the mentor/mentee relationship, SBC student services staff and faculty teaching freshmen-level courses visited IAIA, and attended a First-Year Learning Experience Conference. Based on visits to IAIA and what was learned from the conference, SBC realized a first-year learning experience that engaged students through coursework and activities was needed for first-time freshmen and transfer students.

Sitting Bull College took action and started making changes to establish programs and processes that focused on student success. First, student orientation was reorganized to focus on first-time freshmen and transfer students. Second, the name for the required new course was changed from Psychology of Student Success to First-Year Learning Experience. The name more accurately reflected the purpose of the course, in addition to associating the course with an entire first-year learning experience for new freshmen and transfer students at SBC. Third, a "no fail" semester for first-time freshmen was designed in fall 2011. All new students were scheduled into a block of courses that included the First-Year Learning Experience course, the appropriate English and math course(s) based on the COMPASS placement test, and Lakota/Dakota Language I or Introduction to Computer Applications.

> Third, a "no fail" semester for first-time freshmen was designed in fall 2011. All new students were scheduled into a block of courses that included the First-Year Learning Experience course, the appropriate English and math course(s) based on the COMPASS placement test, and Lakota/ Dakota Language I or Introduction to Computer Applications.

First-Year Learning Experience Course

The revised First-Year Learning Experience course remained a three-credit semester course. In addition, policy was changed to make it mandatory for all new first-time degree seeking students, along with transfer students who had not transferred in a similar course, to take the course during their first semester at SBC. In addition to the name change, the textbook that had been used for years was replaced to reflect a complete transformation of the course. The former textbook was linked to local high school courses, and through research at the First-Year Learning Experience Conference, a more appropriate textbook was selected. As a means of providing new perspectives into teaching the course, the student success director, (who had over 15 years teaching experience) began teaching sections, along with the counselors. With this structural change came a change in the instructional methodology from a lecture driven course to one that involved more group work, increased hands-on activities, and journaling, as well as participation in campus activities. The number of graded assignments decreased.

The purpose behind the change was for less focus on graded assignments to more focus on student engagement in their learning process through the group work and hands-on activities.

As part of the redesign of the course, students were assigned to read a chapter and complete a guided reading assignment before class so that they were prepared to discuss the text at the next class meeting. The class was then divided into random groups to discuss sections of the chapter. The students spent approximately five-to-ten minutes re-reading their assigned section, therefore allowing for the occasion in which a student came to class without having read the assigned chapter. After their small group discussion, they taught the rest of the class their assigned section. Discussions during class also included students' personal issues (such as reasons versus excuses for missing class) and financial problems as well as strategies for solutions to these issues. Group discussion related a current issue to the topic being studied in the text. This led to very lively animated discussions and usually resulted in students solving their own problems. As a result of group discussions, students formed cohort groups which persisted long after the completion of the course.

The hands-on group work was important. For example, in the section about taking notes, students would use large sheets of paper to demonstrate their favorite type of note-taking strategy to the rest of the class. Activities also included a visit to the SBC library where students were given the opportunity to explore the library's physical resources as well as the web-based resources located on the SBC website. The class addressed critical thinking with activities such as using marshmallows and spaghetti. This activity allowed the students to use critical thinking skills and creative ideas to complete a group project. In order to complete this activity, students were placed in groups of four; each group received a bag of marshmallows and uncooked spaghetti. The assignment was to design and build a model of success that had agreement of the entire group. Students used critical thinking as well as communication skills, and the power of persuasion to design and build their group model. Upon completion of the model, each group explained what it was and how they had determined it to be a model of success to the rest of the class.

The course also encouraged students to think critically as they applied new learning to their life. The students responded to open-ended questions in the text, outlining their path to success in their journal. Questions required students to describe specific actions they would take to meet their desired goal and what they had learned or relearned as a result. Journaling allowed students to reflect on their own patterns of inner and outer behaviors that often led to success or failure on the part of the student. The goal of the journals was to empower students to develop inner qualities to assist them in maximizing their potential. The journal was read by the instructor on a weekly basis and was returned to the student with occasional comments. Students received full credit for their journal entry if the journal was honest, creative and demonstrated that the students had thought deeply about the question

Other topics discussed in class were goal setting, time management, organization skills, critical and creative thinking skills, developing memory strategies, building relationships, developing self-management and motivation, as well as study strategies such as reading, note-taking and test-taking. Financial literacy became part of the course as students met with the financial aid/scholarship coordinator to discuss federal financial aid or scholarships. Students worked on personal budgets as well as attending financial literacy events held during the semester. Extra credit points were awarded to students who completed the federal student aid application. Occasionally the financial literacy coordinator, librarian, or academic counselor would teach the course focusing on their respective areas of expertise which exposed students to a variety of perspectives.

Sitting Bull College has a small number of campus housing units, but for the most part it is considered a commuter college; students drive to classes and leave as soon as the classes are over. In order to assist students in building a connection to the college, students enrolled in the First-Year Learning Experience course are required to attend three events hosted by SBC. For example, these events could be a Student Government meeting, Culture Club meeting, Thursday Speaker or any other activity or event hosted by SBC. After attending the event/activity, students wrote a reflection paper detailing the event. This paper was then shared in class to inspire other students to attend the event/activity.

Students received grades based on completion of chapter reading guides, class participation, weekly journal, and final essay in which they explained in-depth five strategies that they learned in the class and described how they will use them on their road to success. Students were encouraged to work together to complete assignments and to act as a peer reviewer for the final essay.

Student retention at SBC has been an on-going concern and numerous strategies were planned and implemented over several years. With the grant from the Walmart Foundation in 2011, SBC made a concrete campus-wide effort to increase student retention. In addition, other retention efforts were used for all students including an annual student summit which allowed students to provide feedback to SBC about processes; aggressive advising, and counseling. Sitting Bull College hired an attendance counselor to track students missing classes, and established talking circles to provide a safe environment for students to talk about what is on their minds. Student persistence from the fall semester 2013 to the spring semester 2014 at SBC increased from 63.4 percent to 73.2 percent, along with an increase of 4.4 percent in the retention rate from fall 2012 to fall 2013.

New Role

Due to the many efforts that Sitting Bull College put forth through their work with the Walmart Foundation, AIHEC, HACU, and NAFEO Student Success initiative, SBC was asked to serve as a mentor college to Fort Peck Community College in phase two of the

Fort Peck Community College

Fort Peck Community College (FPCC), first chartered by the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribal Government in 1978, maintains a prominent position on a 2.1 million acre reservation. Nestled in the northeastern corner of Montana on the Fort Peck reservation, FPCC serves the people of the region, while responding to the unique educational needs of Indians. Enjoying a history of success, FPCC strives constantly to offer and improve courses that prepare diverse students for occupations and for transfer to other post-secondary and institutes of higher education. With enrollment at 426 in the fall of 2013, FPCC looks forward to a resurgence of education and culture with continuous movement toward a good life. Pidamya/Pinamya.

Project. Fort Peck Community College (FPCC) offers associate degrees and certificate programs. It is a tribally controlled college chartered by the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes in Montana.

Fort Peck Community College implemented EDU 101 First-Year Experience as a result of the mentor-mentee relationship and as a vital component of the overall retention effort. First and foremost, it was designed to provide students with the skills necessary for successful graduation from FPCC and second, the course was to enhance their general capacity for goal attainment. Whereas the immediate goal was to help the students apply basic skills necessary for effective use of available services at FPCC, the secondary goals served to empower the students in less obvious but equally measurable parameters.

The course emerged as a required, one-credit course designed to help all enrolled first-year freshmen and transfer students gain familiarity with essential staff whose services directly influence the students' educational access; FPCC recognized the importance of relationship building. For instance, the financial aid director taught new students the intricacies of completing scholarship and other funding applications. The registrar instructed students not only to plan effectively for FPCC's education, but also, to plan for transfer to other institutions of higher learning or vocational training. The librarian demonstrated effective use of library science and familiarized students with the library and its offerings. The student support services director trained students in financial literacy and household budgeting; the retention officer/cultural liaison taught the tribal cultural values and belief system and reinforced understanding of its role in contemporary times. Finally, a faculty member taught the basic elements of critical thinking and the relative standards as articulated by Dr. Richard Paul (1995). Through critical thinking, students were guided to consider their identities

and the thinking behind identity while contextualizing the educational experience with a purposeful awareness of the need for behavioral consistency to attain self-proclaimed goals.

Beyond the self-proclamation of educational and career goals, the course design sequentially reinforced the students' commitments by applying techniques synthesized from formal persuasion. This persuasive sequence: establish the need, satisfaction, reinforcing facts, and visualization, (Ehninger, 1978) worked well and allowed each student to exhibit a personal value structure; this value expression added a layer of meaningfulness that is often missing for students today.

Viewing the course from another perspective, course assessment maintained a practical, yet multi-leveled focus. On the day-to-day level, students developed and contextualized value statements: first, the student considered how a stated value related to the current section of study; and second, the student considered how the current section of study related to her/his general educational and career goals. Students shared goals in presentations to the class where their classmates offered help in addressing instances of inconsistency or irrationality. Within this context, students created working schedules, balanced things they like to do with the things they have to do, and engaged (with much encouragement) a subject they knew well—themselves. Not only did subject familiarity expand their comfort zone, but also, the self-disclosure revealed "fairness" as a constant theme in most of the personal stories. This concern for fairness consistently reappeared throughout student presentations, functioned as a binding factor in classroom culture, and thematically aligned with Howard Gardner's notion of a "central story or message" (Gardner, 1995) being one of the characteristics of leadership. Many students effectively used the concept of fairness to draw others into the personal story and assumed leadership contextually.

Peer assessment only added to the interaction because students liked to say what drove them, kept them in college, and provided an opportunity for shared leadership. While students became each other's support system, the interactions also allowed students to further develop their plans in a non-threatening manner. This process established a foundation for formal assessments.

The first formal assessment was the First-Year Experience Course goal setting in which twenty-five students answered open-ended questions designed to serve a dual purpose. First, although the service-related questions fell into the category of opinion questions and therefore could not be measured, students nonetheless received guided instruction in goal setting. Second, the students' answers provided opportunity for administration to respond to students' needs, both implied and explicit. Further analysis of the test questions is necessary to inform the system of additional need-based modifications.

The second formal examination focused on identity and again required students to present the rationale to explain why they make the sacrifices of time, energy, and other resources to pursue education. The second part of this examination required the student

to explain how the course content facilitated education and career. Of the three types of questions, the test questions fell into the category of questions of which there are better or worse answers but no definitive answer. The examination fostered the students' commitment to educational and career goals to bring more clarity and meaningfulness to their education.

Data suggests that these efforts produced an effective methodology: the persistence rate for First-Year Experience course attendees was 78 percent compared to 57 percent for the FPCC persistent rate for academic year 2013–2014. While the student's grades indicated a positive correlation with attendance, the grade distribution was irregular:

First Year Experience Attendance and Grade Correlation

Avg. Days absent: FA '13	2	2.5	5	5.7	9.8
Ave. Days absent: SP '14	2.25	3.33	4.5	8	13.37
Grades	A	B	C	D	F
4 point Scale	4.0	3.0–3.99	2.0–2.99	1.0–1.99	0–99

Grade Point Average (GPA) for course = 2.04 (Poplar only: Fall '13)
Average days absent for course = 25

GPA for Course = 1.2 (Wolf Point and Poplar Classes: Spring '14)
Average days absent for Course = 31.5

The fall semester 2013 data from EDU 101 indicated the likelihood of attaining another stated goal: a two percent increase in retention. Implying goal achievement, 88 percent of total students registered for the First-Year Experience (including four students who registered but failed to attend even one class period) completed the course. Of the 28 students who did attend class, all completed the course but four received failing grades. So, the student success efforts came to fruition, although modestly.

Conclusion

Student retention at SBC and FPCC has been an on-going concern with numerous strategies implemented through the assistance of the Walmart Student Success Project. Student success has top priority at SBC and FPCC. Everyone from the governing board, president, chief academic officer, faculty, as well as student services personnel place the success of students on their agenda at every meeting. It is not only discussed but acted upon on a daily basis. It is imperative that budgeting continues to allow faculty and staff to attend conferences to keep up to date on best practices in education and those attending present new ideas to other faculty and staff at meetings.

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Collaboration Outcome Summary

The 18 minority serving institutions found this collaboration an exceptional learning experience and a great opportunity to share their strengths and uniqueness. TCUs developed a better understanding of HBCUs and HSIs. Learning occurred across the three communities as well as within each of the three communities. This four-year collaboration had a positive impact specifically on participating TCUs.

There were a number of major outcomes in addition to those cited in the three articles included in this monograph. It was found that there is nothing in the higher education literature about institution-to-institution mentorship; therefore, this aspect of the collaboration had to be created with regard to expectations. At the national level, the three organizations determined that it was in the best interest of MSIs to meet on the respective campuses and share this responsibility by alternating "all-hands" meetings at an HSI, HBCU, and a TCU. Within the TCU community, it was clear that they definitely needed to visit each other's campus to insure the appropriateness of the advice given with regard to student success. The lines between the mentor and mentee institutions also quickly blurred as each of the TCUs had strengths that were shared with others. Dr. Joan LaFrance, external evaluator, conducted a focus group meeting with the TCU project directors and reported that the mentors benefited from the relationship as much as the mentees. One noted that the relationships helped "overcome the isolation factor and get practical guidance, not just conceptual guidance." Another explained that it was good to start out as mentor/mentee, as the mentee was able to see how a mentor school implemented a retention strategy. However, she noted, "but after that it turned more into a conversation about what we can learn from each other and learning from all the institutions. I liked going to (mentee college) because I was learning a lot of things from (mentee college). (Source: AIHEC Final Walmart Report 2014.)

Each of the six TCUs established or revised their campus-based teams, addressing student success with a focus on data supporting the evidence of success. Generally, these teams consisted of those most engaged in retention services such as the directors of student services, learning center staff, and those responsible for institutional research/data collection and analysis.

 It was the intent of the collaboration to increase student completion rates by identifying successful intervention strategies for supporting student success. All six TCUs identified specific student success strategies which included:

Sitting Bull College

- Implemented first-time freshman advising (first-year experience)

- Implemented at-risk advising

- Implemented aggressive counselor intervention

- Implemented first-year experience class

- Implemented a student summit

- Implemented a campus-wide enrollment management plan connected to its strategic plan.

Ilisagvik College

- Implemented orientation program (each semester)

- Implemented aggressive counselor intervention by retention coordinator

- Implemented first-year experience class

- Improved the Learning Center

- Created a retention coordinator position

Institute for American Indian Arts

- Developed and implemented an enrollment management plan

- Restructured its Student Services Division

- Established a director of enrollment management

- Conducted an external evaluation and assessment of its existing enrollment management strategies

- Enhanced its student orientation program

- Increased talking circle participation and tracked impact on retention

Stone Child College

- Established a Wall-of-Fame to showcase student success

- Established Student of the Month award

- Established a process for faculty to refer students of concern to retention coordinator

- Implemented aggressive counselor intervention by retention coordinator

- Improved Learning Center

- Implemented Monday Drum weekly lunch session for students and staff

Fort Peck Community College

- Improved Learning Center including inviting faculty participation in the Center

- Implemented a first-year experience class

- Development and implementation of a retention plan specifically addressing its strategic plan's goal of student success

- Established a retention committee

- Created a retention specialist position

TCUs also realized that a *true culture of data* needs to be developed within this system. The process uncovered variations in critical definition of terms that impacted data outcomes. For example, the definition of retention was defined somewhat differently by IPEDs (National Educational Statistics), AIHEC (AIMs student report), and individual TCUs.

The collaboration's four years allowed TCUs to identify successful strategies and initiate implementation and data collection. However, it was not enough time to collect data to fully analyze the support for these strategies (essentially four semesters). Each of these TCUs has made a commitment to continue to refine these strategies, collect and analyze data, and document the outcome of their efforts. AIHEC will continue to share their work in as many fora as possible; for example, at the annual Chief Academic Officers meeting. AIHEC heartily thanks the Walmart Foundation for providing the essential funding for this collaboration.

AIHEC is the collective spirit and unifying voice of our

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AIHEC provides leadership and influences public policy on American Indian higher education issues through advocacy, research, and program initiatives; promotes and strengthens Indigenous languages, cultures, communities, and tribal nations; and through its unique position, serves member institutions and emerging Tribal Colleges and Universities.