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Retention Issues for Native Students

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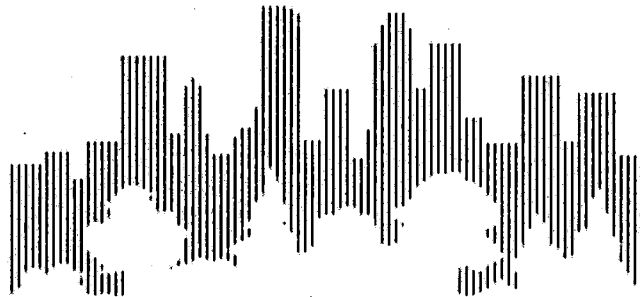
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MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP

Ryan A. Bench

Retention Issues for Native Students

2009

Retention Issues for Native Students

Ryan A. Bench

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts in Leadership

AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

2009

MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP
AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that the Master's Non-thesis Project of

Ryan A. Bench

has been approved by the Review Committee for the Non-thesis Project requirement for the Master of Arts in Leadership degree.

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ABSTRACT

Retention Issues for Native Students

Ryan.A.Bench

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This research focuses on the history of Native Americans in higher education and the challenges that they are currently facing. The research also goes into detail regarding programs that benefit at risk students in higher education such as TRIO, Upward Bound, mentoring programs, and Student Support Services. The central question for this research is how colleges can and universities apply the principles of these programs to the issues Native students face in higher education and use them to increase retention of these students.

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education in America is changing at a rapid pace. Not more than two decades ago, colleges and universities needed to sell students on the university through the admissions office and that was enough to keep them there through graduation. With the recent advent of online colleges and other non-traditional campuses, the words “retention” and “persistence” are used part in parcel with admissions. Many colleges have now created a retention office called “first year experience” office or a “student affairs” office to do nothing but work to engage students and keep them excited about being on campus. According to Larimore and McClellan (2005) retention, attrition, and persistence are among the terms or labels common in discussions about a troubling phenomenon in U.S. colleges: far more students are entering college than finishing college and this is the core concern of this research.

According to the *The Condition of Education 2008*, the percentage of bachelor degrees conferred between 1996 and 2005 fell from 66 percent to 64 percent and the percentage of associates degrees conferred fell from 82 percent to 78 percent. While this may not seem like a significant number on the outset, it is significant when one considers that 36 percent of students who enter into college will drop or fail out before graduation. These numbers have prompted many colleges to look for new programs to both increase their student populations and to retain these students once they are on campus. Methods of retention vary from implementing academic counseling services through working more closely with residence hall staff to ensure students’ needs are met while they are on campus.

Regardless of these strategies, retention is still a serious problem in higher education, and despite much effort, certain populations of students continue to leave college at an alarming rate. Although the disparity between rates of initial enrollment and rates of graduation exist for all populations, the gap is greatest among students who are African American, Hispanic, or Native American, with the lowest graduation rates being among Native students (Wirt, 2002). According to Larimore and McClellan (2005), the severe under-representation of Native Americans among those earning degrees reflects both extremely low enrollment or participation rates and generally poor retention rates for Native American college students (p. 18). Astin (1982) identifies Native Americans as among the least likely to enroll in public four year institutions and the least likely to persist to graduation in those institutions. Furthermore, Tierney (1992) notes that there are many complex problems in determining an exact number, but estimates indicate that the retention rates for most Native students are as low as 15 percent overall.

The issue of low retention rates for Native American students has gathered considerable attention within academia. Several studies have cited potential problems with retaining Native students such as: issues with support from the college, lack of programming on campus, personal commitment, and connections to their homeland (Dodd, Garcia, Meccage, & Nelson as cited by Larimore and McClellan, 2005). Although these are all factors that may lead to a Native student not persisting through to graduation, Belgarde and Lore (2003) found in their study of Native students at the University of New Mexico, that many of these students place family and community (i.e., their tribal community) above completing their college education (p. 195). They also

state that colleges can do as much programming as they like, but if they do not introduce programming that helps bridge an understanding between these values systems, then their programming will not necessarily succeed.

Recently, colleges and organizations have been working with Native Americans and colleges to provide solutions to the issues these students face while in higher education. The purpose of this research is to analyze the literature and offer solutions for colleges and universities that are attempting to increase retention for their Native students. In order to do this, it is important to first examine the history between American Indians and education in America as this will offer insight to why there is such a disparity today. Next, this research will examine much of the literature that exists on issues these students are facing as well as studies on several of the retention programs that are currently in place for minority groups in higher education. The literature review is followed by an analysis by the author of the current literature and his suggestions for taking ideas from the studied retention programs and applying them to Native students. Finally, the study concludes with a review of the research and a call to leaders in higher education to change their current policies.

HISTORY OF NATIVE AMERICANS AND EDUCATION

Native Americans have had a long and storied history with the American government to get to where they are now, and this is especially true when it comes to Indians and education. This history has created a feeling of mistrust and anger that can be seen and felt by many Indian Nations in America. Raymond Cross of the University of Montana in *Race and Higher Education* states:

American Indian education, like the dismal state of the weather in Mark Twain's famous aphorism, is much discussed, but no one does anything to improve it! Doing something about the dismal state of Indian education requires that we confront deeply embedded historic, cultural, and legal biases (Juneau, 2001).

These biases began in the colonial era when the Native Americans first had contact with the Europeans as they began to colonize the Americas and have grown from there.

According to Carbrera (1978), natives are victims of a legacy which includes economic exploitation, military conquest, political manipulation, and social disregard (p. 158).

Education, including higher education, has been a major part of the development of this legacy that Indians now must face. This has led to much distrust between the U.S.

Government and the Indians, and to move forward from this, it is important to examine the history between the two so that one can fully understand the importance of

implementing change in current education practices. The following pages offer a brief outline and description of this history, and in the Appendix of this research, there is a detailed outline that describes many of the following events.

The history of Native Americans and education within the United States can best be explained when they are split into three eras. George McClellan, Mary Jo

Tippeconnic, and Shelly Lowe (2005) describe these three eras as the Colonial, Federal, and the Self-Determination Eras. The first of these, the Colonial era, began with the first contact between Indians and the Europeans as the Europeans began to settle in the Americas and extended through the Revolutionary War. During this time frame, not much progress was made towards the education of Native students as there was no true education system in place at that time, including one for higher education. According to Carney (1999), three of the only nine existing colleges had “educating Native Americans” in their mission statements, but in their first 80 years of existence they only enrolled 47 Indians and graduated four. This failure, however, falls on both the Natives and the Europeans because neither saw the importance in each others education. The Indians did not feel that there was any value in a white man’s education while the colleges seemed more interested in the mission and fundraising of educating Indians rather than the actual education of the Indians (McClellan, Fox, & Lowe, 2005). According to Szasz (1977), the overarching goal at this time was the total assimilation of Indians into the mainstream society. This idea of total assimilation followed the Native American for over a century and well into the next era of the history in Indian education, the Federal Era.

The Federal Era began when the federal government of the United States started signing treaties with the Native American Nations after the Revolutionary War. This era of education is one that marks the beginning of much of the mistrust between Native Americans and the U.S. Government. During this time, the Federal Government began to divide the land among the many Tribal Nations. The idea was that by giving control of the land back to the Indians, they would then take care of it and become better citizens,

eventually assimilating towards “mainstream” American values (Szasz, 1977). This later became known as the Dawes Act, or the Allotment Act, of 1887 which assumed responsibility for dividing up the land into various reservations. This, along with the “civilization fund” of 1819 that provided funding for some education, was the beginning of the government’s attempts to assume control of Native education. However, according to Szasz (1977), the first real attempt at any federal funding of Indian education did not happen until 1879 when Richard Henry Pratt formed the Carlisle Indian School in an attempt to convince the public that the Indian was in fact educable. Pratt’s success with the Carlisle Indian School led to the rapid expansion of off reservation boarding schools which took Native youth away from the reservations for an extended period of time to assimilate and educate them. By the early 20th century, over 25 off-reservation boarding schools had been established through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) that was charged with the education of Indians in America. This type of education was often frowned upon by both Natives and whites alike because the cost was often very high and the youth that returned were often ridiculed by their peers as being “different” (Szasz, 1977).

In an effort to better the education system, many missionary and reservation schools were established. These were often privately funded and tended to suit the needs of the Native students somewhat better because they catered to Native students’ needs and learning styles. Regardless of how effective these schools were, the call for reform grew as the decades passed, and in 1923 a group known as the Committee of One Hundred was formed. On December 12th and 13th, the Committee met for the first time in Washington, D.C. to suggest changes to the current policies of Native education.

Although their meeting had little to no effect on the BIA, the meeting caused a stir among those who sought to reform Indian education, and in 1926 the Secretary of the Interior, Hubert Work, turned to the Brookings Institution who prepared what is famously known as the Miriam Report in 1928 (Szasz, 1977). The Miriam report offered expert advice to the BIA on how to better reform their education practices and how to cure their many shortcomings. This all came at a time where many were pushing for more public education of Indians as white America started moving in on Indian land and needed their own education systems. According to McClellan, Fox, and Lowe (2005), although the Miriam Report did address many issues facing Indians in both K-12 education and higher education, it still was unable to change the objectives that drove the entire Federal Era: Christianization, forced acculturation, and assimilation to mainstream America. This lack of reform added to the mistrust of the Indians. Once again they were promised reform and did not receive it.

In light of the suggestions in the Miriam Report of 1928, the Self-Determination Era began. According to McClellan, Fox, and Lowe (2005), many scholars still argue about when the actual beginning of this Era is, but they all agree that the Progressive movement in education and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 were key components in the movement toward Indian self-determination in education. During this time many were moving to incorporate a greater appreciation of Native American culture into the mainstream public schools by involving Native American history in the curriculum. At the same time however, the Federal government also sought to relocate Natives from reservations through incentives and to shift the control of their education onto the individual states. Both of these had devastating effects on the trust between Natives and

the Federal government because the majority of the work done to reform education at the federal level would be lost. In hopes of regaining trust, President Lyndon Johnson appointed a Native American to serve as the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. According to Szasz (1977), this was a milestone in federal Indian policy because the new commissioner not only had the respect of Native Americans, but he also had the respect of many of the federal administrators through his 32 years of service on the BIA. This time frame also marked the beginning of more accountability by the Federal government in the education of Native Americans in the U.S. McClellan, Fox and Lowe, (2005) site this time frame as one of the most influential times in the history of Native education that is marked by the development of tribally controlled community colleges along with their secondary schools. The Navajo Community College act of 1971, the Indian Education Act of 1972, and the Indian Self-Determination Act of 1975 were all passed and essentially marked the beginning of “modern” Indian education in America and brought to an end many of the horrible education practices of the Federal government.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on the retention rates of Native American students in higher education is extensive and each year scholars and professionals in higher education are adding to what is in place now in an effort to better understand what is happening in this field. The following pages summarize much of the literature on the rate of persistence of Native students and the student support programs that are working to better these rates.

On Retention of Native American Students

Since the early colonial times, mainstream colleges and universities have struggled to create environments where Native American students can persist onto graduation. Since the beginning of the Self-Determination Era of Native Americans in education, much research has been done in the field to attempt to improve these rates of persistence, but to date there is still a severe disparity between Caucasian students and Native students. According to Guillory and Wolverton (2008), recent data show that in 2002 less than 1% of all students who were enrolled in college were Native Americans and the majority of them were enrolled in two-year tribal colleges. Of degrees conferred that year at every level, an astoundingly low 0.7% were obtained by Native American students (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). With overall estimates as low as 15% for graduation rates for these students, many colleges are searching for solutions to the issues that Native students are facing in higher education so they can better serve this population of student. According to much of the current literature on the subject, the main issues that Native American students face in persisting onto graduation are precollege academic preparation, family support and obligation, financial support, and institutional

commitment (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002; Benjamin, Chambers & Reiterman, 1993; Larimore & McClellan, 2005)

Academic Preparation

Pre-college academic preparation as a contributor to low persistence rates for Native students is a common thread in much of the literature studied for the purposes of this research. Academic preparation and aspirations prior to college and academic performance in college are the most highly correlated with American Indian student retention (Brown, 1995 as cited by Larimore & McClellan, 2005). A study done by Don-Paul Benjamin, Stephen Chambers, and Gary Reiterman (1993), that tracked 166 new first-time full-time Native American students who represented over 20 tribes over the course of six years, drew some very important conclusions that are illustrated in Table I. Mainly, this study found that the Native students that were most likely to persist were those with a high ACT score and were in the top one-quarter of their class (1993).

Table I
High School Predictors of Retention in College

	Original	Years After Entry					
Performance Measure	N	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number Retained/Graduated	166	81	46	41	32	33	38
Number Graduated	-	-	-	-	05	13	26
High School Rank in Class							
% 1st Quartile	40	49	51	54	55	52	54
% 2nd Quartile	29	28	28	25	29	26	24
% 2nd Half	31	23	21	21	16	22	22
Composite ACT Score	13.8	14.7	14.9	15.0	15.6	15.5	15.6
Admit Status							
% Unconditional	80	89	89	90	94	94	92
% Conditional	20	11	11	10	06	06	08
Mean Semester GPA	1.66	1.85	2.07	2.05	2.22	2.45	2.43
Mean Cumulative GPA	1.66	2.05	2.22	2.28	2.38	2.41	2.37
% Returns		01	04	07	06	07	05

The study also found that students entering the college on a conditional basis (students who failed to fully meet the admissions requirements) persisted at a lower rate than those admitted under no conditions.

Similarly, in a qualitative 2002 study performed at Eastern Washington University by Assistant Professor Raphael Guillory, it was found that K-12 preparations, whether they are on a reservation or not, are key determinates in academic performance in postsecondary education. In Guillory's research, 30 students were interviewed and seven of the students cited poor K-12 preparation as a barrier in persisting through college (2008). Academic preparation is an important factor in all studies of retention for colleges and universities, but for the Native American student precollege academic preparation is of utmost importance when retaining students.

Family Support and Obligation

Family support and tribal obligations are frequently cited as factors in students stepping out or taking breaks in higher education for Native Americans (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002; Benjamin, Chambers & Reiterman, 1993; Larimore & McClellan, 2005). According to Guillory (2008), family support affects persistence more than any other factor. In his study, 21 of 30 students cited it as a major factor or barrier in persisting to graduation. For Native American families, especially those from reservations, family is extremely important and it is usually the case that extended as well as nuclear family are all living under one roof. In circumstances such as these, many students are required to not only provide emotional support, but also financial support in many cases (Guillory, 2008). HeavyRunner and DeCelles (2002) indicate that because of the financial strain college often places on

Native families, students may drop out for something as simple as having to pay for a car repair. In Guillory's study, it was also noted that many students' families posed major barriers in a student going to and remaining in college because their families began to perceive them as being too white (2008). When this type of treatment occurs, many students would drop-out or simply not attend college. In a 1991 study cited by Benjamin, Chambers, and Reiterman (1993) it is noted that:

Researchers have attempted to verify that a tendency for American Indian students to frequently return home during the school week is at least partially influenced by family and ceremonial responsibilities. One survey of student attitudes and activities found that 56.8% of the 155 American Indian respondents indicated a need to go home often compared to 31.6% of Blacks, 24.4% of Hispanics, and 16.7% of Anglos (Cibik & Chambers, 1991). Furthermore, American Indians also reported a tendency to go home to help their families, or to attend ceremonies or special activities, even when such trips meant missing classes. Subsequent interviews with American Indian students revealed that students realize the detrimental consequences of missing class, although such consequences cannot be equated in importance to other more personal priorities.

To offset the affects of family and ceremonial commitment on Native American persistence, much of the research has begun focusing on family education models (FEM) that incorporate the families of Native students into as many on-campus activities as possible. By doing so, the entire family can feel a sense of belonging and not hold as much resentment towards the college for their student spending so much time there (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002). The family education model focuses heavily on social caseworkers who understand the cultures of the Native students who can work with the student and his family to empower them and help them feel comfortable (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002). When the student and their families are comfortable with the decision to go to college, Guillory reported that the students are much more likely to persist onto graduation (2008).

Financial Support

Financial support can be a barrier for any student who is looking to get into and persist through college. For the Native American, however, it is even more pronounced. According to Almeida (1999), many Native students are entering college with a lack of family resources. Almeida cites that high levels of unemployment in many tribal communities leave Native students looking to attend college with little or no resources. Even if these students' families had the resources to help their student attend college, Almeida argues that bureaucratic and paperwork hurdles, unrealistic student earning requirements, unacknowledged costs, and mistrust of financial officials act as obstacles for students. In Guillory's study, the faculty and institutional representatives interviewed unanimously agreed that a lack of money was the largest barrier facing native students. These same representatives also agreed that a lack of knowledge of the financial aid process was just as detrimental to their persistence in college (2008).

Much of the literature agrees that the larger issue surrounding the lack of funding is a result of Native students not understanding how to navigate the financial aid process. In the past, financial aid usually consisted of grants and scholarships, but the majority of today's financial aid includes federal Stafford loans (subsidized and unsubsidized), private loans, a variety of state loan programs, and federal work study, with the Office of Postsecondary Education being the most common source of aid for Native students (Pavel et al., as cited by Almeida, 1999). With such an array of sources of aid and the complication of the forms, many Native students do not receive the available aid or give up before they actually receive their award (Guillory, 2008).

Institutional Commitment

According to the *American Indian* (as quoted by Martin, 2005), in 1982 fewer than 2,500 students were enrolled in tribal colleges, and today there are as many as 30,000. The persistence rates for students at these colleges, despite financial problems and the nature of the type of students enrolled, is 86% and they are four times more likely to graduate from mainstream colleges than other American Indian students at those same institutions (Martin, 2005). Much of their success can be attributed to a number of factors, but the prevailing sentiment is their commitment to these students (Martin). These institutions have done what they can to make education culturally relevant to their population by involving people from the tribal community in the college and showing institutional commitment. As an example, the University of North Dakota (UND) created a large array of student support programs for Native Americans including programs and services in: recruitment, admissions, orientation, financial aid, housing, academic support, mentorship, advisement, retention, graduation, and alumni activities (Brown, 2005). This total commitment to Native students was created out of a long history of institutional barriers to Native students and has created an enormous return. UND also has a student center devoted completely to Native American students that is staffed by almost all institutionally funded positions which help students through all aspects of college.

On the other hand, Tinto, as quoted in a 2003 study by Belgarde and Lore (2003), argues that these types of programs have little to no impact on long term retention programs and that the secret to success in retaining Native students is through strong faculty involvement. In fact, much of the literature pertaining to institutional commitment

maintains that a strong Native presence in the faculty on campus will do more to increase persistence among native students than most other programs but is quick to point out that support programs help increase the quality of education (Belgarde & Lore, 2003; Brown, 2005; Wright, 1985, Larimore & McClellan, 2005). Faculty have the most contact with students in higher education and can be the institution's greatest asset in retaining Native students. Regardless of whether it is with Native faculty or retention programs, the literature on institutional commitment suggests that this is one of the best forms of retention for American Indian students.

On Student Support Programs

The literature on what affects student retention across higher education is lengthy and often difficult to put together because of the abundance of information. However, the literature on what programs are available to assist students in graduating from institutions of higher education is much more concise in identifying studies. When considering what affects Native Americans in persisting onto graduation in higher education, it is important that one examines the literature surrounding what retention programs colleges and universities can implement or take advantage of right away to begin working to increase these rates. This research, regardless of the vast amount of retention programs available to colleges and universities, will focus on three programs that have been found effective in supporting both Native and non-Native students through to graduation through comprehensive approaches to retaining or developing successful underrepresented students. The following programs work with students prior to matriculation into colleges and some follow them through to graduation.

TRIO

In August 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act to help fight his “War on Poverty” which gave rise to the Office of Economic Opportunity and its Special Programs for Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds, aka TRIO (McElroy & Armesto, 1998). To qualify for TRIO services, the government determined that students must be below 150% of the poverty level and be first generation students, or students whose parents did not attend college (McLure & Child, 1998). President Johnson’s intention with this program was that it would help boost enrollment and success of these disadvantaged students across the country, and today the program is still fulfilling his goal, but it has increased dramatically in size.

The original program initiated by TRIO was Upward Bound. Upward Bound is a federally funded program through TRIO that, according to McElroy and Armesto (1998), targets youth between 13 and 19 years old (grades 9 through 12) who meet the qualifications for TRIO services. McElroy and Armesto (1998) cite that:

The program’s goal is to increase the rates at which the targeted students enroll in and graduate from postsecondary institutions by providing fundamental support such as help with the college admissions process and assistance in preparing for college entrance examinations. It engages participating students in an extensive, multi-year program designed to provide academic, counseling, and tutoring services along with a cultural enrichment component, all of which enhance their regular school program prior to entering college. Most Upward Bound programs also provide participants with a college experience through a five to eight week, full time residential summer program at a postsecondary institution (p. 375)

This program is the most widely recognized student support program on college campuses today and is the most popular among students enrolled in TRIO. Following the creation of Upward Bound, the Talent Search program was created. According to McElroy and Armesto (1998), Talent Search identifies students who have bright futures

but may be overlooked due to their backgrounds, and provides them with extra counseling services. Following Talent Search, Student Support Services (SSS) was created and is the one of the most recognizable TRIO programs on college campuses. SSS programs provide college students assistance in meeting the basic college requirements while they are in college and works to provide motivation to graduate (McElroy & Armesto, 1998). Finally, TRIO provided for the creation of some lesser known programs such as: Educational Opportunity Centers, the Staff and Leadership Training Authority, the Ronald E. McNair Program, and the Upward Bound Math/Science Program. All of these programs are important to the success of TRIO, but for the purposes of this research are not all covered.

Research on the success of programs like TRIO is somewhat limited, but according to research by McElroy and Armesto (1998), the overall affect of TRIO has been positive. McElroy and Armesto cite two studies, one done by Mathematica Policy Research, inc. (MPR) and one by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI). According to MPR, as cited by McElroy and Armesto, Upward Bound had a positive effect on students' college enrollment and overall educational attainment. In a 1979 study led by Burkheimer, Riccobono, and Wisenbaker of the RTI (as cited by McElroy & Armesto, 1998), the program was found to have a positive impact on both persistence and overall aspirations for college. This study was affirmed in a 1999 study done by McLure and Child that compared Upward Bound (UB) students who completed the ACT during the 1997-1998 with non-Upward Bound students of the same year. Their study found that 40% of UB students compared to 33% of non-UB students selected "professional-level degree" as their ultimate degree they would like to attain.

Table II
Degree Attainment Time of Graduates of RSSSP Graduate Cohorts

TABLE II				
<i>Degree Attainment Time of Graduates of RSSSP Freshman Cohorts, 1980–1992</i>				
FRESHMAN COHORT YEAR	PERCENT TOTAL GRADS AT FOUR YEARS	PERCENT TOTAL GRADS AT FIVE YEARS	PERCENT TOTAL GRADS AT SIX YEARS	PERCENT TOTAL GRADS AT SIX-PLUS YEARS
1992	29.4	94.1	100.0	
1991	31.3	77.4	96.9	100.0
1990	27.7	83.1	94.4	100.0
1989	33.3	83.3	91.7	100.0
1988	36.4	81.8	96.4	100.0
1987	27.1	78.0	89.8	100.0
1986	29.4	76.5	88.2	100.0
1985	12.9	70.9	90.3	100.0
1984	33.3	80.0	91.1	100.0
1983	37.3	68.6	84.3	100.0
1982	34.4	62.5	75.0	100.0
1981	24.5	71.7	75.5	100.0
1980	20.6	70.6	88.2	100.0

Source: Compiled from data retrieved by the authors from the RSSSP student database, Rutgers University Information Management System (IMS).

On a more specific level, Thomas, Farrow, and Martinez (1998) performed a study on the Rutgers University SSS program that followed graduation rates for 979 students in the full-time, first time freshmen cohorts in SSS from 1980 to 1992. In their study, there was a mean graduation rate of 56% which is similar to national data of similar students and “normal” students enrolled at the university. However in Table II, one can see that the percent of total grads increased to 100% at six-plus years of tracking for students in SSS which is an outstanding number. Overall, this study along with others, finds TRIO and its programs to be very successful at retaining students (McElroy & Armesto, 1998; and Thomas, Farrow, & Martinez, 1998).

Admission Possible

Another student support service that is available to students in the upper Midwest (particularly in the Twin Cities and Milwaukee) is Admission Possible. Admission Possible is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to finding low-income young

people with the talent and motivation to go to college. Since its creation in 1999 by Jim McKorkell, Admission Possible's main objective once they identify these students is to provide them with four key services. According to Admission Possible's website, those are: ACT or SAT test preparation, intensive guidance in preparing college applications, help attaining financial aid, and guidance in transitioning to college. All of these services are provided to the target students under the basic assumptions that low-income students lack the resources to effectively compete for entrance into colleges and universities and that low-income students are often desired by colleges and universities, but the colleges often struggle in identifying them (www.admissionpossible.org). All of their services are provided by 11 leadership staff who supervise the 44 AmeriCorps members and 2 VISTAs who work with the students and serve as their coaches through the application process. In all, Admission Possible currently serves 1,200 students and 1,100 program alums.

The data concerning Admission Possible has been very positive. In February 2006, Laura McLain of Wilder Research in St. Paul, MN conducted an independent study on Admission Possible. According to McLain (2006), 100% of the students in the program were admitted into college for the fall of 2005 and a total of 92% enrolled in the fall. McLain also found that 61% of students were awarded scholarships for 2005 and the average scholarship awarded to students that year was \$6,168. Finally, the Wilder study found that if nothing else, the students have a much better knowledge of the college admissions process. McLain reported that before entering Admission Possible in 2005, 80% of the students in the program indicated that they knew "not much or nothing" when it came to filling out a high-quality application and by the end of the year only 6%

reported the same results. Finally, the Wilder report cites that Admission Possible had the highest enrollment rate (91%) of similar programs which included Upward Bound (74%).

Peer Mentoring Programs

In the tale of Odysseus, Mentor was a trusted friend whose job it was to develop and care for the son of Odysseus, Telemachus. While Odysseus fought the Trojan War, Mentor guided and prepared Telemachus to become the future ruler of the kingdom in which his father had prepared. This was one of the early examples the world of business has of mentoring. According to Richard Luecke (2004) of the *Harvard Business Essential on Coaching and Mentoring* (HBE), a mentor is generally defined as a trusted advisor. Building on this, Bell (as cited Luecke, 2004) expands this idea of a mentor to describing it as a person who helps another to learn something that they would have learned less well, more slowly, or not at all without some additional help (p. 76). Overall the idea behind mentoring is to develop a person to their full potential, or in the case of working with students in postsecondary education, it can help with the retention of students.

In higher education, the most common form of mentoring students is peer mentoring. Peer mentoring is a form of mentoring that is based on student to student relationships and is effective because they tend to help break down social barriers for students. According to Shotton, Oosahwe, and Cintron (2007), a major factor that fosters success among Native American students is the presence of structured social support systems (p. 82). Research on peer influence through peer mentoring has developed in tandem with the research on social systems, and in Shotton, Oosahwe, and Cintron's

2005 study, the effects of peer mentoring was examined in detail and they found that there are four key elements in developing peer mentoring relationships. Their study shows that in order for the relationship to be successful, it must be developed appropriately, and there are four elements that contribute to this. The four factors are as follows: the mentor must be committed to the program and to the protégé, the peer mentor must have a positive attitude towards the protégé, the protégé should perceive the mentor as admirable, and the two must be able to relate to one another (p. 90). When all of these conditions are met, Shotton, Oosahwe, and Cintron (2005) argue that successful mentorship will follow. In their study, they set-up student focus groups that discussed students' experiences in a peer mentoring program and then recorded the results. The researchers final conclusions were that when a successful relationship had been established, American Indian students were able to overcome barriers in three key areas: connecting students to the community, providing support, and providing guidance. All of which have been cited as key barriers in retaining Native students.

In another peer mentoring study, Ross-Thomas and Bryant (1992), asked faculty and staff at a southern university to volunteer to be mentors to students during the 1990-1992 school years. Their goals for the study were to assign each incoming freshmen a mentor, increase the retention rate of enrolled freshmen by 15%, decrease probation by 15%, and to increase the mean cumulative average of enrolled freshmen by 5% (p. 71). In the fall of 1990, they successfully enrolled 855 new freshmen in the mentoring program (aka the Preventative Model) and they followed them through the academic years. At the end of the spring semester of 1992, they went back to the students, and their findings can be seen in Table III.

Table III

Freshmen Non-participants vs. Protégés in Mentoring Programs

Table II

A Comparison of the Freshman Non-Participants and the Proteges Enrolled in the Preventive Model at Southern University From Fall 1990-Spring 1992

Semester	Total		Retention		Probation		Cumulative		Good Std.	
	General	Prot.	General	Prot.	General	Prot.	General	Prot.	General	Prot.
Fall 1990	1683	885	58%	85%	396	72	2,397	2,668	1287	783
Spring 91	350	300	54%	80%	72	32	2,307	2,470	278	268
Fall 91	1957	1306	30%	75%	372	63	1,977	2,638	1,585	1,243
Spring 92	452	308	68%	79%	159	37	1,917	2,232	293	271

Their results show that with planned mentoring in higher education, universities can dramatically improve their retention (Ross-Thomas & Bryant, 1992). They found that peer mentoring not only benefitted the students, but the entire campus and community as well through a higher caliber of graduates and by simply having more of them.

ANALYSIS

This research has brought to light many of the issues that Native American students have, do, and will continue to face in higher education today in the United States. The history of Native Americans and education in the U.S. is a long and storied history, and when I began this research as a Native student myself I, unfortunately, was not as educated on this history as I thought I was. Through this research I have uncovered a history of mistrust and mismanagement of a relationship between American Indians and education that I believe is still felt to this day in higher education. As the research above indicated, it is believed that only 15% of Native Americans persist on to graduation with a four-year degree in today's higher education systems. I have brought forth research on much of what these students must face and deal with while in college as well as suggestions for programs that educators can use to increase their retention rates in their own colleges and universities. George McClellan, Mary Jo Tippeconnic Fox, and Shelly Lowe (2005) believe that the theme throughout much of the research on the subject today is a lack of knowledge. It is a fundamental lack of knowledge among professionals and non-Native students in higher education about the history, culture, and struggles that Native students still face that is the greatest issue in Native American retention. Through the research presented here we, as leaders and students in higher education, have the opportunity to both learn from our mistakes and move forward with the task of increasing retention for Native students today. This final section of research will look at what programs have been presented in this research and apply it directly to the factors that affect retention today.

Precollege Academic Preparation

Arguably one of the largest predictors of persistence of Native Americans in higher education is academic preparation. According to Brown (as cited by Larimore & McClellan, 2005) academic preparation and aspirations prior to college and academic performance in college are the most highly correlated with American Indian student retention (2005). In my research and interactions with professionals in TRIO, I have found that they offer some of the most effective programs to help increase not only Native American students' level of academic preparation, but also their aspirations towards attaining a college education. As stated before, the main goals of TRIO's programs are to:

increase the rates at which the targeted students enroll in and graduate from postsecondary institutions by providing fundamental support such as help with the college admissions process and assistance in preparing for college entrance examinations. It engages participating students in an extensive, multi-year program designed to provide academic, counseling, and tutoring services along with a cultural enrichment component, all of which enhance their regular school program prior to entering college (McElroy & Armesto, p. 375).

Through programs in TRIO like Upward Bound, leaders in higher education can work with Native students to get them plugged into colleges and universities and get them not only excited, but also prepared to enter college. According to Larimore and McClellan (2005), the problem begins at the high school level where as much as 40% of Native students leave without graduating. Programs like Upward Bound and Admission Possible target these students and assign them coaches at an early age so that they have a support system in place before they can make the decision to drop-out from high school. Studies on both Upward Bound and Admission Possible indicate that they increase the rate at which these students graduate from high school and their level of academic

preparedness prior to entering college. Both have been proven to be very effective at both since their inception. My experience as a professional in higher education with both of these programs found that they are both simple and affordable ways for educators to increase the rates at which they retain not only Native students, but other at-risk students in higher education. The eagerness of both Admission Possible and TRIO to work with educators and at-risk students is abundant and it is my recommendation for leaders in higher education that they begin the process of engaging their staff with these programs. Working with these programs not only provide access for the recruiters of a college to a diverse group of students, but it also gives admission personnel access to well prepared and eager students who they can enroll and expect to retain through graduation at their institutions.

Family Obligation and Commitment

Research on colleges and universities that have some of the best persistence rates for Native students yielded that interaction between the college and the families of Native students is one of the best ways to retain these students. As the research indicated in the literature review, family is extremely important to Native American families from reservations and it is usually the case that extended family as well as the nuclear family is all living under one roof. In circumstances such as these, many students are required to not only provide emotional support, but also financial support (Guillory, 2008). If colleges do not work with their students to make sure that not only they are taken care of in college, but also their families, they simply will not be able to retain their Native American population. Tribal community colleges are often the most effective at this by working closely with the tribal councils to maintain a presence in the community and to

work to fight the often high un-employment rates on reservations (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002). Much of the literature also indicated that students will also drop-out from classes for extended periods of time to attend important ceremonies at home and to help with sick parents/family members. Educators need to find a way to work with Native students in finding a compromise when it comes to family commitment as it is clearly important to most Native students.

Peer Mentoring programs are another effective tool that educators can tap into as a way to work with Native students and their family commitments. Much of the research on why Native and other at-risk populations step-out from college indicates that peer mentoring programs provide the social support that students need. The goal of these types of programs is to place successful students in touch with new students so that they can “learn the ropes” of being a Native student in higher education. I firmly believe that if more colleges and universities would take the step to initiate more of these relationships, that we can find a solution to this problem in higher education. Many of the reasons that Native students leave are for the support of their families which could also come out of these peer mentoring programs through supporting one another. Another added benefit of these programs is that many Native students cite that the feeling of becoming “too white” because of their education in the eyes of their friends and family at home could be avoided by keeping them in touch with someone like them. Peer support has proven to be beneficial at a number of different levels and leaders in higher education must take the steps towards providing an environment where Native students can lean on each other for support when familial obligation mounts and the students are at risk of leaving the college.

Financial Support

At a time when college students across the country, regardless of race, are in need of greater financial support in college, leaders in higher education must take a look at how we can work together with both the government and financial institutions to increase aid to students. The literature presented in this research on what affects Native students' persistence towards a college degree cites financial support as a key indicator in their rate of retention. According to Almeida (1999), many Native students are entering college with a lack of family resources. Almeida cites that high levels of unemployment in many tribal communities leave Native students looking to attend college with little or no resources. Even if these students' families had the resources to help their students attend college, Almeida argues that bureaucratic and paperwork hurdles, unrealistic student earning requirements, unacknowledged costs, and mistrust of financial officials as obstacles for students. The government application for financial assistance, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), can be so overwhelming for students that many opt out of filing it with the federal government. This is alarming at a number of levels because many of the students who will opt out of filling out the FAFSA will qualify for grants and other "free money" programs.

One of the main goals of Admission Possible (AP) has been to help their students through the process of attaining financial assistance and other scholarships. The volunteers at AP often sit with their students and help them file the FAFSA line by line. Studies have found that of the students participating in programs such as AP, 61% were awarded scholarships for 2005 and the average scholarship awarded to students that year was \$6,168 (McLain, 2006).

Finally, leaders in colleges and universities must begin to work more with their Native students by providing services that aid students in getting them through the process of attaining financial assistance. In the case of Native American students, financial aid should not be the factor that keeps them from going to college. Many, but certainly not all, tribes provide as much as full financial support for their students. If we can begin the process of working closer with tribes we can increase awareness to American Indian students about their own tribal assistance available for those who wish to go to college.

Institutional Commitment

In my own experience as an American Indian student and as a professional in higher education, institutional commitment is the most important indicator in American Indian persistence. If colleges and universities truly want to increase the rate at which their Native students persist on to graduation then they *must* commit themselves to the students. Far too many institutions simply state their commitment to increasing their Native student body. It is time that we begin to “walk our talk.” The literature in this research indicates that total commitment to the Native student via implementation of support programs and the hiring of a diverse faculty body will do more to increase the retention of at-risk students than any other step they will take. When American Indian students see and feel the commitment on the university’s behalf they are more likely to commit themselves to the university. Through my own seven years of experience in the higher education system I have witnessed both ends of the spectrum of institutional commitment and I have seen and felt the effects of both on students. As leaders we simply must do more via implementing support programs in all aspects of the college. As

indicated before, we must look towards tribal colleges and universities such as the University of North Dakota where they have instituted support programs for Native students in recruitment, admissions, orientation, financial aid, housing, academic support, mentorship, advisement, retention, graduation, and alumni activities (Brown, 2005). Their total commitment to their student population has yielded much higher retention rates for their Native students, and should be an example for the rest of us to look too. Colleges can talk all they want about commitment to their Native population, but until they take steps towards amending the issues American Indians face in higher education, we will continue to see a dismal rate of 15% retention in higher education.

CONCLUSION

This research has examined virtually every aspect of Native American education in the United States. It has taken an in-depth look at the history behind the mistrust of Natives and the education system, taken steps towards identifying what affects the retention of Native students, and how leaders in higher education can take steps towards remedying them. That said, where does it leave us? Where do we, as leaders in higher education, go from here? It is my hope that leaders can take what has been learned through this research and begin taking steps towards increasing the rate at which American Indians like myself persist on to graduation. In my own experience as a Native student, I have faced trials, mostly related to financial assistance, in higher education that could have been avoided by a heightened awareness of educators as to the struggles that Native students face. To reiterate Fox, Lowe, and McClellan (2005) in their article *From Discussion to Action*, a lack of knowledge of the struggles that face American Indians is detrimental to not only the Native student, but also to the entire institutional body. American Indian retention has become an issue that can no longer be ignored by institutions of higher education. The idea of giving an office to Native student retention is no longer enough. It is an important step, but we owe Native students more than that.

We owe Native students:

- Complete institutional commitment
- A heightened awareness of the issues Native students face in all aspects of the higher education system
- An increase in their involvement in pre-college programs such as TRIO and Admission Possible

- Greater financial support
- Increased familial involvement by our institutions

All of these recommendations must start with the leaders. Step-by-step we as leaders can solve this issue. It will take time, but I hope that I have proven that for every minute and dollar an institution commits towards the solution, another American Indian student is affirmed in their decision to graduate and is given hope that they *can* fly in the face of the statistics and find a way to do what most of the research says they could not do, graduate.

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APPENDIX

1. Chronology of Important Dates in Indian Education

The following are lists of dates and events that illustrate the history of major Congressional acts and systems for controlling Indian tribes through an education institution that was geared toward the creation of changes to their lifestyles. In the beginning, these events involved the religious organizations of America and early contact with European settlers but were eventually sanctioned by the U.S. Congress and, later, the states. This chronology will demonstrate that the involvement of Indian tribes in formal educational process(s) throughout the history of the United States is older than the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

- 1539 Lectures of Francisco de Victoria at the University of Salamanca, Spain, advocating that Indians were free men and were exempt from slavery. They were to be dealt with through treaties and fair trade.
- 1568 Society of Jesus establishes a school in Havana, Cuba for Indians of Florida.
- 1617 Moors Charity School founded as a training school for the education of youth of Indian tribes of English youth and others at Lebanon, Connecticut (later becomes Dartmouth College).
- 1619 Virginia Company started the first mission schools. Abandoned in 1622.
- 1723 William and Mary College opens special house for Indian students.
- 1775 Continental Congress approves \$500 to educate Indians at Dartmouth College.
- 1778 On September 17, 1778, the first treaty between the United States and an Indian Nation was signed with the Delawares.
- 1802 Congress approves appropriations . not to exceed \$15,000 annually – to promote civilization among the savages.. Cherokees and Choctaws soon develop their own systems of schools and academies.
- 1803 \$3,000 was appropriated to .civilize and educate the heathens ..

- 1819 Early Civilization Fund authorized by Congress is given to the Indian agencies for the purpose of having Christian missionaries civilize and Christianize the American Indian population in the amount of \$10,000. Missionaries continued to receive the civilization funds until the 1870s.
- 1824 Indian Service Department (BIA) created in the War Department.
- 1831 The Cherokee were forcefully removed from Georgia to Indian Territory in Oklahoma. This removal began the destruction of the sophisticated education systems developed by the Cherokee, Choctaw, Creeks, Chickasaws, and Seminoles.
- 1832 Post of Commissioner of Indian Affairs established in the War Department.
- 1834 Department of Indian Affairs organized under the Indian Trade and Intercourse Act of June 30, 1834.
- 1842 Number of federal Indian schools reaches 37.
- 1849 Department of Indian Affairs placed in the Department of the Interior because of the nature of the Indian lands.
- Gold discovered in California. Indian people lost most of their possessions, tribal members and land base. The Mission Schools in California survived with one-tenth of their former members.
- 1860 First federal boarding school established on the Yakima Indian Reservation in Washington State.
- 1865 Congressional committee recommends creation of boarding schools away from Indian communities, with emphasis on agricultural training for students.
- 1870 Federal appropriations of \$100,000 authorized to operate federal industrial schools for Indians.
- 1871 Treaty making period with Indian Nations ends.
- 1873 Congressional appeal of missionary society subsidies.
- 1877 The Board of Indian Commissioners included educational statistics in their annual report creating a base line for measuring progress of Indian education.
- 1878 First 17 young Indians released as prisoners of war from Fort Marion, Florida, begin to attend Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute at Hampton, Virginia. Special —Wigwam“ building constructed in the same year for Indian

students, who would continue to attend the school until 1923.

- 1879 Carlisle Indian School established at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, by Colonel R. H. Pratt at an abandoned Army barracks, constituting the first off-reservation Indian school enrolling children from the West and Midwest. Many Indian students from Montana attended.
- 1880 Chemawa Boarding School for Indian children opens in Salem, Oregon. Many Indian students from Montana still attend.
- 1881 Number of federal Indian schools reaches 106. (By 1892, 12 boarding schools would be established which would suppress use of Indian languages and practice of Indian religions.)
- 1882 Congress provides that abandoned military posts be turned into Indian schools.

Haskell Institute established at Lawrence, Kansas. Many Indian students from Montana still attend.
- 1884 Congress prohibits the sending of Indian children to schools outside the state or territory of their residence without the consent of their parents or natural guardians, and forbids the withholding of rations as a technique of securing parental consent in an act of August 15.
- 1885 Congress provides that Indians cannot be taken from a school in any state or territory to a school in another state against their will or written consent of parents. Moravian mission school established at Bethel, Alaska. Lumbees establish their own school system in North Carolina.
- 1887 Lumbees establish Old Main Indian College, Pembroke, North Carolina.
- 1889 Montana Territory receives statehood status. The Enabling Act is included in the State of Montana Constitution.
- 1890 Federal tuition offered to public schools to educate a few Indian children. Thomas J. Morgan published a code of —Rules for Indian Schools“ which indicated that government schools were only intended to be a temporary provision to serve Indian students until they could attend white schools. It marked the beginning of the practice of sending certain Indian children to public schools.
- 1892 Commissioner of Indian Affairs authorized to make and enforce regulations pertaining to attendance of Indian children at schools established and maintained for them. Federal teachers and physicians placed under U.S. Civil

Service.

- 1906 Congress abolishes Oklahoma Cherokee school system.
- 1916 Uniform course of study introduced into all federal Indian schools.

- 1918 Federal educational services limited to children of one-quarter or more Indian blood under the terms of the Appropriation Act of May 25, 1918. 1920 Indian students in public schools out number students in federal schools for the first time.

- 1921 Snyder Act is passed by Congress. This act authorized program services to Indian people through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, still a primary legislative authority for the financial resources of the BIA schools today.

- 1924 Congress declares Indians as citizens of the United States.

- 1928 Meriam Report. This report was critical of the BIA school system and altered the federal approach to Indian education.

- 1933 Indian Emergency Conservation Works Program (IECWP) which provided vocational training to Indians. There were 85,000 Indians served in the IECWP between 1933 and 1942.

- The Board of Indian Commissioners is disbanded by executive order.

- 1934 Johnson O'Malley Act. This act authorized the Secretary of the Interior to make contracts with any state territory, political subdivision and other non-profit agency for the education, medical attention, agricultural assistance and welfare of Indians. The impact of the act was to get states to take an interest in the education of Indians by providing federal aid to states to ease the impact of tax-free Indian lands on a state's willingness to provide a variety of services to Indians.

- 1950 Impact Aid and Public School Construction Amendments. Grants provided through these acts afford general operating resources to public school districts enrolling Indian children whose parents either live or work on federal property. By amendments to these two pieces of legislation many eligible school districts become those which enroll Indian children living on Indian reservations.

- 1952 Congress passes a program to relocate Indians away from the reservations in line with the impending policy of termination of United States - Indian relations with some tribes.

- 1953 House Concurrent Resolution 108 inaugurates Termination Era. The BIA ends operation of all federal schools in Washington, Idaho, Michigan and Wisconsin.

The BIA boarding schools, however, are expanded.

1956 Congress expands vocational educational program of adult Indians residing on or near reservations on August 3, designed to strengthen the relocation program of Indians.

1960 President Dwight D. Eisenhower instructs the Secretary of the Interior to accelerate efforts to provide schools for all Indian children.

Rocky Boy School opens in Montana under an Indian Board of Education.

1962 Institute of American Indian Arts created in Santa Fe, New Mexico, using remodeled facilities of an older boarding school to provide high school arts programs and post-high school vocational arts program. Many Indian students from Montana still attend.

1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This act was designed to benefit all disadvantaged youth in America. In 1966, Title I of this act was amended to include the BIA. Title III was also to include the BIA. Title IV provided for regional education laboratories for development of new and more effective programs for Indian students, both public and federal.

1966 First Indian Teacher Corps project begun at Niobrara, Macy and Winnebago, Nebraska, in Indian Country. Montana participates in 1968.

1967 The BIA establishes National Indian Education Advisory Committee.

1968 Number of federal Indian schools reaches 226.

Sen. Robert Kennedy begins Senate probe into Indian education.

Navajo Community College, the first in the nation, founded in Tsaile, Arizona

President Johnson directs BIA to establish advisory boards at all its schools.

1969 Indian Education: A National Tragedy & A National Challenge, Special Senate Subcommittee Report on Indian Education released recommending increased Indian control of education, creation of an exemplary federal school system, and establishment of a National Indian Board of Education.

1970 National Indian Education Association, a union of Indian teachers, educators and scholars, formed in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

President Richard Nixon announces an era of Indian control over decisions affecting Indians, including the field of education.

Haskell Institute becomes Haskell Indian Junior College at Lawrence, Kansas.

- 1971 Began the formation of Tribally Controlled Community Colleges throughout the United States. Montana began their involvement with Tribally Controlled Community Colleges from 1975 to present. Currently, there is a Tribally Controlled Community College on every reservation in Montana.
- 1972 Montana ratifies its new Constitution. The Constitution carries forward the 1889 provision from the Enabling Act. Article X, section 1(2) —The state recognizes the unique and distinct cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its education goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.“ Montana is the only state among the 50 in having an explicit constitutional commitment to its Indian citizens.

Indian Education Act of 1972. The U.S. Department of Education provides direct funds for the special needs of all Indian students in public schools with 10 or more Indian students (Now known as Title IX Indian Education). Priority funding given to Indian tribes and organizations in use of discretionary program money. The National Advisory Council on Indian Education was established to oversee provisions of the law, set program priorities and assess Indian education throughout the federal establishment. The Act enabled the U.S. Department of Education to begin active work with Indian community colleges. Set-asides were authorized for training of teachers of Indian children.

American Indian Higher Education Consortium formed in Boulder, Colorado, by members of the Boards of Regents of the new Indian community colleges.

First members of the National Advisory Council on Indian Education appointed by President Richard Nixon, under terms of the Indian Education Act of 1972.

First annual statewide Johnson O'Malley Conference in Billings, Montana.

- 1975 Congress passed the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.

Montana's Indian Culture Master Plan was developed and presented to the state in an effort to remedy under-achievement of Indian students in the public school system.

- 1982 Johnson O'Malley Conference changed to Montana Indian Education Association.

- 1984 The Board of Public Education establishes the Montana Advisory Council

on Indian Education.

- 1989 Montana School Accreditation Standards and Procedures Manual refers specifically to the needs of American Indian children in directing that schools shall —nurture an understanding of the values and contributions of Montana’s Native Americans and the unique needs and abilities of Native American students and other minority groups.“

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Montana, began the TRACKS Project which eventually created the Office of Minority Achievement.

- 1990 The Plan for American Indian Education in Montana: Recommended Goals is completed by MACIE.

The Opening of the Pipeline Conference on Higher Education and Native American Studies.

- 1999 The Montana Legislature passes into law HB 528 to implement Article X, section 1(2) of the Constitution, MCA 20-1-501 Recognition of American Indian cultural heritage.

First statewide Indian parent conference organized by Indian Education Specialist, Office of Public Instruction. Organization named Voices of Indian Communities for Education (VOICE) created.

First statewide Legislative Forum on Indian Education Issues.

- 2000 Montana Board of Public Education approves recommendations to implement the legislative intent of HB 528.

Montana Indian Education Association changes name to Montana-Wyoming Indian Education Association.

Montana hosts its first Conference on Race with special emphasis on education of Indians and other minority students.

Metis Indians, after more than 100 years of petitioning the United States government, receive federal recognition as a tribe.

