

Arizona Tri-Universities for Indian Education

By: Karen Francis-Begay



Photo by: Gregor Orbino

History

In the fall of 1999, the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation appeared before the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) and announced its second \$1.0 million gift to be shared equally among Arizona's three state universities. To ensure that American Indian students receive the support at each university, the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation asked the presidents of Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and The University of Arizona to designate a spokesperson on American Indian programs.

The university designees were charged to meet regularly to discuss challenges and opportunities in promoting student success. With the encouragement by the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, the Arizona Tri-Universities for Indian Education (ATUIE) was officially formed on November 17, 2000.

Mission

The mission of ATUIE is to lead the nation in American Indian student recruitment, persistence and graduation; advocate and support American Indian leadership at the highest levels within the state universities, colleges and tribal governments; and support integration of both academics and culture for the total well-being of students.

Policy & Advocacy Initiatives

Over the past few years, ATUIE has been instrumental in its advocacy work whereby its membership has positively impacted statewide policy for the benefit of students and tribal communities.

For instance, the leadership of ATUIE helped draft and get approval for a Tribal Consultation Policy (ABOR Tribal Consultation 1-118). The policy acknowledges the special relationship the state universities have with Arizona's Native Nations and to consult with tribes on initiatives that have a potential impact on tribal citizens and the communities.

Another policy that has been revised and that now benefits American Indian students is the Residency Classification for Tuition Purposes. Initially, American Indian students who were enrolled with one of Arizona's Native Nations and hadn't resided in Arizona to be considered an "in-state" student, had to pay out-of-state tuition fees. With the revised policy, American Indian students qualify for in-state tuition if they are enrolled citizens of one of Arizona's 22 Native Nations, regardless of how long they have lived out of state. Since the policy revision, we have seen an increase number of students qualify for in-state tuition that otherwise wouldn't have.

Membership

The ATUIE coalition expanded its membership to include not only faculty and staff from the three state universities, but also other higher education institutions that serve American Indian students, extending to institutions in New Mexico. The institution members are: Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, The University of Arizona, Diné College, Tohono O'odham Community College, Navajo Technical University, San Carlos Apache College, Maricopa County Community Colleges, Pima Community College, A.T. Still University, University of New Mexico, Gallup Branch, and Western New Mexico University.