Native American Educational Leader Preparation: The Design and Delivery of an Online Interdisciplinary Licensure Program

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"Decision making should always benefit the students,
no matter the color."[1]

In a 1991 report, the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force documented a lack of Native educators as role models for Native American students and set a goal of doubling their number by the year 2000. Under-representation of Native American educators remains an issue today particularly with regard to school leaders (Planty et al. 2009; Snyder and Dillow 2010). In order to increase the number of Native American educational leaders serving Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools,[2,3] and other schools with high concentrations of Native American students,[4] the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program and School of Special Education at the University of Northern Colorado developed a two-year online multidisciplinary Master's of Arts degree program for Native American teachers to obtain both principal and special education administrative licenses.[5] This article describes the context, design, and evaluation of this new degree program. In addition, drawing upon the experiences of program staff, faculty members, and participants (students), it presents the challenges and lessons learned in the areas of recruitment and retention; program structure and online delivery; and cultural accommodation and enhancement.

Context

The knowledge base of school administrative practices necessary for the effective design and delivery of instruction for Native American students is threefold. First is a multicultural perspective that not only acknowledges Native American student cultural knowledge as worthwhile, but also one that reinforces and expands cultural knowledge (Hale 2002). Central to this perspective is the promotion of an appreciation and respect for one's own culture as well

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as that of others. Second is an understanding that Native American students process information in a manner that may not be compatible with the traditional sequential and analytical learning model used by many schools and curriculum providers (Cazden 1982; Dumont 1972; Erickson and Mohatt 1982; Philips 1983). Rather, a global and relational instructional style more effectively engages Native American students through offering a variety of choices in individual learning using examples from contemporary Native American life and applying ideas and skills to those situations. Third, Native American cultural norms related to cooperation over competition and the public display of one's own knowledge must inform the development of instructional environments to encourage Native American student learning without creating a schism between family and community behavioral expectations and successful interaction and school expectations and interactions (Hale 2002). This three-part knowledge base directly impacts the guidance of instruction as well as the evaluation of teaching by administrators in schools with high concentrations of Native American students.

The need for leaders who are knowledgeable of special education student assessment and instruction is also vital in these schools because Native American students are more likely than white, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander students to be served by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Freeman and Fox 2005, 28), and the need is growing. Between 1998 and 2003, the percentage of Native American students identified in need of special education services rose faster than that of any other racial or ethnic minority group, from 9.5% to 11.9% (Freeman and Fox 2005, 34).

For BIE schools, the incidence of Native American students with disabilities is even higher. The Office of Indian Education Programs reported over 18% special needs student in attendance in 2002-2003 (Bureau of Indian Education 2004) in contrast to 9% of all public education students (Freeman and Fox 2005, 34). According to Tippeconnic and Faircloth (2002, 2-3), American Indian and Alaska Native children accounted for a 30% higher than expected representation in special education programs and services, with over-representation in most disability categories, such as specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, deaf-blindness, and traumatic brain injury.

In the 2003-2004 school year, 117 of the 182 BIE schools failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements under the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 guidelines (Bureau of Indian Education 2004). Seventy-nine percent of these schools failed to demonstrate AYP for their special education student population subgroup, with the same trend reported in 2004-2005 (Bureau of Indian Education 2004, 2005b). In 2004-2005, 62 BIE schools fell into the "Alert" category indicating low performance while 17 were classified as "Level I School Improvement" and five were classified as "Level II School Improvement" (Bureau of Indian Education 2005a). Level I School Improvement classification requires state support to increase student achievement while Level II requires supplemental educational services to students from low-income families. Twenty-one BIE schools were classified as requiring corrective action which can include replacement of school staff and internal school reorganization. Further, 16 BIA schools were classified as requiring restructuring by reopening as a charter school; replacement of the principal and staff; state takeover; and/or contractual management by a private company.

Given the high percentage of Native American students with special needs, coupled with low academic performance on state and federally mandated assessments, leaders of BIA schools must be knowledgeable about effective instruction for students with disabilities. Particularly important is the use of authentic or performance-based assessments; involvement of parents and families in the assessment process; and awareness of and responsiveness to students' cultural and linguistic differences (Tippeconnic and Faircloth 2002, 2).

Program Design

Three unique features of this program were the multidisciplinary nature of the course of study; online delivery of courses; and curricular focus on issues pertinent to leadership of schools with high concentrations of Native American students. Course content and discussions emphasized developing relationships between school and community as well as among participants and instructors; and evaluating and responding to leadership situations based on situational, relational, and cultural considerations. Organizational change and leadership development focused on giving voice to individuals and groups who either have been silenced or have not been invited to participate in educational conversations. Native American teacher, parent, community member, and student voices were specifically discussed in readings and assignments throughout the program.

Although the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Master's degree with principal licensure is a 30 credit hour program, this newly developed course of study was expanded to 39 credit hours to encompass the special education administrator license. Courses included:

(1) Self-examination of leadership style, beliefs, and visions (3 credit hours);
(2) Organizational change strategies (6 credit hours);
(3) Effective hiring, mentoring, supervision, and professional development (6 credit hours);
(4) Legal and fiscal issues (6 credit hours);
(5) Planning and evaluation of special education services (9 credit hours);
(6) Understanding and applying educational research (3 credit hours).

In addition, students completed two applied internship experiences, totaling 6 credit hours, supervised by experienced school principals and special education administrators. The curriculum and assignments were designed specifically for program participants, emphasizing knowledge and skills that would be needed to effectively serve Native American students, parents, and communities (Bensen 2001; Cajete 2000; Cazden 1982; Cleary and Peacock 1998; Demmert 2001; Dumont 1972; Erickson and Mohatt 1982; Hale 2002; Howard 2006; Swisher and Tippeconnic 1999).

Online delivery of the program facilitated participation of Native American educators serving remote geographic areas in states where they could not easily access traditional on-campus or regional leadership programs (Hale 2002; McGee and Cody 1995; Solomon 1997; Sorensen 1992). Native American educators were eligible to participate in this program if they: (1) had at least two years of teaching experience and thus would be eligible for state licensure as a school administrator at the end of the program; (2) were affiliated with either a recognized or unrecognized Native American tribe; (3) met the Graduate School grade point average (GPA) requirement of 3.0;

and (4) demonstrated through two letters of recommendation and a personal essay a commitment to leading Native American schools. Participant cost of tuition, books, transportation, and room and board (for a summer on-campus orientation meeting) were covered by grant funds. In return, participants agreed in writing to pay back the costs of the program by serving as an administrator in a school with a predominantly Native American student population for three years. If they were unable or unwilling to do so, they agreed to pay back the costs of the program to the funding agency. Students who did not complete the program were also responsible for paying back costs that had been incurred while enrolled.

Program Evaluation

The program evaluation was guided by two research questions: (1) In what ways did this educational leadership program meet the unique needs and goals of tribal communities; and (2) How could the program be improved in content, structure, and delivery? Students in the two cohorts completed course evaluations and provided feedback to strengthen the overall program.[6] At the end of the program, formal feedback from instructors was also sought. Informal feedback from students and instructors was gathered via email and conversation documentation throughout the project. These three sources of data were used to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the project.

Anonymous course evaluations were administered at the end of each semester by project staff. Each course in the program received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants. Readings, assignments, course materials, and instructor feedback and communication received consistent ratings of "very useful."[7] The technology used in the program delivery also received the highest rating of "very useful" despite the frustration of a few students who encountered problems with internet access at their school or home. Online discussion forums were rated as "very useful" by 82% of students with the remaining 18% rating the forums as "somewhat useful." Online chat room conversations were less successful, receiving student ratings of "somewhat useful" or "did not use," and so were dropped after the second semester of the program.

Course evaluations also included a section for student comments. Overall, students found coursework valuable in their development as school leaders. For example, students indicated they valued learning leadership theories and skills as well as engaging in practical applications, such as in-basket exercises and simulated conferences. As a result, students commented that they felt more prepared to discern and respond to the larger issues that influence a leader's actions. One participant observed:

> I realized that there are all different types of leaders. Native American schools need strong leaders with open minds who have a mission to help students become life-long learners (Student response 01C23).

Another student stated that the program "gave me an understanding of how I want to be when I become an administrator" (Student response 03C29).

According to other student comments, legal and human resources issues addressed in coursework helped participants to deal with "close relatives and real situations" (Student response 04C25) and "politics of the community and the school board" (Student response 04C211). Written assignments, reflections, and discussion forums provided students with the opportunity to crystallize their values and beliefs regarding education and leadership. One student noted

that the most useful aspect of the program was "to put into words my own thoughts about my role in education" (Student response 01C22).

Students also appreciated discussions as a means to help them understand a variety of perspectives on the topics presented as well as a means to facilitate conversations with peers. One participant commented:

> I learned that many problems present in school organizations today can be viewed from different aspects. Depending on the view one takes, different solutions will be presented. Additionally, depending on the view that is taken by others that are involved in the problem, multiple strategies come into play. In order to be an effective leader, that leader needs to be aware of differing views and the motivations behind them (Student response 03C27).

This view was echoed by participants throughout their program. Feedback from students also included the option of digital recordings to fully embrace the Native American oral tradition.

Instructor availability and support received strong positive ratings from both cohorts. In rating overall satisfaction with the program, all participants reported themselves as "very satisfied" with the learning they had experienced.[8] Even in courses where students suggested additional Native American research readings, every student in the program identified relevant aspects that they felt directly applied to their current position and future leadership position in Native American schools and communities. Many times, participants identified new knowledge on how to fairly resolve situations involving multiple stakeholders and legal issues as giving them "confidence in making the right decisions" (Student response 04C24).

Student suggestions for program improvement included the need for stricter enforcement of assignment deadlines and the development of strategies to address issues with peers who did not contribute to discussions or assignment postings in a timely manner. Although the materials used in most courses were rated as applicable and appropriate to Native American school leadership, materials related to statistical research and finance were initially noted as needing more culturally relevant materials, an issue that was addressed with the second cohort. Research on Native American student learning and achievement were the most requested additions to courses. Students also noted that during semesters with three courses the workload related to readings, assignments, and discussion involvement was burdensome for working professionals, presenting to them a challenge to obtain the highest quality learning experience from course content.

Early in the program, participants were exposed to definitions of four epistemologies--logical positivism, hermeneutics, critical theory, feminism--and asked to examine their own way of knowing and making sense of the world. An analysis of participant epistemologies, based on an educational leadership platform and epistemology assignment responses, revealed that 50% of the program participants identified with a hermeneutics perspective, and 40% identified with critical theory epistemology. One student summarized her hermeneutic view of educational leadership as follows:

> Knowing where people are coming from and why they view things as they do is an important piece in understanding human dynamics and building relationships. The culture's whole way of discovering truth and knowledge is that you're doing so because of a sense of being "incomplete" and, through

your quest, you're subject to uncertainty, change, and growth. You exist in a wide open universe, awaiting your own personal enlightenment—yours and yours alone (Student response RNE).

Knowledge for change was also a dominant critical theory theme among participants and was cited by 87% of respondents as the reason for becoming an educator and seeking a leadership position. "I have a real conviction that education, along with renewed spirituality, is the Native American's salvation," one cohort member shared, identifying the interconnectedness of the power of the mind and spirit (Student response DNE).

In a separate analysis of course delivery and assignments, it was found that participants earned higher grades in courses where instructors focused on relationship building and responding to situational contexts than in courses where assignments were more removed from situations participants had experienced or asked for clear-cut applications of laws or principles. Students were also more successful in courses with instructors who utilized a combination of hermeneutic and critical theory approaches, such as understanding and valuing each student's unique life experiences, actively building relationships with students, and supporting students' aspirations and plans to enact changes in their current and future school contexts.

Recruitment and Retention Challenges and Lessons

The grantor's requirement that classes begin less than five months after notification of funding was received proved challenging, particularly for the first cohort, and necessitated moving the starting date of their first class from January to March 2006, impacting participation positively for some potential students and negatively for others. Recruitment efforts began immediately after notification through the development of a program website and distribution of program information to schools through program site coordinators. Early in the semester in which classes were to begin, an informational meeting was held for interested Native American teachers in northern New Mexico in what is referred to as the "Four Corners" region. However, university processing of applications was slower than usual because the program was new and involved simultaneous enrollment in the educational leadership and special education licensure programs under the umbrella of a single Master's degree.

Although the project staff estimated an enrollment of 15 students in the first cohort, the short timeline resulted in a slightly smaller group of 13 students. With attrition, the first cohort lost seven students. One student withdrew within the first six months after becoming terminally ill. A second withdrew during the first term after deciding that a planned vacation would jeopardize completion of the first course and program. Three students experienced life changing events immediately after the first course and requested joining the second cohort. Reasons included taking a teaching position in another state, recertification challenges, cancer, and divorce. In addition, two students were dropped midway through the program because their grade point average (GPA) fell below the Graduate School minimum requirement of 3.0 for more than one semester. The remaining six participants successfully completed the program and graduated in May, 2008.

In the spring semester of 2007, twenty-six students, including the three who transferred from the first cohort, were admitted to the second cohort. The deadline for application to begin the second cohort in June 2007 was established for mid-November 2006 in

order to allow time for applications to be processed by the Graduate School. Although 15 additional applications that met the program participation requirements were received, grant funding limited the cohort to 27 students. As a result, qualified applicants were accepted in the order in which their applications were received. With attrition, the second cohort lost eight students. After briefly attending the first class, one of the transfers from the first cohort stopped participating, did not respond to program or faculty communication, and was subsequently dropped from the program. A second student withdrew after losing his job through a reduction in force while at the same time going through a divorce. The prospect of relocation and starting a new job caused this student to withdraw. Four semesters into the program, six students were dropped because their GPAs fell below the Graduate School minimum. This left 18 students in the second cohort all of whom graduated May, 2009.

Lessons learned from the recruitment experiences of the first two cohorts included the following:

1. If possible, the deadline for application should be at least six months prior to the beginning of classes so that paperwork can be processed and applicants can adequately plan for and commit to participation in coursework.
2. A statement of professional goals to complement the educational platform may help students focus on program outcomes and increase participant retention.
3. Student support structures should be built into the program to assist students struggling with coursework. Although regional tutoring sessions were held for both cohorts, this was not a specified element of the original program design. Several students who were dropped from the program were unable to attend these sessions because of family and job demands.

Program Structure and Online Delivery Challenges and Lessons

The online delivery of the program presented several challenges: (1) Lack of personal bonding opportunities for students with only a few cohort members; (2) unfamiliarity with the technology used in course delivery; and (3) unreliable access to technology.

Although a few of the participants in the first cohort were able attend the informational orientation session, several could not because of the geographic distance.[9] A weekend session was subsequently scheduled in the third semester of the six-semester program to allow all first-cohort members to meet and faculty to get to know students better. For the second cohort, all members were brought to campus to attend a week-long orientation to the first three courses of the program and the technology that would be used. Also, members of the first cohort were invited to share their experiences with the second cohort and to work with faculty teaching the courses in which they were currently enrolled. These activities were positively received by participants and very successful from the standpoint of the program faculty. If funding had permitted, these types of activities would have been scheduled again mid-way through the second cohort's program.

Members of the second cohort found it helpful to begin their program in the summer when they could concentrate more on the coursework. This, however, was not possible for the first cohort because of funding agency requirements. The scheduling of courses for the first cohort was also impacted by the necessity to begin classes in the spring semester. The course schedule proposed to have participants enroll in one course in the fall and spring semesters while their schools were in session and then enroll in three courses each of the two summers in the program. In order to have the first cohort complete all licensure and degree requirements by the end of second spring semester, participants were enrolled in three courses in the fall semester preceding their graduation. This meant that while they were working at their school sites to complete experiences for their internships, they were also completing the required statistics and school finance courses. Several students found this to be a challenging workload. Although reading requirements were reduced because of the compressed time period of the first course in which they were enrolled, participants still experienced stress in covering course content and assignments in addition to mastering statistical software (SPSS) used in the statistics course

Because of the quick start-up time for the first cohort, the only technological training that was provided was at the informational orientation session which few were able to attend. A technology hotline created for the first cohort was used only a few times by one student. The need for technology training was better addressed with the second cohort by providing an hour of hands-on technology instruction each day they spent on campus. An educational technology graduate student facilitated the training sessions and, because of the personal relationship established through face-to-face meetings, phone conversations, and emails, this individual was utilized a great deal by both faculty and participants throughout the program.

Centra Software (2005) software to facilitate visual images and real-time interaction between students and instructors was originally proposed for use in the program. However, it became clear very quickly that this software was more suited to real-time instruction. Because the participants in the program were all full-time teachers with extracurricular commitments, whole-group sessions were impossible to schedule, and the use of the software was discontinued. The Blackboard platform used to deliver the online classes was one with which a majority of participants and instructors felt comfortable, allowing participation at the students' convenience. This flexibility also enabled participation by students who had less reliable access to the internet, for example, in remote locations where service could be interrupted due to the high winds.

All of the special education courses included in the program had been taught online prior to this project, but none of the educational leadership classes had been adapted for online delivery. This required some faculty members to expand their comfort level with and knowledge of technology for instructional delivery purposes. Although support was available to assist with the adaptation and delivery of course content and activities, not all instructors took advantage of it. Some faculty, however, embraced the online learning experience, with one creating weekly YouTube postings in addition to Blackboard discussion forums. According to course evaluation feedback, these postings were much appreciated by students because they could review explanations of assignments and major concepts.

The lessons learned regarding program structure and online delivery included the following:

1. Provide time for students and instructors to interact and build relationships not only at the beginning of the program, but also midway to sustain student commitment and allow new faculty to get to know students.

Educational Considerations

2. Identify a hybrid program structure that supports face-to-face contacts with program participants at the beginning of each online course.

3. Provide two to three opportunities each semester for instructors and participants to meet face-to-face to engage in class activities that are not easily reproducible in an online learning environment and to build relationships among the group and with instructors.

4. Provide an opportunity for past program participants to meet, share, and mentor newly admitted participants.

5. Begin classes in the summer when participants have a lighter workload so that they can concentrate on program coursework.

6. If it is not possible to begin coursework in the summer, structure the first course to provide a nonthreatening, well-paced initiation to the course of study.

7. Schedule potentially difficult courses, such as law, finance, and statistics, during different semesters so that students do not feel overwhelmed by the workload.

8. Provide technology training to all participants in a hands-on setting so they can practice while a person is available to answer questions and explain navigating the platform being used.

9. Use software that allows for asynchronous instruction and student participation.

10. Structure assignments with flexibility to accommodate student internet service interruptions.

11. Provide group instruction to instructors on the adaptation and delivery of online learning experiences using selected technological platform(s) like webcams, digital recordings, and YouTube postings that maximize personal and oral interaction among participants and with the course instructor.

12. Provide readily available technological support for instructors and participants throughout the program via an individual with whom participants have an established relationship.

Cultural Accommodation and Enhancement
Challenges and Lessons

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of the project was ensuring that culturally relevant issues in leading Native American schools were included in the program curriculum. Only two instructors in the program had significant experience in working with Native American educators although site coordinators, the program evaluator, and advisory board members either were Native American or had substantial experience with Native American schools. Feedback from them related to adding relevant readings and enhancing assignments was invaluable.

The degree to which instructors included accommodations and enhancements in their respective courses varied based on their knowledge of available resources, personal background, time constraints, and cultural understandings. For example, some instructors made no modifications to readings, discussion topics, or written assignments because of a lack of time to prepare or find materials relevant to Native American educators coupled with the belief that general understanding of theory was the purpose of the courses they were teaching. On the other hand, another instructor greatly modified readings and discussion topics in the first course in which

each cohort was enrolled as a result of gaining a greater knowledge of resources available. To assist instructors, educational materials that emphasized Native American culture and learning philosophy, e.g., books, videos, research reports, and practitioner-oriented articles, were collected by the project director for instructor use as the project proceeded.

In response to the heavy course loads of participants over the summer when students were enrolled in three courses and when the statistics course ran concurrently with either the school finance or law courses, several instructors reduced the number of reading or reflective essay assignments in courses. The core structure of the key assignments and learning objectives in all classes, however, remained the same.

Instructors found that discussions and assignments were more successful when based on students' experiences. Numerous self-reflection activities were included throughout the curriculum. These were based on traditional leadership theory with articles on aspects of Native American education and culture added in order to integrate participants' experiences. Requesting students to apply or analyze concepts in light of their own experience as educators brought forth high-quality, in-depth, thoughtful responses. For example, assignments in the initial course of the program included examination of Native American culture regarding educational beliefs, role of the community, and epistemology. In many instances, capitalizing upon students' experiences also provided a bridge between the instructors' knowledge of public education and BIE policies.

Instructors found that links to videos, PowerPoint presentations, and external resources were well received by students. Interactive activities that were standard elements of on-campus courses were completed during the summer meeting with participants. Activities in courses not offered at that time were either modified or dropped. Although instructors in the latter portion of each cohort's program found that the consistency of using the Blackboard platform created a high level of comfort for both instructors and students with regard to online course participation, instructors who taught earlier in the program initially accepted emails from students as a substitute for those who were unable to attend the program orientation.

According to instructors in the program, 30% to 50% of participants performed at or above the level of on-campus students, and they suggested that two to three face-to-face meeting opportunities would have enhanced participants' learning experiences and the quality of discussions. Several noted that bilingual students engaged more frequently in discussion, asked more questions, and produced higher quality written products than those with more limited English proficiency. For students who struggled with program requirements, instructors found it difficult to engage them in a productive dialogue to answer their questions or address the challenges they faced unless the instructors were extremely persistent and consistent in their communication. The issue of submitting assignments in a timely manner was also a concern. Although some instructors maintained strict due dates with grade deductions for late work, the majority of instructors accepted work up to the point at which grades were required to be submitted and evaluated the quality of work without regard to time of submission. However, late submission of work led several instructors to voice concerns over participants' ability to handle multiple situations in an efficient manner as required of educational leaders.

Lessons learned in the area of cultural accommodation and enhancements included:

1. Provide cultural resources for instructors, make sure they are aware of what is available, and how these can be used in course delivery.
2. Provide an orientation for all instructors that persuasively depicts the increased quality of learning experiences for participants when cultural issues are woven into the content of each course.
3. Make instructors aware of students' workload in other courses offered concurrently and provide a forum for instructors to discuss student workloads and share successful teaching techniques, including effective methods of communicating with students and structuring of assignment deadlines.
4. Provide two to three opportunities each semester for instructors and participants to meet face-to-face to engage in class activities that are not easily reproducible in an online learning environment and to build relationships.
5. Encourage instructors to provide alternative means for submitting discussion contributions and assignments, such as digital recordings or webcam tapes, when the quality of writing is not fundamentally relevant to the learning being shared or assessed.

Conclusion

While the online delivery of this innovative Native American Education Leadership program encountered challenges, the satisfaction of participants with the quality of instruction and level of learning was consistently high. In terms of concrete results, the principal and special education director licensure of 24 Native American leaders through this program enlarged the capacity for Native American leaders to serve schools and communities with high concentrations of Native American students. These leaders are role models who possess the knowledge and skills to build culturally appropriate curriculum and pedagogies for students; support teachers to better understand and serve Native American students; and reach out to Native American parents and community members to support student engagement and achievement. However, many more qualified Native American educational leaders are needed, and we hope the experience of this program offers insights to others who seek to broaden access to similar opportunities. If self-determination is based on knowledge and the motivation to make a difference, such educational leadership programs and the leaders that they prepare can greatly contribute to the empowerment of Native American tribal communities.

Endnotes

[1] Program participant (student) observation.

[2] The Bureau of Indian Education is a federal agency whose mission is "…to provide quality education opportunities from early childhood through life in accordance with a tribe's needs for cultural and economic well-being, in keeping with the wide diversity of Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages as distinct cultural and governmental entities. Further, the BIE is to manifest consideration of the whole person by taking into account the spiritual, mental, physical, and cultural aspects of the individual within his or her family and tribal or village context" (http://www.bie.edu). According to its web site:

"The Bureau of Indian Education oversees a total of 183 elementary, secondary, residential and peripheral dormitories across 23 states. 124 schools are tribally controlled under P.L. 93-638 Indian Self Determination Contracts or P.L. 100-297 Tribally Controlled Grant Schools Act. 59 schools are operated by the Bureau of Indian Education" (http://www.bie.edu/Schools/index.htm).

[3] In 2002, seven percent of the Native American student population attended BIA schools (Freeman and Fox 2005, 28).

[4] In 2002, approximately one-third (31%) of Native American students attended schools where they were they comprised at least 50% of the student body (Freeman and Fox 2005, 28).

[5] Funding support for this project was provided through a professional development grant from the United States Department of Education, Office of Indian Education (OIE), grant number B299B050024. The Native American Innovative Leadership (NAIL) project performance period was from July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2009.

[6] The first cohort consisted of 10 participants and the second cohort included 20 students. The first cohort consisted of 8 females and 2 males while the second cohort contained 18 females and 2 males. Tribal representation was 75% Navajo, with the remaining 25% of participants from the following tribes: Arapaho; Chemehuevi; Crow; Northern Arapaho; Ogalala Sioux; Old Harbor; Pawnee; Ponca; and Three Affiliated tribes.

[7] Items on the course evaluation used a Likert (five point) scale ranging from "did not use" to "very useful".

[8] Responses were based upon a Likert (five point) scale ranging from "not satisfied" to "very satisfied".

[9] Participants in the program who resided in Alaska, California, Wyoming, Montana, and Michigan were not able to travel to the New Mexico orientation meeting.

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