



## WESTERN REGIONAL SPACE GRANT MEETING



# Educational Success in Indian Country

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# MONTANA TRIBES

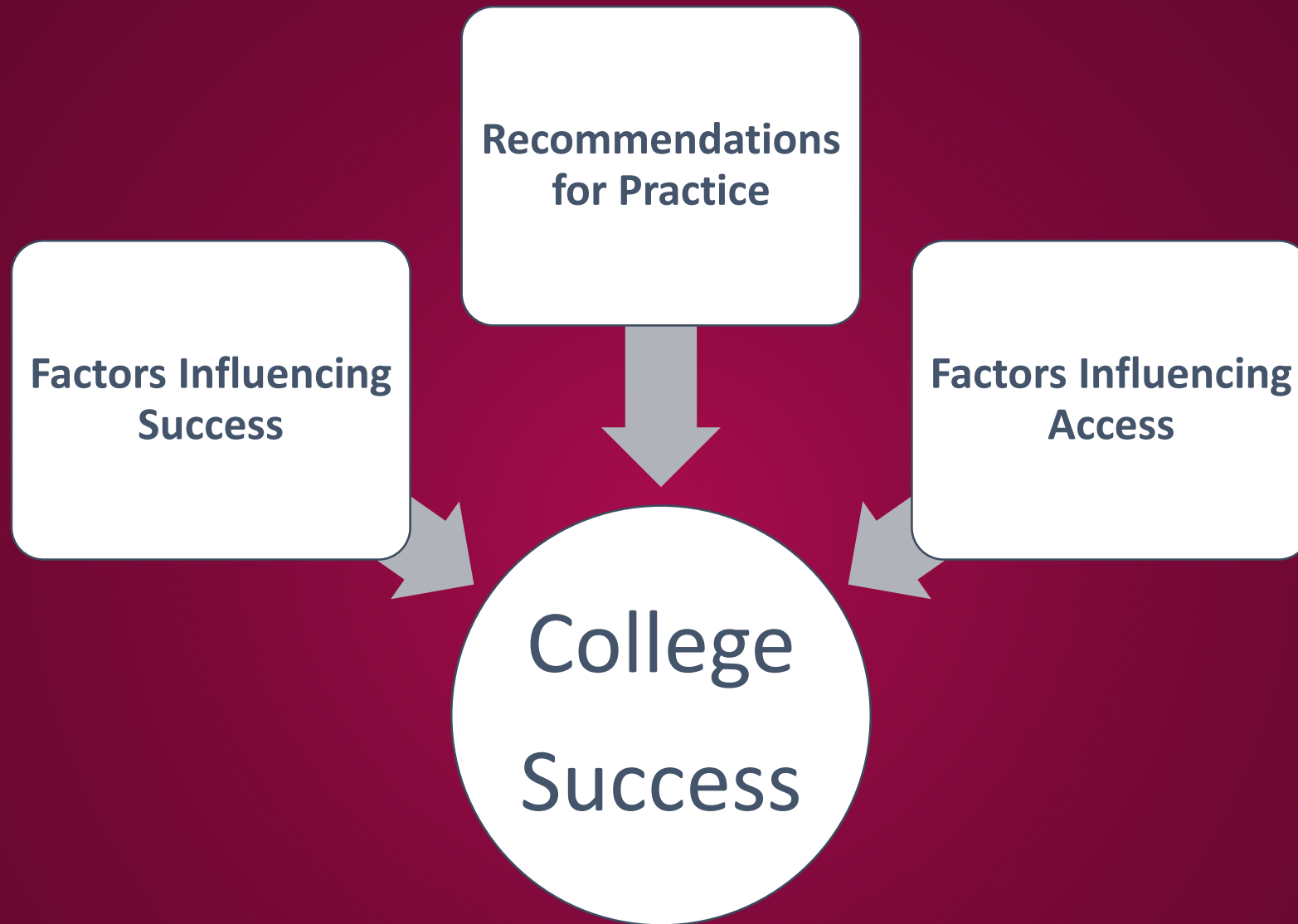


BLACKFEET  
SALISH  
KOOTENAI  
PEND D'OREILLE  
CHIPPEWA  
CREE  
CROW  
NAKODA  
AANIIIIH  
ASSINIBOINE  
SIOUX  
CHIPPEWA/METIS  
NORTHERN CHEYENNE



# MONTANA TRIBAL COLLEGES

- Aaniiih Nakoda- Fort Belknap
- Blackfeet Community College- Blackfeet
- Chief Dull Knife College- Northern Cheyenne
- Fort Peck Community College- Fort Peck
- Little Big Horn College- Crow
- Salish Kootenai College- Confederate Salish & Kootenai Tribes
- Stone Child College- Rocky Boy's



# FACTORS INFLUENCING ACCESS



# Negative environmental influences on academic preparation.

- Students' K-12 experiences play an important role in shaping students' preparation for college.
- Even when completing HS, AIAN students less likely to complete prep courses.
- Middle School and High School programs limited on rural reservation communities.

## Value of Indigenous college access programs.

- Indigenous college access programs and pipelines.
- e.g. Montana American Indians in Math and Science, Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program



# Financial Aid

## (Undergraduates)

- Most students receive financial aid.
- AIAN students face unmet financial needs.
- Higher Education and Native nations need to seek a better understanding to meet the financial aid needs.
- Not Filing the FAFSA or Completing Income Verification
- Not meeting the GPA requirements for merit-based financial aid (scholarships)
- Academic Probation

Students don't know about or understand probation or how this affects financial aid eligibility. Students don't know about the appeal process or bother to complete it to keep their aid

Not Filing the FAFSA or Completing Income Verification

## (Graduates)

- What does Cost of Attendance Mean for Graduate Students
- Many graduate students are non-traditional and have families
- Not having health insurance or using Indian Health Services



# FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESS



# SENSE OF PLACE

**Research indicates that a connection to place on college campuses is critical for Indigenous students.**

- Indigenous centered spaces, such as Native student centers or cultural centers, provide resources to help Indigenous students build relationships, reinforce Indigenous identity, foster a sense of belonging, and create home spaces for Indigenous students.



# MISCONCEPTIONS AND STEREOTYPES

- That Indigenous students confront in higher education perpetuate issues of invisibility and often lead Indigenous students to feel that they do not belong in college.
- Graduate students feel like "imposters" in their programs.

## INVISIBILITY

- Some AIAN student do not envision themselves on campus.
- Feel as if they are the only one in their classes, majors, research, etc. Few peers.



# CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULAR & CO-CURRICULAR EXPERIENCES

May help Indigenous students develop and maintain a sense of belonging in college.



# CONNECTION TO HOME

Maintaining connections to home allows Indigenous students to continue their practices of cultural traditions and fulfill their responsibilities to family and community.

Implement the **Family Education Model** into your institution/program.



# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Develop Partnerships with Native Nations

It is important for institutions of higher education to develop meaningful partnerships that honor the sovereign status of Native nations. Note that this takes time.



## Critically Examine How We Use Data to Better Understand Indigenous Students' Experiences in Higher Education-

Collaborate with Native nations and organizations to determine what data should be collected among Native peoples and how it should be collected. Low numbers can skew statistical relevance.



**Commit Institutional Support to College Access-** Institutions of higher education must make concerted efforts to make college more accessible and welcoming for Indigenous populations.

- Work with Native Nations to determine gaps and community needs
- Make intentional efforts to recruit and presence in Indigenous communities.
- Host targeted recruitment days and summer bridge programs.
- Examine admissions policies and practices to see how they can benefit indigenous students.
- Reach down to K-12 level. NASA is an easy way to engage K-12 students.



**Empower Students to Maintain Connections with their Families and Home Communities.** Institutions of higher education must develop policies that are flexible and work to honor the needs of Indigenous students as they relate to family and home. Such policies should: Support the needs of Indigenous students to return home for ceremonies.

- Focus on family centered activities that are not solely located on college campuses.
- Allow Indigenous students to practice their cultural and spiritual beliefs, particularly in student housing.
- Understand that students need to be home for ceremonies and family events.



**Honor Connections to Place.** Institutions should work to understand the history of the land on which they are located and the Indigenous peoples historically and currently connected to that land. To honor connections to place, institutions should actively work to: Develop land acknowledgement policies.

- Support Indigenous student centers.
- Create Indigenous places of learning on campus.
- Develop land acknowledgements.

**Provide Students with More Culturally Relevant Curricular and Co-Curricular Experiences.**

- Honor Indigenous knowledge systems.
- Create internships and service learning opportunities that connect student learning to Indigenous communities.
- Support Indigenous Studies programs.
- Have your institution hire AIAN staff faculty.
- Peer/Faculty Mentor Program
- Faculty exchange with TCU's



# Fostering Relationships



## Indigenous Knowledge Field Camp

- Native Graduate Students and their Advisors
- Takes place on the Nez Perce Reservation in Idaho
- Elders come to talk about place and language.
- 2 nights on the Salmon River
- No internet or cell service.
- Recommendation - Take faculty, staff, administrators to a local Indigenous Community.



# Fostering Relationships

- Road trips!
- Listen to Tribal Communities Needs
  - Don't just talk about your programs
- Make Regular Visits
- Takes time.



# Fostering Relationships

## Tribal College Faculty Professional Development

- Needs expressed by Tribal Colleges
- 10-12 faculty participate every year
- Linking tribal college faculty to University faculty and to each other
- Each summer's workshops based on feedback from faculty
  - Started at UM, then to the Flathead Lake Research Station, and then to each participant's institutions.
  - Next summer's plan to go national (D.C. and Seattle) then international (New Zealand)





Thank  
You