



DINÉ COLLEGE

THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION OF THE NAVAJO

Office of the President

NOVEMBER REPORT

My November report will focus a lot on the election. Based on the tribal, state, and national elections, there is a lot of impact on Diné College. In some areas, there are positive developments and in others, there are negative impacts. I think in all, there are more positives than negative developments.

Tribal

As we all know, Buu Nygren is the president-elect of the Navajo Nation. I believe this has the potential to be very good for education on the Navajo Nation. With a majority of new council delegates, this also has promising potential. I say this not because of the 24th Council but because of the opportunity to educate more tribal leaders about the amazing things that Diné College is doing. To that end, we are planning a briefing for new delegates to update them on the college's initiatives, previous initiatives, and so forth. We will also do this for the president-elect. As we move forward and set a date, I will let the board know. I believe the big areas of focus will be the impact of the charter and our expansion of programs, research, and access.

State

With the election of Senator Hatathlie, Reps. Peshlakai and Tsosie and with the election of a democratic governor in Katie Hobbs, I believe we have some real potential to deliver on areas that are helpful to higher education on the Navajo Nation.

In New Mexico, we kind of have the same situation. What is unique about New Mexico is that they have another big budget surplus. We are working to expand our request to meet this opportunity.

Federal

While the dynamic did not change much within the Senate, it did change dramatically within the House for our Arizona district. Tom O'Halleran lost in his bid for re-election. This will have a huge impact as we try to re-introduce the Diné College Act. We may need to focus on our New Mexico delegation to move this forward. We will be trying to meet with the new Congressman Eli Crane. I think if we rely on the Navajo Nation to make the Diné College Act a priority we might have more pull...at least in the beginning.

As we near the end of the semester, we are focusing more and more with the support for students. We have been tracking drops and withdrawals and following up with students to learn more from students. This has resulted in taking a second look at our procedures and even policies. The goal is to be more responsive to students but also fair to faculty. This will be something that we will bring through the process of committees but it's also important to understand that by reviewing these procedures it means that we very well will have to review other procedures. This is a good thing as we fully transition into a university.

Our enrollment continues to outpace last year. So far, for the spring semester, we are 22% ahead of last year. I think one reason is that the entire college is on the same page about our 100% grants and who is eligible. There is not the confusion that accompanied this initiative last year. Another big focus is on increasing our numbers of students who transition from Fall to Spring. At a recent data summit, we saw that 1/3 of students are new each year. As I have said previously, if we can cut into this number and increase student retention it will have a profound impact on our enrollment.

On Tuesday we had a kickoff meeting for the HLC visit in April. More than 50 employees attended. Patrick Blackwater and Winifred Jumbo are the co-chairs for this mid-term visit. We had a visit earlier this year for our centers and, you will recall, it went great. Now, our focus is on a more comprehensive visit. We are also very aware that the visit will focus on assessments. We have been working hard to fill this void.

Finally, as we transition to the Spring semester, it is important to remember that our Strategic Design has some very specific focuses. For example, the creation of a school of transformation to incorporate professional education. We will be working on the development of these initiatives and we will be moving fast in these areas but we also want to make sure that we are taking the right steps and not just trying to move quickly. I will elaborate on this during the board meeting.