

**APPENDIX F**

**LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

**BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS  
CREATIVE WRITING EMPHASIS PROPOSAL**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS, HUMANITIES, & ENGLISH  
DINÉ COLLEGE**

**FALL 2020**

# DINÉ COLLEGE

*"The Higher Education Institution of the Navajos"*  
SCHOOL OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND ENGLISH  
Tsaile Campus



November 25, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

Between November 11, 2020, and November 24, 2020, all faculty members who teach English courses at Diné College were surveyed via email or Zoom for their opinions regarding the proposed Bachelor of Fine Arts program in Creative Writing. All full-time faculty teaching English courses at any of Diné College's campuses were surveyed, regardless of whether they plan to teach in the new Creative Writing program.

A total of 13 faculty members teach English courses at Diné College. All 13 responded to the survey. The results are below:

Votes in favor: 12

Votes opposed: 1

Abstentions: 0

For more information, please contact Dr. Paul Willeto at [deansahe@dinecollege.edu](mailto:deansahe@dinecollege.edu) or Professor Alysa Landry at [alandry@dinecollege.edu](mailto:alandry@dinecollege.edu).



## DINÉ COLLEGE

*"The Higher Education Institution of the Navajo Nation"*

### OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF LIBRARIES

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December 9, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

This is a letter of support from the perspective of the library for the initiative to offer a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing here at Diné College.

Our book collection is currently ready to support such a degree. We have been collecting extensively in the areas of Navajo, Indigenous, and Southwestern literatures for many years. We have also been collecting books on writing poetry and fiction, a little less for creative non-fiction as fewer of those books have been published. It is my considered professional opinion that our current collection and our current collecting policies can support academic and creative work at this level.

At this point in time, we do not believe that any additional databases will be necessary. Our subscriptions to JSTOR and Ethnic Newswatch should provide most of the articles needed by student researchers. We can access needed books and articles through Interlibrary Loan or other cooperative arrangements. If it becomes necessary to support literary research at a higher level, because of new courses or different learning outcomes, we can investigate the purchase of the MLA International Bibliography. Diné College has a history of financial support for the best databases available in service of our baccalaureate degrees and I am confident the College will come through in the service of this degree as well, if and when it becomes necessary.

Our Instruction and Digital Resources Librarian, Rhiannon Sorrell, has a master's degree in English with an emphasis in Creative Non-Fiction. So, we will have plenty of professional support for this new program as well.

I am very excited at the prospect of adding Creative Writing to our curriculum. I think it will nicely complement our Navajo Cultural Arts Program. It will add other avenues for creative expression by our students and offer them a way of economic support while remaining on the reservation.

If you have any questions, feel free to email me at: [hpeterson@dinecollege.edu](mailto:hpeterson@dinecollege.edu)

Sincerely,

Dr. Herman A. Peterson  
Director of Libraries  
Diné College

Diné College  
1 Circle Dr.  
Route 12  
Tsaile, AZ 86556

Yá'at'ééh,

Shí éí 'Áshijíhi nishłí dóó Tó Baazhní'ázhí éí bashishchiin; Tódich'íi'nii éí dashicheii dóó Kinyaa'áanii éí dashinalí. Tsétah Tó Ák'olí déé' naashá. Ákót'éego diné nishłí.

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the development of a BFA in creative writing program at Diné College. Diné have an inherent love for stories. Whether it be at a ceremony or an overheard conversation at the trading post, it is not uncommon to hear someone say “aa’,” which is a phrase that yearns for story. To say “aa’” is to expect a story, to say “I know you are a good storyteller, or you have a story to tell and I want to hear it.”

Storytelling fuels our communities. Stories live and breathe in our everyday lives. When we visit our relatives, and conversations naturally unfurl into community happenings, gossip, who said what, who did what, who split up, who got back together, family memories, ceremonies, teachings, creation stories, and anything else that can be conjured up with black coffee and some cookies, we add to our collective body of stories. Stories shape our lives and manifest the characteristics that make up a good life. When elders speak, beginning with “When I was young” or “This is what my grandma told me” or “This is how I heard it,” we metabolize the parts that are meaningful to us and use those stories for strength. From stories, we learn what it means to be human. From stories, we live the prayers and dreams of our ancestors.

While storytelling is a pivotal part of humanity, it also enables communities to maintain rhetorical sovereignty, in which we tell our stories, our histories, in our own words and according to our own terms. For too long, Diné stories have been told by non-Diné writers and academics who become “authorities” in Diné culture and worldview. To dismantle a people, the colonizer must rob them of their power by taking their voice. A BFA in creative writing would help to strengthen our communities by giving our students, our people, the necessary tools and outlook to tell our own stories.

Diné College has always recognized the value in storytelling and literary culture. In its earlier years, Diné College ran its own press known as Navajo Community College Press, which published phenomenal Diné works like poetry collections from Della Frank and Roberta Joe. Navajo Community College Press was essential in producing Diné cultural textbooks and books of poetry and stories. Considering this history, a BFA in creative writing would be a perfect fit at Diné College and would be important for the continued growth of literary culture and storytelling on the Diné Nation. I strongly support this program and I am willing to help it come to fruition and to grow in any way that I can.

In k'é,

Manny Loley  
Director, Emerging Diné Writers' Institute  
Ph.D. Candidate in English and literary arts, University of Denver  
Founding Member, Saad Bee Hózhó: Diné Writers' Collective  
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November 12, 2020

Board of Regents & Academic Leadership  
Diné College  
1 Circle Drive  
Tsaile, AZ 86556

Dear Board of Regents & Academic Leadership,

I am writing this letter in support of the creation of a BFA degree with an emphasis in Creative Writing at Diné College. I fully support this effort. As the Navajo Nation continues to affirm its relationship with the United States, the greater the importance of our stories and narratives. Teaching Diné to embrace and utilize the craft of writing as an element of sovereignty is crucial to language revitalization, eliminating cultural frauds and re-claiming antagonistic spaces that have historically limited our input as tribal nations.

Currently, there are dozens of Diné writers forging paths in academia, journalism, art, and teaching. Many of them are also publishing their writing in journals, anthologies, and single-author books. More importantly a significant number of Diné writers are receiving national awards in the literary field. The timing is ideal to harness the foundational and current writing from Diné. In fact, I am one of four editors of an anthology titled, *The Diné Reader: An Anthology of Navajo Literature* forthcoming in the spring 2021 by the University of Arizona Press. There are over 30 Diné writers included in this highly anticipated book. That volume is a wonderful example of the potential works to be expected from the creation of a BFA, Creative Writing degree.

Additionally, there are more than enough Diné writers capable of teaching. Many of us also have experience teaching composition, rhetoric, and academic research. I am honored and humbled to part of the current Diné writers shaping change in the literary field. I have two poetry books published by the University of Arizona Press and have numerous other works published in journals and anthologies. I am also part of the Diné writers collective, Saad Bee Hózhó. I have taught workshops at the Emerging Diné Writers' Institute (EDWI) held annually each summer for the last few years. Once again, I emphasize the timing is ideal. A program with a Creative Writing emphasis will be received and supported.

I give this initiative my full support and will make myself available to further comment if required. I can be reached at [esther.belin@iaia.edu](mailto:esther.belin@iaia.edu).

Ahxéhee'.

In belief of the future of Diné literary arts,

Esther Belin, Faculty Mentor, IAIA MFA Creative Writing  
[www.estherbelin.com](http://www.estherbelin.com)  
Enrolled citizen of the Navajo Nation



## College of Letters & Science

*Department of English*

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November 25, 2020

Diné College Board of Regents & Academic Leadership  
1 Circle Drive  
Tsaile, AZ 86556

Dear Board of Regents:


Allow me to introduce myself. I am an Anishinaabe writer from White Earth Reservation and a Professor, teaching at both the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the Institute of American Indian Arts MFA program in Creative Writing. I am a past Wisconsin Poet Laureate and the Founding Director of In-na-Po, Indigenous Nations Poets, a national organization devoted to mentoring emerging writers, cultivating Indigenous literatures and poetics, supporting tribal languages and sovereignty, and raising the visibility of all Native writers. I am also among the many Indigenous writers and scholars who admire the long-standing contributions Navajo Community College, now Diné College, has already made to the field of Creative Writing. Past and present faculty include luminaries in the field such as Anna Lee Walters and Rex Lee Jim, as well as contemporary prize-winning writers Orlando White, and Jake Skeets. I am writing today to express my support for the proposal to establish a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Creative Writing at your institution. Establishing such a BFA degree will create a pipeline for the mentoring of another generation of fine writers, but doing so in an academic setting that simultaneously emphasizes tribal values.

The proposed degree, with a combination of attention to craft and attention to lifeways, will allow Diné College to graduate BFA students with a unique combination of skills and knowledge. Prepared to work in the private sector in jobs from publishing to web development,

they will also have the background to contribute to the work of their own or other tribal nations in a variety of ways. Of course, the portfolio of work they produce that makes them candidates for internships and jobs in writing, editing, and publishing, also makes them sought-after candidates for Creative Writing MFA and Ph.D. programs.

As an institution with a fifty-plus year tradition of excellence, a history as well in publishing through the Diné College Press, Diné College seems ideally suited to take this step and build a powerful BFA program for Indigenous writers. I encourage you to pursue this direction—I will look forward to the contributions of its students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kimberly M. Blaeser".

*Kimberly M. Blaeser, PhD  
Professor  
Department of English  
& Program in American Indian Studies  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
kblaeser@uwm.edu*

*MFA Faculty, Institute of American Indian Arts*

*Founding Director, In-Na-Po, Indigenous Nations Poets*

*Wisconsin Poet Laureate, 2015-2016*

<http://www.kblaeser.org>

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