

American Indian Programs
Diversity and Inclusion Report
2015

Statement of Purpose

The American Indian community at Virginia Tech constitutes one of the most underrepresented groups on campus. The nascent American Indian caucus strives to eradicate those obstacles that inhibit a welcoming climate for indigenous peoples, and to foster a sense of community and inclusion for American Indians without promoting exclusion. This includes creating and sustaining venues and organizations where American Indians can come together as a group and celebrate their shared experiences and differences, while advancing a rigorous program to educate the public on the value and contributions of indigenous cultures in all realms of knowledge and experience. The American Indian caucus also strives to build and strengthen ties between the university and its various academic and engagement units, and indigenous communities on a regional and national scale.

Demographic Data

The number of students identifying as American Indian/Alaskan Native has varied from a high of 99 undergraduate and graduate students in 2007 to a current low of 41 students in 2014-15. American Indian/Alaskan Natives currently comprise 0.2% of the undergraduate population and 0.1% of the graduate population.

In 2014-15, there were 3,860 full-time faculty at Virginia Tech. Of these, 8 (0.2%) were American Indian/Alaskan Native. The breakdown of faculty type is as follows:

2014-15 Virginia Tech Faculty	All Races/Ethnicities	Number of American Indian/Alaskan Native	Percentage of American Indian/Alaskan Native
Full professors (tenured)	573	1	0.2%
Associate professors (tenured)	513	3	0.6%
Assistant professors (tenure track)	338	2	0.6%
Non-tenure track instructional	341	0	0.0%
Research	688	1	0.1%
Administration/Professional	1407	1	0.1%

In 2014-15, there were 3,467 full time staff at Virginia Tech. Of these, 12 (0.3%) were American Indian/Alaskan Native. This number has ranged with a high in 2002 of 20 to its current low of 12.

Review of Past Year's Initiatives

The American Indian community at Virginia Tech has historically been reliant on the American Indian Studies program for both outreach and campus programming. While funding and logistical support has come from multicultural affairs during American Indian Heritage Month,

campus programming and outreach to tribes have become necessarily interrelated and intertwined with two major initiatives:

- 1) The Virginia Indian Nations Summit on Higher Education (VINSHE)—an annual gathering of university faculty, students, engagement officers, and representatives from Virginia’s 11 state-recognized tribes. Since 2004, UVA has been a partner in this initiative, which strives to determine how our institutions can both serve tribal communities through recruitment and through other outreach and research initiatives.
- 2) The Virginia Indian Pre-College Outreach Initiative (VIPCOI) - a mentoring program for Virginia Indian youth in grades 8-12 designed to treat education as a holistic endeavor. While this has been a viable college recruitment tool we strive to include community knowledge keepers—notably, elders—so that the youth will realize the legitimacy of their own culture and inherent knowledge, and apply their education to community capacity-building.

Accordingly, all of our major public events during the past academic year were orchestrated in conjunction with these events as follows:

- 1) 1491s—an American Indian comedy team, visited campus in November 2014 and provided the feature event for American Indian Heritage Month. During their visit, they spent the day conducting an informal “day camp” for American Indian youth and their families as a fall visitation activity for VIPCOI.
- 2) Spring Pow wow at UVA—as part of our VIPCOI partnership with that institution, we supported youth activities for this event and sent representatives to answer questions pertaining to Virginia Tech.
- 3) Lecture by Dr. Henrietta Mann, president of Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal College, and Southern Cheyenne Sundance Elder. Dr. Mann is widely regarded as the “Mother of modern Indian education,” and agreed to provide a keynote address for VINSHE.
- 4) Establishment of a chapter of the Society for the Advancement of Chicano/Hispanic and Native Americans in Science (SACHNAS). This prominent organization will bolster positive national and international notoriety for our university and will open a multitude of opportunities for students.

Initiatives for Present Academic Year

- 1) Feature event around Native American Author Sherman Alexie. Alexie will be at Virginia Tech on November 4 for a reading at the Center for the Arts. We are organizing a VIPCOI visitation and dialogue between Alexie and Virginia Indian youth. We are also curating a visual display on Virginia Indians at the Center for the Arts during Alexie’s visit.
- 2) Feature event with former American Indian Movement leader Dennis Banks. We have a unique opportunity to bring Mr. Banks to campus in October during the first half of American Indian Heritage Month. Mr. Banks’ experiences as an activist, coupled with his contemporary initiatives to promote food sovereignty and sustainability in indigenous communities, will provide a timely motivating force as we seek to grow our student organizations and programs.

- 3) Restructuring VINSHE. We are cooperating with UVA and tribal organizations in the state to reorganize VINSHE as a tribally-controlled summit. We hope to hold the 2016 summit in a location central to all tribes, such as Virginia Tech's Richmond center.
- 4) Work with VT administration and student support networks to establish a uniform strategy for American Indian recruitment, retention, and outreach. This includes hosting a regular forum to educate faculty on indigenous issues (how to teach about American Indians, how to establish research or other relationships with indigenous communities, and so forth), and creating spaces on campus where American Indians are comfortable.
- 5) Direct more intensive focus on American Indian student, faculty, and staff recruitment and retention. Given Virginia Tech's status as a Land Grant and Research One institution, this should be a self-evident goal.

Submitted on behalf of the American Indian Caucus by

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