**COMMISSION FOR NATIVE AMERICANS**

**Thursday November 21, 2019**

2:30pm-3:30pm

NAU Native American Cultural Center

Pattea Conference Room A/B

Minutes

Attendees: (add from sign-in sheet)

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed attendees and had them introduce themselves. The Chair’s motion to amend the agenda to include Delsey Benally as a guest speaker in Section III was approved.

1. **Report from Vice President Hamill**

Vice President Hamill provided an update on the work of the Native American Advisory Board, outlined Goal 3 of the University Strategic Plan, and discussed the efforts needed to increase retention and graduation of Native American students from NAU. He stressed that it will take focus by commissioners and everyone in the NAU community to support student success in meaningful ways,

The Chair added that Native American students are persistent over time and overcome financial challenges to graduate and asked that commissioners think about how best to assist these students.

1. **Guests – Tinia Witherspoon and Delsey Benally**

Tinia Witherspoon presented on challenges faced by indigenous students, depression, suicide rates, the importance of culture and holistic thinking and solutions for meeting students’ needs. She described issues in one academic area as examples and stressed the importance of cultural competence in understanding and making room for cultural and family priorities in students’ lives, including the need to return home for family and cultural obligations. The question was asked as to how NAU can be a native serving institution without culturally competent policies and practices, including academic policies and practices, which address the needs of native students to meet family and cultural obligations. She complimented assistance received through the NACC.

Delsey Benally presented on the need for and obstacles to integrating the indigenous experience into Clinical Psychology curriculum. In response to requests, she heard that it is difficult to find space in the curriculum for licensed practitioners and that it is not a priority. In contrast, she spoke about opportunities for partnerships with Applied Indigenous Studies and that Dine College has a Psychology program that integrates culture in the curriculum. She pointed out that micro aggressions exist in class and in terms of dismissing the need and importance of a culturally competent curriculum.

Both speakers spoke about assimilation and that the current climate cuts students off from their homes, values and traditions. The idea of normalization and “normal schools” was mentioned as an example of the current curriculum.

1. **New Faculty Notification Policy and Impact on Native Students- Karen**

The Chair raised the prospect of inviting the new Dean of Students to speak to the Commission about the Office of the Dean of Students’ (ODS) process for considering medical and other excuses for students who miss class due to medical, family, and cultural obligations. (Previously referred to as “classes missed memos.”) The wording of a current ODS explanatory document is not sensitive to the needs of indigenous students and should be reworded. AVP Priscilla Mills of Equity and Access commented that the criteria used by ODS to decide whether to write a classes missed memo had changed, but students are still permitted to make requests directly to faculty. Under current policy, granting assistance to students who miss class is discretionary with the exception of disability and religious accommodations and institutional excuses.

1. **Formation of subcommittees—Continued**

Current subcommittees include Education and Outreach, Events, and Recruitment and Retention.

1. **Updates from subcommittees**

This was deferred.

1. **New commission logo and update of website? See above**

This was deferred.

1. **Set dates and times for Spring meeting**

Meetings will be 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm instead of 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm due to the commission workload.

1. **News from commissioners**

This was deferred.

1. **Update/announcements from commissioners**

This was deferred.

1. **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm.