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PERCEPTIONS OF AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS OF THEIR EXPERIENCES AND FACTORS RELATED TO RETENTION IN SELECTED INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

by

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Bachelor of Arts, Bemidji State University, 1977
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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

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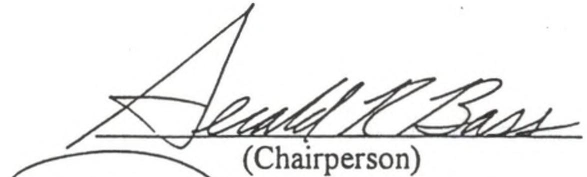
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Grand Forks, North Dakota
May
1999

This dissertation, submitted by Donald R. Day in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.



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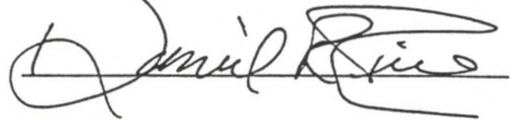

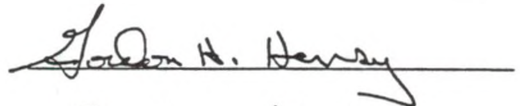

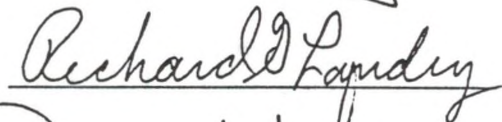

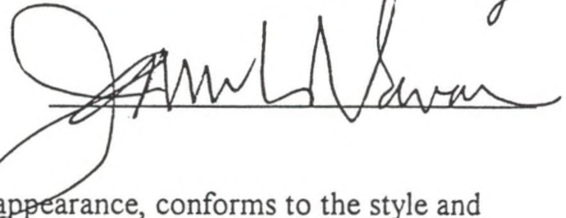

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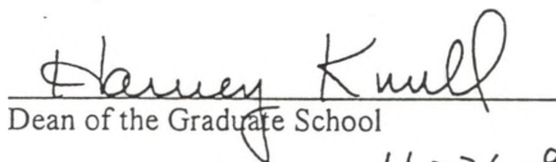

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of American Indian students regarding higher education and to examine factors that contribute to or create obstacles to their retention and graduation. The sample of American Indian students was selected from five Upper Midwest institutions of higher education and was stratified by age and by gender. A total of 100 students participated in the study, with 20 from each institution representing equal numbers of traditional age females (18-24 years of age), traditional age males, females older than average (25 years of age or older), and males older than average.

All five post-secondary schools selected for this study had support programs designed to assist the American Indian student populations on their respective campuses. The American Indian support program staff at each institution assisted in this research by identifying the members of the sample and by distributing and collecting the survey instrument. Focus groups were conducted with selected members of the sample to elicit additional perceptions on retention factors.

Findings of the data analysis supported the following conclusions. American Indian students who are older than average were perceived to have more obstacles to overcome to matriculate successfully in higher education. This was particularly true for the older than average female students. Traditional age female American Indian students were perceived to be better prepared for post-secondary education than their male counterparts

and their older female counterparts and also to face fewer obstacles to retention and graduation. Finally, it was concluded that American Indian students do not perceive themselves as being comfortable attending post-secondary schools, in particular when such action is considered from a cultural perspective.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

American Indians have a long history of attendance at colleges and universities in the United States. In 1655, an Algonquian Indian named Caleb Cheeshateaumuck graduated from Harvard College. In addition to speaking his native language, Cheeshateaumuck was fluent in English, Latin, and Greek. Cheeshateaumuck not only fulfilled Harvard College's academic requirements, he exceeded them (Wright, 1991). Cheeshateaumuck died of an unknown illness to which he had no immunity shortly after he graduated from Harvard College. According to Wright (1991), Cheeshateaumuck's death was ironic in that it exemplified American Indians' ability to succeed in mainstream educational systems, yet the inability of many American Indians to overcome other barriers that came with European occupation such as diseases, inconsistent and oppressive social policies, cultural intolerance, and racial discrimination.

Throughout the history of the United States, government officials' treatment of American Indians changed often and significantly (Tozer, Violas, & Senese, 1995). At times, government officials treated American Indians with a great deal of respect and tolerance and at other times were brutally intolerant of American Indian lifestyles and culture. Government officials attempted to assimilate American Indians into the mainstream of society by cutting their hair, not allowing them to speak their native language, and indoctrinating them into Christianity. Most government officials believed

American Indians were "under-developed" because they did not attempt to master the natural environment but rather to co-exist with it (Tozer et al., 1995).

The main method used by government officials to assimilate American Indians was the development of government boarding schools (Fries, 1987). The first of many boarding schools in the United States was established in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1879. According to Fries, the general belief most government officials had regarding American Indians at the time was that American Indians were members of a race doomed to extinction, so assimilating them was a justifiable government policy. In 1889, Indian education became regulated by the federal government when the Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs set forth his assimilation policies.

Despite early examples of American Indians completing degrees and experiencing increased access to formal schooling, it was not until the late 1960s that American Indians began entering colleges and universities in significant numbers (Fries, 1987). As cultural diversity and cultural pluralism grew in the 1960s, the United States Congress authorized new and additional funds for Indian education programs and Indian retention initiatives. Although Arizona State University began offering courses in American Indian culture in 1954, few post-secondary schools increased their efforts to recruit American Indians to their campuses until the 1970s. It was during the 1990s that many post-secondary schools established undergraduate programs especially designed for American Indian students (Guyette & Heth, 1985).

American Indians began attending colleges and universities for a variety of reasons, most notably because they realized that education was a vehicle capable of

transcending them out of the poor social and economic conditions in which many of them lived. Some American Indians entered post-secondary schools because grants and loans became available through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Two major pieces of legislation passed in the 1970s that helped fuel American Indians' desire to enter higher education were the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (P.L. 93-638) and the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-471). Tribal colleges were a direct response to the unsuccessful educational experiences of American Indians in the public post-secondary school systems (Wright, 1991). For all practical purposes, American Indian attendance at post-secondary institutions in large numbers is a relatively recent phenomenon dating back only to the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The retention and graduation rates of American Indian students in post-secondary schools have been poor, and the solutions to solve those retention problems complex. The reported drop-out rates for American Indian students in post-secondary schools vary from study to study. Wright (1985) reported the drop-out figure to be 61.4%; Wells (1989) put the drop-out rate at 62.7%; Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) estimated the American Indian student drop-out figure at 85%; Hoover and Jacobs (1992) believed the drop-out rate to be 75%; and Benjamin, Chambers, and Reiterman (1993) stated that the American Indian student drop-out rate was 84%. These drop-out figures are alarmingly high and reflect the fact that only 9.3% of all American Indians 25 years of age and older completed a college degree compared to 20.3% of all such persons in the United States (Dingman, Mroczka, & Brady, 1995).

Because American Indians have often been ostracized for speaking their native languages and have experienced discrimination because of their culture, they have often resisted formal educational experiences (Benjamin et al., 1993). Some educators believe that American Indians enter colleges and universities with noticeable deficiencies in verbal and language skills. Since many teachers equate English speaking ability with intelligence, many American Indian students are immediately labeled "dumb" because they do not speak fluent English. Those teachers do not realize that many American Indian students come from families in which the parents are bilingual and have different world views. Even though American Indian students may not actually speak two languages, their parents' bilingual pronunciations impact how the American Indian students verbalize themselves. When American Indian students' cultural base, core values and traditions are not recognized and not respected, post-secondary schools seem impersonal, intimidating, and outright hostile (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

Nearly every research article on why American Indian student retention rates are poor at the post-secondary level contains a report that students were academically unprepared for the rigors of post-secondary education classes (Aitken & Falk, 1983; Hoover & Jacobs, 1992; Mingle & Rodriguez, 1990; Rendon & Nora, 1998). Inadequate financial aid is another major reason cited to explain why American Indian students drop out of school before graduating (Aitken & Falk, 1983; Guyette & Heth, 1985; Noley, 1991; Wells, 1989). A lack of student-faculty contact was also listed as a significant reason American Indian students dropped out of school (Rendon & Nora, 1988; Tate & Schwartz, 1993; Wright, 1991). Other factors contributing to high American Indian

student drop-out rates included unsupportive institutional climates (Noley, 1991; Wright, 1991) and a lack of adequate child care services (Aitken & Falk, 1983; Layton, Blaine, & Rokusek, 1990).

American Indian and non-American Indian educators have agreed that being academically prepared for college is a key factor if American Indian students are to be successful at the post-secondary level (Benjamin, Chambers, & Stephens, 1989; Guyette & Heth, 1985; Hoover & Jacobs, 1992). When students have a solid academic high school knowledge base, succeeding on the post-secondary level is much easier because remedial education is not necessary. If students do not have solid academic backgrounds in the basic academic subject areas of math, science, history, geography, and English in high school, then they will need to "catch up" before they can compete on the post-secondary level.

American Indian students who have maintained caring relationships with significant others such as family, friends, institutional faculty, and support staff have tended to graduate more often than students who do not have these relationships (Aitken & Falk, 1983; Layton et al., 1990; Noley, 1991; Steward, 1993). On the other hand, students who do not have such relationships with family, friends, and institutional employees often do not graduate from college.

Statement of the Problem

The retention and graduation rates of American Indian students in post-secondary schools are poor relative to their Anglo-student counterparts. These low retention and graduation rates help perpetuate a "cycle of poverty" that plagues American Indians

today. Without a significant population of well-educated leaders, American Indian people and the communities where they live will continue to incur lower rates of professional, political, and economic prosperity than those enjoyed by other people in American society.

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of American Indian students regarding higher education and to examine factors that have positive or negative effects on the retention and graduation rates of American Indian students. To help identify factors that contribute positively to or constitute barriers to the retention and graduation rates of American Indian students in post-secondary schools, 20 current American Indian students from each of five participating institutions of higher education were surveyed to gain their insights on student retention issues. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of American Indian students regarding their experiences in selected institutions of higher education?
2. Are there differences in the perceptions of American Indian students according to gender and/or age?
3. What are the perceptions of American Indian students regarding reasons why American Indian students might drop-out of college?
4. What are the perceptions of American Indian students regarding factors that contribute to American Indian students graduating from college?

Significance

This is an important study because faculty, staff, and administrators who read this study should have a better understanding of why American Indian students are successful or not successful in post-secondary schools. After careful review of this study, individuals responsible for the support and advisement of American Indian students should be able to develop more effective retention programs for the students for whom they are responsible. More effective American Indian student retention programs will not only increase American Indian students' retention rates but will help faculty and staff better serve American Indian students and ultimately will contribute to a healthier cultural, scientific, and economic society.

Limitations

1. The study was limited to a sample of American Indian students enrolled at only five institutions: the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks; Bemidji (MN) State University; University of Minnesota – Duluth; Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN; and the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire. All participating institutions are four-year, baccalaureate degree granting institutions. No two-year community colleges, technical colleges or tribal colleges were included in the study.
2. The majority of American Indian students attending the five selected post-secondary schools are Ojibwe (Chippewa) Indians. Consequently, generalizations may have limited application to other universities and to American Indian students outside this three-state area.

3. This study included surveys of current students only. The study did not include students who had dropped out or stopped out nor did it include students who had successfully graduated with baccalaureate degrees.

4. The survey instrument used for this study was constructed specifically for this study. Therefore, no reliability and validity data are available from national norms.

5. Only 20 students from each of the five participating post-secondary schools, a total of 100 students, were surveyed.

6. The survey of American Indian students was completed in a single academic Year, 1997-1998.

7. It was assumed that the responses are fair and honest representations of the perceptions of the subjects and that the subjects fairly represent the population.

Definition of Terms

American Indian: This term is used throughout the study to describe the ethnicity of aboriginal people in North America, including Eskimo, Aluet, and other Alaskan natives. The term "Native American" will not be used in this study. Although popular, the term is too broad because it may include other cultural groups that are not American Indian, such as the indigenous people of Hawaii. The term "Indian" will not be used in this study because this designation might include East Indians or people indigenous to India. While American Indians can be either full-bloods or mixed-bloods, they must be enrolled in federally recognized tribes.

Anglo-Student: A white student or a non-ethnic minority student.

Cultural: The actions, attitudes, beliefs, and accepted norms within a society. The symbols, behaviors, values and beliefs shared by a human group.

Drop-Out: A student who leaves college before earning a baccalaureate degree. The term "stop-out" has been used by some to describe an individual who leaves college for a period of time but who plans to return eventually to complete a degree. In this study, the distinction is not applied and the term "drop-out" is used to describe all who leave the college environment before graduation.

Ethnic minority: Persons who share common racial, national, religious, linguistic, and/or cultural heritages distinct from those of America's white, majority population.

Graduate: A person who has successfully been retained through post-secondary school and has earned a baccalaureate degree.

Non-ethnic minority: Persons who are not members of an ethnic minority.

Retention: A student being successfully retained in a post-secondary school until he/she graduates with a baccalaureate degree.

Student Older Than Average: A student who is 25 years of age or older.

Traditional-Age Student: A student who is 18-24 years of age.

Summary

The retention and graduation rates of American Indian students in post-secondary schools are poor relative to their Anglo-student counterparts. The purpose of this study was to identify perceptions of American Indian students and to examine factors that contribute to or construct barriers to the retention and graduation rates of American Indian students on the post-secondary level. This study is important because it will assist

faculty, staff, and administrators in helping American Indian students successfully matriculate and graduate from college. This study was limited in scope to five post-secondary schools in North Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin; was focused only on current students; and utilized a survey instrument constructed specifically for this study.

Chapter II of this study contains the results of a review of the literature regarding American Indian students with particular focus on retention and graduation factors. While various pieces of the literature originated throughout the United States, a more specific focus was on the American Indian student population in North Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Chapter III is used to describe the research design of the study including the population and sample, survey instrument, collection of data, and the data analysis. Chapter IV is focused on the presentation of the data collected for the study and is organized according to the research questions. Chapter V of this study includes a summary, conclusions, recommendations, and a commentary.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter contains a summary of information identified in a review of literature pertinent to the topic of this study. The first portion of this chapter is used to present a chronological, historical review of American Indian education. The education of American Indian high school students is the subject of the second segment. The third portion of the chapter is focused on American Indian students and higher education. The final segment contains reviews of literature on factors which contribute, first, to American Indians dropping out of higher education institutions and then to the retention of American Indian students.

American Indian Education

American Indian education is a broad term frequently used by educators in describing the process of "educating" American Indian people. American Indian education is most often thought of in the context of formal programs, standard curriculums, state and national standards, certified teachers, and so forth. The American Indian Science & Engineering Society (1989) reported that American Indians used the terms "Indian wisdom" or "Indian learning" because they viewed education as the accumulated knowledge and traditions of Indian people. Many American Indian people have world views that are different than Anglo world views. As an example, Anglos see things in very linear and logical processions, whereas American Indians see things from

holistic viewpoints where events, times, and places are all intertwined. For many American Indian people, it is more important to know what transpired at an event than details of when the actual event occurred.

In the book Against the Tide of American History: The Story of the Mille Lacs Anishinabe, Buffalohead (1985) indicated that, although American Indians no longer live as their ancestors did, they are people who have kept their tribal cultures, traditions, and languages at the heart of their existence. American Indian people combine their own rich cultures with the cultures of the larger society which surrounds them. According to the tribe, American Indian culture, traditions, and languages literally transcend present-day society. The American Indian Science & Engineering Society (1989) reported that most American Indian people believe that their cultures, traditions, and languages are sources of great strength to them and that these attributes will provide them with the strength and wisdom to survive and prosper in the modern, multicultural world.

This portion of the review of literature contains an overview of American Indian education. It follows a chronology, beginning with pre-European contact and ending with events related to self-determination.

Pre-European Contact

In a report by the Quality Education for Minorities Project (1990), the authors stated that, when Europeans first came into contact with American Indians, the American Indians had a variety of economic systems, religions, languages, traditions, and cultures. American Indians ranged from small hunting and gathering groups to large political entities such as the Iroquois Confederacy. Herring (1989) stated that traditional

European families were nuclear in nature in that there was a husband, a wife, and their children, whereas American Indian families were structurally open and assumed a village-type quality.

American Indians did not have a written language prior to European contact. Before Europeans arrived in what is now the United States of America, American Indians educated their children in an oral tradition based on tribal culture (Fries, 1987). Oral stories and legends were the primary means of guiding American Indian children into adulthood. Mothers taught their daughters the roles and duties of females, fathers taught their sons the roles and duties of males, and the elders supplemented the parents' traditional teachings. The Quality Education for Minorities Project (1990) and Garrett and Garrett (1994) stated that American Indians educated their children at home and through a larger kinship system. Although this method of schooling may appear to be simple, it was all that was needed to prosper and to be content in the lifestyle that American Indians chose, which was to live in harmony with nature (Banks & Neisworth, 1995). Skinner (1991) wrote that spirituality permeated not only ceremony and traditional rituals, but the everyday life of American Indian people. According to the American Indian Science & Engineering Society (1989), Chief Seattle of the Suquamish and Duwamish tribes stated in 1853: "Our religion is the traditions of our ancestors – the dreams of our old men, given to them in the solemn hours of the night by the great spirit; and the visions of our sachems, and it is written in the hearts of our people." (p. 8). Traditional Indian education or learning encouraged children to refrain from asking questions (Banks & Neisworth, 1995). Instead of asking questions, children were to

watch, listen and wait until the answer came to them. This method of learning has been viewed as an integral component of American Indian philosophy and spirituality. It is practiced in the home, yet runs counter to the "trial and error" method of learning which is widely accepted and encouraged in contemporary American education.

Missionaries

The history of American Indians is fundamentally different than that of the first white colonists and other groups that now comprise the rest of the population of the United States. White colonists and other groups migrated voluntarily, and in most cases eagerly, in search of land and opportunities (Scott, 1986). American Indian people believe they have always been here. American Indian people often refer to North America as "Turtle Island" (Aitken, 1988). Because American Indians were conquered by white colonists and other willing immigrants, their cultures and ways of life were suspended in time creating regions of refuge within the United States that still exist today (Scott, 1986).

When Europeans first arrived in North America and made initial contact with American Indians, they gave little consideration to aboriginal cultures, heritages, or lifestyles. From the European perspective, cultures that were different from their own were simply inferior (Friesen, 1993). When Europeans first arrived in the New World, their intention towards the aboriginal inhabitants was a quick takeover of their land and resources or the annihilation of them as a people (Adams, 1988). The two main conflicting views Europeans had regarding American Indians during initial contacts were (1) American Indians were a race doomed to extinction because they could not or would

not adapt to an advanced European lifestyle, and (2) American Indians were simply a product of their environment and would assimilate European-American values if they had enough opportunities to be exposed to the "superior" influences of white society (Skinner, 1991). Because most Europeans were not in favor of exterminating American Indians, the government leaders of each country that occupied the New World decided that civilizing and Christianizing American Indians were the more appropriate means by which to deal with American Indians (Tippeconnic, 1991).

The primary purpose of mission schools was to "Christianize" American Indians into becoming "American" (Quality Education for Minorities Project, 1990; Tippeconnic, 1991). As early as the late 1500s, evangelical missionaries tried to establish schools especially designed for American Indians (Fries, 1987). Evangelical missionaries and those of other religious denominations hoped that, through education, some American Indians would accept the Christian faith and then work to convert other American Indian people into Christianity (Boyer, 1989). Many federal policymakers supported the belief that, unless American Indians would convert to Christianity and acquire European-American values, white and Indian cultures would forever be incompatible (Scott, 1986). Missionary schools have been cited as the main means used to eliminate American Indian cultures so that the assimilation of American Indians into the larger society would take place more efficiently (Ambler, 1997; Wollock, 1997).

East Indian School was established in 1621 in James City, Virginia, and included a group of American Indians from a nearby tribe (Boyer, 1989). Harvard, Dartmouth, and William and Mary were among institutions which accepted American Indians as

students in the 1600s and 1700s (Boyer, 1989). Harvard, Dartmouth, and William and Mary all included an American Indian mission statement in their original charters (Wright, 1991). Eleazar Wheelock, a Congregational minister, founded Dartmouth College in 1769 expressly for the purpose of educating American Indian youth (Wright & Tierney, 1991). The College of New Jersey, now called Princeton University, admitted American Indians in the 1700s (Wright & Tierney, 1991). Bacone College was founded in 1880 by Baptists with the overall mission to train American Indians to enter the clergy (Wright, 1991).

Attempting to assimilate American Indians into the larger society by using education as a tool was largely unsuccessful. For the most part, American Indians resisted missionary efforts and clung to their traditional ways of life (Wright, 1991). Boyer (1989) stated that American Indians who demonstrated their "Indianness" in the larger society were criticized by Anglo-Americans because they had not renounced their Indian heritage and had not adopted European lifestyles. However, American Indians who acquired European lifestyles were not accepted back into their tribal groups because they were thought of as assimilated. The American Indian Science & Engineering Society (1989) published an article that recounted a meeting between American Indians and government officials regarding higher education. The Chiefs of the Six Nations at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, stated to federal officials in 1744 that

> several of our young people were formally brought up at the colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your sciences; but when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods... neither fit for hunters, warriors, nor counselors, they were totally good for nothing. (p. 1)

The Quality Education for Minorities Project (1990) listed the following reasons why the educational systems in the United States have historically and continuously failed the majority of American Indians attempting to matriculate through the educational systems: (1) the language and culture of the American Indians were never valued, (2) the needs of American Indian communities were not taken into consideration, (3) the school systems failed to acknowledge tribal sovereignty or self-determination, and (4) relocating American Indian children from their homes to far-away schools was seen as inhumane (p. 28).

Boarding Schools

When the federal government began dominating the education of American Indians in the late 1800s, the need for missionary schools was significantly reduced (Wright, 1991). The main objective of federal policymakers was to convert American Indians into the ideal of the self-reliant American individual (Adams, 1988). Policymakers used federal boarding schools in attempts to assimilate American Indians into the mainstream of American society (Ambler, 1997; Wright, 1991). Boarding schools were created to separate American Indian children from their parents and their "inferior" cultures (Boyer, 1989). Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States from 1801-1809, reflected the view most European-Americans had regarding American Indians, that the American Indians were equal in mind and body to Europeans, but that their cultures were vastly inferior (Tozer et al., 1995). In an article published by the Harvard Educational Review regarding federal policy makers' mindset about American Indians in the late 19th century, Adams (1988) wrote that the institution of boarding

schools implied that American Indians were at the bottom of the civilization ladder, a ladder that could be climbed only if the American Indians would renounce their inferior cultures. Adams went on to note that boarding schools were a source of both humiliation and hope for American Indian people.

In both the 19th and 20th centuries, the federal government implemented a forced assimilation policy by which young American Indian boys and girls were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to boarding schools across the country (Tippeconnic, 1991). By 1900, the federal government had created 147 reservation day schools, 81 reservation boarding schools, and 25 off-reservation boarding schools (Adams, 1988). The first off-reservation boarding school was established at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1879 (Wright, 1991). Assimilation in those schools took two major forms: industrial training and the inculcation of values (Adams, 1988). Boarding schools were used in attempts to eliminate American Indian cultures (Ambler, 1997). Young American Indian boys and girls sometimes were transported great distances from their homes to institutions that de-emphasized American Indian culture and emphasized individualism, farming, and reading and writing in English (Tippeconnic, 1991). Half of each student's day in boarding school was devoted to some form of manual or industrial training (Adams, 1988). From both a historical and contemporary perspective, education has been viewed by most people as a means to a better way of life and a means out of poverty. For American Indian people, however, education has been viewed as a weapon to be used against them, a weapon designed to destroy their cultures, languages, heritages, and ceremonies (Ambler, 1997).

The Treaty Period

As more and more Europeans arrived in America, the need for land to farm, hunt, and industrialize increased. Most Europeans believed that American Indians, with a population estimated to number approximately three million at the time of the first European contact, did not need such vast amounts of land for themselves (Hodgkinson, 1992). Consequently, the Continental Congress in 1775 declared that "Congress assembled shall have sole and exclusive right and power of . . . regulating the trade and managing all affairs with the Indians" (cited by Jeanotte, 1982). This declaration was the beginning of the "treaty period" between the United States government and American Indian tribes.

Tippeconnic (1991) wrote that the treaty period ran from 1778 to 1871, that approximately 400 treaties were ratified between the federal government and individual tribes, and that 127 of the treaties had provisions that specifically mentioned education. During the treaty period, the federal government claimed all the land that is now the United States of America. According to Day (1989), the treaties between the federal government and the American Indian tribes usually contained some or all of the following provisions the tribes would receive: (1) basic health benefits, (2) basic education benefits, (3) set-aside land called reservations, and (4) certain sovereign and inherent rights to do whatever they wanted on those reservations and to perpetuate their lifestyles and economies through activities such as fishing, spear fishing, hunting, harvesting wild rice, harvesting maple sugar, or creating businesses.

Since the American Indians were not willing to assimilate into American society and the Europeans' need for land was far greater than the federal government's willingness to fund "civilization" programs for American Indians, the treaty period was viewed by most congressional leaders as the quickest route to acquiring large tracts of land for expansion and development (Adams, 1988). Many congressional leaders during the treaty period still believed that American Indians would assimilate into the larger society if their "antiquated" culture and social isolation were removed as barriers (Wollock, 1997).

After the treaty period ended in 1871, the federal government passed numerous Congressional acts and executive orders and the Supreme Court ruled on a variety of cases that reaffirmed the United States government's special relationship with American Indian tribes (Tippeconnic, 1991). This "federal-trust" relationship, although constantly being challenged by conservative anti-treaty organizations, still exists.

Congressional Action

The federal government has always had a great interest in American Indians. This interest, however, was concentrated most on the American Indians' land and the land's natural resources. For this reason, government policymakers passed numerous pieces of legislation to provide American Indian people with certain benefits if they agreed to live on smaller pieces of set-aside lands. These pieces of legislation, and related federal reports, significantly impacted American Indians socially, culturally, and educationally.

As stated earlier, many federal policymakers believed that the most efficient route to assimilate American Indians into the mainstream of American society was through the

education systems. Skinner (1991) cited a House Committee on Appropriations Report from 1818.

> In the present state of our country one of two things seem to be necessary, either that those sons of the forest should be moralized or exterminated... Put into the hands of their children the primer and the hoe, and they will naturally, in time, take hold of the plow. (p. 4)

Skinner went on to note that, to make more efficient the assimilation of American Indians, Congress passed on December 14, 1886, a House Executive Document which forbade the use of any Indian language in American schools. A supplemental report released on December 1, 1889, recommended that "education should seek the disintegration of the tribes. Only English should be allowed to be spoken and only English speaking teachers should be employed in schools" (cited by Skinner, 1991, p. 4).

One of the most important pieces of legislation passed by Congress regarding American Indians was the General Allotment Act of 1887, also known as the Dawes Severalty Act or simply The Dawes Act (Adams, 1988). Although the author of this act, Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts, may have had the best intentions for American Indians when he proposed the legislation, this act turned out to be one of the most damaging pieces of legislation ever inflicted upon American Indians (Adams, 1988). The Dawes Act authorized the federal government to survey Indian lands, to divide them into small tracts, and to assign ownership of those small tracts of land to individual American Indians (Adams, 1988). Adams noted that "the head of each American Indian family would be allocated 160 acres of land, with smaller allotments given to unmarried American Indian women and orphans" (p. 18). With the passage of the Dawes Act, land occupied by American Indians for centuries was broken up and parceled off to individual

American Indians, with the vast remaining amounts of land sold to non-Indian people (Wollock, 1997). Under the provisions of the Dawes Act, American Indians who then owned land would be protected from land-hungry non-Indians by having the title to their lands held by the United States government for 25 years, after which time the title to the land would be given to the individual American Indian landowners (Adams, 1988).

Passage of the Dawes Act of 1887 impacted American Indians in two major ways: American Indians lost the majority of their homelands, and some of the money collected from the sale of the surplus land was used to finance the "education" of American Indian children (Boyer, 1989). The education of American Indian children was conducted through the federal boarding schools where the histories, traditions, cultures, and languages of American Indians were forbidden. Boyer noted that the primary mission of the boarding schools was to assimilate American Indians into the European-American lifestyle and to separate the children from their parents' cultures.

The Meriam Report of 1928 changed the emphasis of American Indian education from one of forced assimilation through federal boarding schools to one of day schools that incorporated a bilingual-bicultural approach (Tippeconnic, 1991). The Meriam Report described the outdated and ineffective teaching methods of the teachers in the federal boarding schools (Fries, 1987). The Meriam Report also emphasized the need for scholarships and loans for American Indians to attend post-secondary schools (Wollock, 1997). The Meriam Report helped to incorporate some humanity and compassion for American Indian children back into their education, although the emphasis was still on "civilizing" the children and teaching them proper English (Tippeconnic, 1991).

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed John Collier as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The Collier administration was significant because he was the first Commissioner of Indian Affairs who was committed to maintaining American Indian cultures, languages, and traditions (Wollock, 1997). Although the assimilation of American Indians through the educational systems was still the order of the day, "the actual extermination of American Indian languages, traditions and cultures was not the policy of the Collier administration" (p. 17).

Two congressional acts in 1934 had far-reaching effects on American Indians attending elementary and secondary schools. The Indian Reorganization Act attempted to give American Indian parents more of a voice in their children's education by modifying the curriculum, by providing teachers with special training in American Indian cultures and traditions so they could more effectively serve them, and by acknowledging the traditional and religious backgrounds of American Indian children (Fries, 1987). The Johnson-O'Malley Act provided federal funds to local public school districts for the education of American Indian children and restricted the compulsory religious training of American Indian children (Fries, 1987; Tippeconnic, 1991).

The Termination Era

The history of the United States is filled with pendulum swings regarding American Indians. At times, government officials wanted American Indians to be fully assimilated into American society where they would become completely acculturated. At other times, government officials appeared to believe that American Indians were uniquely diverse and could add strength to a multicultural country. In the 1950s,

government officials again acted with the belief that American Indians were in the way, that their cultures were inferior, and that the best resolution was to assimilate them as quickly and efficiently as possible into the mainstream of American society (Wollock, 1997). This was reported to be the mentality of many policymakers when Congress passed House Concurrent Resolution 108 and Public Law 83-280 in 1953.

House Concurrent Resolution 108 was a termination policy that made a concerted effort to reverse the achievements of the Collier administration and to return to the policies of the allotment era which were dedicated to destroying Indian reservations (Wollock, 1997). House Concurrent Resolution 108 sought to cancel the federal government's trust responsibility with American Indian tribes as had been specified in most treaties. This period of time highlighted a long history of government officials' actions breaking treaty after treaty with American Indian tribes. With the passage of House Concurrent Resolution 108, Congress terminated its financial assistance to over 100 American Indian tribes and ordered each of those tribes to distribute its land and property to its members and to dissolve its government (Pevar, 1992).

Public Law 83-280 conferred upon certain designated states full criminal and civic jurisdiction over Indian reservations. With the passage of Public Law 83-280, individual states in the country were given the authority to deal with American Indian tribes as their leaders wished rather than having to abide by the federal government's protectionist policies (Pevar, 1992). Historically, state government officials and policymakers had not been supportive of American Indian treaty rights and the special

federal-trust responsibility that the United States government had with American Indian tribes.

Self-Determination

Fortunately for American Indian people, the termination period of the 1950s only lasted about a decade. The 1960s marked the beginning of the "self-determination" period for American Indians. According to Buffalohead (1985), the self-determination period was characterized by two main philosophical viewpoints: (1) the American public began to understand the merits and strengths of a culturally diverse society in which citizens did not all have to be alike and (2) the paths that American Indians choose to pursue should be decided by American Indians themselves, not by federal or state policymakers.

As Americans became more and more tolerant of cultural pluralism in the 1960s, Congress authorized funds for American Indians to attend post-secondary schools (American Indian Science & Engineering Society, 1989). As a result, the 1960s was the first decade in American history during which American Indians attended post-secondary schools in significant numbers. The Higher Education Act of 1965 made it increasingly possible for American Indians and members of other ethnic minorities to attend post-secondary schools and to receive financial aid and to do so on the basis of economic need and not solely on academic merit (Levin & Levin, 1991).

Four major reports were produced in the United States on the condition of American Indian education and each helped to initiate the self-determination period: the Meriam Report of 1928, the Brophy Report in 1966, the Kennedy Report in 1969, and the

Havighurst Report in 1971 (Tippeconnic, 1991). Although the four reports were focused on different aspects of American Indians' economic, social, and educational conditions, in all four reports it was concluded that the condition of American Indian education in the country was poor. In addition to the reports, a part of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society initiative provided for leadership of Indian education to be placed in the hands of American Indians on the local, state, and national levels (Tippeconnic, 1991). Levin and Levin (1991) documented that, in 1968, President Johnson stated: "We must affirm the rights of the first Americans to remain Indians while excercising their rights as Americans. We must affirm their rights to freedom of choice and self-determination" (p. 22).

The self-determination period that started in the 1960s brought American Indian people more directly into control of their own future. A mood of opportunity and optimism emerged in American Indian tribes throughout the country. Boyer (1989) wrote that, for the first time in United States history, many American Indian people believed that they could both be a lawyer and dance in a pow wow. With the philosophy of self-determination came the opportunity for self-control. Most American Indians would no longer settle for being treated like second-rate citizens in public places or in the school systems (Boyer, 1989).

In the early 1970s, many American Indian community members were concerned with the high drop-out and low graduation rates of their children in the public school systems. The concerns American Indian parents had regarding their children's education were not being heard by public school administrators. Consequently, in the early 1970s,

American Indian students walked out of the public schools in Cloquet, Cass Lake, and Onamia, Minnesota, as well as in Hayward, Wisconsin, protesting against the racist and neglectful conditions they had to endure daily at those institutions (Levey, May 29, 1995a). Seven tribally controlled schools located in or adjacent to American Indian reservations in Minnesota and Wisconsin were cited in that article.

Perhaps the most important piece of legislation impacting the education of American Indians was the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (Pevar, 1992). That federal law promoted self-determination and allowed tribes to secure federal funds through the Bureau of Indian Affairs to start Indian controlled schools. Leaders of the resulting tribally controlled schools shifted their emphasis from providing education <u>about</u> American Indian culture to providing education to American Indian students <u>in</u> their culture (Kawagley & Barnhardt, 1997). Levey (1995c) cited the harsh conditions an American Indian woman had to endure in the public school system and how that school system completely failed her. The author retold the story of how that woman remembered being "ignored by teachers, being mocked by groups of white boys who danced around in circles imitating Indians singing, and how much she wanted to not be an American Indian" (p. 1A). The article reported that this was not an isolated case, but rather a common occurrence in many public schools in North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and other states across the country.

The Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978 was a Congressional effort to allow tribes to create and administer their own colleges. The Act was a product of the self-determination period which began in the 1960s. Tribally

controlled colleges were a response to the unsuccessful experiences most American Indian students endured as they attempted to matriculate through American post-secondary schools (Wright & Tierney, 1991). The main philosophy behind the creation of tribally controlled community colleges was to focus on American Indian culture and history and thus enhance a student's sense of self-worth (Rendon & Nora, 1988).

A successful education should provide students with a variety of academic skills, including the ability to reason logically, and should help students to develop a sense of purpose and self-worth and the ability to interact with others (Pertusati, 1988). Tribal colleges were created to accomplish exactly those goals for American Indian and non-Indian students alike. Boyer (1990) wrote that "tribally controlled colleges are providing solutions to problems that have remained unsolved for three centuries. Questions of identity, participation in American society, and self-determination" (p. 29).

The 1960s and 1970s represented a time when American Indians regained control of their social, cultural, economic, and educational futures. The self-determination period and the opportunities associated with the Great Society movement saw American Indians assuming leadership positions at every level of administration that dealt with education (Tippeconnic, 1991). One of the biggest challenges for those and other educational leaders was to create climates on and off campuses which not only tolerated American Indians and other ethnic minorities, but celebrated their unique cultural differences as well (Ebbers & Henry, 1990).

American Indian High School Students

The National Commission on Excellence published a report in 1983 entitled "A Nation at Risk." The members of the Commission clearly articulated their concern that the American public had "lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling and the high expectations needed to obtain them" (p. 7). The report was seen as a wake-up call to educators and legislative policymakers that the United States was falling significantly behind other industrialized countries in adequately educating their children. The Commission recommended that school districts nationwide increase the requirements for graduation from high school. The Commission recommended also that these new standards should require at least four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of social sciences, three years of natural sciences, and at least one-half year of computer science.

The National Commission on Excellence report revealed to the general public what most American Indian educators knew long before the report was published, that the public education systems in the United States were failing too many ethnic minority children, especially American Indian children. According to "The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac" (1998), the percentage of American Indians who graduated from high school and who had been sophomores in 1992 was 82.2% compared to 95.1% of their Anglo counterparts.

The Indian Nations At-Risk Task Force was chartered by the Department of Education on March 8, 1990. The Task Force was charged with studying the status of education of American Indian children in the United States. In October 1991, the Task

Force established a set of educational goals to guide the improvement of all federal, tribal, private, and public schools that served American Indian students (Indian Nations At-Risk Task Force, 1991). The 10 educational goals recommended by the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force were:

Goal 1: Readiness for School
By the year 2000 all American Indian children will have access to early childhood education programs that provide the language, social, physical, spiritual, and cultural foundations they need to succeed in school and to reach their full potential.

Goal 2: Maintain Native Languages and Culture
By the year 2000 all schools will offer American Indian students the opportunity to maintain and develop their tribal languages and will create a multicultural environment that enhances the many cultures represented in the school.

Goal 3: Literacy
By the year 2000 all American Indian children in school will be literate in the language skills appropriate for their individual levels of development. They will be competent in their English oral, reading, listening, and writing skills.

Goal 4: Student Academic Achievement
By the year 2000 every American Indian student will demonstrate mastery of English, mathematics, science, history, geography, and other challenging academic skills necessary for an educated citizenry.

Goal 5: High School Graduation
By the year 2000 all American Indian students capable of completing high school will graduate. They will demonstrate civic, social, creative, and critical thinking skills necessary for ethical, moral, and responsible citizenship important in modern tribal, national, and world societies.

Goal 6: High Quality Native and Non-Native School Personnel
By the year 2000 the numbers of American Indian educators will double, and the colleges and universities that train the nation's teachers will develop a curriculum that prepares teachers to work effectively with a variety of cultures, including the American Indian cultures, that are served by schools.

Goal 7: Safe and Alcohol-Free and Drug-Free Schools
By the year 2000 every school responsible for educating American Indian students will be free of alcohol and drugs and will provide safe facilities and an environment conducive to learning.

Goal 8: Adult Education and Lifelong Learning
By the year 2000 every American Indian adult will have the opportunity to be literate and to obtain the necessary academic, vocational, and technical skills and knowledge needed to gain meaningful employment and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of tribal and national citizenship.

Goal 9: Restructuring Schools
By the year 2000 schools serving American Indian students will be restructured to effectively meet the academic, cultural, spiritual, and social needs of students for developing strong, healthy, self-sufficient communities.

Goal 10: Parental, Community, and Tribal Partnerships
By the year 2000 every school responsible for educating American Indian students will provide opportunities for American Indian parents and tribal leaders to help plan and evaluate the governance, operation, and performance of their educational programs. (Indian Nations At-Risk Task-Force, 1991, pp. i-ii).

The report of the Indian Nations At-Risk Task Force (1991) brought to light the educational requirements American Indian students need to be successful in the many different school systems across the country. There has been no follow-up study conducted on the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force report and recommendations, so it is not known to what extent schools across the country have implemented the Task Force's recommendations. It is well-documented, however, that American Indian students still lag significantly behind their Anglo-student counterparts academically and in terms of ultimate graduation. As recently as 1996, it was reported that studies indicate that Asian students were the most likely (70.7%) to complete the "New Basics" recommended by the Indian Nations At-Risk Task Force and that American Indian students were the least

likely (49.5%) to complete the New Basics (Mortenson, 1996). Rolo (1998) reported that 80% of the 179 American Indian students in the Minneapolis public school system who took the Annual Eighth Grade Standard Test in Reading failed and that 75% of the 175 American Indian students who took the math test failed.

To help understand why American Indian students perform so poorly in the educational systems across the country, one has to have a basic understanding of the social and economic backgrounds of most American Indians students as they enter the secondary school systems. The poverty rate on American Indian reservations is two and one half times higher than the national average, the unemployment rate on American Indian reservations is one of the highest in the country, the suicide rate in American Indian homes is twice that of other ethnic minority groups, and the death rate from alcohol-related illnesses is five times higher than that of the general population (Levey, 1995b).

Many American Indian students have had just as difficult a time adapting to Anglo-American culture as their parents had when they were in school (Herring, 1990a). Ambler (1997, p. 8) wrote that "most people see education as a ladder out of poverty, but for American Indian people it is often seen as a vehicle to be used against them" by its failure to recognize and include American Indian culture. Cleary & Peacock, (1998) listed six reasons why American Indian students were not successful in high school: (1) lack of parental support; (2) different priorities in life; (3) a curriculum that is not relevant to students' lives or foreseeable futures; (4) a dialect that causes them difficulty

with standard English; (5) discomfort in competitive systems; and (6) the need to be somewhat accomplished before performance.

The lack of involvement by American Indian parents in their children's education has been well documented (Ambler, 1997; Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Levey, 1995). Those articles have related American Indian parents' lack of involvement in their children's education to the parents' bad experiences in the public school systems they attended or to the boarding school experiences they had (Levey, 1995a). An article published in the Duluth News-Tribune (Levey, 1995a) reported that "when most American Indian parents attended school they were fluent in their own culture, language and traditions" (p. 1A). This is not true for their children who were raised on popular culture by their parents who felt uncomfortable with their American Indian identities.

A variety of articles have been published in which authors suggested that the curriculum they are forced to accept is a major reason American Indian students have had such a difficult time succeeding in the secondary school systems (Ambler, 1997; Charles, 1989; Rist, 1991). The people who develop the curriculum from which students learn are sometimes referred to as "the establishment." The establishment is mostly white, male, and of European heritage (Rist, 1991). The curriculum that the establishment uses in most public schools has resulted in American Indian students' ambivalence or even hostility toward schooling and white teachers (Ambler, 1997). The lack of balance and authenticity in the presentation of American Indian culture in the curriculum dramatizes the need for textbook editors and publishers to do a better job of representing American Indians in a more accurate and respectful manner (Charles, 1989).

When American Indian history is presented in a negative manner by school teachers, some American Indian students will internalize the negative aspects of those historical teachings, including negative myths and beliefs about their own history (Herring, 1990b). Rist (1991) cited the statement by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Humanities Professor at City University of New York, that the standard curriculums used in the schools across the country should be accurate and objective, but not necessarily made to make students feel good about themselves. Professor Schlesinger's opinion was countered by Elizabeth Parent, Professor of Native American Studies at San Francisco State University, who was quoted to the effect that teaching about the culture and history of a people will raise the self-esteem and achievement of ethnic minority students (cited by Rist, 1991). "You can't tell me having women heroes, for example, doesn't boost the self-esteem of girls, and if it doesn't matter one way or the other, why not just go ahead and include it?" (p. 39).

Self-concept and self-esteem are formed on past judgments, perceptions, and feedback from significant others. Since having high and low self-concepts and self-esteem are partially self-maintaining, it is important that ethnic minority students have high self-concepts and high self-esteem (Gerardi, 1990). An accurate and relevant curriculum will not only improve an ethnic minority student's self concept and self-esteem, it will make the student more curious, a vital component to being a successful student (Cleary & Peacock, 1998).

In his book <u>Closing of the American Mind</u>, Bloom (1987) suggested that American schools and universities should return to the teachings of the great ideas of

Western civilization. In response to Bloom's suggestion, Kunisawa (1988) wrote that, if school and university administrators returned to that mono-cultural format, the country would lose many years of cultural sensitivity advancement and maturity. The great literature and classic music taught in the schools and universities would once again be limited solely to that produced by European authors and artists (Kunisawa, 1988).

Effective strategies for teaching American Indian students should include the complete abolishment of racism, a significant reduction in ethnocentrism, and the daily use of culturally compatible curriculum materials (Rendon, 1993). Programs and initiatives that foster aspirations for American Indian students to attend some type of post-secondary school should come early in an American Indian student's high school experience (Rendon, 1993). Career selection discussions and other types of guidance should be held often between American Indian students and high school counselors, particularly when American Indian students decide to attend a post-secondary school. Teachers as well as counselors should talk with American Indian students about post-secondary school options. "Career exploration has the possibility of bringing students to the deepest sort of self-determination" (Cleary & Peacock, 1998).

American Indians and Higher Education: A Recent Phenomenon

The American Indian Science & Engineering Society (1989) reported that a Mohawk Indian named Dr. Rosa Hill stated in 1930 that "going to school and getting an education are two different things and they do not always happen at the same time" (p. 2). This statement is profound for two reasons: first, those are words of wisdom that can apply to all students everywhere and, second, especially for American Indian students,

the words are a warning that transcends academic learning and are meant to include the students' social and cultural experiences as well as their academic experiences in the public school systems.

With the exception of students from Asian descent, the high school graduation rates of all ethnic minority students are lower than those of their Anglo-student counterparts (Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, 1998). However, entry rates of American Indians into higher education have improved steadily, from 84,000 in 1984 to 131,000 in 1995 (Carter & Wilson, 1997). The United States has an aging population and senior citizens will demand more resources for their care. This means that the United States cannot afford to have members of ethnic minorities who are uneducated and unemployed (Bowker, 1992). Many government and corporate administrators have noted the potential negative effects of undereducated citizens (Astone & Nunez-Womack, 1991). American Indians who graduate from post-secondary schools are much less likely to be economic burdens to society, they will increase the tax base, and they will increase the overall productivity of the state and country (Tijerina & Biemer, 1988). Education provides a vehicle in which ethnic minorities can move their lives from dependence and bondage to independence and freedom (Wright, 1985).

Leaders in institutions of higher education must not only recruit more aggressively for ethnic minority students, but they must also focus their efforts on how to retain those students through graduation once they are on campus. In periods of fiscal shortfalls and economic uncertainties, however, many college administrators consider as

non-essential those programs and initiatives that concentrate on the retention and recruitment of ethnic minorities (Tijerina & Biemer, 1988).

In a paper written by Noley (1991) to foster discussion of issues concerning the recruitment, retention, and training of American Indian students, he wrote that American Indians were underrepresented in institutions of higher education for a variety of reasons that begin on the high school level. These include: (1) there is a lack of scholarships for high school graduates, especially those specifically designated for ethnic minorities (2) literature about post-secondary schools is not as readily available to American Indian high school students as it should be; (3) high school counselors have not encouraged many American Indian high school students to attend post-secondary schools; and (4) there is a lack of programs to bridge the gap between high schools and colleges and to help prepare American Indian students for the rigors of college life.

Rendon (1993) wrote that many colleges and universities were designed by and for privileged people; the curriculum is centered predominantly on European-American culture often excluding the viewpoints of ethnic minorities and women; competition, not collaboration, is stressed in most post-secondary schools; and, when American Indians enter post-secondary schools, they must learn new behaviors and attitudes that are often different from their traditional upbringings. Rendon indicated that this cultural conflict may be a partial explanation of why so many American Indian students hang out together in predominantly white schools. Ethnic clustering occurs when ethnic minority students gather together for social and cultural support. White students sometimes see this as

racial segregation, while ethnic minority students see it as cultural support within a larger, non-supportive institution (Loo & Rolison, 1986).

American Indians have attended institutions of higher education for hundreds of years. However, American Indians attending institutions of higher education in significant numbers is a relatively recent phenomenon. Bacone College, Armstrong Academy, and Santee Norman School were private schools that concentrated on the history and cultures of American Indians in addition to the standard canon of curriculum utilized in the United States. However, there were no schools in the United States in 1900 that were designed to prepare American Indians to enter post-secondary schools (Wollock, 1997). Students at Haskell Indian High School wanted to turn their school into a junior college. The students were not successful in turning the entire school into a junior college but did succeed in creating a junior college program in 1928, graduating its first class of 28 students in 1929. However, the junior college program was abolished in 1932 by administrators in the Bureau of Indian Affairs because they thought it impeded assimilation (Wollock, 1997).

Even though there were no significant nationwide efforts to recruit American Indians into post-secondary schools during the early to mid-1900s, American Indian students were entering colleges and universities in larger numbers every year. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 authorized $250,000 in loans to American Indians to attend college and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs reported that 515 American Indians were attending colleges in the United States in 1934 (Wright & Tierney, 1991).

American Indians who served in World War II were eligible for the GI Bill which provided funds for veterans to attend post-secondary schools. Although there were relatively few American Indians who took advantage of that opportunity, the number of American Indians in post-secondary schools did increase in the 1940s and 1950s. The first efforts coordinated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to assist American Indians in entering post-secondary schools occurred in 1948 when the Bureau allocated $9,390 to 50 American Indian students to attend college (Wright, 1991). This marked the establishment of the federal funded scholarship grant program for American Indians. That scholarship program grew exponentially over the years. By 1955, there were approximately 2,000 American Indians attending post-secondary schools across the country, with many receiving funds from that federal Indian scholarship program (Wollock, 1997). The Minnesota Indian Scholarship Program was created in 1955 when the Minnesota State Legislature allocated $5,000 for American Indian students to attend post-secondary schools (Aitken, 1998). The Minnesota Indian Scholarship Program has grown significantly since then. According to Aitken (1998), Scholarship Director of the Program, approximately 1,000 scholarships were awarded during the 1998-99 academic year with a total value of $1.8 million.

The 1960s was a time of great social and civil unrest in the United States. Ethnic minorities, especially African-American students, protested with demands for more equal treatment in all public places and on many college and university campuses. Many non-ethnic minority students displayed the same types of civil unrest while demonstrating against the Vietnam War. Many ethnic studies programs were created from the campus

unrest of the 1960s when students of all nationalities, and ethnic minorities in particular, demanded more relevant curriculums at their respective institutions (Wright, 1985). The standard curriculum at nearly all campuses and universities up to the 1960s focused almost exclusively on western culture, with ethnic minority cultures rarely mentioned. However, there were a few post-secondary schools in the United States that did offer a more progressive curriculum as it related to ethnic minority students in the 1950s and 1960s. As an example, Arizona State University was the first post-secondary school in the country to offer courses on American Indian culture with the establishment of the first American Indian Studies Department in the United States in 1954 (Fries, 1987).

Since 1954, American Indian Studies programs have been created in many other post-secondary schools within existing departments, as separate departments, or in most cases as an interdisciplinary program (Wright, 1985). It is not uncommon today to have an American Indian Studies program established at a post-secondary school that has a significant American Indian student population. Many post-secondary schools now have American Indian Studies undergraduate minors, majors, and/or graduate degrees, including the University of California – Berkeley, University of California – Los Angeles, University of Arizona, Arizona State University, Oklahoma State University, University of Minnesota, Bemidji State University, and the University of North Dakota.

Originally created as federal boarding schools, the Santa Fe Boarding School became the Institute of American Indian Arts in 1962 and the Haskell Institute became Haskell Junior College in 1965 (Fries, 1987). By 1965, there were nearly 7,000 American Indian students attending post-secondary schools across the country (Wollock,

1997). McNamara (1984) wrote that, "even though there were over 7000 American Indian students attending post-secondary schools by 1966, this represented less than 1% of the American Indian population in the United States" (p. 52). Navaho Community College, established in 1968, was the first American Indian-controlled college in the United States (Dodd & Nelson, 1989). The name of Navaho Community College was changed to Dine' College in 1996. Dine' is what the Navaho originally called themselves (Wollock, 1997). Although the number of American Indians who attend post-secondary schools has been increasing since the beginning of the 20th century, the graduation rates of American Indian students has remained low (Fries, 1987; Wollock, 1997).

President Lyndon Johnson introduced the Great Society Programs in 1965. A part of those initiatives resulted in American Indian people assuming leadership positions in Indian education programs on the local, state, and national levels. Some of the American Indian leaders in Indian education during the 1960s and 1970s from the Upper Great Lakes area included Will Antell, Rosemary Christensen, David Beaulieu, Roger Buffalohead, John Redhorse, Elgie Raymond, and Ruth Myers. These American Indian educators were some of the first to be successful in helping American Indian parents assume some control of their children's education by obtaining positions on school boards; by creating Johnson O'Malley Parent Committees, which controlled funds earmarked for American Indian students; and by creating opportunities for American Indian parents to become much more actively involved with their children's education (Antell, 1998).

During the 1970s, the United States General Accounting Office along with various federally funded task forces and committees issued a variety of reports about American Indian students attending post-secondary schools. Generally, the reports all identified a series of academic, social, cultural, and financial problems American Indian students were encountering while attending post-secondary schools. The reports recommended that the United States Congress attempt to help American Indian students by eliminating those problems in whatever ways they could (Wright, 1991).

As stated earlier, the policy focus of the United States Congress regarding American Indians has had many pendulum swings since the inception of this country. During the 1950s, most Congressional members wanted to terminate American Indian treaties and the sovereign and inherent rights accompanying those treaties. The 1960s and 1970s saw a complete reversal of the termination policies. President Richard Nixon officially ended the American Indian termination policy in 1970 (Wollock, 1997). This was followed by a relatively sustained period of time when leaders in the United States Congress believed in American Indian self-determination and helped to pass a variety of acts to perpetuate American Indian self-determination. Self-determination has been defined as Americans Indians having the power to make decisions about their own future and having the ability to control the financial aspects of those decisions (Antell, 1998). Two particular pieces of legislation were passed by Congress in the 1970s that significantly and positively impacted American Indians in higher education. The first was the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, and the second was the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1977.

The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 allowed American Indian tribes to administer on their reservations programs that were funded by the United States government (Pevar, 1992). This act was the cornerstone of today's federal American Indian education policies. This act mandated that the Bureau of Indian Affairs establish standards that agreed with the wants and needs of American Indian tribes across the country (Buffalohead, 1985). Many American Indian tribes used the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 to rid themselves of unnecessary federal domination (Pevar, 1992).

The Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1977 was established to meet the unique educational needs of American Indian students in post-secondary schools on or near American Indian reservations (Buffalohead, 1985). With the passage of the Tribally Controlled Community Assistance Act of 1977, control of some post-secondary schools shifted from non-American Indian control to American Indian control (Wright & Tierney, 1991). The next portion of the chapter has more on those institutions.

By 1979, the Bureau of Indian Affair's Scholarship Program was granting scholarships to approximately 14,600 undergraduate and 700 graduate students (Wright, 1991). In 1979, post-secondary schools across the country graduated 1,639 American Indians with undergraduate degrees and 434 who earned graduate degrees (McNamara, 1984). The number of American Indians of traditional college age (18-24 years of age) attending post-secondary schools more than doubled between 1970 and 1980 (Tippeconnic, 1991).

Until the early-1980s, the federal government continued to increase the size of the Bureau of Indian Affair's American Indian Scholarship Program. Consequently, the number of American Indian students in post-secondary schools continued to increase. Although the number of American Indian undergraduate students increased from 76,000 in 1976 to 88,000 in 1982, the number decreased in 1984 to 83,000 (Tippeconnic, 1991). Some educators perceived that this decrease transpired because the country began moving away from affirmative action policies in the 1980s, federal funds for education were reduced, and institutional and individual racism were more tolerated during the Reagan presidency (Tijerina & Biemer, 1988).

Tribal Colleges

In the United States, both secondary and post-secondary schools have been the main vehicle used to assimilate American Indians into the mainstream of American society. Every effort was made to transform American Indians into speaking, dressing and thinking the same as European-Americans (Skinner, 1991). The great majority of secondary and post-secondary schools today are still a reflection of that Western European-oriented educational philosophy. Even schools that have a primary purpose of serving American Indians have gone down the same path, using the same types of methodology and the same types of educational programming as predominantly white schools (Wiger, 1987). The Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1977 was an effort to change that perspective.

The first tribally controlled Indian community college in the country was Navaho Community College which was established in 1968 (Dodd & Nelson, 1989). Tribal

colleges were not the only type of college established by American Indians. Heritage College is a small private college located on the Yakima Indian Reservation in Toppenish, Washington. Heritage College is chartered as a Catholic college with an overall mission to serve tribal members, migrant farm workers, and other community members throughout the Yakima Valley (Barnhardt, 1991). Although it was not until 1968 that a tribal college came into existence, the idea of a college specifically designed for American Indians is not a new idea. In the early 1900s, the few American Indians who attended post-secondary schools were not necessarily elitists or out of touch with their people, but openly talked of starting some sort of tribal college in the early 1900s. Leaders in the United States Congress and in the Bureau of Indian Affairs were not in favor of creating any type of tribal college in the early 1900s. They thought it would impede the assimilation of American Indians into the larger society and would contribute a form of segregation (Wollock, 1997).

Tribal colleges began to be chartered and established in the 1970s in response to the unsuccessful educational experiences so many American Indian students had in institutions of higher education (Wright, 1991; Wright & Tierney, 1991). The missions of tribal colleges were different from those of traditional post-secondary schools. Tribal colleges offered courses and degrees that were deemed to be important in the community in which they operated. Tribal colleges offered a variety of courses, from general education to vocational training (Dodd & Nelson, 1989). Students who now attend tribal colleges may take classes in such fields as American history, literature, art, philosophy, and religion, and will come to understand that these disciplines are not restricted to an

Anglo-American heritage (American Indian Science & Engineering Society, 1989). American Indian history, language, heritage, and culture are at the heart of each tribal college's structure and identity (Boyer, 1990). Tribal colleges are usually located on or near American Indian reservations in rural areas. Having a tribal college with a mission statement of serving American Indian communities located near reservations should positively impact the success rates of American Indian students who live on reservations (Rhodes, 1988). One of the most defining characteristics of tribal colleges is an over-arching sense of commitment to the communities in which they are located (Barnhardt, 1991).

In almost all institutions of higher education in this country, students are forced to adapt to the institution, rather than having the institution adapt to the students. By having a solid working knowledge of students' learning styles and a little knowledge of the students' cultural backgrounds, faculty can adapt to the students' needs instead of forcing the students to adapt totally to the institution (Tierney, 1991). Tribal college faculty often develop highly personalized relationships with students along with a strong emphasis on experimental forms of teaching (Barnhardt, 1991). Many American Indian and non-Indian students who attend tribal colleges have objectives that go beyond securing a good education and getting a better job. Many American Indian and non-Indian students who attend tribal colleges want to be better qualified to serve tribal communities (Barnhardt, 1991).

American Indian Student Retention Programs

There is a limit on how much personnel at institutions of higher education can do to retain their students. Although each student deserves the same attention and expression of concern about his or her education, not all students have the ability, skills, or commitment to complete their degree programs (Tinto, 1987). Most educators believe that each student who is attending a post-secondary school deserves a chance to succeed. Levitz and Noel (1995) noted that "the success of an institution and the success of its students are inseparable" (p. 1). When faculty and staff members in a post-secondary school cannot meet the needs and interests of a student, they should be prepared to help that student locate and transfer to another institution that is more capable of meeting that student's needs and interests (Tinto, 1987). When the personnel in an institution of higher education cannot meet the needs and interests of a student and the institution does nothing more to meet that student's needs and interests, then the institution is bound to fail that student (Levitz & Noel, 1995).

Even before American Indian students register for classes as new, entering freshmen they should be given assessment tests to determine appropriate programs to consider and appropriate levels for entry into those programs (Henderson, 1991). Depending on the students' needs, post-secondary schools should offer pre-collegiate programs, organized tutoring, and remedial courses (Wells, 1997). Hurlburt, Kroeker, and Gade (1991) suggested that students who are not performing well academically should be offered study skills courses as well as tutorial assistance.

In 1989, ethnic minority students were surveyed at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs to determine how they perceived the support or lack of support for themselves at the University. The survey results showed that 87% of the ethnic minority students perceived that things "were not too bad", but could still be improved (Dickson, 1989). In an article by Benjamin et al. on American Indian student retention factors (1989), they reported that school competence is associated with a certain degree of American Indian cultural awareness and maintenance. When American Indian students do not have the opportunity to practice their cultural traditions and do not develop other skills that will enable them to participate in the institutional environment, their attitudes about the institution and higher education become negative. It is at such times that American Indian students become apathetic, abuse alcohol, think of committing suicide, and lose their pride in being American Indians (Indian Nations At-Risk Task Force, 1991). American Indian counselors, content-related courses, and student organizations can help American Indian students maintain and explore their cultural traditions and heritage (Wells, 1997). Even though ethnic minority students may feel alienated from the larger campus community, they can still feel well integrated into their own ethnic subcultures (Loo & Rolison, 1986).

Brewer (1990) listed three things that did not effectively work in institutions of higher education as administrators attempted to retain American Indian students: (1) having all responsibility for American Indian student retention vested in only one person or office; (2) having responsibility for American Indian student retention assigned totally to the student services department; and (3) providing piecemeal programming with no

comprehensive retention planning. McLendon and Morgan (1992) concluded that effective retention plans succeed only if the faculty are given some responsibility to help and all student retention responsibilities are not left to the Student Services Division. Many ethnic minority students reported that the most support they received was from student support services (Loo & Rolison, 1986). Tinto (1988) emphasized the importance of having appropriate actions and opportunities for students in their first year, especially the first semester. While on-going freshmen orientation activities are important at all post-secondary schools, they are especially important at large colleges and universities (Kalsner, 1991).

To increase the American Indian student retention rates in post-secondary schools, American Indian support personnel must help students to clarify their college and career goals (Hoover & Jacobs, 1992). American Indian students who have a strong commitment to their cultural traditions often prefer American Indian counselors rather than non-American Indian counselors (Johnson & Lashley, 1989). American Indian students and other ethnic minority students often voluntarily segregate by race in predominantly white schools so they can rely on their own cultural groups for support (Kalsner, 1991). As noted previously, to many Anglo-American students ethnic clustering constitutes segregation but, to the ethnic minority students who cluster together in cultural enclaves, it is considered a form of refuge from white cultural domination (Loo & Rolison, 1986). Dodd, Garcia, Meccage, and Nelson (1993) reported that students often would rather go to a special support service program than to a faculty member when facing academic difficulty. American Indian counselors often are

excellent role models for American Indian students because they have already made it through the educational system in which the student is now engaged (Whittaker, 1986). Leaders of post-secondary schools cannot neglect the relationship between the faculty and the students. Faculty advising of American Indian and non-Indian students must be an integral component of each post-secondary school's retention plans (McLendon & Morgan, 1992).

Programs that are designed to assist American Indian students must focus on many aspects of student retention. Personnel in support programs must focus on the American Indian students' families and their spiritual awareness as well as the students' educational goals (Hall, 1991). Developing appropriate activities can commence once support service personnel ascertain the needs of the American Indian students they serve. Tinto (1988) suggested that institutions must develop public rituals and ceremonies as part of an effective retention program. Developing public rituals and ceremonies will help the students become connected to the institutions they are attending and break away from their former lifestyles. Public rituals and ceremonies can take many forms: American Indian Club sponsored back-to-school pot-lucks, halloween parties, fun runs, pow wows, food feature days, end-of-the-year awards banquets, and so forth. Post-secondary schools that offer these types of public rituals and ceremonies are the institutions that are developing traditions of serving American Indian students well (Antell, 1998).

Contemporary American Indian College Students

Contemporary American Indian college students come from a wide range of social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Although there are certain common characteristics of successful students, there are no absolute predictors of student success in post-secondary schools. Studies of why certain American Indian students persist in college and ultimately graduate and why some American Indian students do not persist or graduate from post-secondary schools will help student advocates immensely as they work with American Indian students on a day-to-day basis. This section of the chapter contains a view of contemporary American Indian students in the late 20th Century.

According to Guyette and Heth (1985), some general characteristics of contemporary American Indian students included the following. English was the primary language spoken at home; religious memberships were in Christian churches; one or both parents were employed; uncertainty about their American Indian heritage had been experienced in the student's lifetime; American Indian students were proud to be American Indians; and American Indian students did not believe that they will lose their heritage or culture by earning a post-secondary education. Tierney (1992) found that successful students had certain characteristics that enabled them to be successful. Some of those characteristics were that (1) the students' parents had attended college; (2) the students' brothers or sisters had attended college; and (3) the students participated in an "academic track" in high school, a course of study which included advanced courses in the sciences, English, and math. Brown and Kurpius (1997) found that persistence was significantly impacted by the degree of academic preparation at the secondary school

level. Ambler (1993) suggested that older American Indians make excellent students because they are more focused and more motivated to better themselves and their families. Kerr, Colangelo, Maxey, and Christensen (1992) reported that male students represented 63% of all high scoring American Indian college students.

For many Anglo-American students, the rationales they use to determine which post-secondary school to attend are based on family ties to the institution, affordable tuition, the quality of academic programs offered, and the chance to continue working at a local job (Dickson, 1989). Many ethnic minority students, on the other hand, consider the following criteria important when selecting a post-secondary school: the number of ethnic minority faculty, staff, and students employed at the institution; the type of support services available to ethnic minority students; and the general atmosphere of the campus as it relates to cultural diversity and ethnic sensitivity (Kerr et al., 1992; Loo & Rolison, 1986).

Institutions that accept only students who graduated from the top 10% of their high school graduating classes have the highest graduation rates of all post-secondary schools. On the other hand, institutions that maintain open admissions policies and admit any high school students regardless of class rank have graduation rates about half those of selective colleges and universities (Mortenson, 1996). In a Gallup International Institute Survey of SAT Seniors, King (1996) found that low income students who took the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) were more racially and ethnically diverse than the general population. The survey also documented that low income students scored, on average, more than 130 points lower on the SAT than the general population of students

who took the test. The SAT and the American College Test (ACT) are two of the major measures used to determine if students should be accepted into institutions of higher education (Noley, 1991). It should be noted that in statistical studies on American Indian persistence, Benjamin et al. (1993) and Noley (1991) concluded that the ACT and the SAT were not totally reliable predictors of college success for American Indian students.

The retention rates of American Indian students in their first year of college range significantly from institution to institution. A survey of American Indian college students by Wells (1997) revealed that approximately 45% of those students surveyed persisted in college from their first fall semester to their second, a rate virtually unchanged since 1988. This means that for every 100 American Indian students who began college as new entering freshmen, only 45 were still enrolled the following year. Astin, Tsui, and Avalos (1996) reported the four-year, six-year, and nine-year baccalaureate degree attainment rates for American Indian students to be 22.9%, 30.7%, and 33.2% compared to 34.4%, 41.3%, and 45.7% for the general student population respectively.

Brown and Kurpius (1997) reasoned that students who are effective problem solvers are more cognizant of the institutional environment where they attend school, are more likely to utilize student support services, and are usually more satisfied with the services that are available. Brown and Kurpius's study reinforces a longitudinal study conducted by Neal and Heppner (1986) in which they reported that persistence was significantly impacted by academic preparation and appropriate interactions with institutional faculty and staff. It must be noted that not all American Indian students are anxious to develop strong relationships with non-Indian faculty, staff, and students. Even

though some American Indian students do not make strong efforts to interact with non-Indian faculty, staff, and students, many still succeed on the post-secondary level (Steward, 1993).

Most contemporary American Indians place a high value on extended families. For most American Indians, extended families include aunts, uncles, nephews, and nieces, as well as cousins and other relatives who live with or in close proximity to the students' families and are considered to be part of the immediate family. A student's world perspective is influenced significantly by his or her family. In particular, for a student who arrives on campus from a rural, isolated place such as an Indian reservation, the family environment has had an enormous influence on the student's world views (Lin Lin, 1990). The student's immediate and extended family is the student's primary social, economic, and political unit (Herring, 1989). How a student's immediate and extended family members view the world is, to a great extent, how the American Indian student views the world when she or he arrives on campus.

In an article on how to counsel American Indians, Garrett and Garrett (1994), divided American Indians into four specific types: (1) Traditional: those who speak and think in their native language and practice only their traditional beliefs and lifestyle; (2) Transitional: those who speak their native language and English but do not fully accept all the cultural heritage of their ancestors nor completely identify with mainstream culture; (3) Bicultural: those who practice both their traditional customs and the customs of the larger society; and (4) Assimilated: those who generally accept and participate in all of the customs of the larger society and none in their own cultural background. In a

1993 article published in the Journal of American Indian Education, Benjamin et al. (1993) concluded that bicultural and traditional American Indian students were more successful in post-secondary schools than were acculturated American Indian students. They found that post-secondary schools were likely to have American Indian students in each of the aforementioned categories.

For educators and administrators to understand why some contemporary American Indian students persist in college through graduation and why some do not, many social, economic, and cultural aspects of those students must be studied. For example, many American Indians today still harvest wild rice the traditional way. Harvesting wild rice the traditional way means having two ricers in a canoe with one maneuvering the craft through the rice beds on a lake or river while the other one knocks the rice into the canoe with two sticks. Harvesting wild rice is conducted from mid-August to mid-September in the Upper Great Lakes area of the United States. American Indians can either process the rice themselves and eat it or sell the rice to a company for mass production and sales. The problem that arises when contemporary American Indian students harvest wild rice is that it often means they will miss classes at school or simply start the semester late. Waggner and Smith (1993) found that students who enrolled in college at the last minute had lower retention rates than those students who arrived on campus on time and were ready for classes to begin.

American Indian students in the Upper Great Lakes area must make conscious choices whether to harvest wild rice or not. This is a cultural conflict that has been in existence since American Indians started attending post-secondary schools and is still a

matter of choice for contemporary American Indian students (Benjamin et al., 1993). Tinto (1988) wrote that problems associated with leaving behind a family and joining an institution of higher education with a new set of priorities need not lead to students dropping out of school. Tinto went on to note that it is how a student responds to his or her new environment that determines whether that student will make it or not make it on the post-secondary level.

Another example of a cultural conflict American Indian students face as they leave home and enter the post-secondary schools is the need to be competitive. Living in group harmony is a cultural value by which American Indian people have lived for centuries. For contemporary American Indian students to have to compete for grades and for acknowledgement or respect from teachers and other students is a new phenomenon for many American Indian students (Garrett & Garrett, 1994). Contemporary American Indian students often come from areas that have unique cultural backgrounds where their values, philosophies, and world views are quite different from those of the general student population (Scott, 1986). When their cultural knowledge base, heritage, traditions, and values are not recognized or respected, these students may perceive post-secondary schools to represent impersonal, intimidating, and hostile environments (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

When dealing with American Indian students it is beneficial for support service staff and faculty to have a general understanding of those students' cultural characteristics. Although it is not possible to categorize the cultural characteristics of an entire ethnic group, it is possible to list some broad, general characteristics of particular

groups. As an example of a general cultural characteristic, most American Indian students have a well developed sense of humor. Laughter can relieve stress and help heal a person mentally (Garrett & Garrett, 1994). According to Aitken (1988), American Indian cultural characteristics include making little or no eye contact; interjecting few, if any, thoughts when others are speaking; maintaining a belief in harmony with nature; slower and/or softer speech; and providing delayed responses only after careful thought to questions and inquiries. Once college and university faculty and staff realize that some of these cultural characteristics exist in many American Indian students, they may have a more tolerant attitude about them as they deal with those students on a day-to-day basis.

Factors Which Contribute To American Indian Student Drop-Out Rates

American Indians are significantly underrepresented in post-secondary schools. This underrepresentation can be attributed to a variety of factors ranging from poor academic preparation in high school to social and cultural issues in college (Brown & Kurpius, 1997). This section has been divided into three parts: academic barriers, social barriers, and cultural barriers.

Academic Barriers

Dingman et al. (1995) suggested that low teacher expectations is a major reason why American Indian students are not academically prepared for post-secondary schooling. When high school teachers and counselors have low expectations of students, the students are usually assigned to a non-academic tract where they will spend fewer years in studying academic subjects that prepare them for post-secondary school (Rendon

& Nora, 1988). Even students with a strong academic background in high school cannot be guaranteed a trouble-free transition to a post-secondary career (Tinto, 1987). Poorly developed study habits are listed as a reason many American Indian students have such a difficult time on the post-secondary level (Brown & Kurpius, 1997).

The possibility that many American Indians are not academically prepared for the rigors of post-secondary school is a common reason cited by many researchers for the drop-out rates being so high with this group (Mingle & Rodriguez, 1990; Rendon & Nora, 1988; Wright, 1991; Zwerling & London, 1992). American Indian students who do not take enough math, English, and science courses in high school will be severely handicapped as they attempt to matriculate through required liberal arts or general education courses in college (Mingle & Rodgiguez, 1990; Wright, 1991). Some American Indian students as well as some other ethnic minority students arrive at post-secondary schools from disadvantaged high schools. These students may not be as well prepared for the academic rigors of college because their high schools may not have offered advanced courses in math, English, or the sciences (Rendon & Nora, 1988). Public high schools in poorer communities often have lower quality classes and facilities than public schools in more affluent communities (Kalsner, 1991).

Poor academic advising, both in high school and in college, can be a major barrier to American Indian students' success on the post-secondary level (Hodum & Martin, 1994; Kalsner, 1991; Rendon & Nora, 1988). Students need to have sufficient information on many careers before they even choose what type of post-secondary school they want to enter. The choice of a career based on the potential for monetary gain

should not be the only factor in choosing a particular type of institution or career (Tate & Schwartz, 1993). It should be noted that Tinto (1987) suggested that less than 15% of all students leave post-secondary schools because of academic reasons.

Once ethnic minority students enter the world of higher education, they are immersed in an academic and social culture that is often strikingly different from the culture and environment from which they came. Many American Indian students find that they have no one to guide them through the mysterious world of higher education (Boyer, 1989; Rendon & Nora, 1988). A lack of ethnic minority role models has been cited in a number of studies as a reason many American Indian students drop-out of school before they graduate (e.g., Brewer, 1990; Guyette & Heth, 1985; Noley, 1991). From a statistical standpoint, predominantly white institutions have had very few American Indians employed within the faculty, staff, or administrative ranks (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990).

Faculty are trained in their specific disciplines and often do not know much about the social and cultural backgrounds of the students they teach. In his article "Native Voices In Academe," Tierney (1991) wrote that a lack of understanding about the backgrounds and cultures of American Indian students by post-secondary professors is a major reason many of those students drop-out of school. In a survey of American Indian students, Aitken and Falk (1984) reported that, because individual faculty members took so little interest in American Indian students' lives, the students felt marginalized and unmotivated to perform well in their respective programs. Another survey of American Indian students conducted in 1995 at Northern Arizona University reported similar

results: professors not taking an active interest in their students' cultural backgrounds (Miner et al., 1995). The attitude faculty members take regarding American Indian students is critical as it relates to the students' self-perception, motivation, and attitude (York, Bollar, & Schoob, 1993).

American Indian students can develop a negative attitude toward higher education by not agreeing with the established curriculum used in post-secondary schools as it is related to American Indian history and culture (Tippeconnic, 1988). When American Indian students or other ethnic minority students do not recognize the relevance of the curriculum to their degree programs, then the curriculum can become a barrier to those students' persistence (Bowker, 1992).

Some American Indian students lack motivation because they lack direction (Layton et al., 1990). Post-secondary schools that have American Indian support programs with well established social, cultural, and academic opportunities available to students can help those students become motivated, or more highly motivated, to complete their degree programs (Pluchinota, 1996). Effective American Indian support programs are crucial to American Indian students who enter institutions with passive attitudes and negative self-concepts (Rhodes, 1988). The reasons why some students, in general, and American Indian students, in particular, lack motivation in the academic arena is varied. Calling students by social security numbers; discounting a student's life experiences and different world views; and promoting a competitive academic environment where students are pitted against each other all contribute to disenchantment with higher education (Rendon, 1993). Anti-academic peer pressure and personal fears

about the rigors of academic work can also contribute to students' lack of motivation to complete degree programs (Gedachian, 1998).

Social Barriers

The retention problems faced by American Indian students in post-secondary schools often begin before the students enter college (Davis, 1992). Because of the social and cultural backgrounds from which American Indian students come, many American Indian students enter post-secondary schools in a disadvantaged state (Giago, 1998). American Indians live below the country's established poverty level at three times the national average (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990). Coming from an economically disadvantaged background, American Indian students may not be exposed to many of the everyday experiences that non-Indian students take for granted (Wright, 1991). Many American Indian students who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds have parents who are relatively unfamiliar with higher education systems. More often than not, those parents cannot guide their children through the decisions needed in regard to their post-secondary programs (Kalsner, 1991).

Many American Indian students enter post-secondary schools without the support of their parents, siblings, or friends (Aitken & Falk, 1984; Guyette & Heth, 1985). Some American Indian students are simply not prepared to attend a post-secondary school (Rendon, 1993). The degree of family and/or peer support for American Indians who attend post-secondary schools varies considerably. Many of the non-supportive family members and friends have never attended post-secondary schools themselves and can offer no guidance to the students (Kalsner, 1991). Some non-supportive family members

and friends are afraid that the students will actually graduate from the institution they are attending, secure good jobs, and then move far away (Miner et al., 1995). Having to care for parents and/or siblings was listed as a major reason why many American Indian students dropped out of school before graduating (Bowker, 1992; Tate & Schwartz, 1993). Many American Indian students are extremely loyal to their families and to their clan (Evans, 1994). Some non-supportive family and friends believe that would-be students need to stay at home to help raise their families and to take care of their community obligations (Miner et al., 1995).

When philosophies, world views, religion, language, and other traditional American Indian cultural values run counter to the majority students' cultures and heritages, American Indian students often feel they are attending an institution with a non-supportive institutional climate (Wright, 1991). Support from role models outside the academic arena is needed to help guide the students through their educational careers (Guyette & Heth, 1985; Noley, 1991). The lack of appropriate academic and social role models was listed as a significant reason why many American Indian students had such a difficult time graduating from post-secondary schools (Evans, 1994; Wright, 1991).

After American Indian students are accepted into a post-secondary school, many are not motivated to persist (Aitken & Falk, 1983; Guyette & Heth, 1985; Layton et al., 1990). Some of the reasons students are not motivated have already been mentioned: being academically unprepared, having few academic and non-academic role models, being subjected to uncaring faculty, and having non-supportive families and friends.

Another reason students lack motivation to persist in college is the students' inability to make connections between post-secondary degrees and fulfilling careers (Rhodes, 1988).

Being a single parent is a major barrier for many American Indian students who attend post-secondary schools (Bowker, 1992). A study conducted by Beaulieu (1991) on American Indians in post-secondary schools in Minnesota revealed that the typical American Indian female student was in her mid-30s and was likely to have a GED rather than a high school diploma. Beaulieu went on to state that approximately 25% of all American Indian post-secondary students were receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Although Beaulieu's data were collected in 1991 and the statistical data may have changed somewhat since then, the point remains that American Indians in post-secondary schools are usually older than average and have family responsibilities to a much greater degree than their Anglo counterparts.

Being a non-traditional student can be problematic. Tate and Schwartz (1993) found that 67.9% of American Indian students surveyed reported that family obligations had negatively impacted their persistence in college. Family obligations affect females more than males. Adequate childcare was listed as a major barrier to persistence for one third of all American Indian students in a study conducted of students receiving financial assistance from the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe's Scholarship Program (Aitken & Falk, 1983). In considering another gender-related barrier to persistence, Hill (1992) wrote that a significant proportion of American Indian women were physically battered by males as they attempted to matriculate through their degree programs. Kalsner (1991) found that female students were more likely to internalize failure and to blame themselves while

men were more likely to externalize failure and to blame others. Non-traditional students more often than not had minimal physical involvement with the campuses they were attending except to attend classes (Zwerling & London, 1992). Students who had minimal contact with faculty, staff, and other students at school did not feel a great affinity with their institutions and were more apt to leave than students who readily participated in campus activities (Tinto, 1988).

Some studies conducted on why American Indian students left college before they graduated identified "personal problems" as a reason for departure (Henderson, 1991; Kalsner, 1991; Wells, 1989). Personal problems included excessive drinking or alcoholism (Dodd et al., 1993; Wells, 1989); lack of meaningful social interaction with peers (Wright, 1991; York et al., 1993); low self-esteem (Bowker, 1992; Henderson, 1991); absenteeism (Bowker, 1992; Tippeconnic, 1988); vague or non-existent career goals (Guyette & Heth, 1985; Kalsner, 1991); and loneliness (Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Lin Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988; Pluchinota, 1996). The personal problems could have debilitating consequences for American Indian students' attitudes toward higher education and their degree programs (Pluchinota, 1996).

Feeling of isolation was listed by various researchers as another reason why American Indian students left school before graduating (Boyer, 1989; Brown & Kurpus, 1997; Kalsner, 1991). Insufficient opportunities to interact with other ethnic minority students was found to create severe feelings of isolation for American Indian and other ethnic minority students on the post-secondary level (Pluchinota, 1996). Tinto (1987) wrote that a lack of social adjustment by students was one of the most common causes of

why students dropped out of school before graduating. Kerbo (1981) noted that the more American Indian students identified and integrated with white students, the more likely they were to persist on the post-secondary level.

Another barrier American Indian students face as they attend institutions of higher education is a lack of financial resources. Almost every researcher who has studied American Indian persistence factors noted financial constraints as a major barrier to persistence (e.g., Aitken & Falk, 1984; Luzzo, 1993; Noley, 1991; Steward, 1993). In a case study conducted in 1993, an American Indian student reported that financial difficulties would be the only reason he would ever consider dropping out of school before he graduated (Steward, 1993). In a study, an American Indian student stated that her tribe was to give her a scholarship but never did. She stated that she had only a little money and her family could not help her (Miner et al., 1995). In another study, 87% of American Indian student respondents cited a lack of adequate financial aid as a significant barrier to their completing their college degrees (Aitken & Falk, 1983).

Cultural Barriers

Cultural barriers American Indian students face as they enter post-secondary schools vary considerably from institution to institution. Some cultural barriers American Indian students face, such as cultural isolation and a perceived lack of institutional support for American Indian issues, can be addressed by the students themselves. Other cultural barriers, such as language barriers and racism are more difficult for the students or the institutions to address.

Post-secondary schools with institutional climates that are not receptive to cultural diversity or supportive of ethnic diversity issues create feelings of isolation in many American Indian students (Bowker, 1992; Brown & Kurpius, 1997). Tijerina and Biemer (1988) wrote that the federal government had moved away from affirmative action significantly since the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Affirmative action policies were terminated in California with the passage of Proposition 209. Affirmative action was also under attack in Michigan, Florida, Nebraska, and Texas (Holmes, 1998). Many American Indian students feel that post-secondary schools like the University of North Dakota and the University of Illinois that have American Indians as mascots create and sustain hostile environments for American Indian students by the stereotypical images those mascots represent (Giago, 1998). The University of North Dakota mascot is the Fighting Sioux and the University of Illinois mascot is Chief Illini (Rosenstein, 1997).

Racial tension has been cited also as a barrier for American Indian students attempting to succeed in post-secondary schools (e.g. Dodd et al., 1993; Tijerina & Biemer, 1988; York et al., 1993). Although physical aggression against American Indian students is rare, a perceived hostile environment often includes verbal attacks directed at American Indians (Huffman, 1991). When American Indian students see bumper stickers on cars parked on the campuses where they attend school that advertise slogans such as "Save a Walleye/Spear an Indian," those students immediately realize that racism and discrimination exist at those institutions (Tijerina & Biemer, 1988). In his speech about American Indians in institutions of higher education, Aitken (1988) stated that racism and racist acts are directly correlated to a student's skin color and that the darker a person is

the more likely he or she is to be verbally attacked or victimized. Racist remarks range from general derogatory statements about American Indians to specific statements aimed directly at individuals (Huffman, 1991).

Many American Indian students are unprepared for the racial or ethnic isolation they feel after they arrive on their campuses (Rendon & Nora, 1988). In a study of American Indian students in a predominantly white college, the authors found that 40% of all American Indian students at that college indicated that they felt some degree of hostility toward them by their professors (Lin Lin et al., 1988). While the behavior patterns of American Indian students are usually expected to change when they arrive on campus, this is difficult and unjustified, particularly when the expected behaviors conflict with the values the students were taught (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990). Whether it is accurate or not, many American Indians equate their feelings of isolation with white campus hostility toward them (Lin Lin et al., 1988).

American Indian students who have retained a significant amount of their traditional ways and culture have a more difficult time fitting into the campus environment of predominantly white institutions than students who are more acculturated (Arvizu, 1995; Scott, 1986; Wells, 1989). Scott (1986) found that American Indian students who still practiced their traditional ways were much more likely to drop-out of school before they graduated than American Indian students who were more acculturated. This finding was supported by a 1995 study in which an American Indian student was quoted as feeling very lonely because of her traditional background (Miner et al., 1995).

Ambler (1994) noted that many American Indian students have a difficult time adjusting to the fiercely competitive academic environment of higher education.

A variety of researchers listed language as a barrier to success for many American Indian students attending post-secondary schools (e.g., Dodd et al., 1993; Levin & Levin, 1991; Rhodes, 1988). In American society, people who have a thorough understanding of and ability to use efficiently the English language are considered intelligent while those who do not are often considered to be less intelligent (Antell, 1998). Although most American Indian students are not bilingual and use English as their first language, their parents are often bilingual. American Indian students with bilingual parents often use English dialects that reflect their parents' bilingual abilities. A lack of English proficiency is thus a problem for many American Indian students as they attend post-secondary schools (Rhodes, 1988).

American Indian languages, values, history, and cultures often place American Indian students at odds with their institutions' mainstream environments (Wright, 1991). Even though American Indians are only students for a finite period of time, expecting them to significantly alter their lifestyles and beliefs in that timeframe is not possible for the great majority of them (Benjamin et al., 1989). Faculty members must be careful not to show disrespect to American Indian students even if they have low expectations of them in biased, predominantly white institutions (Zwerling & London, 1992). To expect American Indian students to forget their upbringing, customs, and traditions and totally accept the social and structural system of the institutions they are attending will cause

some of them to think their institutions are hostile, alienating, and isolating (Wright, 1991).

Factors Which Contribute To Increased American Indian Student Retention Rates

For approximately 30 years, researchers and educators have been attempting to understand better why some American Indian students persist in post-secondary schools while others do not. The next section of the chapter summarizes literature regarding factors which contribute to American Indian students successfully "making it" on the post-secondary level. This section is divided into four parts: academic factors, social factors, cultural factors, and personal factors.

Academic Factors

Even before American Indian students enter post-secondary schools, some factors exist that will help those students in being successful on the post-secondary level. Studies have found that American Indian students who earned good grades in high school appear to have more success on the post-secondary level than those students who did not earn good grades in high school (e.g., Baker, 1986; Scott, 1986). Some researchers noted that the best predictor of American Indian student retention on the post-secondary level was the student's ability to earn above average grades in high school (Guyette & Heth, 1985). A statistical study conducted by Gerardi (1990) indicated clearly that students who scored well on the SAT were retained at a much higher rate on the post-secondary level than were those students who scored lower on the SAT. A Higher Education Survey Report (1991) reported that post-secondary schools that were academically more

rigorous in their selection of students had higher retention rates than post-secondary schools that had open admission policies. That report was supported by case studies conducted in 1986 and 1993 that found that American Indian students with high grade point averages in high school performed better on the post-secondary level than students who had lower grade point averages (Baker, 1986; Steward, 1993).

For students to be academically prepared for the rigors of post-secondary school, they must receive high quality academic advising (Baker, 1986; Guyette & Heth, 1985; Noley, 1991). Tierney (1992) found that students who were placed on an academic track in high school performed significantly better than students who were placed in a vocational track. Basic skills development was found to be needed for students who had not been placed in an academic tract in high school (Brewer, 1990; Mingle & Rodriguez, 1990), one which included advanced courses in English, math, and the sciences (Guyette & Heth, 1985). Intensive academic advising was found also to be necessary for many students who were not prepared academically for college (Baker, 1986; Mingle & Rodriguez, 1990; Richardson & Santos, 1988). Once academically unprepared at-risk students are identified, they need to be placed in study skills development courses to help them academically "catch up" with the more academically prepared students (Aitken & Falk, 1984; Brewer, 1990). Study groups can be exceptionally helpful to academically unprepared American Indian students in post-secondary schools (Garni, 1994; Richardson & Santos, 1988).

A curriculum that reflects the unique ethnic, social, and cultural characteristics of American Indian people is an important factor for some American Indian students as they

attend post-secondary schools across the country (American Council on Education, 1992). A 1989 College Board report suggested that post-secondary schools that had racially mixed faculties would be able to diversify their curriculums and thus end the non-American Indian domination of higher education (American Indian Science & Engineering Society, 1989). Brewer (1990) wrote that appropriate curriculum and pedagogy are extremely important factors for the successful retention of American Indian students. Wright (1990) made four major points about the advantages of post-secondary schools with Indian Studies programs: (1) they help post-secondary schools meet diversity goals; (2) they help the institution with both retention and recruitment of American Indian students; (3) they serve as a conduit between the American Indian communities and the institution; and (4) American Indian Studies programs advance any concerns American Indians have within the academic community.

Social Factors

Post-secondary school faculty and staff need to make concerted efforts to establish safe environments for American Indian students. Cleary and Peacock (1998) wrote that establishing a safe environment requires teachers to empower their students so the students themselves can choose to be academically successful. Mingle and Rodriguez (1990) suggested that leaders of post-secondary schools can create supportive environments by developing peer support groups, hiring role models for students, and establishing appropriate social and cultural activities. A belief among American Indian students that the post-secondary schools they are attending are safe was listed by a

number of researchers as a major reason those students persisted at those institutions (e.g. American Council on Education, 1992; Baker, 1986).

A major reason American Indian students persist in post-secondary schools is the support they receive from their families (Bowker, 1992; Guyette & Heth, 1985; Noley, 1991). Parents and spouses who provided consistent encouragement and support to their children, husbands, or wives are major factors in retention rates that were much higher for those students than for those who did not receive support from those key individuals (Davis, 1992; Hoover & Jacobs, 1992). In a study conducted for Minnesota Chippewa Tribe students, approximately one half of the students stated that parental support was an important factor for them to remain in school (Aitken & Falk, 1984). In a two-year study conducted with 991 American Indian female students, Bowker (1992) suggested that American Indian female students needed the support of their families, particularly by their mothers or grandmothers, more than American Indian male students. Studies conducted in 1992 and 1995 found that parents who had college-level experiences were more supportive of their children attending college than parents who had never attended a post-secondary school (Dodd et al., 1993; Tierney, 1992). Tierney (1992) suggested that American Indian students who have sisters and brothers who attended college are better supported by them while attending a post-secondary school than by brothers and sisters who have no college experiences.

American Indian students who have developed peer support groups are retained at a higher level than students who have not developed peer support groups (Layton et al., 1990; Rendon, 1993). Peer support groups can help students in a variety of ways. Peer

support groups help fellow students with better understanding of course assignments, studying for tests, interpreting lectures, advising about course selection, and helping to identify the best instructors from whom to take classes (Zwerling & London, 1992). American Indian students with good support from their friends have a better chance of being retained in college than students without a support system from friends (Layton et al., 1990). Friendship and encouragement from fraternity brothers and sisters can be a student's main campus support system (Steward, 1993).

For many American Indian students, a significant American Indian student population is necessary to develop a feeling of community on campus. According to Synder and Hoffman (1995), the American Indian student post-secondary participation rate has been increasing steadily from 1976 to 1995. The author noted that American Indian student enrollment in post-secondary schools was 76,000 in 1976; 84,000 in 1980; 102,000 in 1990; 119,000 in 1992; and 131,000 in 1995. Carter and Wilson (1997) also found that 131,000 American Indian students were enrolled in post-secondary schools in 1995. However, the Minorities in Higher Education Report stated that American Indians accounted for less than one percent of all students in higher education in 1995. The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac (1998) included data to indicate that the American Indian student post-secondary school enrollment in higher education was 131,000 in 1995 and 137,600 in 1996.

A major factor that impacts the retention rates of American Indian students on the post-secondary level is the relationships they have with faculty (Baker, 1986; Butterfield, 1983; Tate & Schwartz, 1993). Student feelings of acceptance by faculty was listed as a

major retention factor by a number of researchers (e.g., Bowker, 1992; Layton et al., 1990; Loo & Rolison, 1986). By their very nature and mission, faculty contacts with students can positively or negatively impact student retention. In a 1992 study of American Indian students, 22% who were surveyed stated that caring teachers made a major difference in their lives (Bowker, 1992).

Some authors have suggested that peer mentoring can make a positive difference in the retention rates of American Indian students on the post-secondary level (e.g. Brewer, 1990; Mingle & Rodriguez, 1990; Tate & Schwartz, 1993). Peer mentors can help new entering students adjust to college life by showing them around campus, by orienting them to the traditions of the institution, and by being their friends (Brewer, 1990). Peer mentors can introduce new students to social and cultural activities which help to create a friendly and safe environment for the new students (Brown & Kurpius, 1997). Peer mentoring can also help students who are finding it difficult to meet with faculty because of faculty time constraints (Tate & Schwartz, 1993).

Orientation programs designed to assist American Indian students to integrate successfully into the campus community play a major role in successfully retaining students (Baker, 1986; Brewer, 1990; Mingle & Rodriguez, 1990). Most orientation programs last only a day or even a part of a day, while a few are designed to last an entire academic year using returning students to help the entering students (Malaney & Shively, 1992). Orientation programs can help prevent American Indian students from feeling too alienated on predominantly white campuses (Tierney, 1991). Orientation programs can help parents feel better about their children's post-secondary school choices as well as

help their sons and daughters to adjust to the rigors and demands of college life (Mingle & Rodriguez, 1990). Student relationships with faculty are important during a student's integration into a post-secondary school (Loo & Rolison, 1986).

Tinto (1988) put forth the theory that social integration is one of the most basic and fundamental requirements students have to meet if they are to be retained on the post-secondary level. Tinto's social integration theory has been supported by a variety of other researchers who have studied retention factors of American Indian students on the post-secondary level (e.g., Groth, 1990; Loo & Rolison, 1986; Richardson & Santos, 1988). The American Council on Education's Office of Minorities In Higher Education published an article entitled "Environments Of Support," in which the authors noted that an effective environment of support for students to succeed needs to include a locus of academic and social activities at the post-secondary schools the students are attending (American Council on Education, 1992).

One of the easiest ways for students to become better integrated into a campus community is to join a campus organization (Garni, 1994; Gedachian, 1988). Students who participate in extra-curricular activities, such as joining a campus organization, are more likely to graduate from a post-secondary school than are students who do not participate in extra-curricular activities. Joining an organization can help students find a comfortable niche on campus (Steward, 1993). Participating in academic or social organizations can be rewarding for students in post-secondary schools. Guyette and Heth (1985) noted that American Indian students are more likely to graduate if they find school to be enjoyable and interesting.

In study after study, a major factor listed by researchers for why American Indian students graduate from post-secondary schools is adequate amounts of financial aid (e.g. King, 1996; National Center for Educational Statistics, 1995). Not only is an adequate amount of financial aid needed but also is the ability to budget finances (Aitken & Falk, 1984; Baker, 1986). Counseling students on financial aid management is critical for many American Indian students (Mingle & Rodriguez, 1990). For some American Indian students, financial budgeting includes planning for both transportation and child care expenses (Noley, 1991). The National Center For Educational Statistics (1995) reported that students who work part-time while attending school are more likely to graduate than students who work full-time or not at all while attending post-secondary schools.

Educational opportunities for American Indian students have also improved as a result of revenues from gaming (Cozzetto, 1995). A few tribes across the country have programs to help each of their students pay for their tuition and fees while attending college. The Mille Band of Ojibwe in central Minnesota is an example of a tribe that helps students pay their tuition and fees as long as the students maintain satisfactory grade point averages as established by the institutions they are attending (Antell, 1998).

Cultural Factors

Post-secondary schools that have institutionalized activities which allow students to adjust socially and culturally to the college environments will realize a higher retention rate among American Indian students than institutions that do not have such activities in place (Gedachian, 1998; Noley, 1991). A lack of social and cultural integration can be devastating to American Indian student retention rates because opportunities for students

to feel that they belong will not be as readily available as they could be (Brown & Kurpius, 1997). American Indian students should not be afraid to introduce themselves to others because such contact will help them in their social and cultural adjustment to college (Garni, 1994). Successful social and cultural integration activities should be extended to the parents of American Indian students as well as to the students themselves (Mingle & Rodriguez, 1990). Successful social and cultural integration by American Indian students includes the development of relationships with faculty, mentors, advisors, and other students (Zwerling & London, 1992).

American Indian students who enter post-secondary schools must learn about the cultural mores of the institution if they are to be successful (Tierney, 1991; Tinto, 1988). American Indian students who have successfully learned how to adapt to a post-secondary school probably had the ability to recognize and deal with racism in high school (Guyette & Heth, 1985). Maturity; personal motivation; the ability to cope with racial, ethnic, and cultural differences; and the ability to adjust to new situations increase the odds of American Indian students being successful in post-secondary schools (Dodd et al., 1993). American Indian students who are effective problem solvers recognize habits and attitudes that can enhance their social and cultural integration into college (Elliott, Godshall, Shrout, & Witty, 1990).

American Indian students who have pride in their own cultural heritage and have the ability to work effectively in other cultural environments can feel comfortable interacting in nearly any campus situation (Henderson, 1991). When American Indian students feel pride in their cultural heritage, their self-esteem will increase and have a

positive effect on their retention rates in school (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Guyette & Heth, 1985). From a cultural viewpoint, attending college should not mean a totally abrupt transition from one cultural world view to another but rather provide the opportunity to learn about divergent viewpoints (Tierney, 1991). Some American Indian students who are confronted with racially insensitive individuals simply ignore them (Steward, 1993). Post-secondary schools that have enclaves of American Indian students or significant American Indian student populations act as support groups for students not wishing to lose their ethnic identity (American Council on Education, 1992). Most American Indian students who have graduated from post-secondary schools indicate they never lost their cultural identity (Guyette & Heth, 1985). According to a Special Report conducted by Black Issues In Higher Education (1992), three post-secondary schools in the Upper Midwest area were listed as top undergraduate degree producers of American Indian students from their institutions: Bemidji (MN) State University was ranked 41st nationally by having 2.2% of their graduates of American Indian descent followed by the University of Minnesota – Duluth which ranked 63rd nationally at 1.1% and the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, ranked 68th in the country with 0.8% of their graduates being American Indian.

Students need support programs and activities to help with their social, academic, and cultural integration into the campus community (Pavel, 1992). Post-secondary schools that offer social and cultural activities have supportive environments for American Indian student populations (Mingle & Rodriguez, 1990). When leaders of post-secondary schools put emphasis on cultural values, students can learn about

themselves and gain self-confidence while they learn (Hill, 1992). Offering a curriculum that reflects ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity is an effective way to emphasize positively such cultural values and norms (American Council on Education, 1992). College professors who are aware of and sensitive to the unique cultural differences of American Indian students can decrease racial tensions and issues at their institutions (Hornett, 1989). To reduce racist climates, campus personnel must work harder to teach acceptance of those with different cultures (Malaney & Shively, 1992).

To increase the retention rates of American Indian students on the post-secondary level, identifiable, sensitive, and culturally aware role models are needed (Noley, 1991). Those role models can be professors, staff members, or other students (Aitken & Falk, 1983). Parents can be excellent role models for their college-bound children (Brown & Kurpius, 1997). Positive role models can help American Indian students prepare for many different college experiences (Zwerling & London, 1992). Peer role models can counsel other students with drug, alcohol, academic, or personal difficulties (Hill, 1991).

Post-secondary schools that offer mentoring to students can increase the retention rates of their American Indian student population. Individual departments whose staff and faculty encourage mentoring can provide a vital component to the campus environment of support (American Council on Education, 1992). Mentors can tutor, facilitate study groups, or conduct intrusive counseling (Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Richardson & Santos, 1988). Although mentors can be faculty or staff, the most effective mentors are returning, upper class students (Malaney & Shrively, 1992). Peer mentors

can help validate an American Indian student's feelings while attending school (Rendon, 1993).

A variety of researchers have noted that multicultural student centers have a positive impact on the retention rates of ethnic minority students in post-secondary schools (e.g. Brewer, 1990; Noley, 1991; Richardson & Santos, 1988). Institutions with multicultural centers and other organizations that support student activities and needs are more likely to see their American Indian students graduate than institutions that do not have such support organizations (Noley, 1991). Effective advisors are often located in multicultural centers along with other support staff who can serve as advocates and mediators on students' behalf (Pavel, 1992). Multicultural centers and other support service offices need to be institutionalized into the regular campus budget and not supported by external grants so students can rely consistently on support from these organizations (Mingle & Rodriguez, 1990).

Post-secondary school faculty members may be in the most influential position of all to send positive messages to ethnic minority students that colleges will accept them as they are (Hornett, 1989; Layton et al., 1990). In a study of American Indian students at the University of Minnesota – Duluth (Aitken & Falk, 1984), student survey responses indicated that having an individual faculty member who cared was one of the five most important reasons students persisted in school. The frequency and quality of faculty-student contacts are important to the retention of students (Baker, 1986). Rewards, tenure, and promotion should be given to effective teachers. In terms of cultural diversity, effective teaching includes mentoring, having a caring attitude, demonstrating

sensitivity to cultural differences, and having high expectations of all students (Richardson & Santos, 1988).

Personal Factors

Among the most common answers that American Indian students give when asked why they persist in post-secondary schools are "personal motivation" or "personal aspirations" (King, 1996; Layton et al., 1990; Lin Lin, 1990). For many of those students, motivation and aspiration may equate with having the ability to understand the connection between a college degree and a good job (Brown & Kurpius, 1997; Guyette & Heth, 1985; Zwerling & London, 1992). Gedachian (1998) described an American Indian graduate who imagined himself in his graduation cap and gown while attending school, an image which motivated him to succeed. For other students, motivation and aspiration may equate with a personal desire to better themselves (Davis, 1992).

Some of the personal attributes American Indian students need to possess to persist academically, socially, and culturally in post-secondary schools are a healthy body and a degree of cognitive ability (Guyette & Heth, 1985). Successful American Indian students feel personally competent when attending post-secondary schools (Steward, 1993). Successful American Indian students display an abundance of self-determination and self-control (Pluchinota, 1996). There is a direct correlation between good self-esteem and successful persistence (Cleary & Peacock, 1998). American Indian students who persist have excellent self-esteem.

Maturity, determination, and the ability to cope with racial and cultural differences are characteristics successful American Indian student possess as they

matriculate through post-secondary school (Dodd et al., 1993). Mature students realize that earning good grades is essential to persisting in college (Baker, 1986). Because they have learned to adapt, American Indian students who attend predominantly white colleges and universities have discovered that they do not have to relinquish their ethnicity to graduate (Davis, 1992). The ability to adjust to new situations is a general characteristic of all successful American Indian students attending post-secondary schools (Dodd et al., 1993).

Summary

The reasons American Indian students either drop out or persist in institutions of higher education are varied and complex. The social, academic, and cultural backgrounds of those students play a major role in how they react in a post-secondary environment. Students also possess unique personal characteristics and family circumstances that allow some to cope and adapt to their surroundings quickly and efficiently, while others struggle to "fit in." Higher education faculty and staff members often have a significant positive or negative impact on American Indian students' persistence rates. It is largely agreed upon that the ability to adjust to new situations is a general characteristics possessed by all successful American Indian students in higher education (Doll et al., 1993).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of American Indian students regarding higher education and to examine factors that contribute to or construct barriers to the retention and graduation rates of American Indian students currently enrolled at five selected Upper Midwest institutions. A comparison was conducted of the descriptive data from four groups of students: American Indian male students, female students, traditional-aged students (students 18-24 years of age), and students older than average (SOTA or students 25 years of age and older). The study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of American Indian students regarding their experiences in selected institutions of higher education.
2. Are there differences in the perceptions of American Indian students according to gender and/or age.
3. What are the perceptions of American Indian students regarding reasons American Indian students might drop-out of college.
4. What are the perceptions of American Indian students regarding factors that contribute to American Indian students graduating from college.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of undergraduate American Indian students enrolled during the spring quarter/semester 1997 at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks; Bemidji (MN) State University; the University of Minnesota – Duluth; Augsburg College (Minneapolis, MN); and the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire. The sample consisted of 50 American Indian female students and 50 American Indian male students, 10 females and 10 males totaling 20 American Indian students from each participating post-secondary institution. Half (50) of the 100 students selected for this study were traditional-aged students (students 18-24 years of age) and half (50) of the students participating in this study were students older than average (students 25 years of age and older).

All five post-secondary schools selected for this study have support programs designed to assist the American Indian students on the respective campuses. The American Indian student support program directors, or their designees, assisted in this research by identifying the members of the sample at their respective institutions. All of the American Indian student support service personnel had access to personal information about the American Indian students who they were responsible to serve, including such items as the students' ages and gender. Each participating institution's American Indian support service contact person was asked to randomly distribute copies of the survey instrument that had been developed specifically for this study to 20 students, stratified by age and gender.

Instrument

A survey instrument was constructed specifically for use in this study. The title given to the instrument is "American Indian Student Retention Survey" (See appendix A). The instrument was designed to obtain American Indian students' perceptions of the pre-college and college factors impacting American Indian student retention rates in selected institutions of higher education. Pre-college factors include the number and type of high school classes, support services provided, availability and/or completion of a higher education track in secondary school, study habits, and family support. College factors on the instrument include family support, peer group support, institutional support, study habits, career guidance, and personal motivation. The development of this survey instrument was influenced by a review of other retention instruments (Aitken & Falk, 1983; Bowker, 1992; Davis, 1992; Guyette & Heth, 1985; Miner et al., 1995; Tippeconnic, 1988).

The original draft of the survey instrument used in this study was evaluated in two different ways. A panel of American Indian student retention professionals, representing all five of the participating post-secondary schools, evaluated the content of the survey instrument. These American Indian student retention professionals were asked to comment on the survey instrument and to make recommendations regarding the content validity of the instrument. During the summer and fall of 1996, 10 American Indian students not included in the sample were asked to complete the survey instrument to "pilot test" the reliability, validity, and readability of the instrument. Modifications to this survey instrument were made after the comments and recommendations of the

American Indian student retention professionals were secured and after the pilot test was completed.

Data Collection

To assist with data collection, letters of support were secured from American Indian support service personnel from the five participating post-secondary schools. In their letters, acknowledgement was given that they would assist in administering and collecting the survey instruments.

A cover letter was given to each student selected to participate in this study (See Appendix B). The cover letter included:

1. A statement regarding the purpose and need for this study.
2. A statement asking the student to complete the survey instrument.
3. A statement assuring each student who participated in the study that confidentiality would be maintained.
4. A statement offering to each participating student a summary of the study if requested.

In cooperation with the American Indian student support service personnel at the five post-secondary schools participating in this study, members of the sample were identified and contacted to arrange for administration of the student retention survey instrument. Students were asked to pick up the survey packet at the support service staff members' offices and return the instruments to those offices after they had completed the instrument. Since all of the student volunteers knew where the American Indian student service personnel offices were located at their respective institutions, the American

Indian student service personnel offices provided excellent "pick up" and "drop off" locations for students who volunteered to participate in this study. Personnel in those offices then forwarded the completed survey instruments for data analysis.

After the 100 survey instruments were completed and analyzed, American Indian student "focus groups" were conducted at two post-secondary schools: the University of North Dakota and Saint Cloud (MN) State University). Both post-secondary schools had significant American Indian student populations and both had American Indian student support staff willing to help facilitate a focus group. Both focus groups at the two participating post-secondary schools consisted of American Indian students representing the four major groups in this study: traditional-aged female students (students 18-24 years of age), female students older than average (students 25 years of age and older), traditional-aged male students (students 18-24 years of age), and male students older than average (students 25 years of age and older). The focus groups consisted of eight and nine students respectively. The questions that were posed to the students in the focus groups were developed from responses of students who completed the survey instruments (See Appendix C). The qualitative focus group responses helped validate the quantitative survey instrument responses.

Data Analysis

After the survey instruments were collected, and after both focus group responses were secured, analysis of the data transpired. The responses were tabulated for each objective item, and computed percentage distributions of responses for all respondents by age and gender. The tabulated responses were organized into nine categories for

reporting purposes. The responses to open-ended items were compiled in total, by age category, and by gender. The tabulated responses were analyzed by age and by gender. Focus groups were organized and responses were analyzed according to the nine main themes and the results were used to reinforce the quantitative survey results.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter is used to report the findings of the study. Data were collected through a survey instrument and in focus groups. The first two research questions were answered through an analysis of survey responses and are considered in the first two sections of the chapter. The third and fourth sections are focused on the final two research questions and data from the focus groups. Responses were received from all 100 subjects. Therefore, there were 50 female respondents and 50 male respondents, 50 students age 18-24 and 50 students 25 years of age or older, and 20 students from each of five selected institutions of higher education.

Research Question One

The first research question was used to consider the perceptions of American Indian students regarding their experiences in higher education. Survey items were divided among nine categories: preparation, skills, focus and planning, financial aid/resources, affiliation, culture, health, family, and teaching/advisement. Each of those is considered separately in this portion of the chapter.

Preparation

The 10 items which followed the demographics questions on the instrument dealt in various ways with preparation for higher education. Those items were focused on students' perceptions of grades in high school, plans to attend college, participation in

extracurricular activities, the degree to which high school prepared them for college, attendance at a two-year institution prior to attendance at their current institutions, support from family, support from friends, assistance from high school counselors, and presence and educational attainment of parents.

When asked about their high school grades, 70% of the respondents reported their grades to have been above average. Average grades were reported by 22% and only 8% of the students considered their high school grades to have been below average. Two thirds (68%) of the respondents indicated that, while in high school, they had planned on attending college. Eleven percent of all respondents reported that they had been undecided about attending college. Only 21% of the subjects reported that they had not planned to attend college. Three fourths of the subjects had participated in extracurricular activities while in high school. Only 25%, therefore, had not participated in extracurricular activities in high school.

The next survey item was used to ask students to indicate their perceptions of the degree to which high school had prepared them for college. For each of two parts to this item, a 10-point scale was provided with "1" indicating the lowest possible level of preparation and "10" representing a high level of preparation. The first of those was focused on students' perceptions of their academic preparation. Responses to that item had a mean score of 5.8, virtually at the midpoint of 5.5 on the provided scale. When asked to consider how well high school had prepared them socially for college, the students' responses had a mean of 6.1.

A follow-up question to the high school academic and social preparation questions was "Did you attend a 2-year college before you enrolled at this institution." Over one third (38%) of all survey respondents stated they did attend a two-year college before they enrolled at their present institution. Almost two thirds (62%) of all survey respondents stated that the institution they were attending was the only institution they had ever attended.

The next two survey items were used to obtain students' perceptions of support from their family and friends when they decided to attend college. Most (86%) of the students reported that their families were supportive of their decisions. Five (5%) students responded that their families were not supportive and nine (9%) indicated that their families were indifferent. Friends were perceived to have been less supportive and more indifferent to the students' decisions to attend college as 69% reported friends as supportive, 4% as not supportive, and 27% as indifferent.

Generally, high school counselors were perceived to be not helpful to the subjects once they decided to attend college. Only 11% of respondents indicated that the counselor had been "helpful," while 27% reported the perception that the counselor had been "somewhat helpful" and the majority of respondents (62%) reported the counselor to have been "not helpful."

Of the 100 students who participated in this study, almost three fourths (71%) reported that both of their parents were still alive while they were in college. An additional 25% of the survey respondents stated that either their mother or their father

was still alive while they were in college. Only four students who participated in this study reported that both parents were deceased while they were in college.

Almost three fourths (74%) of the students surveyed reported that their mothers had earned at least a high school diploma. A similar proportion (72%) of the students indicated that their fathers had earned at least a high school diploma. College degrees had been earned by 14% of the mothers and 14% of the fathers of these students. Graduate degrees had been received by mothers of 5% of the students and by fathers of 4%.

Skills

Five survey items were focused on the subjects' perceptions of skills they have in college. The skill areas were study skills, self-discipline, problem solving skills, financial budgeting skills, and time management skills. As shown in Table 1, students were most likely to rate as above average their problem solving skills, followed by self-discipline. Time management skills and financial budgeting skills were least likely to be rated as above average. However, it should be noted that no more than 25% of respondents ranked themselves as having below average skills in any category and most students considered their skills to be average in all categories.

Focus

Three items on the survey instrument were considered to have dealt with students' focus in college. The first of those asked respondents if they had decided upon a career when they first entered college. About half (51%) reported that they had decided upon a career while the others (49%) did not have a career decision made when they entered

Table 1

Students' Perceptions of Their Skills in College

Skill category	Number of Respondents		
	Above Average	Average	Below Average
Study skills	21	58	21
Self-discipline	27	57	16
Problem solving	36	58	6
Budgeting	18	59	23
Time management	14	61	25

college. Identical proportions of respondents were found for the question, "Have you ever changed majors in college?"

The third item, focused on planning, asked students if, while in college, they had seen a clear connection between a college degree and a good job. Most (84%) of the respondents reported that, yes, they did see such a connection while 16% did not indicate having that perception.

Resources

Students' perceptions of resources available to them in college were identified through five survey items. The first two of those were concerned with financial aid, while the others addressed institutional resources and work opportunities. As shown in Table 2, respondents had varying perceptions about financial aid. While 59% reported that they

had adequate financial aid, 41% did not perceive such adequacy of support. When asked if they could count on their parents to assist them financially if they did not have adequate financial aid, one fourth of students surveyed reported that they could count on parents while over half (55%) indicated they could not. The remaining 20% said that the issue was not applicable to their circumstances.

Table 2

Students' Perceptions of Financial Aid in College

Survey Items	Number of Respondents		
	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Adequate financial aid?	59	41	—
If not, count on parents to assist you?	25	55	20

Students were asked if, while in college, they had reasonable access to institutional resources such as faculty, staff, support services, library, typewriters, computers, and student union facilities. Ninety-one percent of the respondents indicated that, yes, they did have reasonable access to institutional resources while nine percent reported that they did not.

Over one third (36%) of the respondents reported that they did not work while attending college while 64% had worked or were working. Part-time employment was reported by 47 respondents and 17 indicated that they were working full-time. With the growth in the number and size of operations of American Indian owned and operated casinos, there was some interest in whether employment in such facilities could cause

American Indian students to consider delaying their college careers. Seventeen percent of the respondents indicated that they had considered such an action.

Affiliation

Three items on the survey instrument were used to collect data on social or other affiliation with other students. When asked if they had affiliated with any social, pre-professional, or other groups or clubs, 62% of the respondents indicated that they had while 38% had not.

Eighty-five percent of students surveyed responded that they had good friends in college. While 15% did not report having good friends, 59% indicated that they had a few good friends and 26% responded that they had "a lot" of good friends in college. The final question on affiliation was used to ask students if they studied with other students. While 18% of the respondents "never" studied with other students, 63% studied "infrequently" with others and 19% studied "regularly" with other students.

Culture

The largest category of survey items is related to issues of culture and racism. Students were asked to provide their perceptions about their comfort level in classes; cultural sensitivity of majority students, faculty, and staff; role models; and racism on campus. Table 3 is used to display findings related to students' comfort levels in college. Two items were used to collect those data. The first item was used to ask students how comfortable they were in their classes. While 60% of respondents indicated that they were usually comfortable, 20% reported that they were always comfortable and the remaining one fifth (20%) reported that they were not comfortable in classes. When asked how

comfortable they were in identifying themselves in college as American Indians, 80% of the respondents reported that they were comfortable, 14% were usually comfortable with such identity, and 6% indicated that they were not comfortable identifying themselves as American Indian in college.

Table 3

Students' Comfort Levels in College

How comfortable are you in:	Percent of Respondents		
	Always	Usually	Not Comfortable
Your classes?	20	60	20
Identifying yourself as American Indian?	80	14	6

Two items were used to identify the respondents' perceptions of the cultural sensitivity of non-ethnic minority persons on their campuses. One item was focused on students and the other on faculty and staff. The American Indian students who participated in this survey were more likely to perceive majority faculty and staff as being culturally sensitive than they were of students. While nearly three fourths (72%) of respondents indicated that faculty and staff were always or usually culturally sensitive, considerably fewer (58%) had that view of students. Forty-two percent found students not to be culturally sensitive, in comparison with 26% who held that view of faculty and staff.

Table 4

Students' Perceptions of Whether Non-Ethnic Minority Individuals Exhibit Cultural Sensitivity in College

Category of Individuals	Percent of Respondents		
	Yes	Usually	No
Students	19	39	42
Faculty & staff	38	36	26

When asked if there were American Indian faculty and staff at their colleges who could be considered role models, 89% of the respondents indicated that, yes, there were such individuals.

Racism was the subject of two survey items. When asked if they had personally experienced any types of racism in college, 60% of the students responded that they had while 40% had not. Students were then asked, "If you have experienced racism at college, did you consider dropping out of school because of it?" While 26% of the respondents indicated that this question was not applicable to them, 13% reported that they had considered dropping out due to racism and 61% indicated that they had not considered dropping out of college because they had experienced racism.

Health

Two survey items were focused on health-related issues. The first was used to determine if the students had had any significant health problems while in college. The second item was focused on students' perceptions as to whether drinking or taking drugs

had a negative impact on their college careers. Significant health problems were reported by one fifth (20%) of all respondents. Approximately one fourth (24%) of the students indicated that drinking or taking drugs had negatively impacted their college careers. Of those 24 students, 10 reported that such activity had had a significant negative impact and 14 indicated that the impact had been marginal.

Family

Students were asked if any member of their immediate or extended families had had medical or personal problems that negatively impacted the students' college careers. Nearly half (48%) indicated that medical or personal problems of family members had negatively impacted their college careers. While 27 students said such impact had been marginal, 21 suggested that the impact had been significant. As noted above, nearly half of the students had been impacted negatively by medical or personal problems of family members.

Two other survey items also were used to collect data regarding family issues of college students, both of those focused on dependent children of the respondents. Forty-two percent of the students had dependent children. Students were then asked if child care services had been adequate. Of the 42 who had dependent children, 29 perceived that child care services were adequate, 12 indicated that services were inadequate, and 1 did not provide a useable response.

Teaching/Advisement

The final category of student perceptions was focused on teaching and advisement. Four items on the instrument were used in this category. As noted previously, 89% of the

students had reported that there were American Indian faculty and staff at their colleges who could be considered role models. When asked if any faculty member had ever shown a personal and/or academic interest in them as students, three fourths of the student indicated that they had perceived such interest. Approximately three fourths (76%) of the respondents noted that they had a favorite instructor in college. The final item dealt with the perceived quality of advising students received while in college. Above average advisement was reported by 20% of the respondents, average by 62%, and below average by 18%.

Research Question Two

For the second research question, analyses were conducted to determine if the perceptions of American Indian students regarding their experiences in higher education varied according to gender or age. The survey items were divided again among the nine categories of preparation, skills, focus, resources, affiliation, culture, health, family, and teaching/advisement. Similarities and/or differences by gender or age are reported for each category.

Preparation

Ten survey items were used to consider the respondents' perceptions of their preparation for higher education. Each is considered below with the analysis focused on the gender and the age of respondents. When asked to provide their perceptions of their high school grades as having been above average, average, or below average, differences emerged according to both gender and age. While all categories of students considered themselves to have had above average grades, females were more likely than males to

have that perception. As shown in Table 2, 76% of female respondents reported above average grades in comparison with 64% of males. The differences were more pronounced for age. While 84% of students of traditional college age (18-24) reported having had above average high school grades, that level of achievement was reported by only 56% of students older than average. All of the students who reported having below average grades were in the older student category.

Table 5

Respondents' Perceptions of High School Grades, by Gender and by Age

	Percent of Respondents		
	Above Average	Average	Below Average
Gender			
Female	76	16	8
Male	64	28	8
Age			
Traditional	84	16	0
Older	56	28	16

While two thirds (68%) of all respondents indicated that, while in high school, they had planned on attending college, differences exist when considering age, but not gender. As shown in Table 6, 70% of females and 66% of males reported that they had planned to attend college. While 86% of traditional age students had made such plans, only one half (50%) of the older than average students reported that while in high school they had

planned on going to college. Thirty-eight percent of the older respondents indicated that they had not planned on attending college.

Table 6

Respondents' Perceptions of Whether They Had Planned During High School on Attending College, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents Planning on College Yes	No	Undecided
Gender:			
Female	70	18	12
Male	66	24	10
Age:			
Traditional	86	4	10
Older	50	38	12

Three fourths of the subjects had participated in extracurricular activities while in high school. However, the proportions differed according to both gender and age with males and traditional age students more likely to have participated than females and older than average respondents, as shown in Table 7. Older than average female students were least likely to have participated in high school extracurricular activities with 64% having done so and 36% having not participated.

The next survey item was used to ask students to indicate their perceptions of the degree to which high school had prepared them for college. For each of two parts to this item, a 10-point scale was provided, with "1" indicating the lowest possible level of

Table 7

Participation in High School Extracurricular Activities, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents Who Participated	Did Not Participate
Gender:		
Female	68	32
Male	82	18
Age:		
Traditional	82	18
Older	68	32

preparation and "10" representing a high level of preparation. The midpoint on the provided scale was 5.5. As shown in Table 8, scores on academic preparation for college were similar for females (6.0) and males (5.7). Older than average students considered themselves to have been less well prepared for college (mean score = 5.1) and traditional age students reported the highest mean of 6.6.

When asked to consider how well high school had prepared them socially for college, the students' responses were similar to those for academic preparation. Female and male participants had similar mean scores while the older than average students had the lowest mean score (5.2) and traditional age respondents had the highest (7.0).

The next two survey items were used to obtain students' perceptions of support from their family and friends when they decided to attend college. Only 5 of 100 students stated that their families were not supportive of them attending college. Four of those

Table 8

Participants' Perceptions of Their Preparation in High School for College, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Mean Score for Preparation Academically	Socially
Gender:		
Female	6.0	6.1
Male	5.7	6.0
Age:		
Traditional	6.6	7.0
Older	5.1	5.2

students were older than average females and one was an older than average male student (see Table 9). Friends were perceived to have been less supportive and more indifferent to the students' decisions to attend college. As shown in Table 10, this was particularly true for older than average students, 34% of whom reported indifference by their friends to their decisions to attend college.

The majority of high school counselors (62%) were reported to have been "not helpful" to the subjects once they decided to attend college. While approximately half (52%) of traditional age students reported their counselors to have been helpful or somewhat helpful, three fourths (76%) of older than average students perceived that their high school counselors had not been helpful to them once they decided to attend college (see Table 11).

Table 9

Respondents' Perceptions of Whether They Had Support From Family When They Decided to Attend College, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Supportive	Percent of Respondents Not Supportive	Indifferent
Gender:			
Female	84	8	8
Male	88	2	10
Age:			
Traditional	96	0	4
Older	76	10	14

Table 10

Respondents' Perceptions of Whether They Had Support From Friends When They Decided to Attend College, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Supportive	Percent of Respondents Not Supportive	Indifferent
Gender:			
Female	72	4	24
Male	66	4	30
Age:			
Traditional	78	2	20
Older	60	6	34

Table 11

Respondents' Perceptions of Whether Their High School Counselors Were Helpful When They Decided to Attend College, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Helpful	Percent of Respondents Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful
Gender:			
Female	12	24	64
Male	10	30	60
Age:			
Traditional	16	36	48
Older	6	18	76

Skills

Five survey items were focused on the subjects' perceptions of skills they have in college. The skill areas were study skills, self-discipline, problem solving skills, financial budgeting skills, and time management skills. As shown in Table 12, students were most likely to rate as above average their problem solving skills, followed by self-discipline. Time management skills and financial budgeting skills were least likely to be rated as above average. However, it should be noted that no more than 30% of respondents ranked themselves as having below average skills in any category and most students considered their skills to be average in all categories.

Table 12

Students' Perceptions of Their Skills in College, by Gender

Skill Category by Gender	Percent of Respondents Above Average	Average	Below Average
Study skills			
Female	26	62	12
Male	16	54	30
Self-discipline			
Female	26	60	14
Male	28	54	18
Problem solving			
Female	34	60	6
Male	38	56	6
Budgeting			
Female	18	60	22
Male	18	58	24
Time management			
Female	14	66	20
Male	14	56	30

Focus

Three items on the survey instrument were considered to have dealt with students' focus in college. The first of those asked respondents if they had decided upon a career when they first entered college. About half (51%) reported that they had decided upon a career while the others (49%) did not have a career decision made when they entered college. Identical proportions of respondents were found for the question, "Have you ever changed majors in college?"

Table 13

Students' Perceptions of Their Skills in College, by Age

Skill Category by Age Group	Percent of Respondents Above Average	Average	Below Average
Study skills			
Traditional	20	58	22
Older than avg	22	58	20
Self-discipline			
Traditional	22	66	12
Older than avg	32	48	20
Problem solving			
Traditional	36	60	4
Older than avg	36	56	8
Budgeting			
Traditional	18	62	20
Older than avg	18	56	26
Time management			
Traditional	12	64	24
Older than avg	16	58	26

The third item focused on planning asked students if, while in college, they had seen a clear connection between a college degree and a good job. Most (84%) of the respondents reported that, yes, they did see such a connection while 16% did not indicate having that perception.

Resources

Financial aid and other resources were the focus of five survey items. The first two dealt with whether students had received adequate financial aid to attend college and,

if not, whether their parents could be counted on for financial assistance. As shown in Table 14, there was little difference in adequacy of financial aid when comparing female and male students. However, students of traditional age were more likely to perceive that they had adequate financial aid than were older than average students.

Table 14

Respondents' Perceptions of Whether They Had Adequate Financial Aid, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents: Adequate Aid	Percent of Respondents: Not Adequate
Gender:		
Female	60	40
Male	58	42
Age:		
Traditional	66	34
Older	52	48

Parents could be counted upon to provide financial assistance by one fourth of the respondents. The proportions of females and males are similar, 26% and 24% respectively (see Table 15). Older than average students were less able to count on such parental support as 40% of traditional students but only 10% of older students reported such support.

One item was focused on access to such institutional resources as faculty, staff, support services, library, computers, and student union facilities. As shown in Table 16,

Table 15

Respondents' Perceptions of Whether Parents Could Provide Financial Assistance, by Gender and by Age

Demographic	Percent of Respondents		
	Could Assist	Could Not Assist	Not Appl.
Gender:			
Female	26	56	18
Male	24	54	22
Age:			
Traditional	40	40	20
Older	10	70	20

most students (91%) had access to such resources. There were similar results from females (88%) and males (94%). Traditional age students were more likely (98%) to have reported reasonable access to institutional services than older than average students (84%).

The final two resources items were focused on working. While 64% of both female and male students reported that they worked while attending college, males were more likely to be working, or to have worked, on a full-time basis (see Table 17). While 14% of female respondents worked, that percentage rose to 20% for males. Older than average students were more likely to have worked full-time with 26% of those respondents having done so in comparison with 8% of the traditional age students.

Table 16

Respondents' Perceptions of Reasonable Access to Institutional Resources, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents with Access Yes	No
Gender:		
Female	88	12
Male	94	6
Age:		
Traditional	98	2
Older	84	16

Table 17

Percent of Respondents Who Worked While Attending College, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents		
	Worked Part-Time	Worked Full-Time	Did Not Work
Gender:			
Female	50	14	36
Male	44	20	36
Age:			
Traditional	54	8	38
Older	40	26	34

The final resource question was focused on the appeal of working in a tribally-owned casino. Table 18 is used to display the responses from that item. While no more than 20% of any group of respondents had considered delaying college to work in a casino, the highest proportion was among older than average students.

Table 18

Percent of Respondents Who Considered Delaying College to Work at a Casino, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents: Considered Casino Work	Percent of Respondents: Did Not Consider Casino Work
Gender:		
Female	18	82
Male	16	84
Age:		
Traditional	14	86
Older	20	80

Affiliation

Three survey items were focused on affiliation of students with other students. The first of those identified students who had affiliated with social, pre-professional, or other groups or clubs. As shown in Table 19, such affiliation was reported by nearly two thirds of the respondents, with similar results according to both gender and age. However, it should be pointed out that older than average men had the highest affiliation

(76%) while older than average women were least likely to have had such affiliation (48%).

Table 19

Percent of Respondents Who Affiliated with College Groups or Clubs, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents Affiliated	Did Not Affiliate
Gender:		
Female	58	42
Male	66	34
Age:		
Traditional	62	38
Older	62	38

The second item dealing with affiliation was used to ask students if they had good friends in college. Across all groups, approximately one fourth of respondents indicated that they had a "lot of" good friends while over half had "a few" good friends (see Table 20). Most likely to have reported no friends were older than average males (20%) and traditional age females (24%).

The final affiliation item asked students if they studied with other students. While most students studied with other students, approximately three times as many studied in

that manner infrequently when compared with those who studied with others regularly. Similar proportions were found when respondents were considered by gender and by age.

Table 20

Perception of Respondents Regarding Good Friends in College, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents: Yes, Lot of Friends	Yes, a Few Friends	No Friends
Gender:			
Female	26	58	16
Male	26	60	14
Age:			
Traditional	28	56	16
Older	24	62	14

Table 21

Percent of Respondents Who Studied with Other Students, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents: Yes, Regularly	Yes, Infrequently	Never
Gender:			
Female	22	60	18
Male	16	66	18
Age:			
Traditional	20	64	16
Older	18	62	20

Culture

The survey instrument contained seven items that were developed to identify students' perceptions of culture on their college campuses. Two items were used to collect data regarding the comfort level of students. Two others sought information about perceptions of cultural sensitivity of majority persons on campus. One item was used to identify the presence of role models. The remaining two cultural items were focused on perceptions of racism and its impact on the students.

Students reported that they were usually comfortable in their college classes. Males were more likely to report being "always comfortable," as were traditional age students (see Table 22). Older than average female students were least likely (8%) to have reported themselves as always comfortable and traditional age males were most likely (32%) to have that perception.

Table 22

Perceived Comfort Level of Respondents in College Classes, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents: Always Comfortable	Usually Comfortable	Not Comfortable
Gender:			
Female	14	64	22
Male	26	56	18
Age:			
Traditional	26	60	14
Older	14	60	26

The second survey item concerning comfort levels of students asked students if they were comfortable identifying themselves as American Indians. Most students reported that they were always comfortable identifying themselves as American Indians. As shown in Table 23, similarities exist across groups by gender and by age.

Table 23

Perceived Comfort Level of Respondents in Identifying Themselves as American Indians, by Gender and by Age

Category	Demographic Percent of Respondents		
	Always Comfortable	Usually Comfortable	Not Comfortable
Gender:			
Female	80	16	4
Male	80	12	8
Age:			
Traditional	76	18	6
Older	84	10	6

Students were asked if non-ethnic minority students on their campuses exhibited cultural sensitivity. As shown in Table 24, there were a variety of opinions on this item. Females were more likely than males to respond that, yes, majority students were culturally sensitive. Greater differences are evident when considering the age of respondents. While 50% of older than average students reported that majority students were not culturally sensitive, this view was reported by 34% of students of traditional age.

Table 24

Perceptions of Respondents of the Cultural Sensitivity of Non-ethnic Minority Students, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents Considering Others To Be Culturally Sensitive		
	Yes, Sensitive	Usually Sensitive	Not Sensitive
Gender:			
Female	24	36	40
Male	14	42	44
Age:			
Traditional	22	44	34
Older	16	34	50

When students were asked to consider the cultural sensitivity of non-ethnic minority faculty and staff, there were obvious differences according to the gender and the age of the respondents. While three fourths of all respondents indicated that majority faculty and staff were culturally sensitive, males were more likely to categorize the prevalence of this sensitivity with the response of “yes” while females were more likely to use the response “usually.” Greater differences existed when the data were analyzed by the age of the respondents. While half of the traditional age students reported that, yes, non-ethnic minority faculty and staff exhibited cultural sensitivity, this response was given by one fourth of the older than average students. Twice as many older students (44% to 22%) indicated that majority faculty and staff were not culturally sensitive.

Table 25

Perceptions of Respondents of the Cultural Sensitivity of Non-ethnic Minority Faculty and Staff, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents Considered Yes, Sensitive	Usually Sensitive	Not Sensitive
Gender:			
Female	32	42	26
Male	44	30	26
Age:			
Traditional	50	28	22
Older	26	30	44

Students were asked if there were American Indian faculty and staff at their colleges who could be considered as role models. Table 26 is used to report the data for that item, analyzed by gender and by age of the respondents. Most students reported the presence of such role models on their campuses. While females and males had similar responses, older students were more likely to have identified American Indian role models among faculty and staff than were students of traditional age.

Students were asked if they had personally experienced any type of racism in college. As shown in Table 27, 60% of all respondents reported such experience. While the results were similar when analyzed by gender, older than average students were more likely to have reported having had personal experiences with racism on their college campuses.

Table 26

Perception of Respondents Regarding American Indian Faculty and Staff Role Models, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents Yes, There Are Role Models	No, There Are No Role Models
Gender:		
Female	90	10
Male	88	12
Age:		
Traditional	86	14
Older	92	18

Table 27

Percent of Respondents Who Had Personal Experienced Any Type of Racism in College, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents Who Experienced Racism Yes	No
Gender:		
Female	62	38
Male	58	42
Age:		
Traditional	52	48
Older	68	32

Students were then asked if they had considered dropping out of school because of an experience with racism. Females and older than average students were more likely to have considered such a response to racism than males and students of traditional age. While 28% of older than average females had considered dropping out of school, none of the traditional age males had done so.

Table 28

Percent of Respondents Who Considered Dropping Out of School Because of An Experience with Racism, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents Who Considered Dropping Out of School: Yes	No	Not Applicable
Gender:			
Female	18	52	30
Male	8	70	22
Age:			
Traditional	4	58	38
Older	22	64	14

Health

One of the survey items was focused on whether students had had any significant health problems while in college. While 24% of female students in both categories of age and older than average male students had experienced significant health problems, such problems were reported by 8% of traditional age males.

Students were asked if drinking or taking drugs had a negative impact on their college careers. As shown in Table 29, 16% of males reported having had a significant negative effect on their careers from drinking or taking drugs. Another 18% reported a marginal negative impact, in comparison with 4% of females who reported a significant impact and 10% who reported a marginal impact. While there were considerable differences by gender, similar differences did not exist when comparing students by age.

Table 29

Perception of Respondents Regarding Negative Impact of Drinking or Taking Drugs, by Gender and by Age

Demographic	Percent of Respondents Reporting Negative Impact		
Category	Significant Impact	Marginal Impact	No Impact
Gender:			
Female	4	10	86
Male	16	18	66
Age:			
Traditional	10	16	74
Older	10	12	78

Family

Three survey items were focused on issues of family. The first was used to determine if medical or personal problems of family members had had negative impact on the students' college careers. The other two dealt with dependent children. As shown in Table 30, 48% of all respondents reported having had their college careers negatively

impacted by medical or personal problems of members of their immediate or extended family. The proportions of students reporting such impact were similar by gender. However, females were more likely to report such impact as significant rather than as marginal. When the data were analyzed by age of the students, it was found that 20% of traditional age students and 22% of older than average students reported having had significant negative impact from family members' problems. The proportions were somewhat different, however, when considering marginal impact, as 34% of older students reported such impact in comparison to 20% of students of traditional age. Therefore, 44% of older students reported no impact while 60% of traditional students had not been impacted by family members' problems.

Table 30

Perception of Respondents Regarding Negative Impact of Medical or Personal Problems of Family Members, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents Reporting Negative Impact		
	Significant Impact	Marginal Impact	No Impact
Gender:			
Female	24	24	52
Male	18	30	52
Age:			
Traditional	20	20	60
Older	22	34	44

Students were asked if they had dependent children. As shown in Table 31, 42% of respondents reported having children, with the proportions similar for females and males. However, when considering age of the respondents, differences were evident, with 70% of the older students having children in comparison with 14% of the students of traditional age. The difference was most apparent when considering both age and gender. Eight percent of traditional age female students reported having dependent children while 80% of older than average female students did the same.

Table 31

Percent of Respondents Who Had Dependent Children, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents With Children	Percent of Respondents Without Children
Gender:		
Female	44	56
Male	40	60
Age:		
Traditional	14	86
Older	70	30

Students were then asked if child care services were adequate to meet their needs as college students. Twice as many females described child care services as adequate than inadequate while three times as many males reported adequate services. While older than average students were twice as likely to report adequate child care services, traditional age students with children were six times more likely to describe services as adequate.

Table 32

Perception of Respondents Regarding Adequacy of Child Care Services, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents Citing Child Care As Adequate	Inadequate	No Children
Gender:			
Female	28	14	58
Male	30	10	60
Age:			
Traditional	12	2	60
Older	46	22	44

Faculty/Advisement

The final category of student perceptions of their college experience was focused on faculty and advisement. The data from three survey items are reported in this category. One survey item was used to determine the students' perceptions of the quality of academic advising they had been given. Table 33 is used to provide the results from that item. Male students were more likely to report academic advising as below average and less likely to report it as above average. While 20% of students in both age categories rated their academic advisement as above average, 20% of older than average students gave their advising a below average rating in comparison with 16% of the students of traditional age.

Table 33

Perception of Respondents Regarding the Quality of Academic Advising, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents Citing Advisement As Above Average	Average	Below Average
Gender:			
Female	28	52	20
Male	12	72	16
Age:			
Traditional	20	64	16
Older	20	60	20

When students were asked if any faculty member had ever shown a personal and/or academic interest in them as students, three fourths of all respondents indicated that they had experienced such attention. As shown in Table 34, the proportions were similar when responses were compared by gender and by age.

Approximately three fourths (76%) of the students reported that they had a favorite instructor in college. Older than average females were most likely to have reported having a favorite instructor while traditional age males were least likely to have given that response. As shown in Table 35, 84% of female respondents reported that they had a favorite instructor, in comparison with 68% of the males, and 82% of older than average students had a favorite instructor, in comparison with 70% of students of traditional age.

Table 34

Percent of Respondents Who Had Been Shown Interest by a Faculty Member, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents Shown Interest	Not Shown Interest
Gender:		
Female	72	28
Male	78	22
Age:		
Traditional	74	26
Older	76	24

Table 35

Percent of Respondents Who Had a Favorite Instructor, by Gender and by Age

Demographic Category	Percent of Respondents Yes	No
Gender:		
Female	84	16
Male	68	32
Age:		
Traditional	70	30
Older	82	18

Research Question Three

The third research question was used to ascertain the perceptions of American Indian students on why they might drop out of college before graduating. Data in Tables 36-38 help answer this research question. Narratives highlighting the responses are included after each table. Quotes from the two focus groups have been inserted in the narrative sections to reinforce the validity of the survey responses.

Almost one half (45%) of all survey respondents indicated that inadequate financial aid was a reason American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. Female students stated more often than male students (50% to 38%) that inadequate financial aid was a reason students might drop out before graduating. "Even working part-time, receiving federal and state grants, plus a small stipend from my tribe, I'm still short of money all the time." "I have no extra funds to do anything special like take a trip or go on spring break like many other students."

Over one fifth (22%) of all survey respondents reported that being academically unprepared for college was a reason students might drop out before graduating. "I'm from a reservation school. We had very few biology, science or chemistry classes. Many of the classes I'm taking at UND today I had no background in from high school." "My science teacher from high school was really old and not very good." "[I had] difficult classes and messed up early in [my] college career."

Table 36

Students' Perceptions, by Gender, of Reasons American Indian Students Drop Out of College

	Number of Respondents		
	Male	Female	Total
Inadequate financial aid to attend college	19	26	45
Academically unprepared for college	10	12	22
Not enough institutional support	11	8	19
Not enough family support	10	7	17
Cultural isolation	9	6	15
Cultural shock	4	8	12
Racism at college	2	9	11
Childcare problems	4	7	11
Too many responsibilities besides school	4	6	10
Alcohol & drug use/abuse	5	5	10
Personal & health problems	3	4	7
Lack of motivation	4	2	6
No clear goals in college	4	1	5
Socially unprepared for college	2	2	4
Transportation problems	2	2	4
Lack of support from friends	2	1	3
Lack of role models	2	1	3
Low self-esteem	0	3	3
Loneliness	1	2	3

Almost one fifth (19%) of all survey respondents reported that not having enough institutional support was a reason American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. Male students were more concerned about a lack of institutional support to attend school than female students (22% to 16%). "[I was] not aware of institutional resources." "Lack of support except from the American Indian Center staff and college work-study students."

Almost one fifth (17%) of all students surveyed indicated that not having enough family support was a reason American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. Male students stated more often than female students (20% to 14%) that a lack of family support was a reason students might drop out of college before graduating. "When I moved to UND from my home, I lost my daily contacts of support from my family and friends. It took me a long time to develop a new network of support people at college."

Between 10% and 15% of all students surveyed that cultural isolation (15%), cultural shock (12%), racism at college (11%), childcare problems (11%), too many responsibilities besides school (10%), and alcohol and drug use/abuse (10%) were reasons American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. Male students stated more often than female students (18% to 12%) that cultural isolation was a reason students might drop out of college before graduating. Female students, however, stated twice as often as male students (16% to 8%) that cultural shock was a reason students might drop out before graduating. Female students were also more likely to indicate that they were concerned about racism in college then male students. More than four times as

many female students than male students (18% to 4%) stated that racism was a reason American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. "I don't make friends easily, especially with White students." "UND does not seem to be a racist institution, but the community newspaper and the UND newspaper do not give good coverage to American Indian issues." "Non-native American cultures are so different than Native American cultures." "Racism is hard to constantly deal with. Repeatedly, I have had a hard time finding a decent place to rent because I am an Indian." "Childcare – some faculty will not cut you a break." Almost twice as many female students than male students (14% to 4%) stated that childcare problems could lead to American Indian students dropping out of college before graduating.

Three to seven percent of all students stated that personal and/or health problems, lack of motivation, no clear goals in college, being socially unprepared for college, having transportation problems, lack of support from friends, having a lack of role models, having low self-esteem, and loneliness were reasons American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. Four times as many male students as female students (8% to 2%) stated that having no clear goals in college was a reason students might drop out before graduating. Female students (6%) were the only respondents to state that low self-esteem was a reason American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. No male students made this statement. Students older than average (58%) stated more often than traditional-aged college students (32%) that not having adequate financial aid to attend college was a reason American Indian students might drop out before graduating. "My financial aid to attend school is inadequate."

Table 37

Students' Perception, by Age, of Reasons American Indian Students Might Drop Out of College

Reasons for Dropping Out	Number of Respondents, By Age SOTA	Trad	Total
Inadequate financial aid to attend school	29	16	45
Academically unprepared for college	8	14	22
Not enough institutional support	11	8	19
Not enough family support	13	4	17
Cultural isolation	3	12	15
Cultural shock	7	5	12
Racism at college	7	4	11
Childcare problems	8	3	11
Too many responsibilities besides school	6	4	10
Alcohol & drug use and/or abuse	8	2	10
Personal and/or health problems	6	1	7
Lack of motivation	2	4	6
No clear goals in college	2	3	5
Socially unprepared for college	2	2	4
Transportation problems	4	0	4
Lack of support from friends	1	2	3
Lack of role models	2	1	3
Low self-esteem	1	2	3
Loneliness	0	3	3

Traditional-aged students (28%) stated more often than students older than average (16%) that being academically unprepared for college was a reason American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. “The system makes it easy to drop out. Tough classes, poor/mediocre grades, insufficient financial aid. If a student is on academic probation, it’s easy to just leave.”

Students older than average (26%) stated more often than traditional-aged students (8%) that not having enough family support was a reason American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. Traditional-aged students stated four times more often than students older than average (24% to 6%) that being uncomfortable in school and/or feeling culturally isolated were reasons American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. “I didn’t have the opportunity to socialize much in high school. I was socially retarded when I arrived on campus.”

Students older than average stated almost three times more often than traditional-aged students (16% to 6%) that childcare problems were a reason American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. Students older than average also stated more often than traditional-aged students (16% to 4%) that using and/or abusing alcohol and/or drugs were reasons American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. Students older than average were six times more likely than traditional-aged students (12% to 2%) to state that personal and/or health problems were reasons American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. While eight percent of students older than average stated that transportation problems were

reasons American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating, no traditional-aged students gave that reason.

Table 38

Students' Perceptions, by Gender and Age, of Reasons American Indian Students Might Drop Out of College

Reasons for Dropping Out	Number of Respondents F-SOTA	F-TRAD	M-SOTA	M-TRAD	Total
Inadequate financial aid to college	15	11	14	5	45
Academically unprepared for college	4	8	4	6	22
Not enough institutional support	4	4	7	4	19
Not enough family support	6	1	7	3	17
Cultural isolation	2	4	1	8	15
Cultural shock	4	4	3	1	12
Racism at college	6	3	1	1	11
Childcare problems	5	2	3	1	11
Too many responsibilities besides school	4	2	2	2	10
Alcohol and drug use and/or abuse	3	2	5	0	10
Personal and/or health problems	3	1	3	0	7
Lack of motivation	0	2	2	2	6
No clear goals in college	0	1	2	2	5
Socially unprepared for college	0	2	2	0	4
Transportation problems	2	0	2	0	4
Lack of support from friends	0	1	1	1	3
Lack of role models	1	0	1	1	3
Low self-esteem	1	2	0	0	3
Loneliness	0	2	0	1	3

Female students older than average (F-SOTA) constituted the only group that stood out in this section of the research study. Almost one fourth (24%) of all female students older than average, compared to 7% of students in the other groups, stated that

racism was a reason American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. One fifth (20%) of female students older than average, compared to 8% of those in the other groups stated that childcare problems were a reason American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. Also one student stated, drop-outs were caused by "children, stress, pregnancy." Twice as many female students older than average (16% to 8%) stated that having too many responsibilities in addition to school was a reason American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. "I'm a student older than average and have children. I have a responsibility to my family before school or career."

One fourth (25%) of all traditional-aged male students stated that inadequate financial aid to attend school was a reason American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating compared to over one half (53%) of the students in the other groups. One fifth (20%) of all male students older than average, compared to 7% of students in the other groups, stated that using and/or abusing alcohol and/or drugs were reasons American Indian students might drop out of college before graduating. "Some of my friends drink and socialize a lot. This is a problem for many Native Americans in college."

Research Question Four

For the fourth research question, analyses were conducted to determine the perceptions of American Indian students regarding factors that contribute to persistence and eventual graduation from college. Tables 39-41 contain the data from those analyses. Narratives highlighting the responses are included after each table.

Table 39

Students' Perceptions, by Gender, of Factors that Contribute to American Indian Students' Persistence in College

Support Factors	Female	Male	Total
Institutional support	23	13	36
Personal motivation	16	15	31
Supportive family	16	10	26
Adequate financial aid to attend college	13	9	22
Clear goals in college	3	13	16
Supportive friends	8	6	14
Good support	7	2	9
Pride in one's self and culture	3	4	7
Good mentoring & tutoring	4	2	6
Good faculty support	4	1	5
Strong work ethic	2	3	5
Good role models	4	1	5
Comfortable environment	3	1	4
Self-confidence	2	2	4
Being a good role model for others	1	2	3
Good advising	1	2	3

More than one third (36%) of all survey respondents reported that institutional support was a factor that contributes to American Indian students persistence in college.

"The Native American faculty and staff are helpful to me in a lot of little and big ways." "American Indian support services." Almost twice as many female students (46% to 26%) wrote that institutional support was a factor that contributes to American Indian students graduating from college.

Almost one third (31%) of all survey respondents indicated that personal motivation was a factor that contributes to American Indian students persistence in college. This statement was supported by similar proportion of males and females. "Hard work and personal motivation" and "determination, perseverance" were cited as examples of personal motivation as a positive factor.

Over one fourth (26%) of all students surveyed wrote that having a supportive family was a factor that contributes to American Indian students persistence in college. More female students than male students (32% to 20%) indicated that having a supportive family was such a factor. "My mother is very supportive of me attending college. She has been an inspiration to me by how she works and how positive she is about life, work and school." "My family has been very supportive of me attending college. They will be very proud of me if/when I graduate."

Over one fifth (22%) of all students surveyed reported that having adequate financial aid was a factor that contributes to American Indian students persistence in college. Female students stated more often than male students (26% to 18%) that having adequate financial aid was an important factor.

Four times as many male students as female students (26% to 6%) stated that having clear goals in college was a factor in student persistence. "I don't want to work at

a casino forever or [have any] other menial job anywhere." "I'm a student older than average. I don't have a lot of time to fool around. I know what type of job and career I want and I'm here to move through the college degree I'm earning now." "I want a career that means something to a lot of people and something that I feel good about."

Having a supportive group of friends was listed by 14% of the students as a factor that contributes to student persistence. "I have good social support at college." Listing supportive friends as a contributing factor to student persistence was done almost equally between males and females.

Between three and nine percent of all students surveyed stated that good support (9%), pride in one's self and culture (7%), good mentoring and tutoring (6%), good faculty support (5%), a strong work ethic (5%), good role models (5%), a comfortable environment (4%), self-confidence (4%), being a good role model for others (3%), and good advising (3%) were factors that contribute to American Indian student persistence in college. More than three times as many females as males (14% to 4%) reported that good support was a contributing factor. Having good faculty support was listed four times more often by female students than by male students (8% to 2%). Having good role moels was also listed four times more often by female students than by male students (8% to 2%) as a factor that contributes to American Indian student retention in college. "Some of the non-Native faculty and staff are very supportive and nice." "My parents have college degrees. They expect me to earn a college degree also." "This institution makes me feel like a person, not just a body or number to be processed." "I want to be a good role model."

Table 40

Students' Perception, by Age, of Factors that Contribute to American Indian Student Persistence in College

Support Factors	Number of Respondents SOTA	Trad	Total
Institutional support	16	20	36
Personal motivation	16	15	31
Supportive family	14	12	26
Adequate financial aid to attend college	10	12	22
Clear goals in college	9	7	16
Supportive friends	8	6	14
Good support	6	3	9
Pride in one's self and culture	3	4	7
Good mentoring and tutoring	6	0	6
Good faculty support	5	0	5
Strong work ethic	2	3	5
Good role models	3	2	5
Comfortable environment	2	2	4
Self-confidence	1	3	4
Being a good role model for others	3	0	3
Good advising	2	1	3

Traditional aged students stated more often than students older than average (40% to 32%) that institutional support was a factor that contributed to student persistence. Twelve percent of all students older than average reported that good mentoring and tutoring were factors that contributed to American Indian students' persistence in college.

No traditional-aged college students made this statement. Ten percent of all students older than average stated that having good faculty support was a factor that contributed to student persistence. No traditional-aged students made this statement, either. The last data in this section show that six percent of all students older than average indicated that being a good role model for others was a factor in student persistence while no traditional-aged students made that statement.

Over one half (52%) of all traditional-aged female students compared to an average of 31% of students in the other groups, indicated that institutional support was a factor that contributes to American Indian students' persistence in college. Male students older than average were least likely to provide this reason for persistence.

Twelve percent of all traditional-aged male students compared to an average of 31% of students in the other groups, reported that institutional support was a factor that contributed to American Indian students' persistence in college. Four percent of traditional-aged male students compared to an average of 17% of those in the other groups, indicated that supportive friends were a factor that contributes to American Indian student persistence in college. No traditional-aged male students suggested that such support was a factor that contributed to American Indian student persistence in college.

Female students older than average stated more often than did those in the other groups (16% to 1%) that faculty support was a factor that contributed to American Indian student persistence in college. Female students older than average also indicated more often than the other groups (16% to 3%) that good mentoring and tutoring were factors that contribute to American Indian student persistence in college.

Table 41

Students' Perceptions, by Gender and Age, of Factors that Contribute to American Indian Student Persistence in College

Support Factors	Number of Respondents F-SOTA	F-TRAD	M-SOTA	M-TRAD	TOTAL
Institutional support	10	13	6	7	36
Personal motivation	7	9	9	6	31
Supportive family	7	9	7	3	26
Adequate financial aid to attend college	6	7	4	5	22
Clear goals in college	2	1	7	6	16
Supportive friends	3	5	5	1	14
Good support	4	3	2	0	9
Pride in one's self and culture	1	2	2	2	7
Good mentoring and tutoring	4	0	2	0	6
Good faculty support	4	0	1	0	5
Strong work ethic	1	1	1	2	5
Good role models	2	2	1	0	5
Comfortable environment	1	2	1	0	4
Self-confidence	0	2	1	1	4
Being a good role model for others	1	0	2	0	3
Good advising	1	1	1	1	3

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND COMMENTARY

The retention and graduation rates of American Indian students in post-secondary schools are poor relative to those of their Anglo-student counterparts. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of American Indian students regarding their experiences in higher education and factors that contribute to or construct barriers to the retention and graduation of American Indian students on the post-secondary level. This study may be important because it will assist faculty, staff, and administrators in helping American Indian students matriculate more successfully and thus have a greater likelihood of graduating from college.

This study was limited in scope to five post-secondary schools in North Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin and was focused only on current students. The survey instrument was constructed specifically for this study. It was assumed that the responses of the participants were fair and honest representations of their actual perceptions.

The study was designed to answer the following questions. (1) What are the perceptions of American Indian students regarding their experiences in selected institutions of higher education? (2) Are there differences in the perceptions of American Indian students according to gender and/or age? (3) What are the perceptions of American Indian students regarding reasons American Indian students might drop-out of

(4) What are the perceptions of American Indian students regarding factors that contribute to American Indian students graduating from college?

The five post-secondary schools selected for this study were the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, Bemidji (MN) State University, University of Minnesota – Duluth, Augsburg College (Minneapolis, MN), and the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire. A comparison was made of the data from four groups of American Indian students: traditional-age female students, traditional-age male students, older than average female students (25 years of age or over), and older than average male students. A total sample of 100 students was selected from the population of American Indian students attending the five institutions during the 1997-98 academic year. Personnel in each institution who were working with American Indian students were asked to select five students from each category of age and gender. Thus, 20 students were identified at each of the five institutions. The survey instruments were distributed and collected by those staff members. All 100 survey instruments were completed and returned.

Conclusions

1. American Indian students who are older than average have more obstacles to overcome to successfully matriculate and graduate from college than do traditional-age American Indian college students. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the best prepared), traditional-age students rated their academic preparation for college at 6.6 compared to 5.0 for students older than average. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the best prepared), traditional-age students rated their social preparation for college at 6.9 compared to 5.1 for students older than average. Most (86%) traditional-age students

planned on attending college while in high school compared to one half (50%) of students older than average. Almost all traditional-age students (96%) perceived that their families supported them when they decided to attend college compared to three fourths (76%) of students older than average. Over three fourths (76%) of American Indian students older than average stated that their high school counselors were not helpful to them when they decided to attend college compared to less than half (48%) of traditional-age students. Two thirds (66%) of traditional-age students stated that their financial aid to enable them to attend college was adequate compared to half (52%) of students older than average. While 40% of traditional-age students perceived that they could count on their parents to assist them financially to attend college if their financial aid was inadequate, 10% of older than average American Indians reported that perception. Over two thirds (68%) of students older than average stated that they personally experienced racism in college compared to half (52%) of traditional-age American Indian college students.

2. Female American Indian students are prepared better to attend post-secondary schools than are male American Indian students. Three fourths (76%) of female students reported that they had above average high school grades compared to approximately two thirds of male students. While 12% of female American Indian students indicated that their study skills in college were below average, 30% of male students reported that perception. Over half (60%) of female students reported that they had a career decided upon when they entered college compared to 42% of . Only 20% of female American Indian students reported that their time management skills in college were below average

compared to 30% of males. Over one fourth (28%) of female students indicated that the academic advising they received in college was above average compared to 12% of male students. Fourteen percent of female students reported that drinking or taking drugs had had a negative impact on their college career compared to 34% of males. Over four fifths (84%) of female American Indian students perceived that they had a favorite instructor in college compared to two thirds (68%) of male students.

3. Older than average female students have a more difficult time in successfully matriculating and graduating from college than do members of any other group of American Indian students. Over one fourth (28%) of older than average female students perceived that their families were not supportive of them or were indifferent to them when they decided to attend college compared to less than one tenth (9%) of the other students surveyed. Older than average female students were more likely than those in any other group (88%) to report that their high school counselors were not helpful to them when they decided to attend college. Almost two thirds (64%) of all female students older than average reported that they had changed their majors in college at least once compared to less than half (47%) of students in the other groups. Over half (60%) of all the older than average female students indicated that members of their immediate or extended families had medical or personal problems that negatively impacted their college careers, compared to an average of 44% of other students. Over one fourth (28%) of all older than average female students indicated that they had considered dropping out of school because they personally experienced racism in college compared to less than one tenth (8%) of the other students. Almost one fourth (24%) of all older than average

female students perceived that they did not have reasonable access to institutional resources on their campuses in comparison to an average of 14% of other students who indicated they had this problem.

4. From a cultural perspective, many American Indian students are not comfortable attending post-secondary schools. One fifth (20%) of all students surveyed indicated that they were not culturally comfortable in their college classes. Over 40% of all students surveyed reported that members of the non-ethnic minority student population at the colleges they were attending were not culturally sensitive to the respondents' American Indian heritage. Over one fourth (26%) of all students perceived that the non-ethnic minority faculty and staff at the colleges they were attending were not culturally sensitive to their American Indian heritage. Over half (60%) of all students surveyed reported that they had personally experienced racism in college. Thirteen percent of all American Indian students surveyed had considered dropping out of college because they had personally experienced racism in college. Six percent of all students surveyed indicated that they were not comfortable identifying themselves as American Indians in college.

5. Traditional-age American Indian female students have the least number of obstacles to overcome to matriculate successfully and graduate from college. Over half (60%) of traditional-age female students reported that their high school counselors were helpful or somewhat helpful to them when they decided to attend college compared to 31% of other students. One third (36%) of traditional-age female students indicated that members of their immediate or extended families had personal problems that negatively

impacted their college careers compared to over half (56%) of other students. Almost one third (32%) of all traditional-age female students perceived that the academic advising they received in college was above average compared to half that proportion (16%) of other students. All of the traditional-age female American Indian students reported that they had reasonable access to institutional resources on campus compared to 88% of students from other groups.

Recommendations

1. High school personnel must work more closely with personnel from institutions of higher education to provide for adequate preparation of high school students for college. According to the results of this study, the majority of high school counselors were not perceived to have been helpful to American Indian students once the students decided to attend college. Additionally, one fifth of all traditional-age college students did not see a clear connection between a college degree and a good job. High school counselors must be aware of the academic requirements established at post-secondary schools for high school graduates and then make sure their students are taking classes to fulfill those requirements. High school counselors must have information available on different careers and the skills needed to enter those careers. All of this information must be readily accessible to high school students.

2. The administrators of support services at post-secondary schools, as well as those at the upper levels of the institution, must ensure that American Indian students have adequate financial aid to attend classes. Almost half of all American Indian students surveyed reported that financial aid to attend college was inadequate and that

they could not count on their parents to assist them financially. Almost one fifth of all students surveyed worked full-time while attending college and almost one fifth indicated that they had considered delaying or postponing their college careers to work at a casino. Staff members of retention programs at post-secondary schools must work in close coordination with staff in the institutions' financial aid offices to make sure that American Indian students have applied for all grants, scholarships, and loans for which they may be eligible. Post-secondary schools must also allocate more scholarships to academically promising American Indian students.

3. The climate of each post-secondary school must be assessed to American Indian students and other ethnic minority students can be assisted to feel comfortable and welcome at their respective institutions. One fifth of all students surveyed indicated that they were not culturally comfortable in their college classes. Almost half of all students surveyed perceived that the non-ethnic minority students at their colleges were not culturally sensitive to their American Indian heritage. Over half of all students surveyed reported personal experiences with racism in college and almost one eighth had considered dropping out of school because of those experiences. All employees in all post-secondary schools should attend cultural sensitivity training sessions at the beginning of each academic year. Affirmative action officers must be visible and active on their campuses. The administrators on each campus must support cultural diversity activities, financially as well as verbally. Leaders of post-secondary schools must begin to support active recruitment of ethnic minority faculty, staff, and students to create more

culturally diverse campuses reflecting this country's changing racial and demographic composition.

4. Personnel at post-secondary schools must evaluate the support services that are currently available to American Indian students to make sure that those students receive the attention they need to overcome any disadvantages they may have in their academic and/or social backgrounds. In particular, female students have unique issues that need to be addressed to maximize their retention rates. Almost one fourth of all students stated that drinking and/or taking drugs had had a negative impact on their college careers. Students older than average reported needs and responsibilities above and beyond those of traditional-aged students. Support service programs must be evaluated to determine if the services they are providing are meeting the needs of their students and to modify those services when deemed necessary.

5. Personnel in post-secondary schools must assess the services available to students older than average to make sure that their unique needs are being met. Students older than average often are not as well prepared for post-secondary school as traditional-age students and have not planned to attend a post-secondary school as often as traditional-age students. Students older than average have more dependent children than traditional-age students and have more childcare problems with which to deal. Students older than average are not given support as often by their families as are traditional-age students. Post-secondary schools must fully support services for students older than average and expand those services when necessary to help those students with their unique needs.

Commentary

Personnel in post-secondary schools must evaluate the services they have available for American Indian students. In article after article in the literature search, a direct connection was made between well-planned and administered retention programs and successful student retention. The students in this study responded to reaffirm that effective retention programs such as Indian studies departments, American Indian centers, Native American centers, and Indian student services offices are efficient means to increase the retention and, ultimately, the graduation rates of American Indian students at the post-secondary level. Leaders of post-secondary schools who are serious about adequately serving American Indian students will have those types of programs, fully funded and fully staffed.

High school personnel, especially high school counselors, must become more knowledgeable about the requirements that post-secondary schools have for students and should help students to obtain the academic backgrounds needed to be successful as post-secondary students. Although the number of students high school counselors must serve is sometimes enormous, many are doing a poor job of helping American Indian students prepare for post-secondary school. Too many American Indian high school graduates consider themselves to be unprepared academically for the rigors of post-secondary education. High school counselors should be required to spend a specific amount of time every year reacquainting themselves with the requirements and expectations that post-secondary schools have of students. Academic advising is just as important at the secondary school level as it is at the post-secondary level.

Personnel at post-secondary schools must assess the services available to students older than average at their institutions. Students older than average have numerous issues with which to deal besides attending classes. Family responsibilities take priority over school responsibilities for almost all students older than average. Childcare, health, and financial issues are just three concerns for which students older than average usually have more responsibility than do traditional-age students. Although students older than average have a plethora of issues with which they must contend and which are, largely unique to their age group, students older than average are serious, have clear goals and objectives, and understand how to achieve their goals and objectives in the most efficient ways possible. Students older than average have life experiences which are invaluable in the classroom and should be seen as tremendous assets to the post-secondary faculty at the institutions they attend.

Older than average female students have the greatest obstacles to overcome to matriculate successfully and graduate from college. Historically, women have been the main caregivers of their children and families. Today, American Indian women are still seen as the primary caregivers. When they attempt to attend post-secondary schools, their responsibilities to their children and families do not cease. Faculty members as well as professionals in retention programs must recognize the delicate balance many older than average American Indian women must maintain to attend college. This is not to be construed as suggesting that older than average American Indian women receive academic breaks in their classes, only that faculty, staff, administrators, and retention

program personnel have a modicum of respect for the heavy load of responsibilities many of those women carry as they attempt to balance college and family responsibilities.

Many American Indian students are not culturally comfortable in their college classes. American Indian students have experienced racism directly and many have dropped out or have considered dropping out of college because of racist acts by non-ethnic minority faculty, staff, or students. Post-secondary administrators must assess the overall racial climates on their respective campuses and take appropriate actions that will ensure that all students from every racial and ethnic background feel comfortable and welcome. Post-secondary administrators also must take bold, leadership roles in identifying, recruiting, and hiring more ethnic minority faculty, staff, and administrators at their institutions to bridge the racial and ethnic gaps that exist nationwide.

In my 22 years of helping American Indian students who attend post-secondary schools, supported by evidence from volumes of literature, it is my belief that a lack of financial aid is one of the most devastating problems American Indian students face as they attempt to matriculate and graduate from college. Although many American Indian students are now second generation college students, most American Indian students still come from depressed social and cultural backgrounds in which their parents are not in a position to assist them financially when they enter post-secondary schools. Even parents who are considered to be economically in the middle class are financially limited in assisting their children. Too many American Indian students are working full-time just to make ends meet while going to college. Administrators in post-secondary schools must begin allocating more scholarships and grants to American Indian students who show

academic promise. Retention programs must make sure that American Indian students have the knowledge and assistance to apply for all the financial aid they can so their financial aid packages are as complete as possible.

A student I worked with a few years ago dropped out of college because his grades were below acceptable standards. Upon first reading this statement, readers might think there is nothing odd about this. Students are suspended from college for academic reasons all the time. However, this student may have been somewhat different than other students who were academically suspended. He was different because he considered himself to be a traditional American Indian. He came from a background in which Ojibwe was his first language and English was his second language. His parents kept the traditions of his people alive by practicing as many of the cultural aspects of their heritage as possible. This student knew how to sing and drum the songs his grandparents had taught his parents. This student fasted and attended ceremonies important to his family. This student attempted to live in harmony with nature just as his parents did.

As a student at the college in which I worked, I had the opportunity to meet frequently with this student. His admission application to college was impressive. He had a high ACT score and had graduated in the top 25% of his high school class. His goal in college was to become a secondary school teacher. His first two quarters in college went well. When he enrolled in an anthropology class during the spring quarter, the trouble began. The class was instructed by a tenured professor who considered himself to be an expert on American Indian people. The professor did not like this particular student because the student challenged some of his basic teachings. The first

issue of contention was the professor's belief that all history before Europeans arrived in North America should be considered pre-history. The student immediately felt cognitive dissonance and himself being marginalized because a college professor was teaching students that Europeans had to be present in North America for history to be possible. In later class sessions, the professor compared American Indian to animals. "The hair of American Indian people is coarse and thick like that of a horse." The student received failing grades from the professor for not marking down the "correct" responses in tests. The ordeal lasted all of the spring quarter. The student filed a grievance against the professor on the grounds of racism. The institution received statewide attention on the issue and the student was under constant pressure to drop his grievance against the tenured professor. By the end of the spring quarter, the student had stopped attending classes and the professor was exonerated. The student was suspended from college because he received all failing grades for the spring quarter. The professor is still teaching anthropology classes to students. The institution failed to act or was unable to act against a tenured professor who belonged to a powerful union.

At the very beginning of my dissertation, I wrote about an American Indian named Caleb Cheeshateaumuck who graduated from Harvard College in 1655. Caleb Cheeshateaumuck had no problems with the academic requirements demanded of Harvard College's students. However, he died of an illness shortly after graduating from college and never got a chance to use the education he had received. As one can extrapolate from the story related above, almost three and a half centuries after Caleb Cheeshateaumuck's death, American Indians are still struggling in the public education

systems across the country. The difference between 1655 and now is that much better understanding of why American Indian students persist in college and why they don't. There is a growing cadre of personnel in post-secondary schools who understand this and will take steps to make their institutions fair places in an unfair world.

A new movement is forming in the classrooms where American Indian students are acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for the economic, social, political, and cultural preservation of their people. This movement is creating a new type of American Indian warrior, a warrior who does not carry bows and arrows but books and degrees. A renaissance is transpiring at this moment in time in terms of the reacquisition of American Indian languages and cultures. Through education and through the reemergence of languages and cultures, the American Indian warriors who are emerging today will be the salvation of our people tomorrow.

We are living in exciting times right now. People who work in post-secondary schools have an opportunity to take a completely new look at how they, and we, view cultural diversity, cultural pluralism, and multicultural education. I believe it is inevitable that new paradigms will evolve over the next few years to better serve the growing ethnic diversity that is present in the population of our post-secondary schools and of the country in general.

For many non-ethnic minority people, it will be a scary and difficult adjustment to accept the reality of a rapidly changing demographic national composition. It will be most difficult for many older non-ethnic minority individuals because they can be so set in their philosophical beliefs and world views. I suspect many older, tenured faculty

members will not deviate from their lesson plans or teaching materials until they retire. Administrators in post-secondary schools, therefore, must actively recruit and hire faculty and staff who are willing and enlightened enough to serve students who will live most of their lives in the 21st Century.

I believe that racism, sexism, other forms of discrimination, and mindsets about people of color will someday be completely eradicated from society. I don't believe it will happen for a long time, but I do believe it is possible for people to evolve to that level of moral maturity. Until that day comes, the new warriors who are emerging today will be the connecting points to the next generation. These new warriors will not just be students in the classroom, but will be parents, teachers, staff members, and administrators throughout society. I believe the human race has few limitations, if only our eyes can see.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SURVEY

American Indian Student Retention Survey

What institution are you currently attending ____________________________________

Are you: Female _____
Male _____

Are you a: Undergraduate student _____
Graduate student _____
Professional student _____

Are you: 18-24 years of age _____
25 years of age or older _____

Were your grades in high school: Below Average (Below C) _____
Average (C) _____
Above Average (B or Better) _____

While in high school, did you plan on attending college? Yes _____
No _____
Undecided _____

While in high school, did you participate in any extracurricular activities such as sports, speech, band, choir, debate, or student senate? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, please list:
____
____

On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the most prepared) circle the number that best describes how well high school prepared you for college:
Academically (low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)
Socially (low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

Did you attend a 2-year college before you enrolled at this institution? Yes _____
No _____

How supportive was your family when you decided to attend college?
Supportive _____ Not Supportive _____ Indifferent _____

How supportive were your friends when you decided to attend college?
Supportive _____ Not Supportive _____ Indifferent _____

Was your high school counselor helpful to you once you decided to attend college?
Helpful _____
Somewhat Helpful _____
Not Helpful _____

While in college were your parents alive?
- Yes, my mother was alive _____
- Yes, my father was alive _____
- Yes, both my parents were alive _____
- No, both my parents were deceased _____
- Not sure _____

What was the highest educational level your parents attained?

	Mother	Father
Not sure	_____	_____
Some high school	_____	_____
High school diploma	_____	_____
Some vocational school	_____	_____
Vocational school degree	_____	_____
Some college	_____	_____
College degree	_____	_____
Some graduate school	_____	_____
Graduate degree	_____	_____

Would you describe your study skills in college to be:
- Below Average _____
- Average _____
- Above Average _____

Would you describe your self-discipline in college to be:
- Below Average _____
- Average _____
- Above Average _____

Would you describe your problem solving skills in college to be:
- Below Average _____
- Average _____
- Above Average _____

When you first entered college, did you have a career decided upon?
- Yes _____
- No _____

Have you ever changed majors in college?
- Yes _____
- No _____
- If yes, number of times you changed majors _____

Have you had adequate financial aid to attend college?
- Yes _____
- No _____

If you did not have adequate financial aid to attend college, could you count on your parents to financially assist you?
- Yes _____
- No _____
- Not applicable _____

How would you describe your financial budgeting skills in college?
Below Average _____
Average _____
Above Average _____

How would you describe your time management skills in college?
Below Average _____
Average _____
Above Average _____

In college, have you affiliated with any social, organized, or pre-professional groups or clubs?
Yes _____
No _____
If yes, please list groups or clubs ______________________________________
____

Have you had good friends in college?
No _____
Yes, a few _____
Yes, a lot _____

Have you studied with other students?
Never _____
Yes, infrequently _____
Yes, regularly _____

Do you attend a predominently White (non-ethnic minority) institution?
Yes _____
No _____

Culturally, how comfortable have you been in your college classes?
Always comfortable _____
Usually comfortable _____
Not comfortable _____
Please explain ____
____
____

Do you think the non-ethnic minority student population at the college you are attending are culturally sensitive to your American Indian heritage?
Yes _____
No _____
Usually _____
Please explain ____
____
____

Do you think the non-ethnic minority faculty and staff at the college you are attending are culturally sensitive to your American Indian heritage?

Yes _____
No _____
Usually _____
Please explain ____
____
____

Are there American Indian faculty and staff at your college that can be considered role models?

Yes _____
No _____
If yes , who ____

While in college, do you believe your academic advising has been:

Below Average _____
Average _____
Above Average _____

Besides having a cold or the flu, have you had any significant health problems in college?

Yes _____
No _____

Has drinking or taking drugs had a negative impact on your college career?

Yes, a marginal impact _____
Yes, a significant impact _____
No _____

Has any member of your immediate or extended family had medical or personal problems that negatively impacted your college career?

Yes, a marginal impact _____
Yes, a significant impact _____
No ____

Have you personally experienced any types of racism in college?

Yes _____
No _____

If you have experienced racism at college, did you consider dropping out of school because of it?

Yes _____
No _____
Not applicable, I never experienced racism in college _____

While in college, have you had dependent children?

Yes _____
No _____
If yes, the number of children dependent on you _____

If you have dependent children while attending college, is your child care services:
Adequate _____
Inadequate _____
Do not have dependent children _____

If you have dependent children while in college, who helps you take care of them?
I take care of my children by myself _____
My spouse/significant other helps me _____
My family helps me _____

While in college, has any faculty member ever shown a personal and/or academic interest in you as a student? Yes _____
No _____

While in college, have you seen a clear connection between a college degree and a good job?
Yes _____
No _____

Have you had a favorite instructor in college? Yes _____
No _____

While in college, have you had reasonable access to institutional resources such as faculty, staff, support services, the library, typewriters, computers, and the student union facilities?
Yes _____
No _____

Have you worked while attending college? Yes, part-time _____
Yes, full-time _____
No _____

Have you been comfortable identifying yourself as an American Indian in college? Yes _____
No _____
Usually _____

Have you ever considered delaying or postponing your college career to work at a casino?
Yes _____
No _____

Explain what you think are the main reasons American Indian students might drop-out of college before graduating ____
____
____

What factors do you believe contribute to American Indian students graduating from college?
____
____
____

APPENDIX B

PARCIPANT LETTER

February 19, 1997

Dear Student:

Although the number of American Indian students attending post-secondary schools has increased nationally over the past couple of decades, the retention and graduation rates of American Indian students is still alarmingly low compared to their Anglo-student counterparts. This study is being initiated to help American Indian support service personnel better understand and more effectively assist American Indian students on the post-secondary levels.

I am currently the Director of Minority Student Services at Bemidji State University, in Bemidji, Minnesota, and am completing my doctoral studies at the University of North Dakota, in Grand Forks, North Dakota. I am asking for your assistance by completing the survey instrument titled "American Indian Student Retention Survey" available at the offices of the American Indian student support program at your institution. Please take a couple of minutes to complete this survey instrument. The information you provide will be extremely valuable as post-secondary school personnel develop retention programs for their American Indian student populations.

The information you provide will be kept confidential. Your name will not be recorded when you complete the survey instrument. By completing the survey instrument, you are indicating your willingness to participate and to allow your responses to be used in my study. If you wish to have a summary of the survey instrument results once they are completed, I will be happy to leave a copy of them for you at your American Indian support services office.

Thank you for your assistance in this study. I look forward to analyzing your completed survey in the near future.

Sincerely,

Don Day, Graduate Student

APPENDIX C

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Explain what you think are the main reasons American Indian students might drop-out of college before graduating.

2. What factors do you believe contribute to American Indian students graduating from college?

APPENDIX D

AGREEMENT LETTERS

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Duluth Campus

American Indian Learning Resource Center

College of Education & Human Service Professions

10 University Drive
Duluth, Minnesota 55812-2496

218-726-6379
218-726-6293
218-726-6350
FAX 218-726-6331
Toll Free 1-800-232-1339

April 04, 1997

Mr. Donald Day
4011 Pitt Street
Duluth, MN 55804

Dear Mr. Day:

The University of Minnesota-Duluth/American Indian Learning Resource Center is looking forward to participating in the survey research you are conducting in five selected post-secondary schools. We will assist you in identifying 20 American Indian/Alaskan Native students to complete the surveys.

We look forward to securing the results of the surveys. I am confident we will be able to use the information to refine our current services to American Indian/Alaskan Native students.

Cordially,

Rick J. Smith
Director

cc: H. Mitzi Doane, Dean

April 25, 1997

Don Day, Director
Minority Student Services
202 Sanford Hall
Bemidji State University
Bemidji, MN 56601

Dear Don:

The American Indian Student Support Program at Augsburg College is willing to participate in your doctoral study on retention rates of American Indian students.

I would be happy to distribute and college surveys for 20 students.

Let me know how I can help.

Cindy Peterson

Cindy Peterson, Director
American Indian Student Support Program
(612) 330-1144
FAX (612) 330-1606
e-mail: petersoc@augsburg.edu

2211 Riverside Avenue • Minneapolis, MN 55454 • Tel. (612) 330-1000 • Fax (612) 330-1649

Division of Academic and Student Affairs
Office of Student Affairs
218-755-2075, FAX: 218-755-4115

Date: April 1, 1997

To: Don Day, UND Graduate Student

From: Jon Blessing, Director, Student Life and Counseling

Re: Retention/Dissertation Survey

Bemidji State University approves and looks forward to you surveying 20 American Indian students from our institution to be included in your doctoral dissertation. The Indian Student Services Program will assist you in identifying 20 American Indian students to participate in the survey and will assist you in collecting the surveys once they are completed.

We look forward to the results of the surveys. I am sure we will be able to use the information from the surveys to help refine out current services to American Indian students. Good luck with the survey instrument.

Sanford Hall #3 1500 Birchmont Drive NE Bemidji, MN 56601-2699
A member of The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Systems.
Bemidji State University is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE
EAU CLAIRE, WI 54702-4004

American Ethnic Coordinating Office
(715) 836-3367
Fax: (715) 836-2380

April 14, 1997

TO: Don Day
UND Graduate Student

FR: Jim Vance
Director, Office of Multicultural Affairs

RE: Retention/Dissertation Survey

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire approves and looks forward to you surveying 20 American Indian students from our institution to be included in your doctoral dissertation. The Office of Multicultural Affairs will assist you in identifying 20 American Indian students to participate in the survey and will assist you in collecting the surveys once they are completed.

We look forward to the results of your surveys. I am sure we will be able to use the information from the surveys to help refine our current services to American Indian students. Good luck with the survey instrument.

UNIVERSITY OF UND NORTH DAKOTA

NATIVE AMERICAN PROGRAMS
P.O. BOX 8274
GRAND FORKS, NORTH DAKOTA 58202-8274
(701) 777-4291
FAX: (701) 777-3292

April 10, 1997

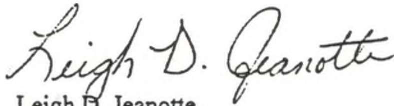
Mr. Don Day
4011 Pitt Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55804

Dear Mr. Day:

I am truly pleased that you have selected the University of North Dakota (UND) as one of five post-secondary institutions to conduct research for your doctoral dissertation. As discussed, I agree to assist you in identifying 20 UNDAmerican Indian students to complete your survey.

Once again, I look forward to this worthy opportunity. Your research findings will undoubtedly assist us in refining services to American Indian students.

Sincerely,



Leigh D. Jeanotte
Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs/
Director of Native American Programs

UND is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution

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