

## **Resolution in Support of the Native American Action Task Force Report Recommendations**

Whereas, in spring of 2023, Academic Senate approved the Native American Action Taskforce with the charge of making recommendations on developing a framework for building a stronger relationship between the Sequoias Community College District and local Native American communities;

Whereas, the Native American Action Taskforce presented a report with seven recommendations that includes a comprehensive equity approach to support COS American Indian students' growth and success through strategic partnerships with COS stakeholders and with the support of American Indian community members and organizations;

Whereas, given that COS Native American students rates of success are disproportionately impacted in comparison to all COS students, it is critical for culturally appropriate and responsive approaches to be taken to address the excessive disparities experienced by this specific student population;

Whereas, any action taken by the Sequoias Community College District to service COS American Indian students would be in direct alignment with federal and state policies addressing American Indian Education: The Federal Title VIIA-Indian Education Act; California Title VII-The Indian Education Program; California Ed Code, Article 6, § 33380-33385; CA-AB 79520 (2022-23); CA-AB 1703 (2021-22); CA-183 (2021-22);

Whereas, the Academic Senate supports and recognizes that the implementation of the Native American Action Task Force recommendations will positively impact our college's results in a stronger sense of place for our American Indian students as well as improve District ties with local Native American communities;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Academic Senate supports the Native American Action Taskforce seven recommendations and advances them for the Sequoias Community College District to identify ways for their implementation;

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED, that the Academic Senate respectfully urges District responsible parties to accept the Native American Action Taskforce recommendations that may fall outside the 10+1 purview and consider collaborating and forming part of this comprehensive approach to service American Indian students and/or partner with American Indian community members and/or organizations.



2024-23 Native American Action Task Force

Academic Senate Report

At the general meeting on Sept. 25, 2024

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## **NAAT Recommendations**

1. Hiring a Director of Native American Outreach/Counseling
2. Establishing a Native American Council under EDAC
3. Establishing Native American Center
4. Public Monument
5. A District Land Acknowledgement
6. Institutionalizing Native American Events
7. Growing Native American Academic Programs

## **Native American Action Task Force Members**

### **Co-Chairs**

Jenae Prator (Nursing & Allied Health, Classified)  
Octavio Barajas (Ethnic Studies Professor, Ñaña, Rarámuri)  
Curtis Allen (HBCU Director, Blackfoot)

### **Community Members**

Jennifer Malone (Wukchumni Elder)  
Arlene Anaya (VUSD-American Indian Liaison)  
Melissa Rodriguez (Santa Rosa Rancheria Tachi Career/College coordinator)  
Navie Hurtado (Owens Valley Career Development Center, OV CDC)  
Vincent Burrough (OV CDC)  
Natalie Jones (OV CDC)

### **COS Students**

Destiny Treglown (Wukchumni)  
Isabel Sanchez  
Wicked Morgue (Oceti Sakowi & Acjachemen/Juaneño)  
Lizette Noguera

### **Academic Senate**

Juan Arzola (Political Science, Rarámuri)

### **Faculty**

Marla Prochnow (Anthropology, Cherokee)  
Matthew Rangel (Art Professor)  
Sandy Valenzuela (Counselor-Tulare)  
Carlota Marin (Science-adjunct)  
Amber Vazquez (Consumer Family Studies, Potawatomi)  
Catherine Medrano (Sociology Professor)

### **Classified**

Tyler Virden (Institutional Research)

### **Deans**

Juan Vazquez (Student Services Matriculation)  
Richard Lubben (Art, Letters, and LRC Academic Services)

## **Introduction**

In response to COS student demand for increasing the visibility of Native American representation at COS, Academic Senate approved the creation of the COS Native American Action Task Force in April 2023. The NAAT was charged with developing a framework for building a stronger relationship throughout COS and with local Native American communities. The NAAT is, consequently, making a series of recommendations to improve COS services for Native American students through designated resources, programming, and staff that are tailored and culturally responsive to these communities. Strategic partnerships with local Native American community members and established local Native organizations is integral to achieving a stronger working relationship with Native Americans in the community but also to enhance services for Native Americans at COS.

The NAAT put into practice the general framework it recommends through its membership and the practices and activities it carried out. In addition to a diverse COS group of administrators, faculty, and classified staff, it is also comprised of COS Native and non-Native students, employees of Native organizations with a focus on education and career development, and Native community members. The NAAT had at least fifteen meetings on the second Monday of the month, which became a space for learning about student needs, learning about the work carried out by community partners, developing ideas and possible shared practices, and coordinating events.

The NAAT demonstrates the potential of what can be achieved for Native students with Native community support through collaboration. In fact, this report was produced through co-authorship with community partners and students also submitting drafts. The NAAT has been well received and is a positive display of COS efforts to better serve Native American students and our Native communities. This work has received endorsement by local Native communities and elders who come to the meetings on their own time and who helped coordinate events. Some of these community members are COS alumni who understand the importance of this work and the difference it would have made in their experience. The student and community engagement for these events prove that there is excitement, support, and a need for their continuation at COS.

## **Establishing a Native American Council**

Considering that the duration of a task force is temporary, according to the GDM, the NAAT recommends institutionalizing an entity similar in composition to this Task Force. It should include faculty, staff, students, Native community members and community partners. It is further recommended that it operates as a governing council under EDAC that falls within the District Governance Senate pillar of our institution. The NAAT also suggests naming it the Native American Council, focusing on improving and enhancing services to support the success of Native students, help coordinate and promote Native events and programs and maintain ties with strategic Native community partners and Native community members.

## **Student Voices**

This section highlights the experiences from the perspective of COS students. The selected comments below have been gathered from the Indigenous Peoples Day event worksheets collected on October 12, 2023, from the NAAT meetings, and with the students' permission, from the 2023 fall American Indian Studies course taught by Octavio Barajas. The selected comments represent a mix of Native and non-Native student voices.

“Getting to attend a school sanctioned event honoring indigenous communities basically speaks for itself. Finally, indigenous communities and their cultures are getting the recognition they deserve.”

“Indigenous Peoples Day was empowering, hopeful, and plain fun. The booth I helped at was organized by the Tule Valley Allies Club.”

“It is up to everyone to keep the process going by educating those who simply are unfamiliar with the rich history around them and the advantages knowing it could bring them.”

“This [Indigenous Peoples Day] event was a great example for me to see firsthand these two important topics. As I sat at the table and listened to the drums of the song players and watched people learn about California Native culture. I felt a cool sense of belonging and importance. I really enjoyed this experience, and I hope to be able to participate more in the future.”

“A theme throughout this semester for me has been sacredness, the level of sacredness that everything in indigenous cultures has. And at Indigenous People's Day you could feel the level of sacredness in the air. These people were so gracious to share their culture with us and teach us their culture and just the way they were speaking about everything you could tell how sacred this was for them. A moment I distinctly remember is during the prayer, you have people from all walks of life stop and listen and pray. Even if they didn't all believe the same thing, they still stopped and prayed, and you could feel how much respect everyone felt for each other in that very moment.”

“Through club meetings, the NAAT meetings and Indigenous Day, I've totaled up about over 18 hours. Through the club, we all became closer friends, and even Dr. Prochnow is our bestie now. The NAAT meetings are educational, point out parts of our school system that need fixing. All these events really do make it feel as if change isn't that hard to achieve. I may not have made a new bill go up or donated a million dollars, but my involvement does feel, as I'm helping local Native communities. Lectures both in class and social setting experience have helped opened my mind. I do plan on continuing helping and participating in any event as I can.”

## **Tule Valley Allies**

With faculty support of Dr. Marla Prochnow and Professor Amber Vazquez, students successfully established the first Native student club at COS. The founding members decided that the name of the club will be Tule Valley Allies and would be open to all students interested

in learning and supporting Native culture. The club began recruiting members and meeting regularly during the 2023-24 academic year. A club highlight was attending the Fresno State Native Youth Conference in the fall of 2023, making dream catchers, and talking about Native culture during their club meetings. In the future, the club plans to do university field trips and represent COS in the Valley.

The club began with only three officers and ended this semester with our three officers and four attending members. Students involved in the club were, the founding president, Destiny Treglown (Wukchumni), Cyndy Rodriguez, Anahy Bobadilla, Keaton Martella, Christian Aguilar, Mallory Marshall, and Karisa Ochoa. These students were instrumental in the formation of the club during the 2024 spring semester making the club possible. Tule Valley Allies have participated in COS events for outreach and always get a positive response from students. Christian Aguilar (Secretary/ Treasurer) and Mallory Marshall (Vice President) have been extremely helpful in getting the club up and running and navigating the rules and regulations. In the 2024 fall semester, the club plans to improve. Club officers have attended required Student Activities and Affairs meetings and took meeting minutes, and through this they learned how to obtain student activity funding, the reimbursement process, and how to plan trips. The club has also shared a few meals and has made crafts together, solidifying their student relationships. They anticipate being even more productive with the experiences gained from last year. They plan to collaborate with other clubs, getting more involved in the community, and gaining more participating members. With key members having graduated, Tule Valley Allies will be looking for more officers to operate the club and hope to be active during the 2024 fall semester. Overall, the club president is grateful, thankful, and impressed by the club members and is looking forward to meeting new Allies at the next club meeting.

### **Native American Student Service Data**

For consistency and compliance purposes, College of the Sequoias adheres to a standard method for coding race/ethnicity, which is used by the Chancellor's Office, IPEDs, and Data Mart. Specifically, any student who selects Hispanic on their CCC Apply application is labeled as Hispanic, regardless of any other race/ethnicity selected. Students who select two or more races (excluding Hispanic) on their CCC Apply application are labeled as Multi-ethnic, and students are labeled as Native American, Black/African American, Asian, Filipino, White, or Pacific Islander, if only one race is selected on their CCC Apply application. Because of this coding, the number of students attending College of the Sequoias who are labeled as Native American is much lower than the number of all students who selected Native American on their CCC Apply application. A vast majority of students who selected Native American on their CCC Apply application are labeled as Hispanic or Multi-ethnic due to selecting more than one race/ethnicity.

For the 2023-2024 academic year (Fall/Spring), 44 students enrolled at census were labeled as Native American (selected Native American only on their CCC Apply application). However, overall, for the 2023-2024 academic year, 673 students enrolled at census selected Native American on their CCC Apply application with 482 being labeled as Hispanic and 147 being labeled as Multi-Ethnic. (COS Data Warehouse)



The data provided below is only for students labeled as Native American (selected Native American only on their CCC Apply application).

When examining course success rates over the past five years, Native American students (69.3%) had the lowest 5-year course success rate, and the course success rates for Native American students fell below the District average in each of the past five academic years. A similar trend was present in statewide data. Based on the Chancellor's Office data, Native American students consistently had one of the lowest course success rates when compared to other racial/ethnic groups, and in four out of the past five academic years, Native American students at COS had higher course success rates when compared to Native American students statewide. (Program Review Dashboard and CCCCCO's Student Success Metric Dashboard)

In the most recent Student Equity Plan data, Native American students were identified as disproportionately impacted for the successful enrollment metric (14%) when compared to the District as a whole (32%). Additionally, Native American students had a lower proportion who completed transfer level math/English within their first year (7%) as well as a lower proportion of students who persisted from one primary term to the next (53%) when compared to the District as a whole (16%; 70%), but the differences did not reach disproportionate impact level. When examining Native American male students' equity data, they were identified as disproportionately impacted for successful enrollments (6%), completed transfer-level math and English within their first year (0%), persisted from one primary term to the next (29%), and attained vision completion goal within three years (0%) metrics. (Please note that except for successful enrollment, the denominator for these metrics was less than 10). (Student Equity Dashboard 2023)

In the most recent survey administration (2023) a greater proportion of Native American students reported medical/mental health issues (43%), financial issues (57%), and balancing work with school (71%) as a challenge when compared to the District as a whole (23%; 44%; 48%). Based on the combined 2021 and 2023 Student Support Services Survey, the top three challenges for Native American students were still medical/mental health, financial issues, and balancing work with school. The proportion of Native American students (56%) reporting balancing work with school as being moderately/very challenging was greater than the District as a whole (51%), but the proportion of Native American students reporting medical/mental health issues (22%) and financial issues (39%) was below the District as a whole (25%; 46%). (Student Support Services Survey Dashboard – 2023)

### **Outreach Director/Counselor**

The NAAT recommends hiring a Native American Outreach Director. The need for a visible point of contact at COS who could assume this responsibility surfaces to the top in the list of recommendations. Community partners need someone visible so they can connect the students, youth, and community members with whom they work with to COS resources and opportunities and for the Outreach Director to attend and support their events. Since having someone on each campus who can service the specific needs of Native students is important, the idea was suggested to have a counselor designee that could help support the work of an Outreach Director with culturally responsive counseling practices. The Outreach Director is also needed to help

recruit and increase the overall successful completion of Native American students attending COS, especially given that Native COS students suffer from an adverse attrition rate, more than any other race/ethnicity. It would be ideal if the director could serve as co-chair for the COS Native American Council to help grow and maintain community relationships with Native community partners. With the support of a Native American Council, the director could also help lead institutionalized COS Native American events and attend tribal activities where they can become a familiar face for building relationships with community members and prospective incoming students. A list of possible tasks could consist of the following:

- Increasing successful Native student enrollment
- Connecting students to available campus and off campus resources
- Helping to coordinate mentorship opportunities
- Establishing relationships with university Native resources to support with transferring
- Obtaining college Native bands for graduation
- Coordinating federal and state-related services available exclusively to Native students
- Developing working relationships with local Native professional and scholarly communities: VUSD American Indian liaison, OV CDC, Wukchumni Youth Program, Santa Rosa Rancheria Education Department, Fresno State American Indian Studies.

## **Sister Institutions**

There are California Community Colleges that have implemented programs serving their Native American students. The NAAT recommends that SCCD take similar steps to better serve our students. Fresno City College has the Resources for American Indian Needs (RAIN) program, which is tailored to support their Native students and open to support all students. It operates in the realm of student success and has a dedicated academic counselor, like Puente Programs. The Native American Student Support & Success Program (NASSSP) at Bakersfield College is another student success program that operates in collaboration with local tribes and focuses on academic success and student leadership for their Native American students. BC's NASSSP was enacted through [AB 183](#) for one-time funding to California Community Colleges who applied for the funds. The NAAT recommends SCCD to further institutionalize Native American initiatives to improve the chances of securing future funding opportunities. In addition to Native American student success programs at the CCCs, California State Universities have taken the same measure. Fresno State has [American Indian Programs](#) and Services, which resides at their Cross-Cultural and Gender Center. This program advocates for the community with on and off campus resources and organizes campus events to feature Native peoples and culture. By creating a student success program attentive to Native American student needs at College of the Sequoias, it can instill support of its Native American students and create continuity into universities that offer similar programs.

## **Native American Student Center**

The NAAT recommends for College of the Sequoias to establish a Native American Center that is directed by a full-time staff member such as a Native American director. The center can offer Native American students a place where they can gather for meetings, workshops, trainings, retreats, and to hear speakers. This collective space can give students a sense of belonging and empowerment and affirm their diverse cultural backgrounds, which can ultimately decrease their high attrition rates, increase their retention rates, and increase their success rates at COS (Patton, 2023). According to the "challenges" section of the student support services survey, the top three challenges for Native students are balancing work and school, financial issues, and balancing family and school. In 2023, mental health was also a top three challenge (replacing balancing family and school). A Native American Center can work to intentionally address these challenges faced by Native students in a culturally relevant and responsive way, and work to increase awareness of COS services. We see an example of this at Fresno City College (FCC). FCC has a Social Justice Center that serves "as an incubator for a series of student-led initiatives and projects designed to increase their sense of belonging and inclusion at FCC and to support student retention, completion, and success. It will create a space where students of color and all marginalized groups will feel safe, welcomed, and at-home" (2). The NAAT can work with the LGBTQ+ Task Force to create such safe and welcoming spaces throughout the district.

### Citations:

Patton, L. B. (2023). Culture Centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and Practice (G. Ladson-Billings, Ed.; 1st ed.). Routledge.

<https://www.fresnocitycollege.edu/student-services/programs/social-justice-center.html>

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/college.of.the.sequoias/viz/NAATFStudentSupportServicesSurvey-2023/ParticipantDemographics?publish=yes>

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/college.of.the.sequoias/viz/2022COSStudentEquityPlanupdate/Overview>

## **Public Monument**

The NAAT recommends a public monument to honor local Native Americans at the three campuses of SCCD. A Native American public monument is a compelling, physical acknowledgement that symbolizes our institution's commitment to increase the visibility and support of Native American culture on our campuses. This recommendation aligns with student demand to raise the visible profile of Native American culture on campus that initially motivated the creation of the NAAT. A public monument will serve as continuous recognition of the existence of Native American peoples, cultural inclusivity, creating a sense of belonging and permanence of Native American culture and students at SCCD. In addition to honoring our Native American population, a monument is an introduction to local history and Native

communities, building cultural competencies for all in the SCCD. [Yokuts Plaza](#) at Fresno City College exemplifies the successful implementation of a public monument in 2014. The NAAT also strongly advises the participation of local Native consultants through the approval process for a public monument made by Native artists.

## **Land Acknowledgement**

Currently, the district is working to promote Native American student success and inclusion through its support of the NAAT. To continue these efforts, a formal land acknowledgement is a significant measure to ensure institutional recognition of Native American culture specific to our service areas and of our Native students and community partners. A land acknowledgement will reflect the district's commitment to its Native population and the history of the land, setting a positive tone for future collaboration by modeling culturally responsive leadership. The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office actively encourages its 116 colleges to work with local tribal leaders in the development of a land acknowledgement and offers a [toolkit](#) to assist in the implementation. A land acknowledgement is in line with the College of the Sequoias Vision and Equity statements. NAAT recommends a land acknowledgement to be produced by a SCCD responsible party that includes the collaboration of local Native consultants and Native faculty and staff.

## **Institutionalized Events**

The NAAT recommends institutionalizing events at COS as a crucial step towards fostering a more inclusive and welcoming atmosphere that centers Native American culture in the SCCD. At least two events per semester should take place on COS campuses. Four potential events that should be considered to take place on a regular basis is California Native American Day on the last Friday of September and Indigenous Peoples Day on or near Oct. 12<sup>th</sup>. The Native Youth Gathering and MMIP (Missing and Murdered Indigenous People) events could be instituted in the spring.

Indigenous Peoples Day was held on October 12, 2023. The event took place in the quad of the Visalia campus. It was designed to be a cultural resource fair where students could learn about programs on and off campus. Members of the local Wukchumni Tribe tabled teaching stations (gaming, basket, language and necklace/earring making) for students to learn more about their culture. The Native American drumming was a major attraction. Over a hundred participants gathered and completed worksheets learning about Wukchumni Yokuts culture to receive an Indian taco in exchange. The worksheet entailed questions that motivated students to interact with Native members who sat at the educational table stations to get the answers to their worksheets. The worksheet questions focused on Wukchumni culture and cultural objects, for which students needed to learn their Native words, and allowed for feedback on the event.

On February 23, 2024, COS held a Native American Student Gathering. The event was the first of its kind bringing together about thirty-six local Native American high school students from Visalia, Hanford, and Lemoore. The theme of the event was Native youth self-sufficiency and pursuing higher education. The event included an inspiring keynote speaker, Shane Lara; Natchitoches, a Fresno State American Indian Studies student and spoken word poet; a COS Native student panel; a campus tour; an art class observation coordinated by Professor Matthew Rangel; and a career coach workshop facilitated by the COS Transfer and Career Center. The Fresno State American Indian Studies program also tabled at the event as well as our task force community partners. The NAAT received positive feedback from participants who look forward to these events in the future, as evident in the student voices segment of this report.

## **Academic Programs**

The NAAT recommends hiring an Ethnic Studies faculty member with a specialization in American Indian Studies who can help lead the development and growth of a robust American Indian Studies program including an ADT, expand course offerings, and be an active participant in the Native American Council.

At COS, American Indian Studies growth has been exponential in the past few years with an increased number of students taking these classes and more sections of this class are now offered at different sites. The FTES growth rate reflects a **218%** increase in student demand for this class when comparing the 2021-22 FTES rate of **2.40** to **11.00** in 2022-23. Before, the course was taught only once a year on the Visalia campus during the spring semester. This recently changed when the course was taught for the first time during the fall semester in 2022. Then in the spring of 2023, two sections were taught on two different campuses for the first time in department history. Both classes were in-person, and one was in Visalia and the other was in Hanford, which attracted members from the Tachi Yokuts community. In 2023-24, there was one section being taught in the fall on the Visalia campus and two during the spring in Visalia and Hanford. There are no ETHN 2 classes offered online, during the evening, during the summer, or at the Tulare campus. The COS Ethnic Studies department is actively seeking American Indian Studies instructors to help meet the academic needs of this subfield, including being able to provide more course options and modalities at different times of the day at all three campuses.

An American Indian Studies AA degree and other types of American Indian Studies-related courses are areas for academic improvement. Apart from ETHN 2, the Art department offers two courses about Mesoamerica and the other on Native South American artistic traditions. To offer an AIS AA degree, an additional two courses with a subject focus specifically on American Indians will need to be created and approved through the curriculum process, and one of those two would need to be taught through a department in the Social Science Division. Community members and students have expressed interest in a course that focuses solely on California American Indians, which, if possible, can be created through the Ethnic Studies department. There is also interest in a class teaching a Native language.