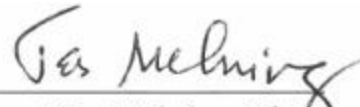


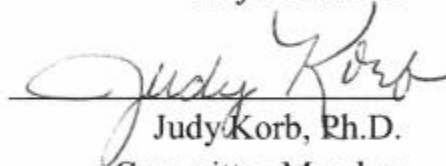
**Tribal College Seniors' Perceptions About Selected Pre-College and College Factors
that Contribute to Academic Success in College**

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Abstract

The failure to involve American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities and leaders in their children's education historically has been one of the most significant barriers to their academic success. AI/AN students nation-wide continue to experience disparities in access to education which has resulted in higher high school dropout rates and less than 1% college enrollment (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). This study was designed to investigate the perceptions of AI/AN seniors eligible for May 2019 graduation at a Midwestern Tribal College (MTC) about pre-college and college factors that contributed to or inhibited academic success in college. Six women and four men participated in the study. Nine students were members of American Indian tribes and one student was an Alaska Native. Six major themes were identified from the analysis of the data: high school factors that contributed to college success, high school factors that inhibited college success, factors that inhibit college enrollment for AI/AN students, factors that promote college enrollment for AI/AN students, factors that inhibited academic success during college, and factors that promoted academic success during college. Enrollment in advanced courses in high school (e.g. Advanced Placement and dual enrollment in college courses) and support from high school teachers, counselors, and family contributed to academic success in college. Limited high school offerings, lack of preparation for the ACT or SAT, lack of knowledge about college costs and scholarship opportunities, and support systems (e.g., family and friends) were cited as high school factors that inhibited academic success while in college. Factors that inhibit AI/AN student matriculation into college included family and friends questioning college attendance, limited guidance from high school personnel, and finances. Social media

from higher education institutions, guidance from family and friends who had attended college, and campus visits were factors that promoted college attendance. Three factors, academic issues, financial concerns, and stress were described as inhibitors to academic success during college. Higher education faculty, staff, peers, and friends were mentioned as factors that promoted academic success throughout college. Additional research and actions focusing on the success and struggles of AI/AN students as they attempt college enrollment, persistence, and ultimately graduation are needed to enhance opportunities for academic success for these students.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, friends, and students. My family, for all the support and encouragement. My husband, Albert, for his tireless support and positive outlook and confidence in me, especially when I had doubts. Darryl, my sister, for believing in me and always sharing words of inspiration. My dad, Burgess for being an amazing and loving father who has always supported me and stood beside me.

My friends, for sharing uplifting words and support during my most difficult days. I especially want to thank Dara. Dara is one of my dearest friends and I cherish and admire her servant leadership. Dara serves the Darlington school and community with grace and dignity. Her efforts are geared toward improving the lives of her students and their families are truly inspiring.

It is also important for me to include in this dedication three courageous women, who even after their passing continue to influence my life daily- my dear mom, and aunts – Elva and Nan. These three women encouraged me to dream and shared with me important life lessons of resilience and leadership. I miss them dearly and honor their influence on my life through service.

To all the students I have been fortunate to meet and know. Each has been a blessing to me. It is such a joy to meet students, share in their highs and comfort them in their lows, and always encourage them to achieve their dreams. The students' resilience has made an indelible impact on me, personally and professionally, these 27 years working at a tribal college.

To all my relatives - may you find solace in the prayers of our ancestors to achieve and persist in our journey.

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For me this journey to complete this dissertation was not without a strong support system. Family, friends, professors, and students provided the fuel for my fire. I want to recognize the role each played in enabling me to complete this dissertation.

First, I want to thank my family – my husband, Albert, our children – Jennifer, Elena, and Freddy, our grandchildren, my dear sister, Darryl, my brothers, and our dad, Burgess, and our mom. I also want to express my appreciation for the amazing women in my life who have not only been a source of inspiration, but also for your words of kindness and encouragement in this process. Thank you – Dara, Toni Lee, Sharon, Amy, Linda, Jenny, Judy, Leslie, Amaya, and Patti.

Appreciation to the amazing faculty of Baker University for the confidence and going the extra mile for all your students. Dr. Tes Mehring is truly a gifted and inspiring advisor. A true servant-leader. She makes the impossible possible. Dr. Peg Waterman has the patience of a saint. Dr. Waterman's investment in my study will not be forgotten. I also want to thank Dr. Judy Korb for graciously serving on my committee.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) enrollment in higher education has more than doubled in the past 30 years, yet AI/AN students continue to be significantly underrepresented in institutions of higher education and continue to face barriers that impede their academic success (Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, & Solyom, 2012). The systemic failure plaguing AI/AN students has been documented over the last century in reports such as the *Problem of Indian Administration: The Meriam Report* (Meriam & Work, 1928), *Indian Education: A National Tragedy - A National Challenge* (U.S. Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 1969), and the *Indian Nations at Risk Task Force Report* (U.S. Department of Education, 1991). The authors of these three reports investigated and documented the issues of American Indian students and continue to be cited by American Indian scholars (National Indian Education Association, 2016; Reyner & Eder, 2004). Barnhardt (2001) detailed the unique and often overlooked history of policies, dual federal/territorial status, and evolution of the school system for Alaska Native students. These three reports and Barnhardt's findings documented inadequate efforts to serve AI/AN students, particularly with regard to the Federal Government's oversight and implementation of policies. The failure to act to improve the conditions of AI/AN communities was detrimental and has only worsened the future livelihood of the most vulnerable sector of the AI/AN communities - children.

A 2010 report by Aud, Fox, and KewalRamani on status and trends in education provided evidence that 1% of enrolled college students nationwide are AI/AN. There is an assumption AI students' failure in higher education is due to their preparation in

schools located on American Indian reservations (The Education Trust, 2013). The premise of lack of academic preparation for college readiness due to American Indian student's enrollment in reservation schools is not accurate as over 93% of AI/AN students attend public schools (National Indian Education Association, 2016). According to a report released by The Education Trust (2013), the majority (602,000) of American Indian students attended public schools in 2012. Only 7% of American Indian students attended Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools in 23 states nationwide according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report for school enrollment (Ross et al., 2012). BIE enrollment of Native students throughout the United States was reported as 41,962, the fourth most significant enrollment behind California, Arizona, and Oklahoma public school enrollment (The Education Trust, 2013.)

The means by which the majority of Americans achieve their goals and dreams and upward mobility is through education. Education as a pathway to success for minorities, especially AI/AN students in pre-K through postsecondary schools, is not the same journey. The inequality of the education landscape is the reality for the majority of AI/AN students (Executive Office of the President, 2014).

Background

The failure to involve AI/AN communities and leaders in their children's education historically has been one of the most significant barriers to their academic success. Austin (2005) stated that thousands of pages of policies, laws, court decisions, and studies attest that educating American Indians in Western ways has always been a Euro-American obsession. The disadvantages experienced by AI/AN students are rooted in the historical context of the federal Indian policy often referred to as Indian Law

(Canby, 2009). According to Canby, the term Indian Law refers primarily to the body of law dealing with the status of Indian tribes and their unique relationship to the Federal Government. Canby (2009) summarized four themes, which form the present law:

First, tribes are independent entities with inherent powers of self-government; two, the independence of the tribes is subject to the powers of Congress to regulate and modify the status of tribes. The third theme is the ability of Congress to deal with and regulate tribes is wholly federal; states are excluded unless Congress delegates power to them. Fourth, the federal government has a responsibility for the protection of tribes and their properties; include the protection from encroachments by the states and their citizens. (pp. 1-2)

The founders of the United States regarded Indian tribes as having both the right and ability to govern their people as sovereign nations, to make treaties, and to declare war (Pevar, 2012). The founders' regard for sovereignty does not resonate in the writing of the Constitution. The Constitution does not extend citizenship to any Indians and they were considered outsiders in their own land by the Colonists (Pevar, 2012). Since the founding of this country, American Indians have been the most heavily regulated ethnic group (Pevar, 2012). This regulation of AI/AN by the United States has been in the form of what is referred to as that of a trustee and beneficiary (Canby, 2009). As sovereign nations embedded within the United States, AI/AN nations ability to self-govern was not fully enacted until 1832. The *Worcester v. Georgia* case heard by the Supreme Court in 1832 established in case law the ability for tribal nations to be self-governed (Canby, 2009; Pevar, 2012).

Prior to this ruling, American Indians entered into treaties for a variety of reasons, most notably, to acquire land. From 1787 with the first treaty signed with the Delaware to the end of the treaty-making era in 1871, the Federal Government signed hundreds of agreements with tribal nations (Canby, 2009). The treaties were all written in English and often not fully explained, and the advantage and bounty for these agreements favored the federal government. However, the AI/AN nations leadership over the decades has sought to enforce the guarantees set forth in treaties, specifically ownership of Indian lands, hunting and fishing rights, and entitlement to specific federal services such as education or health care (Canby, 2009). However, according to Canby, not all rights are secured by treaties; many of them are a product of statute or executive agreement.

Leading the charge to empower AI/AN through education has been a series of efforts by AI/AN leaders and communities. One of the efforts toward improving educational opportunities nationwide for AI/AN students was initiated in 1950, through the passage of Public Law 874, also referred to as Impact Aid. This law provided federal funds to school districts for the education of American Indian school children (Yudof, 1971).

In a 2015 article, Michelson reported that nearly 60% of the Impact Aid educational funding is allocated to schools near Indian reservations. Each year Impact Aid undergoes immense scrutiny by Congress in order to lower the appropriation (Michelson, 2015). Impact Aid is the lifeblood of a majority of public school districts serving AI /AN students (Michelson, 2015). In his testimony to the United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, Daniel Hudson stated that 93% of Indian students are educated in public K-12 schools with the remaining 7% taught in BIE schools (Indian

Education Series, 2014). The inability to adequately fund Impact Aid can be detrimental to providing services to students in the most underfunded school districts, particularly those serving AI/AN students. The failure to adequately fund Impact Aid is another barrier to achieving academic success for AI/AN students in public schools.

The results of the lack of adequate funding for the majority of AI/AN students are measured in low daily attendance, high dropout rates, and lack of academic preparedness. Fann's (2012) study found that out of 100 AI/AN high school students only 50 will graduate from high school and 38 will enroll in a post-secondary institution. The *Native Youth Report 2014* (Executive Office of the President, 2014) included citations of dropout statistics for high school stating 22 % of AI/AN people ages 25 and older have not finished high school. The United States Census Bureau's *American Community Survey* (2012) reported that approximately 29% of the U.S. population has a bachelor's degree or higher compared to the 13% of AI/AN bachelor's degree completers cited by the *Native Youth Report, 2014* (Executive Office of the President, 2014). These studies have demonstrated the need to expand research related to AI/AN education as well as develop strategies to improve opportunities for success for AI/AN students.

The federal government and specifically the Department of Interior (DOI) have not adequately fulfilled the terms of agreements with AI/AN constituents, particularly in the area of education. Schierbeck (1971) said she believed that education historically was a tool used by the federal government to segregate and eradicate the cultures of the first people of this land. Schierbeck stated, "The educational system for American Indians was not viewed as a mechanism for developing upward mobility, but rather as a subtle weapon of subjugation" (p. 4). In her 1971 article, Scheirbeck contended that the U.S.

historically has shown that education as a whole for American Indians is an either/or proposition – either learn the ways of the whites or remain poverty stricken. Schierbeck was not speaking from the sidelines but as a servant-leader who was instrumental in Indian education nationwide until her death in 2010. The context and personal conviction exhibited by Schierbeck in her role in the Office of Education in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) provided essential support and assistance to the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) founders.

AIHEC, founded in 1972, was originally comprised of five colleges: Navajo Community College (now Diné College, Tsaile, Arizona), Sinte Gleska (Rosebud, South Dakota), Turtle Mountain Community College (Belcourt, North Dakota), Standing Rock Community College (Fort Yates, North Dakota), and Hehaka Sapa College of D-Q University (Davis, California) (AIHEC, n.d.). The work of the founders of AIHEC in 1972 was to secure federal funding for tribal colleges. Pease (2016) recounted the herculean efforts by members of the six original tribal college's leadership and AIHEC toward making the argument for funding to support tribal colleges and universities (TCUs). The passage of the Tribally-Controlled Community Colleges Act in 1978 was a long and difficult but meaningful task.

In 2016, the over 17,000 students enrolled in 35 TCUs pursuing their academic goals exemplified the living legacy of the leadership of the six original TCUs and AIHEC founders (Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2018). A 2019 report by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) revealed that students attending TCUs are likely to be female and over 25 years of age. CCCSE found that tribal college attendance promoted a holistic approach to overall development and development of

Native American values. In addition, TCUs emphasize culture and a sense of belonging. These factors promote persistence in college. CCCSE also found that engagement with faculty, staff, other students, and their major increased persistence. Results of the same study indicated that 67% of first-time TCU students were enrolled in developmental math, 65% in developmental writing, and 61% in developmental reading courses. Although TCU students reported using tutoring services and skill labs more frequently than non-TCU students, the challenges associated with developmental course enrollment increases the probability of not completing college. Other obstacles and barriers facing AI/AN students that influence TCU attendance and completion included being a first-generation college student, lack of financial resources to help pay for college, work schedule, having dependents who need care, unreliable transportation, lack of internet services, and food insecurity (CCCSE, 2019).

During the fall of 2015, 627 degree granting higher education institutions served over 20 million students nationwide (Snyder et al., 2018). The 2015 total college enrollment rate for AI/AN students as compared to peers was 23 % (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). AI/AN students had the lowest college attendance among all ethnic groups. Musu-Gillette et al. (2017) defined the total college enrollment rate as the percentage of 18 to 24-year-olds enrolled in 2- or 4-year colleges and universities, which would include TCUs. Since 1990, Hispanics have increased enrollment faster than all other ethnic groups in college enrollment and AI/AN student enrollment remains consistently below 1 % (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). These reports demonstrated a need to investigate, examine, and find solutions to the barriers, gaps, and obstacles encountered by AI/AN students in higher education settings.

Swisher and Tippeconnic (1999), both revered American Indian educators, issued a challenge to others to take up the cause to provide and improve the educational experience for AI/AN students from early childhood to postsecondary education. Swisher and Tippeconnic (1999) stated, "the next step to addressing problems associated with AI/AN persistence and retention is for Native American researchers to focus their attention and efforts in this area" (p. 303). Larrimore and McClellan (2005) stated, "There is a clear need for additional scholarly research on the experiences of Native American students in postsecondary education" (p. 27). The response to the Swisher and Tippeconnic 1999 challenge is not yet completed. As researchers seek data pertaining to AI/AN students there are still major reports and studies, such as those authored by ACT, which indicate low numbers or lack of information to report specifically for AI/AN students. Shotten, Lowe, and Waterman (2013) documented efforts of support and the lack of resources encountered by AI/AN students nationwide in *Beyond the Asterisk*. These authors focused on AI/AN student data and argued that researchers must "look beyond the asterisk" (p. 27). The Shotten et al. (2013) findings renewed national recognition of the ongoing struggle facing AI/AN communities and attempts to provide educational opportunities. The importance of educational access and achievement is correlated to nation-building and self-determination for AI/AN tribal nations. Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, and Solyom (2012), in their report for the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), contended:

We believe that institutions of higher education offer possibilities and that by working with researchers and communities, they can change the tide that batters

Native students, their communities, and tribal nations against the shoreline to that is favorable, useful, and productive. (p. 117)

Statement of the Problem

Low high school graduation rates and high dropout rates are the reality faced by AI/AN parents and educators nationwide. Stetser and Stillwell (2014) studied gaps in higher education and provided a detailed description of the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR). The ACGR included summarized data for 9th graders who graduate from high school within four years and is considered more accurate than the Average Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014). Stetser and Stillwell's study indicated only 65% of AI/AN students graduate from high school in four years. The ACGR revealed that American Indian students fall behind Black, White, and Asian students on this indicator (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014). The implication of having a 65% high school graduation rate is a factor leading to the low percentages of American Indian students applying to and accepted by colleges and universities. Brayboy et al. (2012) stated that AI/AN students arguably have the lowest high school completion rates in the country (p. 32). The low high school completion rates create a barrier to access to postsecondary pursuits.

The research focusing on the AI/AN student college experience has primarily focused on the non-academic factors experienced at college such as family support, cultural inclusion, and finances. Few studies were found that focused on specific pre-college factors (e.g., strengths and weaknesses of the preparation for college received in high school, high school cumulative GPA, and ACT score). Limited qualitative studies were found that reported college student perceptions about factors that contributed to or

inhibited college enrollment or academic success during the college years for AI/AN students. No qualitative studies were found that focused on pre-college and college factors that contributed to the academic success of individuals who attended a tribal college in the Midwest. There is a need for qualitative research focusing on pre-college and college factors that contribute to academic success for AI/AN college students in the Midwest.

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to investigate the perceptions of AI/AN seniors eligible for May 2019 graduation at a Midwestern Tribal College (MTC) about pre-college and college factors that contributed to or inhibited academic success in college. The first purpose of the study was to explore student perceptions about strengths of high school preparation for college academic success. The second purpose was to investigate perceived weaknesses of high school preparation for academic success in college. The third and fourth purposes were to probe college student perceptions about factors that either inhibit or promote college enrollment for AI/AN students. The fifth purpose of the study was to examine college student perceptions of factors throughout the college years that inhibited academic success. The final purpose of the study was to ascertain factors AI/AN college students perceived promoted academic success during their college years.

Significance of the Study

This study contributed to the literature on factors related to high school preparation, college enrollment, and college attendance that influence success of AI/AN students during college. Unlike the quantitative studies that have focused on factors related to college success, the qualitative focus of this study is unique and presents the

perspectives of tribal college students who are eligible to graduate from a Midwestern tribal college. In addition, the focus of this study is on pre-college and college factors that have contributed to the academic success of AI/AN students in college. The results of this study may be of interest to the BIE leadership, tribal higher education leaders, and college and university student affairs staff in their ongoing efforts to strengthen academic success for students in higher education settings. On a local level, the results of this study could enrich pre-college preparation for high school AI/AN students.

Delimitations

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), “Delimitations are self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study” (p. 134). The delimitations for this study included the following:

- The study was conducted at a specific MTC.
- The sample included AI/AN men and women attending a MTC.
- All participants in the study were seniors eligible to graduate in May 2019.
- Students who had attended college part-time were excluded from the study.
- Only perceptions about strengths and weaknesses of high school preparation related to college academic success, factors that inhibited or promoted college enrollment, and factors that inhibited or promoted college academic success were analyzed.

Assumptions

“Assumptions are postulates, premises, and propositions that are accepted as operational for purposes of the research” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 135). The current study was based on the following assumptions:

- All participants understood the interview questions and responded honestly.
- All student self-reported demographic information was accurate.
- The interpretation of the data accurately reflected the perceptions of the respondents.

Research Questions

Creswell (2009) stated research questions "shape and specifically focus on the purpose of the study" (p. 132). The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What do American Indian/Alaska Native seniors, eligible to graduate spring 2019 from a MTC, perceive as strengths of the preparation for college they received at the high school attended?

RQ2. What do American Indian/Alaska Native seniors, eligible to graduate spring 2019 from a MTC, perceive as weaknesses of the preparation for college they received at the high school attended?

RQ3. What do American Indian/Alaska Native seniors, eligible to graduate spring 2019 from a MTC, perceive as factors that inhibit college enrollment for AI/AN students?

RQ4. What do American Indian/Alaska Native seniors, eligible to graduate spring 2019 from a MTC, perceive as factors that promote college enrollment for AI/AN students?

RQ5. What do American Indian/Alaska Native seniors, eligible to graduate spring 2019 from a MTC, perceive as factors that inhibit academic success for AI/AN students during college?

RQ6. What do American Indian/Alaska Native seniors, eligible to graduate spring 2019 from a MTC, perceive as factors that promote academic success for AI/AN students during college?

Definition of Terms

This section provides terms and definitions used throughout the study to enable the reader clarity and understanding.

Alaska Native. For purposes of this study, the term Alaska Native refers to a student attending a MTC who was from an Alaskan corporation or tribe. The Native people of Alaska are comprised of three groups: Eskimos, Aleuts, and American Indians (Pevar, 2012).

American Indian, Native American, Indigenous, First Nations. The use of the terms American Indian, Native American, Indigenous, and First Nations, have appeared in various sources and there is no universally accepted definition (Pevar, 2012). The use of these terms refers to the Indigenous population of North America, primarily the United States.

American Indian research asterisk *. Shotten, Lowe, and Waterman (2013), defined and amplified the term to refer to data in quantitative research findings noted with an asterisk which denotes the data as not statistically significant regarding AI/AN students in studies and research.

Assimilation. Throughout American history, several actions have been taken to force AI/AN to adapt and adopt the American way of life which devaluated their language, traditions, and culture. The federal government's efforts were set in formal policy in 1887 with the passage of the General Allotment Act, also referred to as the

Dawes Act. The premise of removing AI/AN from their traditional homelands to reservations was to extinguish tribal sovereignty and force assimilation to the society at large (Pevar, 2012).

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The BIA was developed in 1824 by John C. Calhoun and is one of the oldest bureaus in the federal government. In 1849, the BIA supervision was moved to the newly created Department of the Interior (DOI) and out of the War Department. The BIA provides support, technical assistance, and services to over 567 federally-recognized tribes in the United States. The BIA has over 12 regional offices and funds programs in healthcare, safety, and education through the Office of Justice Services, Office of Field Operations, Office of Trust Services, and the Indian Health Service (Bureau of Indian Affairs, n.d.).

Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). The BIE, formerly called the Office of Indian Education programs, was renamed and established in 2006. It has oversight for over 180 elementary and secondary schools in 23 states serving over 42,000 AI/AN students. The BIE also operates 125 tribally-controlled schools through grants and contracts and operates off-reservation boarding schools. The BIE also provides funding and support to two post-secondary institutions in Kansas and New Mexico. Grant funding for AI/AN post-secondary students is administered through the BIE (BIE, n.d.).

BIE school. According to the BIE (n.d.), a BIE school is a Bureau-funded school which is operated and supported with funding through the Bureau of Indian Education. For this study, these schools will be referenced as a BIE high school. The primary attributes for these schools are (a) a Bureau-funded school; (b) a contract or grant school;

or (c) a school for which assistance is provided under the Tribally-Controlled Schools Act of 1988 (BIE, n.d.).

Indian Country. In this study, many schools reside in areas identified as "Indian Country" (Canby, 2009, p. 139). Canby (2009) stated Indian Country is defined as all land within the limits of any Indian reservation under the jurisdiction of the United States government and all dependent Indian communities within the borders of the United States.

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). In 2018, there were 38 schools in the United States designated as a TCU. Except for two TCUs (Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute), the remaining schools are chartered or operated by tribal nations. TCUs offer certificates, associates, bachelors, and masters' degrees (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, n.d.).

Tribally-controlled school. A tribally-controlled school is (a) operated by an Indian tribe or a tribal organization, enrolling students in kindergarten through grade 12, including a preschool; (b) not a local educational agency, and (c) not directly administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA, n.d.)

Organization of the Study

This study includes five chapters. The first chapter included the introduction, statement of the problem, significance of the study, delimitations, assumptions, definition of terms, research questions, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 includes the literature review and consists of a concise overview of the historical and significant policies and events related to American Indians and their impact on education. The impact of Federal oversight on Indian Education, and factors influencing Native American student success

are also included in Chapter 2. The third chapter describes the methodology for the study and includes the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and limitations of the study. The fourth chapter presents the results of the study. The final chapter includes a summary of the study findings, findings related to the literature, and conclusions, which describe implications for action and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

By 2020, the United States hopes to reach its goal of a 90 % high school graduation rate. The architects of this plan contended achieving this rate is a critical first step to disrupt the cycle of poverty for the youth of our nation (DePaoli et al., 2015). These authors argued this goal would enable young people living at or below the poverty level access to better opportunities for employment and education. The ultimate purpose of this plan is to end the high school dropout epidemic (DePaoli et al., 2015). One formidable challenge toward achieving the 90 % graduation rate goal by 2020 rests upon the smallest cohort: AI/AN students.

Stark and Noel (2015) summarized a compendium report issued by NCES focusing on trends in high school dropout and completion rates for the years of 1972-2012. According to Stark and Noel (2015), AI/AN students had the highest overall dropout rate (14.6%) of all ethnicity groups in the United States (Stark & Noel, 2015). The high dropout rate is a crucial factor for AI/AN students as it affects the prospective numbers enrolling in postsecondary institutions. The result of a high dropout rate is the low numbers enrolling in college. According to Musu-Gillette et al. (2016), less than 1% of AI/AN students enroll in college. Stetser and Stillwell (2014) reported only 65% of AI/AN students graduate from college in four years. Low high school graduate rates were cited as a primary factor related to post-secondary entry (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014). Future success for AI/AN students resides in understanding the detrimental impact of our nation's oversight regarding education for these students. This understanding is

imperative to restoring the dream and hope for AI/AN students to attain a college education.

In this literature review, the contextual framework of the discourse of the history of Federal policies, and the impact of policies and legislation on AI/AN education is discussed. A summary of studies and research describing factors that impact AI/AN students' academic success constitute the second section of this literature review. The final section summarizes the pathway AI/AN students travel from high school to college with an emphasis on pre-college preparation.

Indian Policies: Historical Overview and Impact on Indian Education

The impact of colonization of the First Nations populations has had a significant effect since the first contact with non-natives through loss of life, culture, and homelands. From the beginning of the settlement of this continent, the systematic killing of the Indigenous peoples was a fact of life (Cook-Lynn, 2007). According to Cook-Lynn, the United States had pursued policies throughout the generations that led to the decimation of the First Nations people on this continent.

The stark reality for AI/AN populations was the organized effort of explorers, colonists, and later the Federal Government to gain access to land and resources at any cost. From 1820 to 1850, the demand for additional land was acute (Canby, 2009). The removal from ancestral lands was not voluntary and was enacted upon American Indians by the United States despite two Supreme Court rulings in support of the rights of the Cherokee between 1823 -1831 (Canby, 2009). Tyler (1973) stated,

The land greed of the whites forced the Indians westward, and that behind the removal policy was the desire for eastern whites for Indian lands and the wish of

eastern states to be disencumbered of the embarrassment of independent groups of aborigines within their boundaries. (p. 55)

President Andrew Jackson was ardent that the removal of American Indians was necessary and took extreme measures to carry out his idea. Jackson was not the first president to pursue policies to remove American Indians and push westward to acquire land. Thomas Jefferson had devised a similar initiative to persuade southern tribes to trade eastern land holdings for lands west of the Mississippi (Tyler, 1973). The overall goal as documented by policies and history was the fervent need by the United States to acquire land and eliminate contact between Indians and white people.

Before the examination of the movement of the reservation system and impact on education policies for American Indians, it is essential to define and review the purpose of the BIA. The predecessor to the BIA was the Office of Indian Trade, which was in operation from 1806 to 1822 (Tyler, 1973). The abolition of the trading system between Indians and whites resulted in significant changes for the Office of Indian Trade. Congress eventually created the Office of Indian Affairs and placed it within the War Department in 1832 (Tyler, 1973). In 1834, the post of Commissioner of Indian Affairs was established to lead the Office of Indian Affairs (Reyner & Eder, 2004).

The Office of Indian Affairs remained within the War Department until it was transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1849 which eventually resulted in the Office of Indian Affairs evolving into the BIA. It was during this time the federal government created a policy restricting the tribes to a specified reservation (Canby, 2009). The establishment of the BIA in 1849 formalized the United States role in directing affairs of American Indians.

According to Tyler (1973) the creation of the BIA resulted in an attempt to end the Indian nations. Before the establishment of the BIA, Indian policies were carried out by states with federal support through treaties, laws, and proclamations. The Indian policies secured some of the desired results for the non-Indian population usually at the expense of the expressed desire to "civilize" and "assimilate" the Indian (Tyler, 1973, p. 66). An example of policy impact was elimination of tribal Indians in the eastern United States by 1849 (Canby, 2009).

The first reservations were established in mid-1850 and extended to other areas west of the Mississippi (Tyler, 1973). Through treaties, the federal government required tribes to cede much of the land they occupied reserving a smaller portion for the tribe (hence the term reservations) (Canby, 2009). The reservations were land allotments to American Indian tribes and often resulted in the removal and displacement of American Indian tribes from ancestral lands (Canby 2009). From 1853 to 1856, 52 treaties were negotiated, and some 174,000,000 acres of land were acquired by the United States (Tyler, 1973).

The Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 further supported the U.S. government's efforts toward decimation of the American Indian (Cook-Lynn, 2007). This era of federal policy regarding American Indians is the Allotment and Assimilation Period, which occurred from 1887-1934 (National Congress of American Indians, 2015). The primary effect of the Allotment Act was a precipitous decline in the total amount of Indian-held land, from 138 million acres in 1887 to 48 million in 1934 (Canby, 2009). The intended result imagined by Massachusetts Senator Henry Dawes, (author of the

Dawes Allotment Act and chair of the Senate's Committee on Indian Affairs), was the 'civilization' of American Indians (Reyner & Eder, 2004).

Dawes, like many others of his day, viewed the communal life of the American Indian as primitive and antithetical to civilization (Reyner & Eder, 2004). The emphasis from hunting to farming, living in one place, or adapting to a new environment had significant impacts on all members of the tribes. Canby (2009) wrote the intent of the Dawes Act was to have the tribes, which were viewed as obstacles to the cultural and economic development of the Indians, wither away. When the Indians did not wither away, the response was to assimilate tribal members. Blue Dog (1982) stated, "The Dawes Act gave land allotments to the individual Indians with the intention of breaking up the tribal structure and allowing Indians an opportunity for a more "civilized life" (p. 113). Blue Dog contended the Dawes Act was, "directly related to the Indian education policy because proceeds from the destruction of the Indian's land base were used to pay the costs of taking children from their homes and placing them in Federal boarding schools" (p. 111).

Indian Education: Impact of Federal Oversight

Canby (2009) stated the primary instrument for carrying out the federal trust responsibility for AI/AN people has been the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for over 150 years. The most substantial activities for the BIA today are education and management of tribal resources (Canby, 2009). Before the BIA's oversight, the methods used to accomplish the teaching of the American Indian children by missionaries were disciplinary approaches to civilize and Christianize. The BIA's historical influence led to the inclusion of provisions in treaties for providing education to AI/AN tribes in

exchange for ceding land (Blue Dog, 1982). The annual budget for the Office of Indian Affairs in 1870 available for education for American Indian students was \$140,000 (Tyler, 1973). Reyner and Eder (2004) reported that in a span of 82 years, the United States Senate approved almost 400 treaties and 120 tribes ceded nearly a billion acres to the United States.

In 1878, the United States established off-reservation boarding schools (Canby, 2009). The United States government reported an average of 4,488 Indian children were enrolled in federal institutions and by 1887 the number rose to 14,333 students (Tyler, 1973). The boarding school purpose was to assimilate the children into the non-Indian way of life. The boarding school experience changed the lives of thousands of AI children (Trafzer, Keller, & Sisquoc 2006). Deloria and Wildcat (2001) contended the missionaries, and later, government teachers, primary pedagogy to 'educate' American Indian children was accomplished through erasing their cultural backgrounds.

Historically, Indian education has been mostly subtractive in nature (Reyner & Eder, 2004). Gipp and Fox (1991) stated,

To break the vicious cycle of low educational achievement and high school dropout rates that contribute to problems of poverty, alcoholism, unemployment, and other social ills among Indian people, the real hope lies in educational programs that are grounded in and recognize the enduring traditional values and richness of the American Indian. (p. 2)

As demonstrated in federal policies, the impact to remove, assimilate, and educate the American Indian by the Federal Government has been trial and error. Blue Dog (1982) contended, "The attitude of the Federal Government toward Indians and the

education of Indian youth during the late 1800s and early 1900s is best characterized as an attitude of forced assimilation and forced education" (p. 113). A bleak reminder of the pervasive attitude of the paternalism of the Federal Government and lack of respect for the Indian nations is the fact AI/AN were not considered citizens in this country. The United States government formally granted citizenship to American Indians in 1924 (Tyler, 1973). The granting of citizenship to the AI/AN was not a benevolent gesture as it did not improve the lives of AI/AN communities (Reyner & Eder, 2004). The federal oversight of American Indians extended to facets of their life and more importantly to the future of the tribal nations – their children. American Indians are victims of a legacy that includes economic exploitation, military conquest, political manipulation, and social disregard (Dejong, 1993; Szasz, 1999, Tippeconnic-Fox, Lowe & McClellan, 2005). This poorly designed framework is the legacy by which AI/AN education populations endure. A report by the U.S. General Accounting Office (1977) to the Secretary of the Interior and the BIA findings concluded more assistance was needed to help educate Indian students in preparation for and during college. This report provided strong recommendations to enhance the pre-college preparation for AI/AN students to give them a better chance at furthering their education (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1977). Gipp and Fox (1991) stated, "Although education provides hope, educators must go beyond the recognition that the standard educational approach in America has not worked for American Indians" (p. 2). Scholars and advocates of Indian law and legislation have determined the historical involvement of the Federal Government has explicitly and implicitly acknowledged there is a Federal responsibility to Indian education (Blue Dog, 1982).

Factors Impacting Native American Student Academic Success

The barriers to persistence for American Indian students in mainstream institutions have been the focus of a handful of studies, dissertations, and reports. Lopez's (2016) literature review concluded limited research relevant to AI/AN postsecondary persistence was a factor in understanding AI/AN student persistence. Shotten et al. (2013) stated, "The lack of knowledge and understanding about this particular population may be attributed to our invisibility within the academy" (p. 1). The exclusion often is due to the low numbers and the perceived lack of statistical significance which has resulted in a phenomenon that has been referred to as the 'American Indian research asterisk' (Shotten et al., 2013). The limited studies, reports, and research focusing on the American Indian student college experience have focused primarily on the non-academic issues experienced at college. These factors include the lack of financial resources, family support, and challenges associated with cultural inclusion on campus.

Demmert (2001) conducted a literature review that examined research-based approaches and programs focusing on the academic improvement of Native American students. Demmert reviewed approximately 8000 documents including masters and doctoral dissertations and other research related to education and Native Americans. His meta-analyses included topics that addressed early childhood environment and experiences; Native American language and cultural programs; teachers, instruction, and curriculum; community and parental influences on academic performance; student characteristics; economic and social factors; and factors leading to student success in college or college completion (Demmert, 2001).

Lopez's (2016) literature review included both qualitative and quantitative research studies. The main question was to identify the factors that influence AI/AN students' postsecondary persistence (Lopez, 2016). Lopez (2016) organized the limited articles and studies into four themes: family support, institutional support, tribal community support, and academic performance. Lopez (2016) stated, "Due to the lack of research conducted using measures important to AI/AN persistence, the understanding of factors influencing AI/AN student postsecondary persistence is still somewhat limited" (p. 792).

Crosby (2011) concluded that previous academic performance is a key factor in predicting college student success. Crosby concluded that successful Native American college students, while in high school, took more rigorous courses to develop the skills needed for college. Crosby (2011) concluded the ability to provide Native American high school students with the opportunity to take advanced classes would enhance and give them the foundation to be successful in college.

Jackson, Smith, and Hill (2003) studied American Indian college students' academic persistence from their personal experiences growing up on a reservation. Jackson et al. sought to understand the barriers to postsecondary success as well as the strategies to overcome those barriers. The Jackson et al. qualitative study included 15 participants who were seniors at colleges in the Southwest United States. The criteria for participant recruitment included the following: (a) students had lived on a reservation for the majority of their school years, (b) both parents of the students had to identify themselves as Native American, (c) were seniors in good academic standing at their respective college, (d) had been enrolled in college no longer than 7 years, and (d)

students enrolled fewer than 7 years had been full-time students most of their enrollment in college. The conclusions of the study yielded two levels of depth related to postsecondary barriers and college success.

The first level was referred to as 'surface' themes. The surface themes consisted of the following factors – family support, structured social support, and faculty/staff warmth, previous exposure to college experiences, developed self-assertiveness, and reliance on spiritual resources. The second level was labeled 'deep themes' and included attributes which were more personal and deemed more complex. Two of the deep themes focused on experiences with racism and the pathway to college. Jackson et al. (2003) described the persistence of these students to pursue their degree despite struggling academically, taking breaks from their studies, dealing with racism, and a perceived lack of support from the institution. Jackson et al. found that participants discovered ways to overcome discouragement and continue their studies. The researchers stated, "These students appeared to have an exceptional ability to take advantage of resources that were available to them" (Jackson et al., 2003, p. 561). Two factors which contributed to the student's achievement of their success were the exposure to college and family support.

Marcus (2011) conducted a study that examined barriers and factors influencing persistence for first-year American Indian students attending a university summer bridge program. The premise of the study was to determine the impact of forming a sense of community by AI students participating in the summer bridge program on a college campus. Marcus sought to measure factors which contributed to the student's persistence or departure. The overarching question for this study centered on the extent of the student's participation in the summer bridge program and transition into higher education.

Four results were observed. Making connections, family support, academic preparation, and finances were associated with AI student success (Marcus, 2011). These four results were consistent with earlier research conducted by Demmert (2001) and Lopez (2016), who suggested family and financial support were factors related to AI student success, and Guillory (2009) who found that the quality of high school preparation impacted AI student success.

Al-Asfour and Abraham (2016) summarized factors related to college persistence and provided additional evidence of the importance of family support for Native American students at tribal colleges. The factors included quality of instruction and faculty, mentoring, and student engagement. The premise of the study centered on the impact of family involvement throughout the student's educational experience at TCUs. Included in the research was a description of the Family Educational Model developed by HeavyRunner and DeCelles (2002). HeavyRunner and DeCelles (2002) stated that family plays a significant role in Native American student's success in college. The Family Education Model encourages family contributions, support, and connections with their student throughout the college experience (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002). This support enhances the student's success in higher education at TCUs.

Findings in the literature review have focused on addressing institutional efforts to address concerns related to AI/AN student persistence. Rarely have research results been presented from the perspectives of AI/AN students. Generally, research has focused on aggregated data from quantitative studies. The few qualitative studies that have been conducted have focused on higher education institutions which are predominately white (PWI). Máxkii (2017), a TCU graduate, published an article in the *Chronicle of Higher*

Education that expressed a personal perspective. In the article titled, “Why I Attended Tribal College”, Máxkii shared reasons for attending a tribal college that included affordability, location, close relationships with faculty, culture, and being surrounded by peers with similar backgrounds (Máxkii, 2017). Supiano (2018) also stressed the importance of affirming belonging through college programming that emphasizes culture. Marroquin (2019) affirmed the importance of culture in persistence efforts with AI/AN college students.

A 2019 study by the CCCSE explored the student experience and its impact on persistence. The study report included the results from two surveys whose respondents were TCU students. The first survey was the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE). The SENSE survey centered on the student’s experiences prior to enrolling in the third week of the first semester at a TCU. Over 1000 students from 25 TCUs participated in the 2017 survey (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2019). The second survey administered in the spring of 2018 was the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The CCCSE sought to gather information from TCU students on their experiences during the academic year. Over 2400 students participated from 22 TCUs (CCCSE, 2019).

According to the authors of the 2019 report, there were special focus items on both surveys that found TCUs were fulfilling their respective mission and that TCUs had a strong focus on preservation of culture (CCCSE, 2019). Over 88% of SENSE survey respondents indicated a strong sense of belonging at their respective TCU. Sense of belonging is a critical factor to achieving academic success (Brayboy et al., 2012; Heavy Runner & DeCelles, 2002; Shotten et al., 2013).

Educational barriers, rooted in this country's historic (and present) customs and structures of racial/ethnic discrimination, continue to frustrate the educational ambitions of far too many qualified students of color (Allen, Bonous-Hammarth, & Suh, 2004). On the importance of developing relationships with faculty and staff, authors who reported results from the SENSE survey reported TCU students indicated faculty and staff knew their first name within three weeks of enrollment (CCCSE, 2019). The connectivity and positive interaction between TCU faculty and staff and students is foundational to students achieving success and persisting. The findings from the surveys sponsored by the CCCSE raised additional questions for continued research and application toward closing the gaps for TCU students. Marroquin (2019) stated that, "In addition to ensuring that culture is an essential tenet in TCU education, another fundamental principle of a TCU education is to create a positive and thriving learning environment for their students" (p. 8).

Apthorp (2016) led the Regional Education Laboratory (REL) team which authored a study for the Institute of Education Sciences for the purpose of developing future strategies toward improving academic preparedness for AI/AN students. The focus of this study supported field-based research on the use of language and culture to assist American Indian student success. Apthorp's (2016) study yielded an unintended result. The study results included the identification of a region in which a large number of AI/AN students (25 % or more) attended non-BIE schools. Of the 208 schools included in the study, 35 were BIE schools and the remaining 173 schools were not BIE schools. This report demonstrated and debunked the myth that all AI/AN students live on

reservations or attend BIE schools (Apthorp, 2016). This finding provided a wider context to assess student academic achievement for AI/AN students nationwide.

Understanding and establishing a frame of reference for the current state of education must begin with the resources, factors, and foundations of high schools AI/AN students attend. The Executive Office of the President (2014) stated in the *Native Youth Report*, that “AI/AN students continue to have worse educational outcomes than the general population by nearly all measures” (p. 14). This report attributed low persistence rates for AI/AN students at the post-secondary level to a lack of financial planning, inadequate academic preparation, and an underdeveloped support network.

Crosby (2011) focused on factors that affect Native American college student success. The qualitative research involved interviews of six successful Native American college graduates. Crosby (2011) found the elements of success for students interviewed for her study were split into two categories. Factors in the first category included previous academic performance, financial aid, and familial support. These are factors a student encounters before reaching an institution of higher education. The second set of elements focused on feeling connected and campus involvement when the student arrives on campus. The participants in the study revealed that those factors encountered before reaching the university setting have a more significant impact on success. The results of the study confirmed the importance of peer-mentoring and cultural connection as critical factors related to supporting student persistence. The study also provided evidence of the impact enrolling and completing advance classes had on secondary education and tools to succeed in college (Crosby, 2011). Crosby (2011) also found that lack of understanding of the financial aid process, family support, and integration of American Indian culture

limited college attendance. Feelings of isolation and campus involvement were variables that influenced persistence and graduation from college.

According to Stark and Noel (2015), the high school dropout rate for AI/AN students is one of the highest in the United States at 14.6%. The Executive Office of the President (2014) indicated in the *Native Youth Report* only 13% of AI/AN students earn a college degree compared to 29% of the United States total population. Similar to Crosby (2011), Stark and Noel (2015) reported the barriers to persistence often include the lack of understanding of the financial aid process, family support, and integration of American Indian culture by the college. These same three factors are often cited in numerous articles and dissertations in the recent decade as the major contributors to the lack of persistence and graduation.

Crosby (2011) and Adelman, Taylor, and Nelson (2013) postulated the biggest obstacle to resolve the issues facing America's ability to prepare and support AI/AN college students adequately is the lack of policy support. According to Adelman et al. (2013), lack of policy support culminates in a disconnect between state and federal policies for AI/AN postsecondary education preparation, recruitment, access, transition, and retention. These authors stated federal policies and oversight have been created in an ad hoc and piecemeal manner. Their example of disconnect is the monolithic structure of the Department of Education (DOE). The most egregious example cited by Adelman et al. (2013) was the lack of integration and communication among programs housed within the DOE including the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, and the Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

The disconnected structure of the DOE is analogous to the BIA's past and current oversight for Indian educational as documented in a BIA report issued in 1988 (Reyner & Eder, 2004). While the BIA only accounts for less than 10% of AI/AN student enrollment, the agencies' inability to fully advocate for all AI/AN students as part of its mission contributes to the problem (Indian Education Series, 2014). The historical missteps in formulating, enacting, and sustaining policies to benefit AI/AN students education is the result of a disenfranchised effort by all (Reyner & Eder, 2004). High dropout rates and low attendance and completion rates of AI/AN students are documented annually. In the last decade this topic has been the subject of research by American Indian scholars. Faircloth and Tippeconnic (2010) stated the high school dropout and low graduation rates of AI/AN students is a crisis. Unfortunately, since 2010 the crisis and issues related to dropout and completion rates have persisted to the detriment of AI/AN students.

The inability to create and sustain programs, resources, and support for all AI/AN students results in only 69% of AI/AN students graduating from high school compared to 83% of white students (The Education Trust, 2013). AI/AN students are more likely to be classified as low-SES and 30% attend schools where more than half of students are Black, Latino, or American Indian (Bromberg & Theokas, 2014). Bromberg and Theokas (2014) found that high-achieving students of color attending low-SES high schools leave with lower ACT scores and lower high school GPAs. AI/AN students are less likely to participate in Advanced Placement (AP) examinations compared to their peers (College Board, 2011). These are three examples of the larger compounded problem that has led to the current state of diminished postsecondary achievement for

AI/AN students. The reported achievement gap for Native American students starts at an early age and persists through college (Field, 2016).

Adelman et al. (2013) expounded on the ongoing efforts and understanding required for supporting college readiness for postsecondary success. The analysis by Adelman et al. suggested the need for policy that can guide the development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive system of interventions. Adelman et al. recommended that the system should begin in pre-kindergarten and continue in a fully interconnected way through postsecondary graduation. Evidence to support adoption of this approach is test scores for AI/AN students. Native American students from elementary school through high school are more likely than white students to score “below basic” (Field, 2016, p. 1) on the math and reading portions of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Strategies should be implemented early on to meet or exceed the national benchmarks of assessment with an emphasis on pre-K learning (Adelman et al., 2013).

Larrimore and McCellan (2005) included a Burr, Burr, and Novak (1999) recommendation in their conclusions: “We must consider Native American student retention and secondary school and higher education as related parts of a seamless whole” (p. 24). Two established models which could contribute to the development of a seamless whole in support of retention for AI/AN students are early college high schools and summer bridge programs. Although the literature published for AI/AN students is limited on these two types of models, there are several ongoing efforts in Alaska, Washington, and New Mexico which have shown promising results.

The Effie Kokrine Charter High School in Fairbanks, Alaska is an early college high school. The Effie Kokrine curriculum immerses students in real-world projects and activities organized around themes such as family, cultural expression, health and wellness, outdoor survival, and applied technology (Brayboy et al., 2012). The accomplishments of students attending early college high schools noted by Brayboy et al. (2012) included proficiency levels in reading reaching 92% and students earning up to 45 college credit hours before high school graduation.

These programs cannot meet all the needs of AI/AN students in the region or even beyond their physical locations. Unfortunately, the downside of promising programs geared toward underserved populations is the loss of support due to funding or enrollment resulting in closures. The success and challenges of these programs provide options to replicate in other geographic areas. The Suquamish Tribe of Oregon created the Oregon Suquamish Early College High School which opened in 2005 and closed in 2011. The Suquamish Tribe in 2011 stated the closure would be for a year. The school never re-opened as the Suquamish Early High School, but the tribe did create and continues to support the Chief Kitsap Academy. The Chief Kitsap Academy is one of the first compact schools in the state of Washington. Legislation passed in 2013 by the State of Washington authorized tribal-state compact schools. Compact schools are funded under Title 1, Part 1, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA). The purpose of compact schools is to solidify through a written ‘compact’ between the school, parents, students, and in this example the tribe, to share in the responsibility for school academic achievement (Office of the Superintendent of Instruction, 2017). The Suquamish tribe’s expectation for graduates from the Chief Kitsap Academy is for them

to aspire to assume leadership roles in their tribe and community and be productive global citizens (Susquamish Tribe, 2017).

Adelman et al. (2013) called for programs to move beyond piecemeal and fragmented practices toward support for transformative and sustainable systemic change. Highlighting Chief Kitsap Academy provides a glimpse of the need to affirm and support systemic changes even in the midst of what appears as lack of success. The Suquamish tribe's Chief Kitsap Academy is an example of a sovereign nation's efforts to prepare citizens through a culturally-based learning environment for grades 6-12.

Another program built on the premise for transformative change is the Native American Community Academy (NACA) located in Albuquerque, New Mexico (NACA, 2016). NACA is a charter school serving over 37 tribal nations (NACA, 2016). NACA goals emphasize wellness, culture, and academics with a focus on college preparation. NACA was initiated in 2006 by parents and educators striving to offer students another choice. The central question driving discussion posed by community members was, "How can public education embrace the future while sustaining our identities, culture, and traditions?" (NACA, 2016). Discussion resulted in the development of core values and a mission to serve students grounded in an integrated process of academics, culture, and wellness.

Musu-Gillette et al. (2016) found that AI/AN student dropout decreased from 2% to 1% at charter schools between fall 2004 to fall 2014. Chief Kitsap and the NACA remain solvent and operational despite the bleak outlook on enrollment at charter schools by race/ethnicity (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). These two charter schools have demonstrated in their curriculum and mission the desire to enhance student's

postsecondary success through college preparation efforts. The programs at Chief Kitsap Academy and the NACA are guided by values and leadership from an AI/AN perspective and influence. The downside to the success of these programs is the limitation of services. Chief Kitsap Academy serves students in and around Poulsbo, Washington with an enrollment of 75 students in 2017 (Office of Superintendent of Instruction, 2017). In 2016 the NACA served approximately 385 students in and around Albuquerque, New Mexico (NACA, 2016). Chief Kitsap Academy and the NACA are two prominent examples of enacted change to address the gaps in preparation for life after high school.

The term to describe the influx of students transitioning from high school to post-secondary education has generally been the word 'pipeline'. In March 2017, Dr. Adrienne Keene, in a presentation at the University of Kansas, stated the term 'pipeline' was no longer a desirable or appropriate term to use in context with Indigenous people and education (A. Keene, personal communication, March 31, 2017). Her reason to discontinue using the term pipeline was the correlation to the ongoing resistance by a few tribal nations against the building of oil pipelines through their tribal lands. The protest against the Dakota Access pipeline was one of the most significant stories and show of resilience and solidarity to the Standing Rock Sioux tribe from tribal nations across the United States and Canada (Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, 2016). In her show of continued support against this atrocity, Keene said she prefers to use the term 'pathway' to describe a student's transition from secondary to post-secondary education (A. Keene, personal communication, March 31, 2017). On a pathway, Dr. Keene stated, students find a path that has been forged by others like them to follow (A. Keene, personal communication, March 31, 2017).

The literature on the pathways of successful students transitioning from high school to college is limited but provides reliable information from which to draw relevant points of data. Shotten, Starr, and Cinètron (2007) studied a peer-mentoring program serving AI students at a Midwestern, public, predominately white (PWI) institution with a student enrollment of 27,000. Peer mentors were matched to first and second year AI students. The objective for the peer mentors was to provide community support and to guide their protégé to overcome potential barriers to success. The peer-mentors participating in the study had all previously engaged in the program as a protégé. The participants in the Shotten et al. (2007) study had persisted successfully to their junior and senior years at the institution. Their reflections about the impact of the program demonstrated to the researchers the positive influence of the peer-mentoring program.

Pathway to College

Preparing students for postsecondary pathways, especially AI/AN students, is vested in large part in the public schools. Snyder, de Brey, and Dillow (2016) drawing from an NCES digest issued in 2016, reported that AI/AN secondary enrollment was approximately 1%. In 2012-2013, NCES listed 31,100 AI/AN high school completers nationwide. There are very few studies focused on tribal affiliation, type of high school attended, high school cumulative GPA, or ACT scores as factors that may have an impact on student success in college persistence. The academic rigor of a student's high school curriculum is more predictive of long-term educational attainment than family socioeconomic status and is the single best predictor of college graduation (Adelman, 2006; Brayboy et al., 2012). Miller (2014) stated academic preparation is vital, as a

prepared student with a higher college GPA has the best possibility of being retained and being successful in college,

Motl, Multon, and Zhao (2016) conducted a study focused on persistence and factors associated with second-year enrollment at a tribal college. The findings were based on a survey administered to 89 participants during the first semester of college. One of the conclusions based on the Motl et al. study was that academic success in high school did not translate to academic success in college for some AI students participating in the study. This finding was contrary to other prominent researchers who stated that pre-college academic preparation, specifically high school GPA, was a reliable predictor of success in college. Motl et al. (2016) noted few studies had been conducted investigating psychosocial factors affecting persistence behaviors of students at TCUs. Their literature review uncovered no studies using qualitative methods with a TCU sample. Their research also did not distinguish between students who departed voluntarily and those who withdrew because of academic difficulties (Motl et al., 2016).

Tinto's (1993) theory of student departure has been cited numerous times in the literature related to pre-college education. Lotkowski, Robbins, and Noeth (2004) linked the ACT Policy Report of 2004 to Tinto's theory when they stated, "Tinto believed that pre-college education interacts with and directly influences a student's initial commitment to the institution and its academic goals" (p. 11). Sawyer's (2010) research report suggested that high school GPA and the ACT testing provide valuable insights and predict first-year success. Ishitani and Desjardins' (2002) longitudinal study findings indicated that the higher a student's first-year college GPA, the less likely the student would drop out of college. One of the conclusions of the authors of the ACT 2004 report

was the finding of a positive relationship between socioeconomic status, high school GPA, and ACT scores and college retention. The most influential factor was high school GPA, followed by socioeconomic status (SES) and ACT scores (Lotkowski et al., 2004).

Regardless of cultural background, many students enter college who are not adequately prepared to face the academic rigor of higher education (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1977; Marcus, 2011). This statement rings true and should also carry a footnote which emphasizes and clarifies the students of color who are impacted the most by lack of preparedness for college are AI/AN students. The lack of fundamental skills in math and English make it difficult for students to manage an average college course load (Lau, 2003; Marcus, 2011). The lack of academic preparedness often requires enrollment and completion of developmental (remedial) courses before transition into general education courses in math and English as outlined by the college. The enrollment in developmental courses could add a year or more to the student's trajectory to graduate and often results in dropping out of college.

Guillory and Wolverton (2008) conducted a study of three higher educational institutions focusing on persistence. These authors held focus groups with administrators, faculty, students, and key stakeholders. The faculty feedback listed two barriers for students at their colleges. The first was financial support and the second was the lack of academic preparation. The student focus group identified academic preparation as a key barrier to persistence. It is important to note the Guillory and Wolverton study was limited to three institutions and yet provided a compelling argument for further examination of institutional practices. Institutional practices are not limited to

higher education but include the broader community involving public and government sectors regarding achieving parity for post-secondary success for American Indians.

Summary

This literature review began with an overview of the history of the influence and subsequent oversight of AI/AN education experiences. It was essential to provide this foundation to understand the unique relationship between AI/AN and the Federal Government regarding education. This foundational structure led to an overview of studies and research on AI/AN students who have found the pathway to college. A fundamental concept in this literature review was the research on overcoming challenges for AI/AN students. These obstacles are vital and unique to AI/AN students in higher education. The relationship between pre-college and college environments as well as the strategies and programs enhancing AI/AN student success in college were described. The current study investigated perceptions of seniors attending a MTC eligible to graduate in May 2019 about pre-college and college factors that contributed to or inhibited academic success in college. Chapter 3 explains the methodology used in the current study including the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and limitations.

Chapter 3

Methods

This qualitative study examined AI/AN 2019 graduation- eligible seniors' perceptions of pre-college and college factors that contributed to or inhibited enrollment and success in college. Chapter 3 provides a summary of the methods used in the current study. This chapter includes a description of the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and hypothesis testing, reliability and trustworthiness testing, researcher's role, and limitations of the study.

Research Design

A qualitative phenomenological research design using a social constructivist paradigm was chosen for this study. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), "Qualitative research is suited to promoting a deep understanding of a social setting or activity as viewed from the perspective of the research participants" (p. 27). Phenomenological research allows the researcher to focus on interpretation of the lived experiences of those interviewed. This process required the researcher in the current study to withhold interjecting personal experiences and concentrate solely on the participants' experiences at the MTC. The social constructivist paradigm assumes that individuals "develop subjective meanings of their own personal experience, and that this gives way to multiple meanings" (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012, p. 29). Constructivist focused research allows the researcher to ask questions that lead to inductive development of meaning from data. The researcher was able to gain understanding about the lived experiences of seniors eligible to graduate in May 2019 from a MTC by asking

them to talk about pre-college and college factors that contributed to or inhibited academic enrollment and success during the college years.

There are common core characteristics which define qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). For this study the core characteristics included a natural setting, researcher as a key instrument, inductive and deductive data analysis, participants' meaning, and reflexivity (Creswell, 2014). Securing space in a location adjacent to the MTC campus provided a natural setting for the participant's ease of access and comfort. The researcher, as the interviewer in the current study, played a key role in obtaining the data for the study. This role was conducted with objectivity and purpose. Receiving the information through face-to-face interviews followed by transcribing, reviewing, and coding the data involved inductive and deductive data analysis. Researchers must strive to remain unbiased and focused on the integrity of the participant's meaning through keeping the transcription intact and pure as espoused during the interview. The researcher listened to audio-tapes of each interview several times during transcription to ensure the participants responses to interview questions were noted correctly. Finally, Creswell (2014) listed reflexivity as a means to assure the researcher's personal history, experiences, and cultural influences do not color or influence the interpretation of the data. The researcher made significant efforts to interpret the data in a professional and unbiased manner. Two peer reviewers audited the transcriptions and interpretations of data drawn by the researcher. These actions promoted reflexivity in the analysis and synthesis of data.

Setting

The setting for this study was one tribal college in the Midwest. The choice of one MTC was purposeful due to the university's diverse enrollment within its student population. Students at this MTC represent over 150 tribal nations from 38 states (MTC, 2017). Enrollment for fall 2017 at the MTC was 806 students with 83 % under 24 years of age. More than 80 % reported having residency outside of the state (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Sampling Procedures

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), sampling for qualitative research is almost always purposive (p. 176). The sampling procedures utilized for this study were criterion sampling and snowball sampling (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Criterion sampling, as defined by Lunenburg and Irby (2008), involves selecting participants who meet some criterion. The participants for this study were seniors eligible to graduate in May of 2019 who were enrolled at a Midwest tribal college.

In an effort to attract participants meeting the criteria the researcher also used snowball sampling. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) defined snowball sampling as a process that involves selecting individuals who can assist in identifying potential research participants. Research participants then help identify additional potential participants. The researcher shared an overview of the study with selected faculty and staff at the MTC and solicited support from these individuals to identify seniors eligible to graduate in May 2019. The preliminary number of participants from the faculty and staff yielded 10 potential participants. Participants provided an additional four recommendations for

other potential participants. The total number of potential participants was 14. Ten students agreed to participate and completed the semi-structured interview.

Instruments

Creswell (2014) described the interview protocol as an outline of interview questions with probes to ensure the interviews remain on topic and solicit thoughtful responses from participants. The interview protocol for this study was designed to ensure a safe and secure environment that allowed participants to share candidly and poignantly about their high school and undergraduate experiences at a MTC that promoted or inhibited college enrollment and academic success during the college years. The interview protocol included six demographic questions followed by 14 structured interview questions aligned with the research questions. The demographic questions included the following:

1. What is your tribal affiliation?
2. What is the name of the high school you attended?
3. What was your high school GPA?
4. What was your composite ACT score?
5. What is your college major?
6. Why did you decide to attend college at [REDACTED]?

The research questions and structured interview questions included the following:

RQ1. What do American Indian/Alaska Native seniors, eligible to graduate spring 2019 from a MTC, perceive as strengths of the preparation for college they received at the high school attended?

IQ1a. What do you think were some of the strengths of the preparation for college you received at the high school you attended?

IQ1b. What high school courses contributed to your academic success in college?

IQ1c. What role did your high school teachers play in preparing you for academic success in college?

RQ2. What do American Indian/Alaska Native seniors, eligible to graduate spring 2019 from a MTC, perceive as weaknesses of the preparation for college they received at the high school attended?

IQ2a. What do you think were some of the weaknesses of the preparation for college you received at the high school you attended?

IQ2b. What high school courses were difficult for you? What supports did your high school provide to help you achieve success in these courses? How did your experience in these high school courses impact your academic success in college?

RQ3. What do American Indian/Alaska Native seniors, eligible to graduate spring 2019 from a MTC, perceive as factors that inhibit college enrollment for AI/AN students?

IQ3a. What factors make college enrollment difficult for American Indian/Alaska Native students?

IQ3b. What steps related to enrolling in college can be confusing or difficult for American Indian/Alaska Native students?

IQ3c. What factors have friends who are American Indian/Alaska Native who are enrolling in college indicated make it difficult to enroll in college?

RQ4. What do American Indian/Alaska Native seniors, eligible to graduate spring 2019 from a MTC, perceive as factors that promote college enrollment for AI/AN students?

IQ4a. What factors make college enrollment easy for American Indian/Alaska Native students?

IQ4b. What factors have friends who are American Indian/Alaska Native who are enrolling in college indicated make it easy to enroll in college?

RQ5. What do American Indian/Alaska Native seniors, eligible to graduate spring 2019 from a MTC, perceive as factors that inhibit academic success for AI/AN students during college?

IQ5a. You will be graduating from college in a few weeks. What challenges have you encountered that made your academic success difficult throughout your college years?

IQ5b. If there were particular courses you struggled with what was it about these courses that made them difficult?

RQ6. What do American Indian/Alaska Native seniors, eligible to graduate spring 2019 from a MTC, perceive as factors that promote academic success for AI/AN students during college?

IQ6a. College graduation indicates you have been a successful student. What factors have contributed to your academic success as you have been enrolled in college?

IQ6b. What role have faculty, student affairs staff, or others at the university played in helping you achieve academic success?

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to data collection, a request to conduct the study was submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board (IRB) on February 18, 2019. Approval to conduct the study was received from the Baker University IRB on February, 19, 2019 (Appendix A). Approval to conduct the study was received from the MTC IRB on March 8, 2019 (Appendix B). Emails were sent to faculty and staff at the MTC to request suggestions for participants meeting the criteria. Upon receipt of potential participants with contact information, an email invitation was sent to the 14 potential participants (Appendix C). In the email to schedule the interview each potential participant was provided the consent form to review (Appendix D). The consent form included information about the purpose of the study, the research questions, and information on opting out of the study at any time. Those participants who agreed to participate were scheduled for a face-to-face interview. Each participant was made aware that the interview would be audio recorded. The measures taken to protect the identity and confidentiality of the participant were shared prior to signing the consent form. The consent form outlined the method by which the researcher would assign an identification code number ranging from 1 to 10 to protect anonymity. This identification code was used during data analysis, the presentation of findings, and summary of results.

Interviews were conducted adjacent to campus at a local ecumenical building in a study room reserved by the researcher. Rubin and Rubin (2005) indicated qualitative interviewing involves two important elements - the art of hearing data and the establishment of a partnership between the researcher and participant during the interview. The semi-structured interview approach was utilized to facilitate openness,

enhance participation, and remain focused on the research topic. These factors created a comfortable setting which enabled each interview participant to share experiences freely and expound upon topics from a personal perspective.

It was important to observe and mitigate issues of time and transportation for each participant and provide a setting that would be easy to access. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher greeted each participant outside of the room. This courtesy was due in part to the researcher's personal preference to establish a positive first impression. Upon entering the room, the researcher asked the participant to sign the consent form. The researcher also made it clear to the participant that at any point during the interview consent could be withdrawn and the interview terminated by the participant. The participant was reminded the consent form gave permission for the interview to be audio recorded and for note-taking to occur.

After the consent form was signed, the researcher shared appreciation to the participant for the time and willingness to participate in an interview. The tone and pace of the initial greeting and casual conversation at the beginning of the interview were essential to creating a foundation for a safe and comfortable environment for the participant. Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated that starting an interview with casual conversation sets the pace for the discussion to be determined. This allows the researcher to 'form a relationship' with the participant (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Building rapport with the participant was fundamental to assuring the participant would fully engage and offer responses and details that assured rich and meaningful data.

The interview began with six demographic questions and then proceeded to the open-ended questions. If necessary, a follow-up question was employed at times when

additional details were needed to fully interpret the response to a question. The use of audio-recording and note-taking allowed the interviewer to obtain details, anecdotes, and observations about the participant for analysis. At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher stood and extended a hand to thank the participant and walk him/her out of the room. Interviews took place March 12, 2019 to April 1, 2019. On average, the interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Marczyk, Dematteo, and Festinger (2005) suggested three steps should be used when analyzing qualitative research interviews: data analysis of interview recordings including data preparation, analysis, and interpretation. Creswell (2014) elaborated upon this approach and suggested qualitative data analysis involves a linear approach with an interactive design that includes three steps: (1) organizing and preparing data, (2) reading and/or looking at all data, and (3) coding all data. A similar three step approach to qualitative data analysis was suggested by Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), who further elaborated upon Creswell's (2014) third step and recommended the final stage of coding should be completed as soon as possible in order to retain the clarity of the shared responses observed and recorded during the interview by the researcher. The approaches described by these researchers along with those specified in Tesch's Eight Steps, as described by Creswell (2014), were incorporated into the data analysis and synthesis of the current study. Tesch's first step requires the researcher to read the interviews meticulously. After reading, the researcher may recall information from the interview and add it to notes being kept about the interview. In step two the researcher should select one transcribed interview and ponder the question, "What is this about?"

(Creswell, 2009, p. 186). From this perspective in step two, the researcher should review several interviews and isolate the underlying meaning of the transcribed interviews (Creswell, 2009 p. 186). Following step two, Tesch's third step involves creating a list of topics from the reviewed transcribed interviews from step two. In the formulation of the list of topics, the emergence of headings such as major topics, unique topics, and leftover topics surface. Following the identification of the list of topics the researcher is encouraged to review the data and begin to assign and write codes. This review and onset of coding is step four and may result in additional categories as codes emerge. Step five requires the researcher to assign the most descriptive wording for the topics and convert topics to categories. This step may result in reducing the total list of categories through combining and identifying interrelationships. Abbreviations are created for each category and codes are alphabetized in step six. Step seven is the preliminary analysis. Finally, in step eight, the researcher, after the preliminary analysis, may find it necessary to recode the data. The premise for qualitative research, according to Creswell (2009), is to answer the question – "What were the lessons learned?" (p. 189).

At the conclusion of each interview the researcher in the current study clearly labeled the interview and audio-recording with a numeric identifier (e.g., 1,2,3, etc.) to ensure anonymity. Each interview was stored and placed in chronological order. The researcher completed transcriptions of the interviews through the use of an online tool called Trint. This allowed for expediency and accuracy of the interview transcripts. In addition, notes taken by the researcher were entered onto each transcript using a colored font that clearly delineated notes from the interview transcription. The researcher's notes included details about the participant's demeanor and engagement in the interview.

To analyze the data, the researcher first read all of the transcripts several times. This was followed by using a colored font to highlight key words and phrases in each response that focused on each RQ. The researcher then created a spread sheet that allowed all key words and phrases for a specific question for each respondent to be viewed on the same page. Review of the responses across participants promoted identification of common codes or themes and subthemes for each research question. These were recorded on a separate summary document and reviewed to determine overarching themes of pre-college and college factors that promoted or inhibited college enrollment and academic success in college.

Reliability and Trustworthiness

A peer examination (Creswell, 2014), two pilot interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), and member checking (Creswell, 2014) were conducted to affirm the accuracy and credibility of the findings for this study. The researcher provided the RQs and interview questions to two peer reviewers prior to the interviews. The peer examiners were asked to provide feedback about the wording of the interview questions including whether or not the information obtained from participants would help formulate insight related to the research questions and whether or not the wording of the questions was understandable. No revisions in the interview questions were made as a result of the peer review. Both peer examiners were familiar with qualitative research. Examiner one completed a qualitative dissertation and currently works at a regional public university in the Midwest. Examiner two was a doctoral student completing a qualitative dissertation at a public research university in the Midwest.

Prior to conducting actual interviews, two pilot interviews were conducted by the researcher to provide an opportunity to assess the interview process and questions with a live audience and eliminate any concerns related to formulation of questions or the interview process. The pilot interview feedback prompted the researcher to organize the demographic questions in a format that asked easier questions before those requiring more thought. The two individuals participating in the pilot interviews were both recent graduates of the MTC.

Member checking is essential to confirm the reliability and accuracy of the researcher's ability to capture the responses of each participant. Prior to the analysis, each participant was sent the transcript of his/her interview. Participants were asked to review the transcript and report omissions or corrections within one week. The purpose of member checking was to enable the participants to have their responses assessed and clarified. This process promoted accuracy in recording the responses to the interview questions.

Researcher's Role

Creswell (2014) stated the two key elements for the researcher to maintain in all phases of the qualitative study are objectivity and truthfulness. In addition to these two elements, the researcher is responsible for the data collection and analysis of a qualitative study (Creswell, 2009). These elements and role require the researcher to recognize the potential for bias and maintain the integrity of the study throughout all phases of the study. The researcher first and foremost must acknowledge and always be mindful of any personal bias and prejudice. The researcher for this study is currently employed at the Midwestern tribal university. The Midwestern tribal university is a small close-knit

campus and as a result, the researcher knew or had encountered participants on campus. However, the researcher is not a faculty member and as a staff member had no role related to student records. As an American Indian and enrolled member of the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, the researcher has the background – culturally and educationally – to have a strong base to comprehend the challenges facing AI/AN college students. These factors contributed to an understanding of the complexities of being an AI/AN post-secondary student. To minimize personal bias in the current study, awareness, intentionality, integrity, and cognizance about maintaining objectivity were continually practiced.

Limitations

Limitations in the current study included the following:

1. Additional variables beyond the control of the researcher which may have impacted participant's memories and experiences included but were not limited to the level of social and academic engagement in college, socioeconomic status, and family support.
2. The level of rigor assigned to course grades resulting in a cumulative high school GPA is inconsistent across high schools throughout the nation.
3. The quality of high school education may have been impacted by the amount of funding and school resources available to each school.

Summary

This chapter described the use of a qualitative research design that engaged participants in face-to face semi-structured interviews. Six research questions focused on tribal college seniors' perceptions about pre-college and college factors that contributed

to or inhibited college enrollment and academic success in college guided the study. This chapter described the methodology of the study including the research design, sampling procedures, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and limitations of the study. Chapter 4 contains an explanation of the results of the data analysis.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to gain first-hand perspectives from spring 2019 tribal college bachelor's degree graduates about pre-college and college factors which contributed and did not contribute to their academic success in college. The participants shared their perspectives about pre-college and college factors that contributed to or inhibited academic success while attending a MTC. A total of 10 candidates eligible for graduation spring 2019 who were attending the MTC participated in the study. Each participant engaged in a face-to-face interview and their responses were analyzed for this study. Chapter 4 includes a presentation of the descriptive analysis of perceptions of selected pre-college and college factors contributing to success, as well as identification and explanation of themes emerging from the coding and analysis of interviews with the 10 study participants.

Descriptive Demographics and Participant Background

Six women and four men participated in the study. Nine students were members of American Indian tribes and one student was an Alaska Native. The participants in this study were predominately graduates of public high schools. Eight of the participants graduated from a public high school, one graduated from a BIE school, and one student graduated from a Department of Defense school. Of the 10 students, four transferred to the MTC within the first two years of their undergraduate studies. Two of the 10 students indicated one or both of their parents attended college and one student's older sibling completed college. The remaining seven stated they were the first in their family to graduate from college.

One student made a campus visit to the MTC prior to attending. Nine of the students learned about the MTC through word-of-mouth. Recommendations from family and friends guided the majority of students to apply to and attend the MTC. Student 7 shared that her mother encouraged her to attend. Student 7 stated, “My mom told me of the MTC and told me it was a great way to get started in college and also a school with an indigenous community.”

Diversity and culture were two of the reasons cited by 6 of the 10 participants in the study to explain why they choose to attend the MTC. The diversity of the student body was also a major factor. Student 6 stated, “I spent a lot of my educational time in public schools and so hearing there was a university specifically for Native Americans is something that sounded perfect, especially because I wanted to work in a tribal school which would be a great environment for me to fit my interest.”

Student 7 responded, “I didn’t grow up with my community and my parent said this would be a great way to connect.” This student shared growing up away from the tribal community was due to her dad’s employment. Attending the MTC was viewed as a way to learn about her tribal history and other native cultures. Student 10 confirmed this view and stated, “It is culturally diverse so that there’s opportunities for me to express myself while at the same time learn from other people.”

The college’s cost was a factor in applying and attending for 5 of the participants. The participants who spoke about the costs primarily were those who had transferred from another institution. In fact, one participant had originally applied to the MTC but initially attended an art institute. The participant shared that due to limited financial aid resources he elected to re-apply to MTC based on recommendations from a family

member. The responses shared by participants to the demographic questions about their reasons for attending the MTC established a strong foundation for each participant to share responses to interview questions freely. Interviews resulted in detailed responses that summarized academic and personal perceptions of each respondent's academic journey during high school and college.

The following section provides an explanation of themes derived from responses to interview questions. Seven major themes were identified from the analysis of the data: high school factors that contributed to college success, high school factors that did not contribute to college success, factors that inhibit college enrollment, factors that promote college enrollment, factors that inhibit academic success during college, personal concerns, and factors that promote academic success during college. Direct quotations are included to highlight and demonstrate interview respondent's perceptions about pre-college and college experiences which impacted college academic success.

High School Factors that Contributed to College Success

To gain a perspective about how high school helped prepare participants for college success respondents were asked to explain how high school courses, faculty, and staff contributed to their preparation for college. Two subthemes emerged. The first subtheme included enrollment in advanced courses including Advanced Preparation (AP), dual enrollment, and college preparation courses. The role of high school support from teachers and counselors and their encouragement of participants to attend college emerged as a second subtheme. Participant responses supporting each of these two subthemes are provided in the following subsections.

Enrollment in advanced coursework. Three respondents indicated that enrolling in Advanced Placement (AP) classes while in high school helped prepare them for the rigors of college. Student 1 shared that to prepare for college she enrolled in Language and Composition AP courses offered at her public high school. She stated, “I was really prepared to have that higher order of thinking by actually reading pieces of figurative language or literature to make me think more abstractly.” Student 1 stated she believed one of the integral factors that contributed to pre-college preparation was the ability to participate and be successful in the AP program offerings.

Student 2 expressed having the opportunity to enroll in advanced courses during high school helped prepare her for college. Student 2 also took advantage of the high school’s AP offerings. She explained, “They were pretty demanding classes which helped with the work load at college.” One of the takeaways from Student 2 was how the work ethic was incorporated into the high school AP courses. She explained, “The courses were rigorous, but the teachers were also there to help in an environment where they can help you learn the skills that are going to help you in college.” A third respondent (Student 3) who took advantage of AP course offerings during high school stated, “I think these classes really helped me because of the instructors.” His success in college was due in part to the rigor of the curriculum and the work ethic required to pass the courses and the instruction and delivery of the AP classes.

One study participant had the opportunity to engage in dual credit. Student 4 was able to enroll in a local tribal college English and math classes and earn college credit during the senior year. The student found the classes helpful and stated he believed they prepared him for college. Student 4 was encouraged to enroll in a dual credit program by

a high school English teacher. The respondent indicated the dual credit experience was beneficial to his future endeavors in college. One study participant spoke of a college prep class offered at a high school she attended. Student 6 spoke about how the college prep class made students aware of life after high school and stated, “They were really understanding and having people know that we will not always follow the same career path and timelines, and I thought that was really important to know college wasn’t for everybody.”

Support from teachers, counselors, and parents. A second subtheme centered on the support participants received from teachers, counselors, and parents throughout the high school years that promoted attending and succeeding in college. Six of the ten participants spoke highly of the support received at their high schools as a strength related to preparation for college. Student 4 emphasized his teacher’s nudging to consider dual enrollment.

One study participant recounted a high school program specifically designed to assist students planning to attend college. Student 3 said, “At XX high school, one of the strengths is that they helped you to apply for college.” Another feature of the program was to assist students in taking the ACT or SAT. Students were assisted one-on-one in searching their college choices and applying to the college. The students in this program were actively engaged and supported by one dedicated staff member. Student 3 was appreciative of a staff member’s role and support assisting students to achieve personal academic goals. Student 3 fondly recalled that the staff member sat with individuals and built rapport and trust. The success of the student was a key focus for the staff member. Student 6 shared that a staff members’ belief and confidence in the each of the students

was inspiring and created the momentum to achieve personal academic goals of acceptance to the college of their choice.

Student 8 described a science teacher who provided enrichment field trips for students to discover professions in the health field. The teacher was a person with whom Student 8 shared plans for attending college. The teacher lent support to Student 8 by offering to review her application and college essay. Student 8 is still in contact with her high school science teacher and is genuinely appreciative of the support received.

Another study participant shared that high school teachers were considered role models. Student 6 stated, “My teachers were kind of my stability and seeing their success was really inspiring and made me want to pursue a degree in education.” Student 7 mentioned attending college fairs and college prep seminars hosted by the school were good, but the opportunity to work alongside a teacher was crucial to her preparing for college. It was the opportunity to work alongside with the teacher, not the content of the class that was important. Student 7 believed the work “kind of helped show me what I would be doing in college.”

Student 9 shared from his own experience the impact of the encouragement from high school teachers that was genuine and caring. This student had attended a few high schools before finding a place that, as he said, “understood the challenges students had to overcome and knew how to handle those challenges.” Student 9 contended that the staff support allowed students to excel. This student poignantly stated, “They believed in me. Thank God!”

All study participants shared pre-college examples from high school that contributed to academic success in college. Each student easily recalled a person,

program, or effort which enhanced pre-college preparation. The importance of the support for each student promoted high school graduation and provided a foundation for success in college.

High School Factors that did not Contribute to College Success

The participants in this study expounded upon several topics which they perceived as weaknesses in preparation for college during the high school years. The perspectives of the participants reflected during the interviews on individual high school experiences had not diminished and were relatively easy to recall. These factors included lack of knowledge provided about post-secondary opportunities, limited high school course offerings, attending more than one high school, and lack of institutional support from their respective high schools.

College comes with a whole new vocabulary. Students hear terms such as credit hours and general education. If they aren't familiar with these terms or have no exposure to the process it can be overwhelming. Student 2 shared, "The biggest thing for me is just kind of general knowledge about college. I didn't know by the time I graduated high school that a full-time load in college was 12 credit hours." The student shared that she knows now that to graduate in four years a student should enroll in at least 15 credit hours each semester. Student 2 also discussed the complexity of the college application process and described it as frustrating. While both her parents were involved in the planning for her to attend college, they did not have all of the answers.

One rural public high school was only able to support students by assisting with applying for scholarships. Student 8 stated this was good but would have been better if there would have been a class to assist the Native students. Student 8 explained the

frustration of peers as well as herself due in large part to the fact Native students had no idea who to talk to or what to do or where to ask for help in applying for college. Student 8 said, “We didn’t know what kind of questions to ask.”

Student 4 spoke about the standards of education at his high school. The overall concern was that the classes were not challenging to students. Student 4 believed students should have been challenged to do harder work. The student understood that the school was smaller and rural and considered these factors for the school’s not being able to support student learning at a similar level as provided at a previous high school.

Several students shared barriers in high school related to difficulty with specific subjects. Students most frequently indicated that high school classes in which they performed poorly had an impact on their college preparation. The classes study participants mentioned most frequently were English, math, and history. Student 8 recalled the difficulty in mastering mathematics during high school. The student shared it was not only the course but the delivery of the instruction which caused her to be unprepared for college math. A similar story regarding the lack of preparedness in high school leading to challenges in college was given by Student 10 who stated, “A lot of my difficulty was with reading and writing classes because English is not my first language.” On his own this student had to work on techniques to overcome the barrier and learn English as a second language to use in compositions for college classes. Student 10 described reading aloud to enunciate the words and concentrate on understanding the meanings and terms.

Interestingly, history was a class about which two of the study’s participants voiced concerns and expressed difficulty experienced while in high school. Student 5 did

not find the coursework to be difficult but did find the western-based history class wasn't valuable. The viewpoint of the history being based on western concepts and having very little information on Native Americans in the course were the major detriments cited by Student 5. It was not until college that Student 5 enjoyed the opportunity to learn about the 'correct' history of Indigenous peoples. Student 3 had a more harrowing experience related to a history class. In the incidents recalled during the interview, Student 3 shared that a history teacher at a public high school stated that the government could 'take out Natives' and made jokes about Natives. This prompted the student to change schools.

Four of the study's participants had attended more than one high school. The reasons provided during the interviews by the participants ranged from racism, family moving to a new area, and disciplinary-based. Two participants shared changing schools was one of the weaknesses in preparation for college. Of the four students, two moved from a tribal school to a public school, one moved from a public school to a tribal school, and one moved three times due to parent's employment. The choices to change schools were not always at the discretion of the student. One student candidly discussed issues at school which included disciplinary actions. However, moving to a new high school provided stability to finish high school for each of these students.

All study participants indicated the support offered to AI/AN students during high school to help prepare them for college is not consistent or is non-existent. The areas of support study participants indicated that would have been helpful included assistance with ACT/SAT, information on college entrance requirements, and importance of high school classes and GPA. Study participants indicated little to no help was provided to prepare for life after high school.

Student 5's perception was, "There could have been someone there who could maybe help Native American or minority students in general because knowing we have a lot of scholarships specifically for minority groups." Student 5 stated the public high school she attended was large and predominately enrolled white students. Student 5 expressed, "In general somebody needed to make students aware of where they can go and where they might be successful." Student 7 stated, "Being honest, you know they (the high school) didn't necessarily help (prepare for college). They didn't talk about like what you do or they didn't talk about the college experience." Student 5 reflected on her experience citing the lack of actively encouraging AI students to go to college at her high school. Student 5 expressed knowing people were willing to help if asked but there was no push or encouragement to students. Student 8 shared, "While they (the high school) talked about different timelines and different career paths they didn't really help us in how to apply for college." Student 8 said that she believed the school's expectation was that the students' family would be the primary source of support in preparing for college.

Factors that Inhibit College Enrollment

In response to the question about factors that inhibit college enrollment for AI/AN students, the participants responded with personal viewpoints as well their peers' struggles. The care and thoughtfulness in responding to the question from each of the study participants was duly noted. This question evoked in a few of the participants an awakening to find solutions for their younger siblings or community members to avoid factors which can inhibit pursuit of a college degree. Responses fell into three categories: support systems, applying for college, and finances.

Support systems. All students shared their own experience or that of peers in discussing the complexity of applying for college. Three study participants indicated that very few people asked them about their future goals after high school. Student 8 stated that only one person, a family member, asked about future plans. Consequently, now Student 8 regularly discusses and reinforces goals for younger family members who are making plans for after high school. Student 8 is intentional in connecting with younger family members to provide them with information about opportunities and options related to college attendance.

Another study participant, Student 4, when asked about his perception about factors which inhibit college enrollment stated, “I mean you were never kind of given the idea that college is an option and I guess the whole other issue is like actually taking time to pull somebody aside and say I really want you to go and I’m supporting you at the same time.” Support was mentioned by Student 7 as well but in a different context. Student 7 stated, “Maybe they (the student) doesn’t want to leave their community cause, you know, the community has always been the support they needed and being away is scary.” Student 7 concluded this feeling might result in students not applying to attend college.

Following the theme of support, Student 8 expressed concerns received from friends regarding attending college out of state. The questions Student 8 had to respond to from friends included: “Why did you go all the way out there for school?” and “Why are you so far away from home and we’re here?” Student 8 explained it was exciting to be in a new environment and the experience was good. The conclusion drawn by Student 8 was that peers perceived being away from home would be hard so they choose to stay

in the community. As Student 8 shared this memory it was clear attending college and leaving home was a sound and beneficial decision for her.

Applying to college. After a decision to attend college the next step is applying to a college. A few of the study's participants recalled their experiences with the application process. Student 1 gave an example from her own experience in applying to the MTC. Student 1 stated, "I didn't know anything about the MTC until after I graduated." The information Student 1 received was first-hand and came from a friend who had previously applied and was currently attending the MTC. Student 1 further shared, "Communication between the college and a student should start early." Student 1 had a resource at the college to assist with the application process.

Another perspective offered by Student 2 was concerns based on observations and discussion with peers who were first generation students. Student 2 learned from these peers about the factors they had to overcome to apply and attend college. Student 2 remarked,

I know a lot of first generation students and they don't have parents that can be like – oh, this is what you do. You know, many of them might be the first person in their family to ever leave home and try to get a higher education degree.

Finances. Associated with applying to college is the application fee. Participant comments focused on the issue of application fees. These participants discussed how application fees, on face value, seem inconsequential. However, put in context, students are encouraged to apply to more than one college which can be a huge hurdle. Student 4 stated, "As far as the application process goes I think I was applying and applications

required a fee ranging from \$25 to \$30 dollars. So I'm sending out four or five and that adds up to \$100."

Student 4 was excited about applying for college but with little or no support from family, the expense to pay for applications was often straining financially. Student 6 was cautious in applying for colleges. Student 6 equated the application fee process to paying to be told no if you are not accepted, which in turn the student interpreted as failing. Student 7 also shared the financial burden regarding application fees. Application fees were discussed as a barrier shared by participants in applying to college by AI/AN students. Student 7 wondered, "I've seen some crazy amounts (for application fees) and what if you don't even get accepted?" These concerns shared by the study's participants clearly elucidated the financial issues students experience before stepping on campus.

After being accepted to college the excitement and joy can quickly subside when contemplating how to pay for college. AI/AN students who attend college with support from their tribal higher education program are required to complete a financial needs analysis. This support requires the student to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Student 3 remarked that the FAFSA is the most confusing step to enrolling in college. Student 3 stated, "I remember helping my cousins do it and they were confused by the whole process, you know they kind of gave up a little bit because they couldn't get all the information."

Tax returns are often the document required to submit when filing the FAFSA. While there is an option to now use the tax retrieval through the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to obtain tax returns the study's participants did not mention this option. It may also prove difficult if you or your parents don't file taxes. Student 6 explained, "I

personally struggled with this because it is hard to obtain any kind of important information from my parents.” Student 5 said, “Applying for your FAFSA was challenging especially since I didn’t really know about having to get my hands on the tax information that is involved.” Another study participant, Student 7, shared “When I was applying, you know, some of my struggles were with FASFA and the essays (applying for college).” Student 7 went on to say, “It (FASFA) was a bit confusing and I do think sometimes students you know don’t feel like they can complete it.”

On the flipside of the struggles with FASFA, one study participant shared a positive experience. Student 9 sought assistance from the MTC through the Financial Aid Office. Student 9 stated, “Mrs. X and the people down in the Financial Aid Office do a tremendous job. I would have never been able to finish that (FASFA).” The option to get help at the tribal college was due in large part to the proximity of the student’s home. Student 9 took advantage of this opportunity and said he believed that, “If I didn’t have someone to guide me through that (FASFA) I don’t know if I could do it.”

Aside from applying for FASFA or tribal higher education money, there are still circumstances which prevail that prevent students from affording college. Student 10 aptly stated, “It’s definitely a lack of resources which are not provided from my community.” Student 10 expressed the concern the lack of funding had on students in his community resulted in students attending colleges based on cost and losing opportunities to attend the college of their choice.

Access to post-secondary opportunities for AI/AN students is not guaranteed. First, AI/AN students must pass through the obstacle course that is secondary education. Obtaining their high school diploma is a major feat. Secondly, moving through the

gauntlet of decisions after high school and determining the best choice for a career requires encouragement, support, and access. Encouragement as discussed by study participants had been hit or miss. The selected commentary from study participants on factors that inhibit college enrollment indicated a high-level of persistence. This fortitude enabled each of them to realize their personal goals and shed light for others to follow.

Factors that Promote College Enrollment

The final research study question that focused on factors that promote college enrollment was responded to with little hesitation. Participants easily recalled and mentioned personal experiences and drew from interaction with other students. Responses focused on social media, guidance, assistance, and place.

Social media. Student 7 believed social media is a big part of promoting college to AI/AN students. Student 7 explained,

So like seeing the MTC's Facebook page and seeing you know what people's experiences are about helps give you a glimpse of enrollment and it kind of gives students our future students a kind of insight on what to expect.

Student 7 also discussed the cost of attendance as a means to promote college to AI/AN students. Student 7 remarked, "Maybe knowing the price – that cost of attendance, that's a really big factor for me personally as I didn't necessarily know what I wanted to do." Cost is an important factor in making a decision of where to attend college.

Guidance. Several respondents spoke about the guidance they received that resulted in college enrollment at the MTC. Study participants described factors that influenced their decisions about which college to attend. Participants stated their college choice was based on guidance through recommendations from peers, family, and friends.

Student 3 actually selected the MTC as his first choice but decided to try another school first. Student 3 eventually applied and returned to the MTC after a family member enrolled. Student 3 shared, “I guess with the MTC there is always someone who went there or who I know or has relatives, so they like me leaned towards it (the school).” Student 3 further stated that in most conversations about the college, people spoke fondly and had good memories. These conversations were literally guiding individuals to the MTC based on word-of-mouth. The guidance offered from a person with first-hand knowledge of a campus and programs, as described by Student 6, enables students to navigate the college admissions process with confidence. Student 6 shared proudly that, “We (the tribe) actually have an educational director who is an alum and has been somebody that has insight on campus life and someone a lot of youth have been able to get support from about college.”

Connections. The word ‘connection’ surfaced in the transcripts of more than a few of the study’s participants. Student 2 offered this example, “If you know somebody that’s here already, they can help you with processes and kind of help I guess check on things or help get the ball rolling because you’re not here physically.” The respondents viewed this assistance as key to navigating the college processes.

One student used the word ‘legacy’ to describe a factor that promoted college enrollment. Student 1 believed that one factor for success was that if someone was to apply at a college and it was the alma mater of a family member this was viewed favorably. Student 1 said, “As alumni it’s their legacy, I guess that’s a huge factor. You know most people you talk to here (at the college) they’re mom, grandma, cousin, literally everyone came to the school.” Although admission to the college does not offer

incentives for children or family of alumni it does provide prospective students with the opportunity to ‘connect’ to individuals and gain a more intimate perspective of the school. It affirms a sense of belonging.

Place. TCUs, like the one featured in this study, are places where students are immersed in a variety of cultures and diversity. Promoting college enrollment according to a few participants would be to encourage a campus visit. Student 4 shared that, “A visit would allow you to meet people and becoming familiar with campus staff and students.” Student 4 further stated, “I suppose seeing a lot of Native students you feel more comfortable and at home (and) seeing that there’s a strong multicultural aspect of the university.” Student 6 said, “Cost was something like the very last thing on my list and a lot of it (decision to attend college) was the cultural aspects.” Student 6 did not have the opportunity to grow up near her tribe. Attending the MTC provided Student 6 with cultural enrichment and diversity. Cultural relevance and reciprocity are important factors to consider for AI/AN students and for colleges to consider when recruiting students. Several of the study’s participants described place and people as elements in their consideration of where to attend college and college success.

Factors that Inhibit Academic Success During College

Participants in the current study described two major factors that inhibit academic success in college: academic issues and personal concerns. Academic issues included preparedness and instruction. Personal concerns focused on homesickness, finances, and stress. While each respondent spoke about personal struggles, each also provided his or her solution to overcome the obstacle and persist.

Academic Issues. Several of the study's participants recalled their first and second years in college and their struggles with math and English. Student 8 stated, "My worse subject in college was math. I hated math so much." Previously, Student 8 shared math was difficult in high school and believed it impacted her ACT score.

Two participants shared the issues encountered with English classes. Both expressed the issues they had experienced in high school followed them to college. Student 5 shared, "Yeah, I kind of think it goes back to the high school question (research question two) about the same classes. Specifically English 1 and English 2 were hard for me." Student 5 elaborated that the difference between high school and college was the focus on one topic in high school. She expressed that to capture her interest the topic had to be relatable. Student 5 concluded, "It was so challenging and so creative writing was hard for me, but I really did try." Student 5 did pass and discovered technical writing was an area in which she excelled.

A second study participant, Student 10, explained, "Definitely a lot of my writing courses, you know, I had the same difficulties in my high school experience." Student 10 further shared research, citing works by others, and the amount of writing was challenging. Student 10 summarized his determination by saying,

I had to focus on not getting the urge to procrastinate, you know, and not doing it (a paper) and not putting time aside to do a lot of research because in the end, you know, you're not going to be able to read so many pages of research and citing those sources.

Another topic related to inhibiting academic success in college focused on instruction. Participants expressed concerns with teaching methods and delivery.

Student 2's statements centered on delivery of instruction. The student explained, "I knew that I was not being prepared the way I needed to be, and I was not learning what I should be in the class." The student explained others in the class were also frustrated and unsure of how to address the situation. Student 2 stated the issue was addressed to the satisfaction of the class. It did restore her confidence in the institution.

An example shared by Student 6 also focused on delivery of content and engagement. Student 6 described how in a class the instructor showed a lot of videos. Student 6 said, "I would become a little frustrated because I did not find it very engaging and so it was like leaving most of the retention of knowledge (from the video) to me." This student explained her expectations for this class were not being met. Efforts to address the situation with the instructor were not met with a positive outcome. Student 6 stated, "Like, if I were confused, I couldn't just walk up to them after class as they would tell me to send an email." Student 6 affirmed that it is easier to communicate frustrations in person than through an email. Student 6 did not allow this to deter her progress but did learn a valuable lesson which helped her overcome a future incident with another instructor.

Personal concerns. Personal concerns was a second factor which emerged in responses related to questions on factors which inhibit success during college. Study participants shared their own struggles or those of peers which they perceived as creating barriers to achieving success in college. The issues included separation from family, finances, and stress.

Separation from family. Student 1 stated "What made things difficult, I think they're all personal factors." Student 1 disclosed there were no academic concerns but

finding a support system was difficult. Student 1 said, “I wasn’t involved (in campus life). Like I only went to two orientation events.” This student explained she is very close to family and making the decision to attend college far from home was initially a difficult transition. Student 1 disclosed, “So homesickness was a big factor.”

A second study participant shared a similar experience with being homesick. Student 7 said, “Okay, so my big thing when I first started was a lot of homesickness.” This student also confided the close relationship with family and being far from them was hard. Student 7 shared, “So that kind of really had an effect on my studying and you know trying to hide my emotions. It didn’t really encourage me to want to do that much when I first got here.”

Student 5 shared a common factor expressed by three other study participants related to being away from home and family. Student 5 stated,

Being Native American and having such a family oriented way of living, it’s kind of hard because I am so far away from home and I feel obligated to be home if anything happens to a family member or a special person.

Student 6 commented, “Well I’m far away from home so that’s something that I struggle with often. Even this very moment. You know as tribal people we are very connected to where you come from.”

Both Student 5 and Student 6 were heartfelt in discussing the connectedness to their family and community. Student 6 said, “Our areas are very close to us because our culture is embedded and it’s around and comes from our family, the language, the kinds of plants that surrounds us, all the influences important to our culture.” Student 6 found

combatting homesickness and adjusting to being away from home while in college required “making your own little family down here.”

Finances. Another topic viewed as an inhibitor to success in college by the study’s participants was finances. One of the strongest statements made regarding finances and family support was made by Student 5, who said, “I want to be financially stable and be able to do this on my own because I am a first-generation student and feel like a financial burden on my family.” This student was not under pressure from family but believed it was her obligation to manage finances and become fiscally independent. Student 5 was quite passionate about this goal and remarked, “Academically making the honor roll is great, but the number one thing was to become self-sufficient.” The work to become independent financially resulted in Student 5 exploring options such as part-time employment, internships, and scholarships. Student 5 shared it was difficult but worthwhile.

Student 4 discussed how another college he attended listed available scholarship opportunities and believed this helped ease the financial burden on students. Student 4 stated, “It’s always a little stressful when you don’t have any money in your pocket and really don’t want to eat in the cafeteria or you need supplies or something.” Student 4’s comments demonstrated the continued need for support and guidance for students in completing the FAFSA and applying for scholarships to ease the financial strain for all students.

Stress. The last factor mentioned as contributing to lack of academic success for AI/AN students during college included specific examples that all resulted in stress. The respondents in the current study not only have a full-time role as a student, but also must

include work, clubs, family, and extracurricular activities in 168 hours each week. The toll on some students has resulted in increased levels of stress.

Student 10 responded, “I probably would say putting too much on my shoulders while trying to get a degree.” Student 10, like many of the students interviewed, was involved in campus activities. Student 10 further stated,

A lot of times when I put myself in leadership positions I kind of drained a lot of my energy where I’m trying to take more time to relax and alleviate some of the stress I’ve been going through and not focusing so much on my homework and then trying to catch up.

Eventually the learned outcome for Student 10 was to reassess priorities and focus on his studies. The determination to succeed despite inhibitors for the study’s participants is evident in the next section on factors which promoted success.

Family. All students in the study shared the impact of family as a factor that inhibited academic success during the college years. Family had both a positive and negative influence on students. One student shared the challenge of school while raising a family. Student 9 likened the experience to being a whirlwind. However, the support of family enabled the student to persist and achieve his goal.

Factors that Promote Academic Success During College

The final set of questions in the current study asked participants their perceptions about factors that promoted academic success during college. The participant’s collective end outcome was to achieve a bachelor’s degree. All respondents expressed their success was due to the efforts of faculty, staff, family, peers, and friends. Student 2 shared,

The college is such a small community and there were a lot of opportunities offered to help you get involved. I feel like this also helps you in the classroom and if you feel like you have somewhere to belong that's really important.

Student 1's response to the question focused on the staff and administration support for all students. Student 1 stated, "Encouragement came from people in a wide variety of departments. I think that had I not had that encouragement and personal relationships with staff all across campus I probably would have transferred." Student 7 said, "I really felt the support that made me feel like you know – you're gonna succeed."

Student 5 said, "I think knowing that it's kind of a small university and you have people you can look up to and kind of have a mentor or someone you can reach out to for help." Student 5 furthered stated, "I feel like it was more personable and if you feel lost you can approach someone for help." Student 5 explained during her first semester another student told her that she knew over half of the staff by their first name. At the time Student 5 said she couldn't imagine knowing or calling staff by their first name. Student 5 reflected pondering on how to achieve this familiarity with staff was important as it affirmed connectedness to the campus. Student 6 stated, "You know you have a sense of belonging because there are people that like you and they have similar goals here and so that in itself is a feeling of belonging."

In some responses, the word mentor was used to describe the relationship between students involved in this study and faculty and staff at the MTC. The question evoked genuine recollections of the impact that individual faculty and staff have on students. Student 3 commented on how a faculty member's support was, "The best advice I've ever had. You know, they were so knowledgeable and all things and really enjoyed

talking to them as I was inspired.” Student 6 shared, “I have some instructors that I really owe everything to. You know, they kept me motivated.” Student 9 said, “I’m definitely more personable with a lot of the instructors. A couple of them, I would even call a friend.”

Study participants offered additional factors which they perceived promoted academic success such as family, peers, and institutional support. Participants were asked to comment on the support of family. Student 1 stated, “My family is supportive of everything that I do and always has been.” Student 9 said, “My family, my mom and dad, without question would be number one on my list.” Both students agreed and indicated the support of family was significant and contributed greatly to accomplishing their educational goals. Student 9 succinctly stated, “If it wasn’t for them (family) I wouldn’t be here right now.”

Another group identified by the study’s participants as crucial to their success was their peers. Student 4 stated, “Being around the Native community here was helpful.” Student 9 also shared, “The student base in my program is pretty close knit and if we have questions about something and we don’t understand something, not only can we approach instructors, but we also ask our peers.” Sharing a different perspective, Student 6 discussed the student government on campus and remarked, “I think creating a campus community is important and I see a lot of student government and club members working to make the college better.”

As students shared their personal highs and lows, the overall focus was on the positive. Students discussed the importance of asking for help early and often. Most of the students also were instrumental in campus life and sought opportunities to share their

lessons with incoming students each year. The range of emotion during the interviews included laughter, tears, and appreciation. Student 1 stated that hearing the words “I am proud of you.” was powerful. Student 1 explained that, “Hearing those words, you realize your self-worth and self-determination and you stay motivated.”

Summary

This chapter included a report of the results of the analysis of the interviews conducted with 10 seniors eligible to graduate spring 2019 from a MTC. Questions focused on high school factors that promoted or inhibited academic success in college. Participants reflected on factors that contributed to or inhibited enrollment in college. Finally, participants shared perceptions about factors that inhibited or promoted academic success during the college years. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study, findings related to the literature, and conclusions.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

The participants in this study were AI/AN seniors eligible for May 2019 graduation at a MTC. The study investigated the participant's perceptions of pre-college and college factors that contributed to or inhibited academic success in college. Study participants shared their perceptions about: (a) strengths of high school preparation for college, (b) weaknesses of high school preparation for college, (c) factors which inhibit college enrollment for AI/AN students, (d) factors which promote college enrollment for AI/AN students, (e) factors throughout the college years that inhibited academic success, and (f) factors throughout the college years that promoted academic success. Chapter 5 is organized in three major sections. The first section delineates the research problem, purpose statement, research questions, methodology, and major findings. A second section describes how findings in the current study are related to the literature. A final section concludes with implications for actions, recommendations for future research, and closing remarks.

Study Summary

This section provides a summary of the study including an overview of the problem. The purpose statement and research questions utilized in the study are identified. This section concludes with a review of the methodology and the major findings.

Overview of the problem. AI/AN students have low high school graduation rates and high dropout rates. Stetser and Stillwell (2014) indicated only 65% of AI/AN students graduate from high school in four years. The low high school graduation rate is

a primary factor leading to the low percentages of AI/AN students accessing post-secondary opportunities. While research has documented non-academic factors (e.g. family support, cultural inclusion, and finances) that impact college attendance and academic success in college (Crosby, 2011; HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002; Marroquin, 2019), studies have not focused on college student perceptions about pre-college and college factors that inhibited or contributed to college attendance and academic success in college. In addition, no studies have examined perceptions of college seniors about college factors that inhibited or contributed to academic success while enrolled in college. There is a need for research focusing on pre-college and college factors that contribute to academic success for AI/AN college students.

Purpose statement and research questions. Six purposes and six research questions guided this study. The purposes and research questions focused on investigating the perceptions of college seniors about pre-college factors that were either strengths or weaknesses in preparing them for academic success in college. Perceptions of factors that either inhibited or promoted college enrollment for AI/AN students were also examined. College seniors' perceptions about factors that inhibited or promoted academic success throughout the college years comprised the final focus for the current study.

Review of the methodology. A qualitative phenomenological research design using a social constructivist paradigm was chosen for this study. Phenomenological research focuses on interpretation of the lived experiences of those interviewed. This process required the researcher in the current study to withhold interjecting personal experiences and concentrate solely on the participants' experiences. Constructivist

focused research allows the researcher to ask questions that lead to inductive development of meaning from data and eliminate research from being repeated (Creswell, 2009). Upon receipt of approval for the study, faculty and staff who worked at a MTC were contacted to recommend spring 2019 graduates to invite to participate in the study. Emails were sent to 14 students to invite them to participate and 10 agreed to participate in the study. A semi-structured interview that included six demographic questions and 14 structured interview questions was conducted with each participant.

The interviews occurred in a space located adjacent to the campus. Interviews were scheduled the last two weeks of regular classes for the spring 2019 semester. Each interview was recorded and scheduled for 40 minutes. The recordings were transcribed using an online source. Each transcript was assigned a number (e.g., Student 1, Student 2, etc.) to preserve anonymity. After each interview was completed, member checking of the transcript was completed by each participant. Following the transcription and member checking, the interviews were reviewed for common themes.

Major findings. Respondents indicated that enrollment in advanced courses like Advanced Placement and dual enrollment in college courses contributed to academic success in college. Support from high school teachers, counselors, and family was also mentioned as contributing to college academic success. Several factors including lack of knowledge about cost and post-secondary opportunities, limited course offerings in high school, attending more than one high school, and lack of support from the attended high school related to scholarship applications and preparation for the ACT or SAT were described by respondents as high school factors that did not contribute to college academic success. Respondents described three factors that inhibit AI/AN student

matriculation to college: support systems (family/friends) either do not discuss going to college or question why individuals might want to move so far away from home; minimal guidance, especially if a student is the first to consider attending college, from family or high school personnel; and finances. In regard to finances, the cost of application fees, especially if applying to more than one higher education institution, was described as a challenge to the college application process. Completion of the financial analysis if applying for tribal funding or the FAFSA if applying for financial aid was also described as a financial hurdle for AI/AN students who want to attend college. In many instances the complexity of these financial forms and the limited ability of students to obtain tax information from parents were described as factors that inhibit completion of college applications by AI/AN students. Factors that respondents indicated promoted college attendance included social media (information from institutions as well as posts from students already attending college), guidance in the form of recommendations from family, friends, peers, and in one case a tribal director, assistance from those already attending college or legacy recommendations from family members who had attended a specific college, and campus visits to become familiar with faculty and staff.

Respondents described three factors that inhibited their academic success during college: academic issues, personal concerns, and stress. Academic issues included lack of preparation in high school for the rigor of college classes. The teaching methods of college faculty and their approachability were also mentioned as academic issues. Personal concerns included separation from family and homesickness. Finances were also described as personal issues. Respondents described having to pursue part-time employment, internships, and scholarships as they completed their undergraduate years

in order to have the necessary funding to continue in college. Stress related to classes, work, clubs, family, and extracurricular activities was mentioned as a third factor that inhibited academic success during the college years. Faculty, staff, peers, and friends were mentioned as factors that promoted academic success throughout college for the study's participants.

Findings Related to the Literature

In 1977 the U. S. General Accounting Office (GAO) issued a report on the BIA's grant program that provided Indian students financial assistance to further their education (p. 1). The GAO (1977) report indicated that Indian students were poorly prepared for college. The GAO report included a review of ACT scores, GPA, and semester hour completion rates for the students selected from seven higher education institutions. The authors of the GAO report indicated Indian student's poor academic performance in college was due to poor academic preparation, culture shock, and inadequate remedial and tutoring services (U.S. GAO, 1977). Lack of academic preparation and support were cited by current study participants as both high school and college factors that inhibited academic success in college.

Adelman (2006) found that academic rigor of a student's high school curriculum is more predictive of long-term educational attainment than family socioeconomic status and is the single best predictor of college graduation. Crosby (2011), Guillory (2009), and Miller (2014) described the importance of the quality of high school coursework and its relationship to success in college. ACT (2012) indicated students need to plan for college early, take rigorous courses, and monitor their progress toward becoming college and career ready. Only 1 in 4 Native graduates who took the ACT scored at the college-

ready level in math, and about a one-third scored at the college-ready level in reading (The Education Trust, 2013). In the current study, respondents shared that their high schools had limited course offerings, provided limited information about post-secondary opportunities, and had limited support for ACT or SAT preparation.

In 2013, The Education Trust published a report that indicated Native students are less likely to attend a high school that offers Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Ninety-seven percent of Asian and 91% of White students attended high schools that offered AP courses compared to only 76% of Native students (The Education Trust, 2013). This is significant as the College Board (2011) reported students who score a 3 or higher on an AP exam have greater success in college, earn higher GPAs, and are more likely to graduate than students who score less than a 3. Three participants in the current study indicated participation in AP and dual credit courses were factors that contributed to their academic success in college.

Academic rigor of the high school curriculum was also discussed by participants in the current study as a factor that promoted and inhibited academic success in college. Mathematics courses are a particularly important gateway for college going students and completing high-level math courses in high school provides the strongest likelihood of going to college (Brayboy et al., 2012; Marcus, 2011). In the current study, eight respondents indicated they struggled in both high school and college with courses in mathematics, English, and history.

According to Brayboy et al. (2012), parents who have not had opportunities to attend college have no experience with the process of college preparation and college going, or access to needed information. Family involvement is crucial. If families aren't

equipped or given access to information and resources from the school then the student can be left behind. The importance of family support was also cited by Demmert (2001), Jackson et al. (2003), Crosby (2011), Stark and Noel (2015), and Al-Asfour and Abraham (2016). Participants in the current study stated that support from family is essential to AI/AN students particularly in alleviating the separation from family and community which results in homesickness. Respondents in the current study cited separation from family and homesickness as factors that inhibited academic success in college. Study participants also mentioned support from family as a factor that contributed to college academic success.

The college debt crisis in the United States is staggering. Affordability is one of the practical reasons for attending a TCU (Máxkii, 2017). In the current study, respondents indicated that finances were a factor that inhibited AI/AN college attendance. Finances were also included in respondents' comments about personal issues that inhibited academic success while in college. The participants in the current study acknowledged one of the benefits of attending the MTC was to graduate with little or no debt. However, respondents reported pursuing part-time employment, internships, and scholarships to supplement finances as they completed their undergraduate years of study.

While Tribal Colleges are often more affordable than mainstream institutions and community colleges, there is still a cost. To pay for college AI/AN students rely on financial aid and tribal support. There is also a difference in how students pay for college as described in the findings by the CCCSE (2019). CCCSE found that tribal college students were more likely to use grants and scholarships to pay for college expenses. The

participants in this study described the affordability of the MTC as a factor in attendance and persisting. Máxkii (2017) stated “Students can earn degrees or take general-education requirements without having to move far away from home or pay huge tuition, room and board fees – which are out of reach financially for many Native students”. Three participants indicated their original reason for attending the MTC was simply to enroll in general education courses and transfer, but they remained and graduated.

Support from the institution, family, and peers of the participants in the current study were cited as factors contributing to college academic success for AI/AN students. Supiano (2018) described two studies presented at the American Educational Research Association’s annual meeting in 2018 that provided insight on how colleges are making an effort to help students persist in college. The studies focused on the relationships between students’ sense of belonging and mattering in the context of institutional support and programing. Supiano (2018) stressed the importance of programming that affirms belonging and its impact on persistence. Marroquin (2019) found that Native students who attended TCUs reported higher perceptions of cultural reciprocity and cultural resiliency which are in tandem a part of the objectives and missions of the 37 TCUs in operation during 2018-2019. This sentiment was echoed and affirmed in the responses by participants in the current study. One respondent shared the MTC enabled her to actively participate in a group which shared tribal songs and dances to a broader audience. This was important as the respondent was active in her home community and it gave her a sense of home. Another student found that his knowledge of traditional music brought him opportunities to travel and share his culture. Both of these students persisted to graduate from college.

Conclusions

Pre-college and college factors that contributed to the academic success of AI/AN students attending a MTC were identified in this study. Through qualitative interviews and results of the data analysis, six major themes were identified from the analysis of the data: high school factors that contributed to college success, high school factors that inhibited college success, factors that inhibit college enrollment for AI/AN students, factors that promote college enrollment for AI/AN students, factors that inhibit academic success during college, and factors that promote academic success during college. The study's participants provided detailed responses to questions and shared perceptions of challenges and strengths that affected academic success throughout their college years.

Implications for action. Participant responses to interview questions in the current study provided in-depth information about factors that contributed to and inhibited academic success in college. TCUs throughout the U.S. would benefit from conducting in-depth interviews to obtain similar information from students about to graduate or those who have recently graduated. The information gathered from one-on-one structured interviews would provide a first-hand account of the factors that inhibit and promote academic success at respective TCUs. While TCUs rely on national surveys such as the CCSSE and the American Indian Measures for Success (AIMS) administered through AIHEC, interview data would promote the acquisition of more in-depth data than the more generic responses obtained on survey data.

Respondents in the current study spoke about lack of preparation in math and English in high school as a factor that continued to inhibit academic success in college. Higher education institutions should be encouraged to collaborate with AI/AN

professional organizations to develop and implement strategic pre-college programs for AI/AN youth in addition to current efforts such as Upward Bound and STEM camps. Summer remedial boot camps, online remediation during the summer, or on campus visits focusing on pre-college preparation are options TCUs and other higher education institutions could explore as remedial supports in math and English.

The information shared by participants in the current study offered insight into their collective experiences related to systemic problems which still persist in America's public school system including racism and lack of inclusion. While the calendar reads 2019, the student's pre-college experiences described were less than stellar and demonstrate the continued need to address racism and equity for AI/AN students nationwide. The MTC campus climate was a respite for some students who had previously experienced hostility during high school. The programming offered and connections established between the participant's in the study and the MTC affirmed a sense of trust and safety to express and share their culture. TCUs like the MTC espouse in their mission statements goals pertaining to culture, language preservation, and sovereignty. The study's participants were appreciative of the campus climate's diversity and its impact on persistence and support. Each participant attributed campus diversity initiatives as a factor that contributed to college completion.

In response to the interview questions related to factors that promote academic success during college, current study participants described the influences of the people in their lives. The influence of family, peers, faculty, and staff was discussed as a significant reason for completing college. The influence of family was described by study participants as both positive and negative. Family was often cited as one of the top

three factors enabling students to persist in college. Family acknowledgement of the student's earning a college degree, especially those who were first generation college attendees, evoked a sense of accomplishment. Continued study of the positive influences from family, peers, faculty, and staff related to college persistence should be conducted through interviews, surveys, or focus groups. This information would provide data and assist in planning programs and services geared toward student retention, college orientation activities, and residential life.

The study's participants discussed peer support with respect and gratitude. A few remarked the structure of upper-level courses resulted in an informal cohort model. This enabled the study's participants to have a source of support to draw from when encountering difficulties in mastering concepts or material in various classes. The students in this study described the positive impacts of peer support as not only meaningful, but also as a source of reinforcement to persist. The MTC where the study was conducted should consider formalizing this organic cohort model as a means to enhance academic progress for upper level classes.

The literature on AI/AN student persistence, although limited, indicated the importance of AI/AN faculty as a core component to persistence during college. Marroquin (2019) found TCUs overall had a faculty to student ratio of 1:8. According to the current study's respondents, the MTC faculty were key to academic success in college. The study's respondents described the rapport established between faculty and the students with respect and appreciation. The mutual respect and understanding of cultural diversity between faculty and the current study respondents was evident and resulted in the bond established. Respect is earned and mutual between faculty and the

students served and occurs in a seamless effort. TCUs often are unrecognized for the ongoing services and support faculty provide which enriches students. It is not a strategy planned and implemented but truly is dependent upon the role faculty exhibit in and out of the classroom. At the MTC in the current study, respondents shared instances of faculty participation in after-class events and engagement in cultural activities.

Administrators at MTC need to compliment faculty for this important element of support they provide to students and encourage all faculty to establish a bond with students through in-class and non-classroom visibility and support.

Another factor not often cited in the current literature is the impact of higher education staff on college academic success. The study's participants each recalled a story of support and assistance from a staff member at the MTC. The staff members did more than their job according to all of the study's participants. This is important to note as learning occurs beyond the classroom. The positive influence of staff on the study's participants evolved for many from the first day they arrived and will likely extend after graduation. TCUs and their respective faculty and staff members should be recognized for this vital aspect of community building.

Recommendations for future research. Research is essential as a foundation for developing and enacting actions to improve access and eliminate barriers to success and promote best practices for AI/AN students from Pre-K through postsecondary education. Unfortunately, scholarly research regarding the experiences of Native American students in higher education remains sparse. More research must focus on American Indian students. Through working closely with Native communities and conducting research using both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, higher education

institutions could address these issues and enhance the AI/AN students postsecondary experiences.

Several of the study's participants shared examples of racism and hostile environments experienced during their pre-college years. Future research should continue to investigate specific racist and hostile actions that occur in pre-college and college settings. Once specific actions are identified, educational environments can expand upon the initial research to develop practices that promote respectful learning environments that do not promote racism.

Lopez (2016) found limited research that examined variables relevant to AI/AN postsecondary persistence. The criteria Lopez used for a meta-analysis of existing research was to find research which had been peer-reviewed, published in the last 25 years, included an analysis of AI/AN students, and focused on persistence or retention in higher education (Lopez, 2016). Lopez's review of literature found the predominant factors influencing college persistence for AI/AN students at 2 and 4-year colleges were family support, institutional support, tribal community support, and academic performance (Lopez, 2016). Lopez (2016) found the support of the tribal community as a motivator was driven by the students' desire to 'give back' to their communities. The review found that tribal community support as a factor in AI/AN student persistence was evident in three areas: giving back to the community, community connection, and culture (Lopez, 2016). Lopez (2016) contended there is a need for additional research focusing on how different persistence theories may interact with or be combined to create a model of AI/AN postsecondary persistence. Future research should expand the persistence and retention focus for AI/AN students recommended by Lopez.

The Millennium Falcon Persistence Model allows researchers to examine varying aspects of AI/AN persistence according to Lopez (2016). One of the predominant factors in this conceptual model is family. Lopez also found that family was both a positive and negative influence related to college academic success. The role of the family was evident in the responses by the current study's participants. A study focusing on the impact of family on AI/AN postsecondary students' persistence could result in practical applications for use at all institutions of higher education.

Concluding remarks. The success of AI/AN college students will undoubtedly bolster the economic mobility of their families and the economic development of their communities (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2019). In 1934, the higher education grant program administered by the BIA reported a total of 71 students receiving funds to attend a postsecondary institution (U. S. General Accounting Office, 1977). According to NCES (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), 124,000 AI/AN students were enrolled at a postsecondary institution in 2017. However, the number of AI/AN students enrolled in college is still less than 1% of the total postsecondary enrollment (NCES, 2019). According to Fry (2017), President Barak Obama cited increasing post high school enrollment in and graduation from a higher education institution as a national goal. Fry (2017) stated, "In his first address to a joint session of Congress in February 2009, President Barack Obama said, 'By 2020, America should once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world'" (para. 1). The goal has not been achieved. College completion by AI/AN students is particularly dire with fewer than 1% of college enrollments being comprised of AI/AN students. Additional research and actions focusing on the success and struggles of AI/AN

students as they attempt college enrollment, persistence, and ultimately graduation are needed to enhance opportunities for academic success for these students.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Baker University IRB Approval

Baker University Institutional Review Board

February 19th, 2019

Dear Freda Gipp and Tes Mehring,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.

Please inform this Committee or myself when this project is terminated or completed. As noted above, you must also provide IRB with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If you have any questions, please contact me at npoell@bakeru.edu or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,



Nathan Poell, MA
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Scott Crenshaw
Jamin Perry, PhD
Susan Rogers, PhD
Joe Watson, PhD

Appendix B: MTC IRB Approval



██████████ UNIVERSITY

Accredited by Higher Learning Commission

The College of Humanities & Arts

155 Indian Avenue, #5009
██████████

March 8, 2019

Freda Gipp

██████████
155 Indian Avenue
██████████

Dear Freda,

The ██████████ University Institutional Review Board met March 7, 2019, and reviewed your update request for your previously approved application for research involving ██████████ students. We understand that your application involves the analysis of the factors impacting degree completion for TCU students and that the subsequent use of such data will be included in your research for the completion of your doctorate. As the current Chair of the IRB, I am pleased to inform you that our board approved the update request and the revisions to your research. Again, we stipulate that the acquisition and use of student data follow the University's guidelines for student confidentiality and that you observe federal workplace guidelines as you conduct your research. Furthermore, we request that you share your completed scholarship with ██████████ administration—for inclusion in the University's efforts to improve service to our students. ██████████ IRB extends its best wishes to you as you complete the requirements for your doctoral degree.

Sincerely,

Jim Rains, Ph.D.

██████████ IRB Chair

The mission of ██████████ University is to build the leadership capacity of our students by serving as the leading institution of academic excellence, cultural and intellectual prominence, and holistic education that addresses the needs of Indigenous communities.

Appendix C: Email Inviting Participation

Greetings XXXX, [REDACTED] Spring 2019 Candidate for Graduate.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study for my doctoral dissertation. My study is titled, "*Tribal College Seniors Perceptions about Selected Pre-college and College Factors that Contribute to Academic Success in College.*" Your invitation to participate consists of a one-on-one interview which should last approximately 40 minutes.

Here are a few details that may assist you in your decision to participate:

- This study is a qualitative study. The one-on-one interviews should not take longer than 40 minutes. The interviews will be held in a private room near campus. This private setting will afford confidentiality. The date and time will be determined based on your schedule.
- The format for the questions will begin with demographic questions that include tribe, name of high school, ACT score, college major, and reason you choose to attend [REDACTED]. The research study questions will inquire about your perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of the high school you attended in preparing for academic success in college, factors that inhibit or promote college enrollment for American Indian and Alaska Native students, and factors that inhibited or promote academic success in college.
- Your participation is solicited, but is strictly voluntary. Information obtained through interviews will be completely confidential. Your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. If you choose to participate, you may indicate a preference for not providing a response to any of the questions and may withdraw from participation at any time.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at gpr4lfe@gmail.com by March X. Once I receive your reply we will schedule a time to meet. Also, if you have any questions about the study, do not hesitate to contact me and I will be happy to provide further details.

Ah-ho!

Sincerely,

Freda J. Gipp

Baker Doctoral Student
2009 E. 30th Street
Lawrence, Kansas 66046

Appendix D: Consent Form

APPROVED CONSENT STATEMENT

_____ supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

The study is concerned with determining factors that influence the enrollment and academic success of American Indian and Alaska Native students enrolled at a MTC. Data collected will include:

- Demographic data including your tribal affiliation, name of high school you attended, high school GPA, ACT composite score, college major, and your reasons for choosing _____ as the college you would attend.
- Your perceptions of weaknesses and strengths of the high school you attended that impacted your academic success in college
- Your perceptions of factors that inhibit or promote American Indian and Alaska Native student enrollment in college.
- Your perceptions of factors at _____ that inhibited or promoted your academic success during college.

Your participation is solicited and strictly voluntary. The information obtained through interviews and audio recordings will be completely confidential. Your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. I appreciate your support with this research study.

Sincerely,

Freda J. Gipp, ABD
Baker Doctoral Student

Signature of individual agreeing to participate in study

Date

I agree to be audio recorded: _____
Signature of participant