



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., meets with presidents of Diné College, Northern Arizona University, Coconino Community College

PAGE, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., gathered with the presidents of Diné College, Northern Arizona University and Coconino Community College for the first summit of northern Arizona higher education leaders here Saturday.

President Shirley met at the Page campus of CCC with CCC President Leah L. Bornstein, NAU President John Haeger and Diné College President Ferlin Clark to discuss what kinds of collaboration and initiatives are in place at these institutions that are working or not working for Navajo learners.

Together, the presidents hope to determine what works best for Navajo colleges students to improve success rates and increase enrollments.

The President said the coming together of the four presidents is “the only way to be.”

“That’s just the way it should be: working together,” he said. “It’s knowledge, getting at knowledge. We all need to do it together. We’re all family. We’re all on the same side. It behooves us to work together. It’s a lot easier working together instead of trying to do it by yourself or going against each other.”

“I see a bright future for us, getting together, discussing things on behalf of the students, on behalf of education, no only on Navajoland but even without, where Native students are found.”

“The focus was on commonalities and strengths of our programs,” President Clark told the Arizona Daily Sun. “This reinforced the continued discussions and partnerships that we have. We talked about the long-term potential of our partnerships and what we need to do to build a stronger



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Frank Talbott Photo*

Arizona and Navajo Nation.”

Asked about the conflict college students face whether to leave home for an education or remain on Navajoland, the President said it’s good to seek an education in order to help oneself and one’s family, community and Nation.

“Individuals have sovereignty,” the President said. “If you’re a sovereign individual, you stand on your own. You’re self-sustaining. You’re not dependent on your parents, grandparents, nobody. You support yourself. And if you’re in that position, it’s your choice where you want to be.”

He said it would be tough to remain on the Navajo Nation with such a high unemployment rate, but it can be done, he said. Good jobs are in the cities but Navajo life and culture are on Navajoland where young people can contribute to their families and communities.

The Navajo government is young at only 84 years, and is growing all the time, he said.

"I venture to say that Diné College is going to be a major educational force one of these days," he said. "It's going to become a major educational institution. We're going to be graduating our own bachelor's, our own master's, possibly doctorates. That's what I see for us."

President Shirley presents a Navajo Nation flag to Coconino Community College President Leah L. Bornstein for the Page campus.

