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## President Begaye appoints two new members to Diné' Board of Education



President Begaye announced two new appointments today. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.— On June 29, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye appointed two individuals to the Diné Board of Education.

“We have selected two highly educated and qualified applicants to the Diné Education Board,” said President Begaye. “These individuals have the education and experience to make a difference for the Navajo people.

“We did not enter into these selections hastily and ensured we did our due diligence to bring high caliber educators back home to help our nation,” he added.

Dr. Manley Alan Begay Jr. and Dr. Benjamin Jones were appointed to the Diné Board of Education.

Begay has more than 35 years of professional educational experience and was previously serving as a tenured professor at Northern Arizona University for the Department of Applied Indigenous Studies College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

He also worked for the College of Education for the

Department of Educational Leadership at NAU.

He obtained his doctoral degree in education for administration, planning and social policy from Harvard University in Nov. 1997. He also obtained his master’s degree from Harvard University in education for administration, planning and social policy in June 1989.

In August 1985, he received an education specialist degree from Brigham Young University in educational administration. He was selected as valedictorian, but deferred the honors to the salutatorian.

Begay did not want to repeat the honors because he was previously selected as valedictorian and gave the commencement address when he obtained his master’s degree in educational administration with emphasis in community education from BYU in August 1983.

In August 1977, he received his bachelor’s degree in secondary education with emphasis in social studies

from the University of Arizona. Prior to that, he obtained his associate’s degree from Navajo Community College and was the valedictorian commencement speaker.

Begay’s academic focus is Indigenous Nation-Building, with specific emphasis on economic development, leadership, education and governance.

“My recent work includes executive education sessions and research, with and relevant to, First Nations and organizations in Canada and Native nations and organizations in the United States,” Begay said.

He plans to expand his work and research to include the Navajo Nation, Australian Aborigines and the Maoris of New Zealand.

“I have professional interests in putting theory into practice regarding issues of Indigenous education, Navajo history and philosophy, and development,” Begay said.

The second individual selected to the Diné Education Board by President Begaye is Dr. Benjamin Jones.

Jones said his professional objective is to continuously advance in all areas of professional knowledge, skills and experience necessary to facilitate organizational success.

He obtained his education, both graduate and undergraduate, from NAU.

In Dec. 1985, he obtained his doctoral degree of philosophy in political science. In May 2007, he obtained his master’s degree in political science. In Dec. 1994, he obtained his master’s degree

in business administration. In Dec. 1985, he obtained his bachelor’s degree in business administration with an emphasis in accounting.

“The world is undergoing a paradigm shift in economic growth with the need for balance to temper the instability of climate change,” Jones said. “The Navajo Nation is uniquely positioned to reinvent their educational framework recognizing their strong beliefs in maintaining harmony and adapting their skills to changes in the environment.”

He noted that Navajo education has been addressed in an isolated vacuum concerned primarily with shifting curriculum to improve the outcomes of standardized testing.

Instead, Navajo youth deserve a new approach that refocuses on strengthening Navajo economic livelihood, he said, and building value in the Navajo homeland that coincides with the Navajo educational ambitions.

“I believe Navajo education works best grounded in academia that integrates our culture and language,” Jones said. “The uniqueness in combining these parameters of education not only makes us more holistic, but provides the most effective means in how we apply and adapt ourselves to the challenges of today’s changing world,” said Jones.

Jones previously served as the entrepreneurial director of Navajo Technical University since Jan. 2015.