



THE NAVAJO NATION

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Vice President Nez Participates in NAU Tribal Advisory Board Meeting, Tribal Leadership Education Summit



Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez and fellow tribal leaders from Arizona met with faculty and administrators of Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff to discuss education for Native American students and nation-building.

FLAGSTAFF—Improving services to Native American students of Northern Arizona University was the purpose of a two-day tribal advisory board meeting and educational summit on March 1 and 2.

Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez, an NAU alumnus, was in attendance and encouraged empowering students for creation of a galvanized tribal workforce.

“Today, with the assistance of NAU, we can work on applying tribal sensitive models to the Navajo Nation for results. This shift in public administration is key to helping us continue building our nation while strengthening our government and people,” Vice President Nez said.

The NAU President’s Tribal Advisory Board meeting was held at the University Union on March 1 and was hosted by Dr. Rita Cheng, NAU President.

Cheng said it is the goal of NAU to become the nation’s leading university serving Native Americans.

“We’ve been talking about some very important issues for the future of our university. NAU is a very special place, especially our historical mission to serve Native American students,” she said.

A memorandum of understanding between Diné College and NAU was executed the day before, Cheng said, strengthening ties between the institutions to provide educational opportunities to Navajo students.

The application of Navajo language and culture by Navajo elder Lorenzo Max not only showcases NAU’s cultural sensitivity, but also the need for traditional beliefs to sustain student success,

Vice President Nez said.

Other tribal leaders in attendance included Hualapai Tribe Vice Chairman Philbert Watahomigie, NAU Tribal Advisory Board Chairman Jamie Fullmer, Robert Roessel, Salt River Project Executive Principal, and Ron Lee, Northern Field Office Director for Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick.

The board discussed updates and educational concerns from their respective regions and elected new board officers before listening to NAU program updates from various departments and programs.

Vice President Nez said, “It’s important for tribal leaders to be a part of setting the standards for our native students because before, we became indoctrinated with certain knowledge and take that indoctrination back home to incorporate in government and administration. We found out that it doesn’t work.”

Five percent, or 1,530 students from NAU’s enrollment are native, with 90 percent identified as in-state residents. From this amount, 122 native tribes are represented.

Sixty-one percent of these students are first generation students and are the first person from their family to attend college. In 2015, NAU awarded 168 degrees to native students.

During the educational summit on March 2, NAU provided statistics and brief presentations from faculty and staff on ensuring native student success at the university.

Dr. Manley Begay was one of the six administrators and faculty that spoke.

He is a tenured professor in the NAU Department of Applied

Indigenous Studies and Department of Politics and International Affairs, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Begay spoke about the Native Nation-Building Leadership Initiative and said the mission is excellence in indigenous leadership, administration, management, and policy.

The initiative was funded with \$200,000 that was provided by the 22nd Navajo Nation Council which also paid for a part of the Native American Center on campus. Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President voted in support of the legislation during the tenure as councilmen.

“The strategy is to provide world-class leadership education, development and outreach in support of practical sovereignty through the initiative,” he said. “This will be accomplished by the guiding principles of sovereignty, education, culture, and leadership.”

The goal is creation of native nations that are viable, economically sustaining communities.

Tribal leaders in attendance convened separately to discuss one-on-one with NAU faculty and administrators their vision for education.

Vice Chairman Watahomigie said retention of teachers for schools on his nation is a challenge, especially with the lack of available housing.

His other concern was the need for cultural awareness and sensitivity training.

“We need some kind of a program where teachers can be shown where these kids are coming from and what background they have,” Watahomigie said.

Yavapai-Apache Nation Chairman Thomas Beauty agreed and said his tribe established “Yavapai-Apache 101” to Camp Verde public schools because of the insensitivity and misunderstandings from administrators and staff.

“It’s mostly a (non-native) school (in Camp Verde). We did get resistance when we proposed the training, but now it’s mandatory for teachers to go to this class,” he said.

Verlon Jose, Tohono O’odham Vice Chairman, said basic common sense is sometimes overlooked in the push for educated tribal leaders.

“My grandfather said we are the smartest person in the world when we’re born. When we take that first breath of air, we know everything that we need to know,” he said.

Vice President Nez said, “If NAU is to train our future leaders, it has to have its roots in public management and public administration. I think we’re all in it to empower our people, that’s what public management is all about.”

By providing administrative structure, we as policymakers and upper management can define, explain and predict outcomes from the public administration model we embrace, he said.

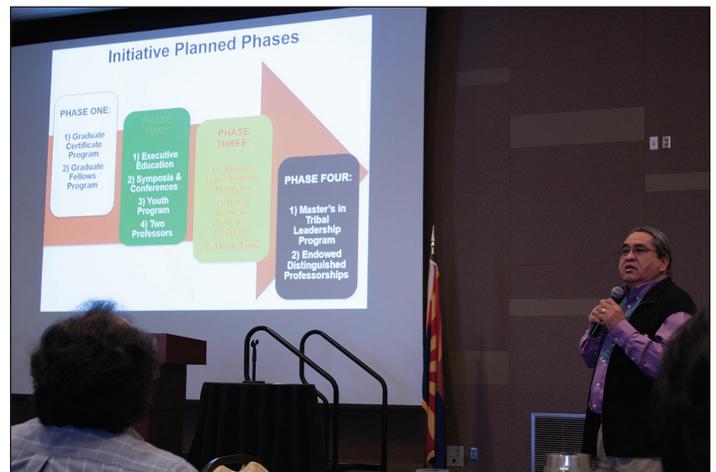
The key is to minimize uncertainty and gain successes along the way, he said, adding that is what a policy model will do for the native governments.

Vice President Nez noted that previous generations maintained their job for 30 to 40 years, on through retirement. This work ethic must be instilled in today’s job force.

Today the average worker stays at their job for 4.4 years, according to data from the Bureau of Labor statistics. This equates to about 15-20 jobs over the course of their career for Millennials (born between 1977-1997).



Vice President Nez said the foundation for training future tribal leaders must be rooted in public management and public administration to empower the workforce and in so doing, the tribal nation.



Dr. Manley Begay spoke about nation-building and suggested that former tribal leaders become tenured at the university for a year or two to share what worked and didn't work during their time in office with future leaders.



The NAU President's Tribal Advisory Board convened to elect new officers, provide reports and listen to updates from the various programs and departments of NAU to improve services to Native American students.