



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Navajo Nation and University of Arizona sign
MOA to create the Navajo Law Fellowship Program**



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez following the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement to establish the Navajo Law Fellowship Program with University of Arizona and Arizona Board of Regents officials in Tucson, Ariz. on Dec. 3, 2019.

TUCSON, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez was joined by Miss Navajo Nation Shaandiin Parrish as he finalized a Memorandum of Agreement with the University of Arizona at the James E. Rogers School of Law on Tuesday, which establishes the Navajo Law Fellowship Program with the overall goal of increasing the number of Navajo law school graduates and creating pathways to legal careers.

President Nez said the new fellowship program is an investment in the future of the Navajo Nation, and also empowers young Navajo people to determine their own future and creates another pathway for Navajo students to come home and give back to their communities.

“This MOA is intended to empower our Diné students — to bring them home to the Navajo Nation to help our people through this partnership with the University of Arizona. I am thankful to the University for working with us to create this new opportunity,” said President Nez.

Under the terms of the MOA, the Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship and Financial Assistance and the University of Arizona will partner to match financial aid awards to Navajo law school students who are part of the fellowship program.

In addition, first-year law school students will receive academic advisement, information, and an overview of the Navajo Nation legal system and legal career possibilities within the Navajo Nation. They will also be placed in a summer honors externship that may include rotations through selected Navajo Nation law offices, court locations, legal aid offices and other placements.

Second-year students will be offered a course on Navajo Nation law and the legal system. The summer externships will build on the first-year experiences and include a workshop that helps to prepare for the Navajo Nation Bar Exam. Third-year students will participate in a workshop that prepares them for the Arizona Bar Exam and Navajo Nation placement following the exam.

“This is a great partnership and a great opportunity to foster the development of more Diné professionals. Our Nation has a great need for more legal expertise to help move us forward in many ways whether it be securing water rights, the protection of our women and children, or other important matters,” said Vice President Myron Lizer.

As part of the program, the Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship and Financial Assistance will also provide additional funds to cover a portion of fees for students who are admitted to and attend the Pre-Law Summer Institute at the University of New Mexico and fees for the state bar exam application and the Bar Review course necessary to help prepare for the bar exam.

During the visit to the campus, President Nez also met with Navajo students who are part of the Navajo Nation Future Physicians’ Scholarship Fund program, which was established under the former administration.

The agreement with the University of Arizona College of Medicine is designed to help more Navajo students pursue careers as physicians. The program currently provides financial aid to seven Navajo students for the costs of tuition and academic support to help them earn a medical degree from the University.

“Our Nation is working with IHS to construct several new hospital facilities in our communities including Dilkon, near the city of Gallup, and we’re working to develop more so we need more health and medical professionals to return home and help our people,” stated President Nez.

He also met with University of Arizona President Dr. Robert C. Robbins to discuss how to develop more partnerships to benefit Navajo students and to develop stronger support from the University for all Native American students by creating a senior level position to advise the University on Native American issues to help students, providing academic advisors for Native American students, more financial assistance, and more to improve retention and graduation

rates. He also delivered a letter from the Native SOAR student organization outlining concerns and recommendations from the Native American student body representatives.

The Office of the President and Vice President thanks Native SOAR, Native American Law Students Association, University of Arizona President Dr. Robert C. Robbins, James E. Rogers School of Law Dean Mark Miller Regents Professor of Law Rob Williams, Assistant Vice President for Tribal Relations and Government & Community Relations Karen Francis-Begay, and Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship and Financial Assistance Department Manager Rose Graham for your support.

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