

In compliance with BOR Policy 1902, each campus president or chancellor is charged with developing an action plan to accomplish Montana University System goals for multicultural diversity. Reports on these plans, along with data on system-wide and state-wide minority participation in higher education, are posted on the MUS website and updated every two years.

Looking at the data, it is interesting to note that Montana's tribal colleges provide an important gateway. When tribal college enrollments are included, Montana's American Indians make up 9.6% of higher education enrollment in Montana, compared to an overall population distribution of 6.1%.

Of course, the challenge remains to get more of these students to transfer into MUS 4-year colleges. In their action plan, MSU-Billings makes specific note of the need to maintain close working relationships with colleagues at the seven Montana tribal colleges to develop transfer opportunities, build effective partnerships, and seek grant funded projects. MSU-Northern continues its cooperative program in elementary education with the three tribal colleges in northern Montana – along with other targeted efforts.

At Montana State University, Bozeman, The Bridges Program is an NIH-funded project that maintains and enhances the partnership between MSU-Bozeman and four tribal colleges in Montana: Little Big Horn College, Fort Peck Community College, Stone Child College and Chief Dull Knife College. The specific goal of this partnership is to build a seamless educational experience between the four reservation-based colleges and MSU to increase the number of Native American students successfully transferring and pursuing academic studies in the biomedical and other health-related sciences at MSU.

The University of Montana, Missoula, in the years from 1992 to 2009, roughly doubled the enrollment of Native Americans from about 2.7 to 4 percent of the student population. The University of Montana also had substantial growth in the number of Native American graduate and professional students. UM ranks 19th nationally among state universities for the awarding of baccalaureate degrees to Native Americans.

These highlights from the reports barely scratch the surface of all the programs and activities that are described. The Diversity Reports from all our campuses reflect concerted efforts to enhance our curricula and our campus communities by increasing multicultural awareness and understanding.