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Factors Affecting American Indian Student Persistence in Attending a Northern Minnesota Tribal College

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**Factors Affecting American Indian Student Persistence in Attending
a Northern Minnesota Tribal College**

by

Delana L. Smith

A Dissertation

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St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Abstract

Recruitment of American Indian students into college and universities has been a long-standing challenge, but retaining these students, especially those from reservations, highlights an even greater challenge. According to Guillory and Wolverton (2008), “Although a select few have successfully matriculated through higher education’s colleges and universities, institutions cannot truthfully claim success when it comes to serving this unique population” (p. 58). American Indian students are more likely to feel academically inadequate, isolated, and alienated. Many times, academic inadequacy, isolation, marginalization, or other factors became too much for them to overcome. As a result, many American Indian students leave college before completing their degree program (Guillory, 2009).

The quantitative study was designed to examine factors that affected American Indian students’ persistence in higher education in a select northern Minnesota tribal college. The study sought information regarding the importance of first year support programs offered to students by the Tribal college that assisted them in their persistence in higher education experiences. Information was gathered in the fall of 2018 from 20 second-year American Indian students in a northern Minnesota tribal college through use of a 27-item survey instrument using Likert-type scales and open-ended comments.

The ongoing academic barriers or challenges identified by study participants included time, money, commute/transportation, and not being academically prepared for college courses that they continued to experience in completing their educational program.

The ongoing personal barriers or challenges identified by participants included finances, family, transportation, and behavior health. The challenges continue to present obstacles for students to overcome in their persistence in higher education. The study also revealed that students at the Tribal College in the study identified “first year experience course or seminar” as a factor specifically from their first year of college attendance that influenced them to persist into their second year.

Information from the study may assist Tribal College leaders in developing, maintaining, and implementing programs and services that positively influence American Indian students’ persistence in their college experiences.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Recruitment of American Indian students into college and universities has been a long-standing challenge, but retaining these students, especially those from reservations, highlights an even greater challenge. According to Guillory and Wolverton (2008), “Although a select few have successfully matriculated through higher education’s colleges and universities, institutions cannot truthfully claim success when it comes to serving this unique population” (p. 58).

American Indian students are more likely to feel academically inadequate, isolated, and alienated. Many times, academic inadequacy, isolation, marginalization, or other factors became too much for them to overcome. As a result, many American Indian students leave college before completing their degree program (Guillory, 2009).

College success for American Indian students has been a concern since the inception of higher educational institutions (Guillory, 2009). American Indians have the lowest enrollment, comprise less than 1% of all students enrolled in a college or university, and earn only 0.6% of all university/college degrees awarded in any given year in the United States (Guillory, 2009). American Indian students make up most tribal college student bodies. According to the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (1999), “In general, tribal colleges provide access for local students who might not otherwise participate in higher education; in fact, most of those enrolled are the first generation in their family to go to college” (p. D-1). However, significant progress has been made since the 1970s in American Indian student enrollments and graduation rates, particularly in tribal colleges. In the document *Tribal Colleges: An Introduction* prepared by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (1999), “In a sign of the growing influence of the Tribal College movement, during the 1990s Tribal College enrollment increased

more rapidly than has American Indian enrollment at mainstream institutions” (p. C-1). Tribal colleges saw an increase in enrollment of 62% for American Indian students from fall semester 1990 to 1996 (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 1999).

Even with a slight increase in enrollment, retention of American Indian students in higher education institutions continue to be a problem particularly in their persistence to complete their college experiences through to graduation. Guillory (2009) suggested, “The factors determining whether or not American Indian/Alaska Native students decide to attend and persist through college are as diverse as they are complex” (p. 13). Some of these factors that helped American Indian students’ persistence in higher education were academic preparation prior to college, family support, counseling services offered by the college, presence of home communities with other tribal members, and cultural ceremonies (Guillory, 2009). According to Guillory, the strengthening of cultural identity affected American Indian students’ persistence in their college participation.

American Indian students often desire to retain strong tribal identities in lieu of assimilating into mainstream campus culture. College administrators and faculty who recognize this factor might assist Native American students to persist in their college attendance (Brayboy, Fann, Castango, & Solyom, 2012). However, many colleges and universities generalize Native American students into one marginalized group (Brayboy et al., 2012).

Unlike other marginalized groups, American Indians have not been fighting for inclusion into the democratic political body; rather, they continue to emphasize their right to remain distinct, sovereign tribal members (Brayboy et al., 2012). According to Brayboy et al. (2012),

“Each tribe has its own history, culture, and language- defying easy generalization” (p.11).

Brayboy et al. also found:

The dual position of American Indians and Alaska Natives as both racial/ethnic groups and legal/political groups and individuals, as well as understanding of the hundreds of years of abusive relationships between mainstream educational institutions and Native communities, are important to framing any conversation between Native peoples as both racialized and political. (p. 11)

Tribal colleges in northern Minnesota have been in existence since 1987. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, graduation rates in northern Minnesota tribal colleges range from 8-19% or more recently 22%. The tribal communities support higher education for tribal students (Brayboy et al., 2012). Graduation rates have improved for American Indian students; however, graduation rates are still lower than the national average for other races. Reasons for this may include: high level of poverty, 36% of families living on reservations, (Champagne, 2013); history of social distress, drug and alcohol addictions; lack of role models who have completed college; lack of hope for future employment opportunities, and other community and familial pressures (Champagne, 2013). The American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and the American College Fund (2007) reported:

Poverty is not just an economic phenomenon; it is a cyclical condition that affects multiple generations and is often accompanied by a range of social problems-such as substance abuse, health problems, domestic violence, and high mortality rates- which greatly affect a person’s ability and desire to pursue education. Thus, the dynamic aspects of poverty for American Indian communities- failed government policies, lack of

employment and low per capita incomes, high rates of violence and injury, poor health, and a low perception of the value of education- create a culture of poverty that repeats itself, generation after generation. (pp. 16-17)

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study was based on the concept that poverty financial issues is a generational condition affecting the opportunities and desires of American Indian students and their quest for higher education.

In addition, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (2007) found that education may assist in breaking the cycle of poverty for Native American students since higher education provides economic and social development in American Indian communities, regardless of geographic location.

Although there is research regarding student persistence in higher education, there is minimal research that pertains to American Indian student persistence in higher education in tribal colleges in northern Minnesota. An underlying assumption of the study is that education may assist in breaking the poverty cycle, therefore it is important to the future of the students and to the American Indian communities in which they live to find those factors that students report have influenced their college persistence. The study may add to the understanding of factors that assist higher education institutions to better meet the unique needs of the American Indian student population in northern Minnesota tribal colleges.

Statement of the Problem

The study is needed to better understand the challenges American Indian students face as college students and as community tribal members in northern Minnesota tribal colleges. In order

for Native communities to thrive and persist in maintaining and sustaining their tribal and cultural identity; Native peoples must be well-educated so that their contributions to the community results in greater financial stability and well-being among other benefits. The study may assist northern Minnesota tribal college decision makers in determining which programs should be retained and supported, and what additional programming and support services should be considered. Information from the study may add to the current body of literature addressing American Indian student persistence in higher education, specifically, American Indian students attending tribal colleges in northern Minnesota.

Purpose of the Study

The quantitative study was designed to examine factors that affected American Indian students' persistence in higher education in a select northern Minnesota tribal college. The study sought information regarding the importance of first year support programs offered to students by the Tribal College that assisted them in their persistence in higher education experiences. Information was gathered in the fall of 2018 from 20 second-year American Indian students in a northern Minnesota Tribal College through use of a 27-item survey instrument using Likert-type scales and open-ended comments. Basic descriptive statistics were used to analyze numerical results; open-ended comments generated were examined using a thematic approach. Information from the study may be used to reaffirm best practices and suggest improved first-year support services and programs available to American Indian students attending tribal colleges in northern Minnesota.

Assumptions of the Study

The following is a list of considerations that were assumed to be true in the study:

- It was assumed that study participants answered survey questions truthfully.
- It was assumed that study participants could identify factors causing their persistence in continuing their college enrollment.

Delimitations

Delimitations are variables that the researcher purposely leaves out of the study (Reference, n.d.). The following were delimitations of the study as determined by the researcher:

- Only select northern Minnesota tribal colleges were involved in the study; no other institutions of higher learning were included.
- Only second-year Native American students attending a select northern Minnesota Tribal College were selected to participate in the study.
- First-year American Indian students were not included in the study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to provide an understanding of persistence for second year Native American students in a select Minnesota Tribal College.

1. What did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College identify as factors that influenced them to persist in their higher education experiences?
 - a) What did American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College report as the ongoing academic barriers or challenges in their higher education experiences?

- b) What did American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College report as ongoing personal barriers or challenges in their higher education experiences?
2. How did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College rate the level of influence that specified factors had on their persistence in their higher education experiences?
 3. What did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College identify as college sponsored programs from their first year of college attendance as influential in their persistence into their second year of college?
 4. How did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College rate (in terms of importance) college sponsored programs from their first year of college attendance that influenced them to persist into their second year?

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions provided are intended to provide clarity to the terms used throughout the study:

1. *American Indian, Native American, or Indigenous*: used interchangeably in the research; are the Indigenous people of the United States (American Indian, n.d.; Native American, n.d.; Indigenous, n.d.).
2. *Assimilation of American Indian people*: efforts by the United States to transform Native American culture to European–American culture between the years of 1790-1920 (Carney, 1999).

3. *Drop-out*: For the purpose of the study, a student abandoning a course of study (Drop-out, n.d.).
4. *First Year Experience, Freshmen-Year Experience, Freshmen Seminar*: terms used interchangeably in the research to reflect programs at colleges and universities designed to help students to make the transition into college from high school (Jamelske, 2009).
5. *Gaming Transportation*: For the purpose of the study, gaming transportation that is provided by the tribal casino for employees of the casino to get to work.
6. *Graduation*: the act of receiving or conferring of an academic degree or diploma (Graduation, n.d.).
7. *Indian Self-Determination Act*: The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (Public Law 93-638) authorized the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and other government agencies to enter into contracts with, and make grants directly to, federally recognized Indian tribes (Govtrack, 2017).
8. *Sovereignty*: refers to tribes' right to govern themselves, define their own membership, manage tribal property, and regulate tribal business and domestic relations; it further recognizes the existence of a government-to-government relationship between such tribes and the federal government (The Free Dictionary, n.d.).
9. *Stop-out*: For the purpose of the study, to withdraw temporarily from higher education or employment in order to pursue another activity (Stop-out, n.d.)

10. *Student Attrition*: For the purpose of the study, the number of individual who leave a program of study before its conclusion (Advance HE, n.d.).
11. *Student Persistence*: For the purpose of the study, the act of continuing towards an educational goal (Postsecondary Retention and Persistence, n.d.).
12. *Student Retention*: For the purpose of the study, institutional measure: students staying in college year to year
13. *Tribal Colleges*: For the purpose of the study, these are higher educational institutions serving American Indian and Alaska Native students; most are located on tribal lands.
14. *Underrepresented Students*: For the purpose of the study, any ethnic group whose representation is disproportionately less than their proportion in the general population of the institution (Association of American Medical Colleges, n.d.).

Summary

The study is organized in five chapters. Chapter I provides the research problem, purpose, study questions, assumptions, delimitations, and definition of terms to assist the researcher in understanding student persistence for second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College. It has been observed that, although there is research regarding student persistence in higher education in general, there is minimal research on American Indian student persistence in higher education, specifically in northern Minnesota tribal colleges.

Chapter II provides an overview of the literature related to the history of Americans Indian students in higher education, the Tribal college movement, poverty on reservations, factors affecting student persistence in higher education institutions, and persistence of American Indian students in tribal colleges.

Chapter III presents research methods which includes the research questions, participants of the study, Human Subjects' approval (IRB), data collection and analysis, treatment of data, and procedures and timeline. Chapter IV presents the results of the study. Chapter V presents conclusions and discussion from the findings of the study and includes limitations and recommendations for practice and further research.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

The researcher surveyed second-year tribal college students who self-identified as Native American in a select Minnesota Tribal College. The study was designed to examine factors that second year tribal college students identified as contributing to their persistence in higher education and factors that may improve Native American students' college experience.

Through the review of literature, the researcher focused on five themes: history of Native Americans in higher education, the tribal college movement, poverty on reservations, student persistence in higher education, and persistence of American Indian students. The themes assisted the researcher to identify the transition of higher education of Native American students throughout history and the struggles and/or resistance Native American students have experienced. In addition to that, the researcher was able to identify factors that assisted Native American students' persistence in higher education. The researcher used several resources to conduct the review of literature. Those included the St. Cloud State University Library and online library resources, Bemidji State University Library, Google Scholar, Google, Amazon, and Barnes and Noble.

Introduction

Tribal colleges throughout the United States provide opportunities that are less likely available to remote and geographically isolated tribes. Higher education provides economic and social development in American Indian communities, regardless of geographic location (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2007). Tribal colleges were created by American Indians for American Indians. The institutions have been committed to increased economic, social, and cultural prosperity of tribal communities. American Indian students who

chose higher education had to choose between mainstream two- and four-year institutions or tribally owned colleges near their homes. Most Native American students attend tribal colleges and represent less than 1% of all students enrolled in colleges throughout the country (Guillory, 2009). The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (2007) reported the following about tribal colleges: “Their appearance and evolution has paralleled that of the self-determination movement; thus, in addition to serving as venues for educational attainment, they are also committed to the preservation and resuscitation of native cultures and traditions” (p. 8).

The development of native nations has been slow (Brayboy et al., 2012). With low levels of income in tribal communities, it has taken decades for tribal communities to catch up to mainstream United States (Brayboy et al., 2012). Brayboy et al. (2012) suggested, “In order for the tribe to be economically and politically successful, it must also be educationally successful” (p. 27). Pursuing higher education is an element of nation building. Early attempts by tribal nations were laborious primarily because Native nations lacked experience in business and government (Brayboy et al., 2012). According to Brayboy et al. (2012), “Indigenous community members sought to engage the discourse, policy, and structures of their community actively in hopes of better addressing the particular and unique needs of their community” (p.14).

History of Native Americans in Higher Education

Colleges and universities have been a part of the United States of America long before it became a country. Nine of the original higher education institutions include Harvard, William and Mary, Yale, Pennsylvania, Princeton, Columbia (King’s), Brown, Rutgers, and Dartmouth. Harvard, William and Mary College, and Dartmouth were the first institutions to embrace the

education of American Indian people (Carney, 1999). Prior to the American Revolution, a fourth institution was established, the College of New Jersey (Princeton), had no formal purpose toward the education of American Indians. Only a few American Indian students were admitted. During the colonial period of the United States, there was a substantial interest and involvement of American Indians in higher education (Carney, 1999). Higher education for American Indians has been to grow and expand to impressive heights (Carney, 1999).

Although there was substantial interest to include American Indian students in the earliest higher education institutions, enrollment numbers were very low from the years 1650 to 1800. Harvard built an Indian college which operated from 1650 to 1693 (Carney, 1999). Five students were enrolled during that time and only one of the five graduated. William and Mary College enrolled approximately 16 American Indian students. None completed a baccalaureate degree. William and Mary's college focus for American Indian students was more preparatory for assimilation versus an academic college (Carney, 1999). Dartmouth had a slightly larger number of American Indian students. Twenty-five students were reported as enrolled (Carney, 1999). Only three graduated before 1800. According to Carney (1999), "Prior to the American Revolution (1800 in the case of Dartmouth), these three institutions professed to be devoted to providing higher education to Native Americans for a combined total of 240 academic years" (p. 2).

As the United States began to establish a government system, negotiations and treaties were also established with American Indian people. In 1778, the first treaty was signed with the Delaware tribe. Between 1778 to 1871, over 645 treaties were established between the United

States and Tribal Nations (Carney, 1999). The Treaty of Greenville, 1795, was negotiated and signed into place by senate members treating tribes like foreign nations (Carney, 1999).

The Continental Congress enacted the Northwest Ordinance in 1787 (Carney, 1999). In the ordinance, a pledge was made to provide education to Indian people. Citing the pledge during the negotiation of treaties was a common practice. Educational provisions, however, were often ignored. Various religious groups received most of the funds from the Northwest Ordinance based on their “good moral character” (Carney, 1999). Various religious and missionary groups built several mission schools. According to Carney (1999), “This, in turn, meant that the focus on religious instruction, now combined with agricultural training, was still a major part of the curriculum” (p. 52). American Indians primarily resisted this type of education and their input was not sought (Carney, 1999).

Treaties served several purposes for the United States Government: Indian lands diminished, reservations were established, and some compensation for lands, even declarations of peace were established from these treaties (Carney, 1999). Out of the 645 treaties established between the United States and American Indian people, only from 1778 to 1871 97 of them included educational clauses. According to Carney (1999), the Oneida, Tuscarora, and Stockbridge tribes were the first to include educational clauses in their treaties in 1794. The only educational provision included in the treaty was milling and sawing training (Carney, 1999). Prior to that, around 1791, the only promise was made to the Seneca, and was for two teachers to be sent for training in husbandry and agriculture, however, that action has not been formally documented (Carney, 1999).

Indian education was carried out by religious groups for approximately 100 years from 1770 to roughly 1870. The religious groups consisted of primarily Christians and Protestants (Smelser, Wilson, & Mitchell, 2001). Funds for the religious groups were provided by the federal government. Most of the funds included treaty provisions established in the 1870s (Carney, 1999). Official records account for 47 Indian students in higher education, however, only four graduated. “From the Revolutionary War until the 1960s, higher education for Native Americans languished, largely ignored during this extended period when the focus of Indian education was relatively low level agricultural, industrial, and domestic training combined with religious instruction” (Carney, 1999, p. 3). The United States government established boarding schools with similar curriculum. Training shifted from religious to vocational (Carney, 1999). Smelser et al. (2001) further described the objectives of mission schools and colleges, “The objectives were basically the same-train an elite group of natives who would then teach their own people- ‘civilization and salvation’” (p. 148).

The government, religious groups, and school leaders viewed Indian culture as “not worth knowing” and often denied Indian students their culture. According to Carney (1999), “Whereas, in virtually every known society, a central purpose of education is the stewardship and passing on of culture, white education as offered to the Indian dwelled on the dissolution of their culture” (p. 50).

During the treaty period, the most important piece of legislation for American Indian education was the Indian Civilization Act, 1819. The bulk of federal funds provided for American Indian education. The act granted authorization to the president to employ “persons of good moral character” to teach the Indians (Carney, 1999). Agriculture was

the main curriculum taught to American Indians. As part of the act, the “civilization fund” was established and set aside \$10,000 annually to support Indian education. The treaties of the period contained more specific educational provisions like paying a Catholic priest to teach (Carney, 1999). Theoretically, tribes could express their desires for educational programming as a part of the provisions provided in the treaties but, the history regarding meeting treaty obligations is grim (Carney, 1999). According to Carney (1999) “Unfortunately, our history regarding the meeting of treaty obligations leaves a great deal to be desired and given the frequent resistance to white education by Native Americans educational obligations were among the easiest provisions to fail to honor” (p. 53).

Treaties still bridge Native American tribes and the government. Tribes were treated as foreign nations. Most American Indian people were not considered citizens of the United States. There were a couple of exceptions to that: Indian women who married white men were offered the opportunity to be citizens and, American Indians who served in the military were also offered citizenship. The Indian Citizen Act of 1924 changed that. On June 2, 1924 Congress granted citizenship to American Indian people who were born within the boundaries of the United States (NebraskaStudies.org, n.d.). All American Indian people were now citizens of the United States. The act also did not infringe on tribal status. American Indian people were then classified as “dual citizens.” There was not a universal petition by American Indians. Meaning they were not seeking their own citizenship in the United States. Congress granted citizenship as a method of absorbing American Indians into American life (NebraskaStudies.org, 2017).

Another major turning point was the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. “Regarding higher education, it established a loan fund for Indian college students” (Carney, 1999, p. 4). A

\$250,000 fund was established for American Indian higher education. Even though the Reorganization Act was viewed as the turning point, it was not until post-World War II there was an increase in American Indians seeking higher education. College access and attendance also increased significantly for the general public (Carney, 1999). As a result of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, Indian schools were established throughout the country. Several of the schools transformed into colleges. However, the colleges were rarely Indian colleges. “This movement away from predominantly Native American student body to more mainstream position was usually based on financial considerations” (Carney, 1999, p. 75). The colleges greatest need was to appeal to the broad population of students. Few of the new colleges retained cultural ties. Fort Lewis College was one of a couple of colleges that developed special programs for American Indian students (Carney, 1999). “In a nation with 2,500-plus higher education institutions, this pattern of Indian schools evolving into predominantly white colleges has probably happened dozens of times” (Carney, 1999, p 82).

Tribal College Movement

Tribal colleges are viewed as integral and contributing partners with tribal governments in providing growth in the tribal communities in which they were located. Educational needs of American Indian students within the tribal communities have been met with the help of tribal colleges. The tribal colleges have made deep connections with their students through curriculum that addressed historical, cultural/social, political, governance, and economic needs of the students. According to Benham and Stein (2003), “The catalyst for the tribal college movement was in large part due to mainstream higher education’s lack of attention to and failure to address the unique needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students nationwide” (Foreword, p. xiii).

Tribal colleges have designed and developed a way to educate in a context true to the unique cultural integrity of American Indian and Alaska Native students (Benham & Stein, 2003).

The movement for tribal colleges began early in the twentieth century (Benham & Stein, 2003). Many Americans believed American Indians could and should manage their own higher educational institutions (Benham & Stein, 2003). In 1911, an American Indian and an American, August Breuninger made the first proposal for an American Indian University (Benham & Stein, 2003). The proposal included an American Indian studies program connected to an Indian museum. The denial of the proposal by the United States Congress was common in the beginning “there were others of like mind, but their ideas could not overcome the assimilations who had powerful allies in the United States Congress, the business world, and the philanthropic community” (Benham & Stein, 2003, p. 30).

Several years passed before another proposal for a tribal college was made in the same capacity. A second proposal was made by the Rosebud Sioux (Sicangu Lakota) in the mid 1950’s. The tribal chairman of the time was Robert Burnette. The idea was the precursor for tribally controlled education (Benham & Stein, 2003). Lack of funds prevented the fruition of the idea and project (Benham & Stein, 2003).

Another attempt toward the establishment of an American Indian higher education institution came from Dr. Jack Forbes in 1960. Forbes and a small group of people working with him lobbied congress for an American Indian university. He advocated with passion and persistence when lobbying to administrations under presidents Kennedy and Johnson (Benham & Stein, 2003). Their efforts did not have immediate success; however, they did provide a philosophical base for their efforts. Forbes’ proposal included the promotion of cultural

traditions, tribal languages, and teacher training for American Indians and to enhance Native communities. American Indian people controlling the university was the guiding principle in Forbes' proposal. According to Benham and Stein (2003), "This principle, although not popular with government officials and mainstream educators of the time, also became the guiding principle for tribally controlled college movement" (p. 31).

The tribal college movement proved to be a slow process (Benham & Stein, 2003). Tribal groups persisted in their efforts to establish their own tribal higher education colleges and universities. The Navajo Community College, located in the southwest, was the first tribally controlled college in the United States and Canada in 1968 (Benham & Stein, 2003). Taking the lead "The Navajo intelligentsia of the mid-1960s was the first to put together the necessary internal and external politics, people, and resources to find a true tribally controlled college in 1968" (Benham & Stein, 2003). They had clear intentions, local community, and complete control of the institution. The Navajo wanted to ensure that the college was deeply rooted in Navajo heritage, language, history, and culture (Benham & Stein, 2003).

The founders of the Navajo Community College now Dine' Community College, carefully developed their mission. They knew their mission and purpose statements had to be very detailed. This would ensure ideal achievement of the proposed college to the founders. The clear and detailed mission would allay questions and critics (Benham & Stein, 2003). According to Benham and Stein (2003):

The founders also understood that these questions and critics would not come just from the outside, but would also arise from many of their own people and from other American Indians who had come to believe the words of the colonizers- that American Indians are

just not capable of managing and successfully overseeing an institution of higher education, even one dedicated only to the education of their own people. (p. 31)

The leaders of the Navajo Community College faced a large task. They had to develop a plan to serve 140,000 Navajo tribal members over a land base of 25,000 square miles (Stein, 1992). In the 1960s, over half of the Navajo people had limited English and just under half had little to no schooling. The Navajo Community College leaders also faced other barriers that made progress very slow. Some the barriers included lack of facilities, competition with the Bureau of Indian Affairs employment training program, and insufficient organizational structure (Stein, 1992).

The Navajo Nation kept moving forward with the college plan. The Navajo Community College held its first classes on January 20, 1969 located in a temporary site at their new high school. Three hundred nine students from across the Navajo Reservation were enrolled spring semester 1969 (Stein, 1992). Sixty percent of the students passed the first semester at the Navajo Community College. According to Stein (1992), “Given that normal attrition is approximately 20% in non-Indian higher educational institutions, 40% would seem high until one realizes that attrition of Indian Students at non-Indian institutions was approximately 90%” (p. 16). During the 1973-1974 academic year, 700 students were enrolled. The enrollment included 80% Navajo, 10% other tribal affiliation, and 10% non-Indian (Stein, 1992).

The curriculum was important to help students become successful in higher education. The staff and leaders at the Navajo Community College developed a strong Navajo Studies program, which included Navajo history, culture, heritage, and language. Other credible academic programs were developed in a more mainstream curriculum base to set a foundation in

an associate of art degree program (Stein, 1992). Around 1973, “However, the trend toward a mainstream style of academic program began to cause concern among some Navajo staff, as did the weak development of vocational education programs during this period” (Stein, 1992). The leaders of the college faced several concerns, “The most difficult was maintaining in the curriculum a proper balance between Navajo and western philosophy” (Stein, 1992).

History illustrated that American Indian students experienced failure in non-indigenous educational systems. Benham and Stein (2003) noted that “the alienation of indigenous students as they attend mainstream schools and colleges is a well-documented fact, and this has led to horrendous dropout rates” (p. 40). Tribal colleges have shown to reverse that point of view. They provide a supportive learning environment. American Indian students believed they were welcomed for the first time in a classroom (Benham & Stein, 2003). The climate shifted from expected failure to an atmosphere of success in tribally controlled colleges. The traditions of American Indians were sustained in tribal colleges. This is the result of the many tribal college mission statements to preserve and protect tribal culture, language, and traditions of their tribal communities (Benham & Stein, 2003).

Tribal colleges have increased educational access and success of American Indian Students (Benham & Stein, 2003). The original six tribal colleges formed an organization that would become the focal point in the development of tribally controlled higher education. A conglomerate of six tribal colleges were Dine College, D-Q University, Oglala Lakota College, Sinte Gleska University, Sitting Bull College, and Turtle Mountain Community College (Benham & Stein, 2003). Leaders of the tribally controlled college movement recognized that unity among the small number of tribal colleges was imperative (Stein, 1992). In October 1972,

the tribal college presidents met in Washington, D.C. to discuss founding a national organization. Tribal college representatives agreed on several principles to form a national organization (Stein, 1992).

Founders realized that the size and difficulty of the task of creating tribally controlled colleges on Indian land was a monumental task. A second meeting took place in Phoenix, Arizona (Stein, 1992). The leaders had received advice to pursue Title III funds to finance their organization. Each leader brought drafts for a submission proposal to the Office of Education. The drafts were combined into one proposal (Stein, 1992).

As a result, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) was founded in 1973. In the early years of AIHEC, the consortium maintained an office in Denver, CO. AIHEC lobbied congress on behalf of the tribal colleges. In 1978, congress passed the Tribally Controlled College Act, which later became the University Assistance Act. AIHEC was dependent on short-term funds. They had to close the Denver office in the early 1980s because of lack of financial resources.

According to Benham and Stein (2003), "Over the next five years, the consortium existed only through quarterly meetings of the TCU presidents, which usually were held in Washington, D.C." (p. 82). In 1987, AIHEC was able to re-open in Washington, D.C. with an aggressive legislative agenda. The purpose was to move AIHEC forward as an effective advocate for tribal colleges. Over the years, AIHEC faced many challenges (Benham & Stein, 2003). A new administration fired most of the staff, which resulted in several lawsuits. AIHEC was almost destroyed as a result of the lawsuits; however, AIHEC is still serving the needs of tribal colleges and American Indian Students. The creation of the American Indian College Fund in 1989,

AIHEC student council in 1990, and the Alliance for Equity in Higher Education in 1999 were some of successes of AIHEC.

During the years 1973 to 1978, AIHEC has expanded its membership. By 1978, AIHEC grew from six tribal college members to 16 tribal college members. Many of the new AIHEC members were operating on little to no money for growth and further development of tribal colleges. According to Stein (1992), “The tribal colleges received help from AIHEC staff in curriculum development, human resource development, administration, board training, fundraising, and regional accreditation preparation on an as-needed basis” (p. 112). In the early 1970s, “These chronic obstacles to tribal college development led the AIHEC board to choose as its number one task the securing, stable funding source for its membership” (Stein, 1992). That decision would dominate AIHEC for the next decade. Tribal colleges and AIHEC have since been trying to assist tribes in changing the economic status of tribes and their tribal members.

Poverty on Reservations

American Indians are among the poorest groups in the United States (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2007). The rural areas such as the reservations often have little or no diversity of economic sectors, most American Indians living on reservations are from low-income families (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2007). Limited access to consumer and labor markets added to the struggle and affected earning potential and professions. Employment opportunities have been limited to teaching, social work, and government (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2007). Geographic isolation has also contributed to the ongoing poverty cycle of American Indians (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2007). Economic decisions made by government officials appeared to

have little to no concern for American Indians' well-being. Brayboy et al. (2012) reported that American Indians experienced the highest-level poverty at 26% and American Indians living on reservations at 39%.

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (2007) reported, "Federal policy has had a tremendous impact on the economic and social fabric of the American society" (p. 15). Many American Indian children raised on the reservations may lack role-models, encouragement, and a lack of appreciation of the value of the degree. Numerous health related issues have been associated with poverty such as drug abuse, alcoholism, diabetes/unhealthy diet, and lack of quality health care. Poverty has also been associated with increased depression.

Research suggested students from low-income families negatively influenced student persistence at the end of the second and third year than the first year of college (Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2005). One factor might be that coming from low-income families placed undue pressure on the student (Nora et al., 2005). The student might have needed to withdraw to help with family expenses (Nora et al., 2005). A mother's educational attainment also made an impact on student persistence year to year. According to Nora et al. (2005), "Specifically, at the end of the second year, students whose mothers had attained an undergraduate degree were 57% more likely to re-enroll for a third year than students whose mothers did not complete a college education" (p. 133).

Students' and their families' finances also played a major role in pursuing higher education. Some barriers may have included poverty, unemployment, and lack of social services. Nora et al. (2005) stated, "The stress associated with financing one's education was found to

negatively impact the decisions of students to remain in college” (p. 135). Research suggested that students who received full financial aid were nearly twice as likely to persist. Financially challenged students, ones receiving Pell Grants, were less likely to continue to the second year of college. It was more related to out-of-state tuition. Out-of-state students were 1.93 times less likely to continue to the second year of college (Nora et al., 2005). The high cost of out-of-state tuition may outweigh any perceived benefits.

Student Persistence in Higher Education

Student issues. In order for students to persist in their education, they need to know and understand their educational path. Institutions that provided settings with clear and consistent information about institutional requirements are more likely to have students who persist and graduate (Tinto, 1999). Students who feel valued and involved in the institution tend to stay in college, therefore, higher educational institutions that provide academic, social, and personal support also contributed to persistence (Tinto, 1999).

There have been several studies conducted on student persistence. One study revealed that students who were not enrolled in remedial courses were more likely to persist (Stewart, Doo, & Kim, 2015). Minority students had a higher rate of departing before graduating than their peers (Stewart et al., 2015). High school grades were a predictor to college persistence and academic achievement. Stewart et al. (2015) suggested there has been a positive relationship between the ACT score and persistence. Other researchers had contradicting results that there was not a relationship (Stewart et al., 2015). Economic factors influence where and how long a student stays at a particular college or university (Stewart et al., 2015).

Higher education has been more accessible to all students in recent years, however, many students still drop out before completion of their academic program (Nora et al., 2005). Students have been unsuccessful for a number of years. Dropout rates are not a recent phenomenon (Nora et al., 2005). Nora et al. (2005) found, “To retain students, colleges have provided programs for the economically disadvantaged, programs for underrepresented students (minorities), programs and services for students with disabilities, women, and older adults re-entering college or beginning college for the first time” (p. xii). Other programs and services may include counseling services, job and career centers, and financial aid readily available (Nora et al., 2005).

Starting college is difficult for most students. Students identified as at-risk for failing even more challenged (Connolly, Flynn, Jemmott, & Oestreicher, 2017). Criteria for identifying students as at-risk might include high school grade point average and low SAT score. A goal for many FYE programs was to transition students to the university environment and social engagement for students at risk. Peer groups are one of the most influential sources of growth and development (Connolly et al., 2017). More goals of FYE programs might include reduced attrition, increased grade point average, and enhanced academic skills. By the 1930s, one-third of institutions in the United States offered some type of first year seminar (Clark & Cundiff, 2011). Clark and Cundiff (2011) found, “Academics and administrator spend a lot of time and resources focused on achieving these goals, and evaluation is required in order to determine the effectiveness of such efforts” (p. 619).

Learning fosters retention. Tinto (1999) found, “Students who learn are students who stay” (p. 6). It seems institutions should have established settings that educate and create active

involvement. Tinto (1999) also found, “Students who are actively involved in learning activities and spend more time on task, especially with others, are more likely to learn and, in turn, more likely to stay” (p. 6). Adaptations were made to foster learning for undecided students or students who require academic assistance is helpful (Tinto, 1999).

Tinto (1999) stated, “Let me suggest that colleges and universities should make learning communities and collaborative learning hallmark of the first-year experience” (p.6). Learning communities ask students to be responsible for each other. The dependency on each other ensures that learning of the group advances collaboratively. Curriculum varies in learning communities (Tinto, 1999). Service learning is a pedagogical strategy that encourages collaboration. Tinto (1999) explained, “When connected to learning communities and the collaborative pedagogy that underlies them, service learning becomes a shared experience in which students and faculty are able to engage in time-intensive interdisciplinary study of complex social problems” (p. 7). Academic and student affairs staff need to collaborate in order for learning communities to be effective. Collaboration on content and pedagogy is important (Tinto, 1999).

Learning communities, co-registration, or block scheduling allow first year students to take courses together through shared curriculum. Courses typically organized by a theme provides meaning to their linkage (Tinto, 1999). Courses such as biology, psychology, and sociology might be linked. This reinforces three objectives of learning communities which include shared knowledge, shared learning, and shared responsibility (Tinto, 1999). Curricular structure can be applied to any content or group of students.

Programs offered. In spite of the efforts put forth by colleges and universities to provide the programs and services for student retention, not all are successful. First- and second-year retention rates may not have improved in spite of the programs offered and graduation rates did not improve (Nora et al., 2005). Nora et al. (2005) found, “Logic dictates that the addition of programs and services should improve the retention of students but in reality, this seems to not be the case” (p. xii) The study also found that American Indian students were significantly less likely to persist to the second year.

Thousands of first-year programs have been created with the primary focus on retention rates. Approximately 16% of students leave college during their first year (Porter & Swing, 2006). Most students only leave temporarily. On average those students return within six years (Porter & Swing, 2006). It generally takes them longer to obtain a degree and complete their course of study. Porter and Swing (2006) suggested, “Clearly, stopping out, dropping out, or transferring out has a negative impact on the cost of higher education and degree attainment rates” (p. 91). Institutions developed an array of first year programs to encourage student success. Another goal of first year programs is student persistence. Studies suggested that there is a positive connection with students who take a first-year course and persistence (Porter & Swing, 2006). Student characteristics such as weak academic backgrounds or students who work more than 15 hours per week lower persistence rates. Institution characteristics that may impact student persistence are institution type and spending per student (Porter & Swing, 2006).

Higher educational institutions developed a wide range of First Year Experience (FYE) programs. Approximately 95% of colleges and universities have some type of FYE program (Jamelske, 2009). They range from courses that introduce students to college life to highly

organized learning communities. There is growing literature on first year experience programs with mixed results. Institutional characteristics and types of first year experience programs vary greatly (Jamelske, 2009). Other types of first-year experience programs include disciplinary themes linked to resident halls or more basic course with regular class meetings. Jamelske (2009) found, “Evidence suggests that students involved in some type of organized first year intervention report higher levels of satisfaction and involvement in campus activities achieve higher grades and are more likely to be retained and graduate” (p. 376).

First-year experience supplements necessary academic and life skills. Schrader and Brown (2008) suggested, “Academic and social skills, along with learning and thinking strategies play a significant role in academic success” (p. 313). Students may neither be aware of nor use existing services colleges offer. The services may include technology labs, libraries, and counseling. Freshmen have a difficult time allocating their own resources to completing assignments (Schrader & Brown, 2008). Schrader and Brown (2008) found, “In response to the growing need to prepare students for their first year, many universities have developed programs and initiatives intended to facilitate the transition to college” (p. 314). FYE afford students opportunities for social interaction. The programs also introduce students to academic facilities, counseling, and other faculty. Schrader and Brown (2008) also suggested, “FYE programs must be tailored to suit the needs of the university that sponsors it” (p. 315).

Persistence of American Indian Students

Good academic preparation along with adequate finances set a foundation for a productive academic career and, high school curriculum made a difference; students who completed advanced curriculum persisted in college at a greater rate more than those who

completed only the basic high school core curriculum (Nora et al., 2005). Other studies suggested that student scores on standardized tests influenced withdrawal decisions of students enrolled in college and universities. Higher ability students, as measured by SAT scores, had a lower risk of attrition (Nora et al., 2005).

Education differed on reservations. According to Guillory and Wolverton (2008), “Students from Indian reservation high schools in their states are not afforded the type of good quality education necessary for successful transition to college” (p. 73). Native students had the lowest high school completion rates in the United States. Critical conditions for college attendance included the completion of a high school diploma. As Brayboy et al. (2012) found, a prerequisite for political and economic success in tribal communities is educational success.

Internet and technology have enhanced educational opportunities for students. Several prospective Native American students in college must find a source that is available for study and research to them such as a library (Brayboy et al., 2012). At times, however, computer and Internet access has been unavailable to some Native American students on reservations. Having internet access provided Native American students the opportunity to research colleges and the programs they offered. Brayboy et al. (2012) stated, “The educational success of Indigenous youth relies in part on the technological and school-based opportunities. Nation building is about strengthening all aspects of communities, and educational success is also about building stronger communities” (p. 39).

American Indians have been trying to build their nations through educational success of tribal members. Unfortunately, there has been a disconnect between Native American students

and mainstream higher education institutions (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Persistence in earning a college education brings hope of making life better for Native American families. According to Guillory and Wolverton (2008):

The sense is that a schism exists between what Native Americans value and what mainstream society values; and since it is mainstream (white) society that controls and directs these major research universities, it is Native Americans who must conform, something that some Native Americans are just not willing to do. (p. 58)

Connections to their nuclear family and extended family may help students to persist and overcome many difficult situations (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Some of these difficult situations may include feeling unwelcome, lack of financial support, and not being academically prepared. American Indian centers on campus encouraged academic and social engagement (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

Summary

Through the review of related literature, five themes were at the core of the topic: the history of Native Americans in higher education, the tribal college movement, poverty on reservations, student persistence, and persistence and Native American students. College success for Native American students has been a concern since the implementation of higher educational institutions. The factors for Native American students to attend and persist through college are as diverse as they are complex (Guillory, 2009).

Tribal colleges serve as both a placed for educational attainment and committed to the preservation of native cultures. Native American students who seek tribal identity through tribal

history, culture, and language can obtain it through the help of tribal colleges. Tribally controlled colleges are located on tribal lands which allows for easier access for Native American students to receive higher education. They also provide a supportive learning environment. The climate has shifted for Native American students from an expected failure to success.

Student persistence has been studied several times. Tinto (1999) found, “Students who learn are students who stay” (p. 6) Colleges and universities have developed programming that provides a successful learning environment for students. First year experience programs have been developed with a primary focus on student retention. This type of course supplements necessary academic and life skills. Each college or university tailor their program to meet the needs of their college or university.

Native American students often lack the preparation required to be successful in higher education. Students from Indian reservations are not afforded good quality education (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Technology and internet access may also be limited on the reservation. Native American student persistence in earning a college degree brings hope to the student, their family, and their community. It also assists in the disconnect with Native American students and mainstream higher education institutions (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

Chapter III describes the research methods which include the research questions, participants, Human Subjects Approval (IRB), data collection and analysis, treatment of data, and procedures and timeline. Chapter III also discusses how the research questions were designed to coincide with factors that second year Native American students identified as contributing to their persistence in higher education at select Minnesota tribal colleges.

Chapter III: Methodology

The quantitative study was designed to examine factors that affect American Indian students' persistence in higher education in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College. The study sought information regarding the importance of support programs offered to students by the Tribal College that assisted them in their persistence in their higher education experiences

This chapter presents an overview of the study's research questions, participants, instrument for data collection, research design, treatment of data, and procedures and timeline.

Research Questions

The following research questions are used to guide the design and treatment of this study.

They include:

1. What did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College identify as factors that influenced them to persist in their higher education experiences?
 - a. What did American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College report as the ongoing academic barriers or challenges in their higher education experiences?
 - b. What did American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College report as ongoing personal barriers or challenges in their higher education experiences?
2. How did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College rate the level of influence that specified factors had on their persistence in their higher education experiences?

3. What did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College identify as college sponsored programs from their first year of college attendance as influential in their persistence into their second year of college?
4. How did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College rate (in terms of importance) college sponsored programs from their first year of college attendance that influenced them to persist into their second year?

Participants

The study participants were 20 second-year American Indian students enrolled in a northern Minnesota Tribal College. The participants were selected by the Tribal College administrators who determined which American Indian students were classified as second-year students according to credits earned. Second-year tribal college students were selected because they have completed at least one year of school at the Tribal College thus illustrating persistence toward completing their degree program. Student academic records were not provided directly to the researcher, but rather, staff from the Tribal College agreed to support the study by identifying a group of students based on the following criteria:

1. Classified as second-year students according to credits earned at the Tribal College. Students need approximately 30 credits to be considered as second-year student and were enrolled in upper level courses.
2. Identified as American Indian/Alaska Native (with assistance from the Tribal College staff).
3. Registered for second-year coursework at the college (as confirmed by the Tribal College staff).

The researcher was assisted by the Director of the American Indian Resource Center at Bemidji State University in identifying Northern Minnesota tribal colleges and contact information. Participants were identified and selected with the assistance of the Tribal College staff.

The researcher emailed contact persons identified at the Minnesota tribal colleges. None of the contacts replied to the emails that were sent. The researcher was assisted by the graduate committee in contacting one of the tribal colleges identified. The researcher was informed by that tribal college that an IRB application had to be submitted to the Tribal Council for research approval. The IRB application process was time intensive and some of the stipulations by the tribe for research approval could not be met by the researcher or by the study design. The researcher then personally contacted and met face-to-face with the Dean of Students of another Minnesota Tribal College. The Dean agreed to schedule a meeting between the researcher and the chairperson of the Tribal College IRB board. The Tribal College IRB board approved the study; that tribal college was selected as the institution in which the study was conducted. Results from the study may only be generalized to this particular tribal college population.

The name of the Tribal College for the study was not used in the study and all identifying information was redacted. The participants for the study were identified by instructors for their enrollment in upper level courses. A total number of students who agreed to participate in the study was 20. There were 60 students originally identified as possible participants. Unforeseeable factors resulted in only 20 study participants. Factors included but are not limited to, low attendance the days the researcher was on campus, classes cancelled for unforeseen

reasons, inclement weather (snow), low enrollment in upper level courses, and some upper level courses were online only limiting the number of students available to take the survey.

Human Subjects Approval

In efforts to ensure that the rights and welfare of the subjects participating in research were adequately protected, the St. Cloud State University committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research reviewed the study and concluded that confidentiality was assured and the potential benefits through increased knowledge were appropriate. Approval from the St. Cloud State University IRB was granted November 5, 2018. The study was conducted so that no emotional risks or risks to self-esteem were present. Modified informed consent to participants was assumed by those voluntarily completing and returning the survey instrument. Permission was additionally sought and received from the selected northern Minnesota Tribal College Institutional Review Board (see Appendices A and B).

Instrumentation

The study's instrument was comprised of 27 items. Items 1 through 3 on the survey gathered background information from participants including: age, secondary school information, and parents' education level. Items 4 through 23 gathered data specific to student persistence; Item 24 asked for information regarding the importance of programming and other support services offered by the college; and Items 25 through 26 were open ended comments seeking information regarding additional challenges and barriers participants encountered in their persistence in their higher education experience. Item 27 was also open-ended asked participants to identify recommendations for tribal colleges that may assist in American Indian student persistence into their second year.

Survey items that asked the extent to which a statement affected student persistence used a four-point Likert-type scale which included: Very Little (1), Some (2), Quite a bit (3), and Very Much (4). A “Not Applicable option” was also available. The chart below illustrates the survey items and the source from which each item was derived.

Item	Statement	Citation
4-6	Financial Support a. family/friends b. scholarships/grants c. employment	Nora, Barlow, and Crisp (2005)
7-11	Family Support (immediate and extended family) a. transportation b. food c. emotional support d. money e. housing	Guillory and Wolverton (2008)
12	Clear understanding of your educational path (the courses you need to complete your program of study)	Tinto (1999)
13	High School Preparation (PSEO or other preparation the high school provided to prepare you for higher education)	Nora, Barlow, and Crisp (2005)
14	Counseling support services	Nora, Barlow, and Crisp (2005)
15	The location of the tribal college (the convenience of where it is located)	American Indian Higher Education Consortium (2007)
16-19	Staff/faculty of the college a. advising b. mentorship c. connections/relationships with faculty/coaches d. cultural identity and language	Benham and Stein (2003) Tinto (1999)
20-22	Community/Tribal Support a. financial b. medical c. political	Guillory (2009)
23	Peers (Friends/Colleagues either on or off campus)	Connolly, Flynn, Jemmott, and Oestreicher (2017)

Survey Item 24 asked the importance of first-year college sponsored programming and other support services offered by the college with relationship to student persistence. Participants were asked to rate the importance of college sponsored programming and other support services offered by the Tribal college using a five-point Likert-type scale which ranged from 1=Little Importance, 2=Slight Importance, 3=Moderate Importance, 4=Important, and 5=High

Importance. Items 25 through 27 consisted of open-ended questions. Items 25 and 26 gathered data regarding ongoing academic and personal challenges that the participants encountered in their academic persistence toward program completion. Item 27 gathered recommendations for tribal colleges can do better assist students in their persistence in higher education.

The survey for the study was piloted with a group of doctoral students in a graduate level class in the summer of 2018; they provided both verbal and written feedback. The feedback was used to modify the survey questions for greater participant understanding.

Validity was established through a detailed review of the research literature to identify appropriate items for the study. Additional validity was attained through the experiences and expertise in subject matter by the researcher who is Native American and enrolled in a federally recognized tribe.

Research Design and Treatment of Data

The quantitative study sought opinions and perceptions through a 27-question survey instrument. A survey is a fixed list of questions administered to a select sample of participants for the purpose of learning about attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and/or behaviors with respect to a variety of elements (Cohen & Swedlik, 2005). Numerical data were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics including means, frequency counts, and standard deviations.

Open-ended Items 25 through 27 were analyzed by coding and seeking patterns and themes in responses.

The researcher utilized the services of the Statistical Consulting and Research Center on St. Cloud State University to generate aggregate data by item only. No individual results were reported.

Data Collection

As per the request from the participating institution, the survey was administered using paper and pen only due to the uncertainty of participants' technology skill in using survey digital platforms. As a result, the researcher was required to manually input all individual data into an Excel spreadsheet. The Excel spreadsheet was submitted to the Statistical Consulting and Research Center at St. Cloud State University to generate aggregate data by item. All hand-written comments were transcribed and coded for analysis.

Surveys were administered by the researcher in-person. Data were gathered from students in several classroom settings for ease of access to the students and for their comfort level. The researcher contacted the seven instructors to schedule times at the beginning or end of each class to meet with students. The researcher scheduled times with six of the instructors. The seventh instructor informed the researcher that the upper level course was online only. The researcher attended seven classes. The researcher met with the Tribal College IRB chairperson prior to the administering of the survey. The chairperson agreed to provide the researcher a list of upper level classes and an email list of the instructors for the designated classes in which the participants were located. The researcher contacted the instructors to schedule times to meet with participants at the beginning or end of each class. The surveys were provided to the participants following a brief introduction and description of the research project. The informed consent document was provided to the prospective participants. The researcher instructed participants to place the surveys in an envelope to be sealed once all surveys were collected. The envelope was placed in a bag with a lock and key for which only the researcher had the key.

To ensure confidentiality, all raw and aggregate data results were kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office with only the researcher having access. All digital data were housed on the researcher's personal laptop computer with a protected password. As per the request from the participating institution that all data be gathered by paper and pen, this required the researcher to manually input all data into a statistical platform. Participant names were not collected to guarantee anonymity. The identity of the institution supplying the data was kept confidential as a condition for participation in the study.

Procedures and Timelines

The researcher's presentation of the preliminary proposal of the study was Summer 2018. The researcher then identified Minnesota Tribal Colleges that would allow students to participate in the study. The study was conducted in fall of 2018.

Spring/Summer 2018

- Preliminary proposal of study to committee
- Identified Minnesota tribal colleges in Northern Minnesota
- The researcher emailed the Director of Bemidji State University American Indian resource center to access a list of potential contacts at the Minnesota tribal colleges.

Fall 2018

- The researcher made initial contact with the tribal colleges.
- The researcher met with key staff at a northern Minnesota Tribal College to seek permission and to conduct the study.
- The researcher contacted the St. Cloud State University's Statistical Consulting and Research Center in October.

- The researcher gained St. Cloud State IRB and tribal college approval to conduct the study.
- The researcher went to the Tribal College campus to deliver the survey. Each participant received informed consent, background information, and a description of the study. All information and results of the study were kept in a secure location where only the researcher had access.
- The researcher worked with the statistical center to analyze and develop an understanding of the data and create charts related to the findings in November/December.

Spring 2019

- Final Oral Defense
- Final edits made to the dissertation and uploaded into the repository.
- The data were disposed of once the researcher passed the final defense and data was no longer needed for the study.
- Graduation

Summary

Chapter III presents an overview of the study's research questions, participants, instrument for data collection, research design, treatment of data, and procedures and timeline.

Chapter IV presents the quantitative findings for each of the research questions.

Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

Recruitment of American Indian students into college and universities has been a significant, complex challenge for higher education leaders, but retaining those students, especially those from reservations, has been an even greater challenge. According to Guillory and Wolverton (2008), “Although a select few have successfully matriculated through higher education’s colleges and universities, institutions cannot truthfully claim success when it comes to serving this unique population” (p. 58). American Indian students are more likely to feel academically inadequate, isolated and alienated. Many times, academic inadequacy, isolation, marginalization, or other factors became too much for them to overcome. As a result, many American Indian students leave college before completing their degree programs (Guillory, 2009).

College success for American Indian students has been a concern since the inception of higher educational institutions (Guillory, 2009). American Indians have the lowest enrollment, comprise less than 1% of all students enrolled in a college or university, and earn only 0.6% of all university/college degrees awarded in any given year in the United States (Guillory, 2009). American Indian students comprise most tribal college student bodies. According to the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (1999), “In general, Tribal Colleges provide access for local students who might not otherwise participate in higher education; in fact, most of those enrolled are the first generation in their family to go to college” (p. D-1). However, significant progress has been made since the 1970s in the growth of American Indian student enrollments and graduation rates, particularly in Tribal Colleges. In the document, *Tribal*

Colleges: An Introduction prepared by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (1999), it was stated that “In a sign of the growing influence of the tribal college movement, during the 1990s tribal college enrollment increased more rapidly than has American Indian enrollment at mainstream institutions” (p. C-1). Tribal colleges saw an increase in enrollment of 62% for American Indian students from fall semester 1990 to 1996 (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 1999).

Even with a slight increase in enrollment, retention of American Indian students in higher education institutions continues to be a problem particularly in students’ persistence to complete their college experiences through to graduation. Guillory (2009) suggested, “The factors determining whether or not American Indian/Alaska Native students decide to attend and persist through college are as diverse as they are complex” (p. 13). Some of the factors that aided American Indian students to persist in higher education are academic preparation prior to college, family support, counseling services offered by the college, presence of home communities with other tribal members, and cultural ceremonies (Guillory, 2009). According to Guillory, the strengthening of cultural identity affects American Indian students’ persistence in their college participation.

Study Purpose

The quantitative study was designed to examine factors that affected American Indian students’ persistence in higher education in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College. The study sought information regarding the importance of first year support programs offered to students by the Tribal College to assist them in their persistence in their higher education experiences. Information was gathered in the fall of 2018 from 20 second-year American Indian

students in a northern Minnesota Tribal College through use of a 27-item survey instrument employing Likert-type scales and open-ended comments. Basic descriptive statistics were used to analyze numerical results while open-ended comments generated were examined using a thematic approach. Information from the study may be used to reaffirm best practices employed by Tribal Colleges and identify first year support services and programs made available to American Indian students attending tribal colleges in northern Minnesota.

Research Questions

The study focused on four critical questions:

1. What did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College identify as factors that influenced them to persist in their higher education experiences?
 - a) What did American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College report as the ongoing academic barriers or challenges in their higher education experiences?
 - b) What did American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College report as ongoing personal barriers or challenges in their higher education experiences?
2. How did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College rate the level of influence that specified factors had on their persistence in their higher education experiences?

3. What did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College identify as college sponsored programs from their first year of college attendance as influential in their persistence into their second year of college?
4. How did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College rate (in terms of importance) college sponsored programs from their first year of college attendance that influenced them to persist into their second year?

Organization of Chapter IV

Chapter IV data are reported by each research question. Research Question 1 contains three separate questions with results reported for each question.

The three demographic questions on students' backgrounds information were asked regarding the high school they attended, whether or not either of their parents graduated from two- or four-year institutions, and their age group.

Demographic Background

The results of the background information questions are summarized in the following chart.

High School Attended	# of Respondents	Percentage	Parent Graduated from College	# of Respondents	Percentage	Age	# of Respondents	Percentage
On Reservation	4	20.0	No	11	55.0	18-21	7	35.0
Off Reservation	10	50.0	Yes, both parents	4	20.0	22-25	3	15.0
Both On/Off Reservation	6	30.0	Yes, Father Only	3	15.0	26-35	5	25.0
Other	0	0	Yes, Mother only	2	10.0	35+	5	25.0

The demographic information revealed that ten or 50.0% of the participants attended high schools off the reservation and six or 30.0% attended high schools both on and off the reservation.

A majority, 11 or 55.0% of participants reported that neither parent graduated from a two- or four-year higher education institution. Seven or 35.0% of respondents reported they were in the age range of 18 to 21, and 10 or 50.0% reported they were in the combined age ranges of 26 to 35+.

Research Question 1 data were gathered from Survey Questions 4 through 23 which asked participants to identify factors that influenced them to persist in their higher education experiences. Results are reported in Table 1.

The second and third parts of Research Question 1, Survey Questions 25 and 26, asked participants' open-ended questions regarding academic and personal barriers or challenges they experienced in their persistence in higher education. Research Question 2 data are reported in Tables 2 through 5 using a frequency rating for each item on a Likert-type scale from 1 (Very Little) to 4 (Very Much).

Research Question 3 results are derived from survey question 24. These data are reported in Table 6.

Research Question 4 results were also derived from Survey Question 24. These data are reported in Table 7.

Recommendations for the Tribal College were derived from Survey Question 27 which asked an open-ended question about recommendations for the Tribal College.

Research Question 1. What did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College identify as factors that influenced them to persist in their higher education experiences?

Table 1 displays the number of participants who identified each factor as having influenced them in pursuing their higher education experience. The level of influence will be further explained in Research Question 2.

Table 1

Factors Reported by Participants as Influential in their Persistence in Higher Education Experiences

Influential Factors	# Participants Selecting the Factor	% Participants
Financial support provided by scholarships and grants	20	100.0
The college provides opportunities for establishing connections and relationships with faculty/staff/coaches.	20	100.0
You have a clear understanding of your educational path.	19	95.0
The location of the tribal college (the convenience of where it is located) meets my needs.	19	95.0
The college provides adequate opportunities for mentoring with staff and faculty	19	95.0
The college reinforces and supports the preservation of cultural identity and language.	19	95.0
I have adequate peer support from friends and colleagues.	19	95.0
Financial support provided by employment	18	90.0
Community and Tribe provides ample political support.	18	90.0
Family support (immediate and extended family) is provided by emotional support.	17	85.0
Family support (immediate and extended family) is provided by money.	17	85.0
High school preparation (PSEO, advanced placement, etc.) provided prepared you for higher education.	17	85.0
Family support (immediate and extended family) is provided by transportation.	16	80.0
Family support (immediate and extended family) is provided by food.	16	80.0
Family support (immediate and extended family) is provided by housing.	16	80.0
Counseling support services are provided that meet my needs	16	80.0
Staff/faculty of the college provides sufficient advising to meet my needs.	16	80.0
Community and Tribe provides ample financial support.	16	80.0
Community and Tribe provides ample medical support.	16	80.0
Financial support provided by family and friends	15	75.0

Participants could select more than one factor

Table 1 data reveal that 20 or 100.0% of participants reported financial support provided by scholarships and grants and the college provides opportunities for establishing connections and relationships with faculty/staff coaches as influences in their persistence. The factors identified by 19 or 95.0% of participants as having influenced them in their persistence in higher education included the following: you have a clear understanding of your educational path; the location of the tribal college meets my needs; the college provides adequate opportunities for mentoring with staff and faculty; the college reinforces and supports the preservation of cultural identity and language; and I have adequate peer support from friends and colleagues.

Eighteen or 90.0% of participants identified two factors as having influenced them: financial support provided by employment and community and Tribe provides ample political support and 16-17 participants or 80.0-85.0% identified ten of the 19 factors as influential.

The factor chosen least frequently by participants as having influenced persistence in their higher education experiences was financial support provided by family and friends by 15 or 75.0% of participants.

Research Question 1 Part a. What did American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College report as the ongoing academic barriers or challenges in their higher education experiences?

A qualitative approach was employed by the researcher to address Research Question 1 Part a. The researcher analyzed the open-ended answers from question twenty-five on the survey. A few themes emerged from participants' responses. The respondents identified four main themes as academic barriers and challenges they continued to experience in their efforts to

persist in their higher education programs. The themes included time, money, commute/transportation, and being academically unprepared for college courses.

Two themes time and money emerged in respondents' answers on the survey. Lack of time and money were identified as on-going challenges for students to persist in their college program completion. One student wrote, "Finding time to do the homework with work and everything else going on in my life gets difficult sometimes." Other respondents wrote about completing all their homework in a timely manner. Another respondent wrote, "Not enough hours in the day." Grants and scholarships sometimes provide insufficient funds to cover other expenses that full time students experienced. One respondent wrote, "Financial issues- grants and scholarships don't cover everything." Another respondent wrote, "Money and time because I was taking care of my family and working at a full-time job."

A third theme identified by respondents was commute/transportation. Attendance is affected when students lack adequate transportation. One respondent replied by stating, "My commute to this school is half an hour and it can be difficult in bad weather conditions (snow in particular)." Another respondent wrote, "Transportation and availability of gaming transportation (transportation provided by the Casino) to and from college."

A fourth theme respondents identified as a continuing issue for them was being academically unprepared for college courses. One respondent wrote, "It takes me a little more to learn what is being taught. I am not very good with computers but would love to learn more. Another respondent wrote, "I was not academically prepared for main stream college." Nevertheless, respondents identified that the staff and faculty were helpful in assisting students' success in their higher education persistence. A respondent wrote, "School and teachers have

been good with learning styles that help me learn and retain information. Instructors are available to assist and make sure you are learning and passing.”

Research Question 1 Part b. What did American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College report as ongoing personal barriers or challenges in their higher education experiences?

A thematic approach was used by the researcher for responses to Research Question 1 Part b. The researcher analyzed the open-ended answers from question twenty-six on the survey. The respondents identified four main themes as personal barriers and challenges they continued to experience in completing their higher education programs. The themes included finances, family, transportation, and behavioral health.

Respondents’ identified finances as a personal issue theme they continued to experience in their persistence through their higher education program. One respondent wrote, “My father makes too much money, so I can’t receive any FAFSA.” Numerous respondents wrote, “Financial.” Another respondent wrote, “Financially, I would like to make more money. That is why I am going to college, to better my education and to get a higher paying job.”

A second theme identified by the researcher from participants’ responses was family. Most of the respondents just wrote, “Family,” without further explanations. However, one respondent wrote, “Having a daughter with a disability sometimes causes me to miss school.” Another respondent mentioned having a toddler and having to bring his/her child to class, “Classrooms were very open to allowing her when she was not disruptive to be in the room, which, helped with attendance and child care.”

The third theme that emerged from the survey question was transportation. The respondents identified transportation as a personal and academic challenge that they continue to experience in their persistence in higher education. Respondents' mentioned relying on tribal gaming transportation for transportation to school. A respondent identified gaming transportation under academic challenges he/she faced. One respondent wrote regarding relying on gaming transportation, "Transportation to and from school. Relying on gaming transportation is not always available when needed. For example, I wait one to two and a half hours for transport to/from college. One respondent mentioned the cost that he/she spent each week to travel to school. The respondent wrote, "Travel costs me one hundred dollars a week. I travel sometimes one way to sit here. If there were dorms I would have applied to live on campus."

A fourth theme that was identified was behavioral health. Chemical dependency, mental health, and probation were all cited. One respondent wrote, "Mental health/personal issues impact my life in many aspects but detrimental to my academics." One respondent explained a conflict with attending A.A. meetings and classes in which they were enrolled. He/she wrote, "I am currently in a program to live a sober life, so I am going to A.A. meetings which makes it difficult. My meetings are in the morning, which, I have English and math class." Another respondent wrote, "County probation is a personal challenge that puts stress on my mental and physical state."

Research Question 2. How did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College rate the level of influence that specified factors had on their persistence in their higher education experiences?

To address the second research question, the researcher analyzed responses from Questions 4 through 23 on the survey. The respondents rated each factor on the survey using a four-point Likert-type scale in which the values are as follows: 1=Very Little, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, and 4 Very much. The researcher categorized the factors into the following four categories: financial support, family support (immediate and extended family), higher education institution/programming support, and community and tribal support.

Table 2 data report the participants' ratings of influence of financial support factors on their higher education persistence by mean scores using a four-point scale. Mean scores greater than 2.50 are considered above the average.

Table 2

Respondents' Ratings of Financial Support Factors in their Persistence in their Higher Education Experiences

Factors	#	Mean	SD
Financial support provided by scholarships and grants	20	2.85	1.13671
Financial support provided by employment	20	2.00	1.25656
Financial support provided by family and friends	20	1.30	1.17429

Using a Likert scale, Table 2 data reveal the average (mean) ratings by participants on financial support as a factor for their persistence in higher education. Financial support provided by scholarships and grants received the highest rating as a financial support factor with a mean score of 2.85. Employment as a financial support factor received with a below average mean score of 2.00. The type of financial support identified by the respondents as being least influential with a mean score of 1.30 was support from family and friends.

The standard deviation figures detail how closely the individual data values were from the mean values. The figures provide indications of how far the individual responses to a question vary from the mean but does not indicate right or wrong. Together, the means and the standard deviations provide a more complete picture of the statistical data. As Table 2 indicates, the smallest standard deviation figure is found for the category financial support provided by scholarships and grants (1.13671). In this instance then, there is greater variability between responses for financial support provided by employment than for financial support provided by scholarships and grants.

Table 3 data describe participants' ratings of influence for each of the family support factors in their higher education persistence. Mean scores greater than 2.50 are considered above average.

Table 3

Respondents' Ratings of Family Support in their Persistence in their Higher Education Experiences

Family Support Factor	# Respondents	Mean	SD
Family support (immediate and extended family) is provided by emotional support.	20	2.40	1.3917
Family support (immediate and extended family) is provided by food.	20	2.00	1.41421
Family support (immediate and extended family) is provided by housing.	20	1.95	1.57196
Family support (immediate and extended family) is provided by money.	20	1.90	1.25237
Family support (immediate and extended family) is provided by transportation.	20	1.55	1.19097

Table 3 data reveal the mean scores for family support as a factor in participants' persistence in higher education based on a four-point scale. Emotional support that was provided by family received the highest mean score, 2.40, by participants in helping them to persist in their higher education experience. Family support by providing food received a mean score of 2.00; providing housing received a mean score of 1.95 while providing food received a mean score of 1.90. Family support provided by transportation ranked the lowest with a mean score of 1.55.

The smallest standard deviation figure was 1.19097 in the factor family support by providing transportation indicating little variance in mean values, the largest standard deviation figure was 1.57196 for the factor housing provided by family indicating the greatest variance in mean values for that factor.

Table 4 data report the participants' ratings of higher education institution programming support in persisting in their higher education experiences. Mean scores with a value greater than 2.50 are considered above average.

Table 4

Respondents' Ratings of Higher Programming Support by Higher Education in their Persistence in their Higher Education Experiences

Higher Education Institution Supports	# of Respondents	Mean	SD
You have a clear understanding of your educational path.	20	3.70	0.57124
The college reinforces and supports the preservation of cultural identity and language.	20	3.60	0.59824
The college provides opportunities for establishing connections and relationships with faculty/staff/coaches.	20	3.30	0.80131
Staff/faculty of the college provides sufficient advising to meet my needs.	20	3.25	0.7864
The location of the tribal college (the convenience of where it is located) meets my needs.	20	3.15	1.13671
The college provides adequate opportunities for mentoring with staff and faculty	20	3.10	0.91191
I have adequate peer support from friends and colleagues.	20	2.95	0.88704
Counseling support services are provided that meet my needs	20	2.20	1.47256
High school preparation (PSEO, advanced placement, etc.) provided prepared you for higher education.	20	1.85	1.34849

Table 4 data reveal mean scores for respondents' ratings of higher education institution/programming support as a factor in their persistence in higher education. The respondents rated having a clear understanding of their education path highest among support choices with a mean score of 3.70. This was closely followed by the college reinforces and supports the preservation of cultural identity and language, 3.60. Higher education institution support mean scores from third highest to lowest (yet considered above average (2.50) were as follows: college provides opportunities for establishing connections and relationships with

faculty/staff/coaches (3.30); staff/faculty of the college provides sufficient advising to meet my needs (3.25); the location of the Tribal College (the convenience of where it is located) meets my needs (3.15); and the college provides adequate opportunities for mentoring with staff and faculty (3.10) and having adequate peer support from family and colleagues (2.95).

Two higher education institution supports received below average (2.50) mean scores. There were: counseling support services are provided to meet my needs (2.20) and high school preparation (1.85).

The standard deviation details how close the individual data values are from the mean value. It provides an indication of how far the individual responses to a question vary from the mean but does not indicate right or wrong. Together, the mean the standard deviation provides a more complete picture of statistical data. As the Table 4 indicates, the largest standard deviation number is 1.34849 for high school preparation (least among in variance in mean scores) and the lowest is 0.57124 for the factor you have a clear understanding of your educational path. - (greatest amount of variance in mean scores).

Table 5 data reports mean scores for each item in community and Tribal support using a four-point rating scale.

Table 5

Respondents' Ratings of Community and Tribal Support in their Persistence in their Higher Education Experiences

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Community and Tribe provides ample financial support.	20	2.30	1.55935
Community and Tribe provides ample medical support.	20	2.00	1.21395
Community and Tribe provide ample political support.	20	1.80	1.10501

Table 5 reveals that financial support provided by community and tribe received the highest mean score (2.30) in helping participants persist in their higher education experiences. Community and tribe provide ample medical support received a mean score of 2.00 and community and tribe provide ample political support received the lowest mean score of 1.80.

The smallest standard deviation figure was 1.10501 for community and tribe provide ample political support which indicates little variance in mean values for that factor. The largest standard deviation figure was 1.55935 for the factor community and tribe provides ample financial support which indicates greater variance in mean values for that factor.

Research Question 3. What did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College identify as college sponsored programs from their first year of college attendance as influential in their persistence into their second year of college?

In addressing the third research question, the researcher analyzed responses from Question 24 on the survey.

Table 6 reports participants' responses on how influential each of the first-year programs offered by the Tribal College were their persistence into their second year of higher education.

Table 6

First Year of College Sponsored Programs Identified as Influential in Persistence into Second-Year College Experience

First Year Program	# of Respondents	% Respondents
First Year Experience Course or Seminar	16	80.0
Semester long course	16	80.0
Counseling services	13	65.0
Courses or seminars on financial aid, student services, campus tours	12	60.0
Hybrid: both online and in class	10	50.0
Short seminar (in class lasting only a couple of weeks)	9	45.0
Online only course	9	45.0
None	2	1.0

Respondents could select more than one program option.

Table 6 data reveal that 16 respondents or 80.0% identified their first-year experience course or seminar and semester long course as influential in their persistence into the second year of college. Another 13 respondents or 65.0% identified counseling services and 12 respondents or 60.0% identified courses or seminars on financial aid, student services or campus tours as influential in their second-year persistence. Hybrid classes were identified by 10 or 50.0% of respondents as influential. Short seminar and online courses were identified by 9 or 45.0% of respondents, least influential in the respondents' persistence into their second year of college.

Research Question 4. How did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College rate (in terms of importance) college sponsored programs from their first year of college attendance that influenced them to persist into their second year?

In addressing the fourth research question, the researcher analyzed responses from question 24 on the survey. The respondents rated each first-year college sponsored program using a five-point Likert-type scale as follows: 1=Little Importance, 2=Slight Importance, 3=Moderate Importance, 4=Important, and 5=High Importance.

Table 7 reports the mean scores and standard deviations of the respondents' ratings of the importance of each first-year Tribal College sponsored program in their persistence into their second year of college.

Table 7

Respondents' Ratings of Importance of First Year College-Sponsored Programs to their Persistence into their Second Year of College

First Year Tribal College-Sponsored Programs	# Respondents	Mean	SD
Semester long course	20	3.60	2.06219
First Year Experience Course or Seminar	20	3.35	2.1095
Counseling services	20	2.75	2.24488
Courses or seminars on financial aid, student services, campus tours	20	2.25	2.12442
Hybrid: both online and in class	20	1.65	2.00722
Short seminar (in class lasting only a couple of weeks)	20	1.3	1.83819
Online only course	20	1.15	1.63111
None	20	0.1	0.30779

Table 7 data reveal mean scores from respondents regarding first-year Tribal College sponsored programs that influenced them to persist into their second year of college. The respondents identified having a semester long course as the most important college-sponsored

program with a mean score of 3.60. First year experience course or seminar closely followed with a mean score of 3.35. The respondents' rated counseling services with a mean score of 2.75.

There were four college-sponsored programs that the respondents ranked as below average in importance in influencing them to persist into their second year. Courses or seminars on financial aid, student services, and campus tours received mean scores of 2.25 while hybrid: both online and in class programs, received a mean score of 1.65, short seminar (in class lasting only a couple of weeks) received a mean score of 1.30, and online only course received the lowest mean score of 1.15 as causing them to persist into their second year of college.

As Table 7 indicates, the largest standard deviation was for the program counseling services (2.24488) and the smallest was for online only course (0.30779) thus it established that there was greater variability in participants' responses for counseling services than for online only course.

Recommendations for the Tribal College

A qualitative approach was used by the researcher in which a follow-up question was posed of the participants to provide recommendations to the Tribal College. The researcher analyzed responses to the open-ended question, Question 27 on the survey. The respondents' recommendations to the Tribal College leaders were categorized in four themes that would assist them in aiding the students in their academic persistence in the Tribal College setting. The themes included campus operations, programming, campus involvement, and compliments.

The first theme recommended by the respondents was related to campus operations. Multiple respondents recommended the college leaders consider the issue of longer campus hours. One respondent offered, "Keep the computer lab open longer. I work until 8; doors are

already locked. I have a computer but no internet.” Another respondent provided this written comment, “Closing the library at midnight like other universities so won’t have to drive 15 more miles to utilize other library hours.” The respondents recommend making the Tribal College a bigger campus. Two other written comments were, “Bigger Campus!” and “Dorm rooms would help.”

The second theme recommended by the respondents regarded programming. Recommendations were offered about additional programming the respondents would like added to the Tribal College. Respondents recommended adding courses that prepare students for college academics. One respondent wrote, “Teach us to read and write at the college level.” One other respondents’ comment was, “Make sure students are prepared for college level work. Reading and writing skills and math skills.” Another respondent wrote, “Maybe more one-on-one or a special ed class maybe.” Another programming recommendation from the respondents was offering more courses and times and another was, “More instructors. Offer more classes in upper level degree seeking requirements and class availability.”

The third theme respondents recommended was related to campus involvement. A respondent recommended, “Have new student groups that assist with acclimating students to the college setting and college culture.” Another respondent said, “I think they could encourage team building activities more. Getting to know other students better rather than just first name basis.” A third respondent cited that “Maybe motivating seminars and understanding why we are not disciplined with our time and responsibilities.”

The fourth theme respondents reported regarded compliments to the Tribal College. One respondent reported, “They do quite a bit.” Another compliment was, “Our Tribal College here

does a great job accommodating students, teaching, and preparing at the same time for a university type setting. I now feel ready and prepared to go forward.” Another respondent offered, “I believe the Tribal College does a great job. The college even provides transportation.”

Summary

Chapter IV presented data from 20 Tribal College students’ responses to a 27-question survey asking about factors that influenced their persistence into their second year of college. The students were identified as second year college students at a select northern Minnesota Tribal College. The four research questions guiding the study were used as the organizational structure for reporting study data. Tables and a brief description of the data from each table were presented.

In Chapter V, conclusions and discussion from the study results are presented as are recommendations for further research and for professional practices.

Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations

In order for Native communities to thrive and persist in maintaining and sustaining their tribal and cultural identity, Native peoples must be well-educated so that contributions to their communities result in greater financial stability and well-being. The study may help college decision makers decide which programs should be retained and supported, and what additional programming and support services should be considered. Information from the study may add to the current body of literature addressing American Indian student persistence in higher education. Specifically, results will shed light on American Indian students' perceptions of factors that influenced their persistence in attending tribal colleges in northern Minnesota.

Through the review of literature, the researcher focused on five themes: history of Native Americans in higher education, the tribal college movement, poverty of reservations, student persistence in higher education, and persistence of American Indian students. The themes assisted the researcher to identify the transition of higher education of Native American students throughout history and the struggles and/or resistance Native American students have experienced. In addition, the researcher identified factors that assisted Native American students' persistence in higher education.

The quantitative study was designed to examine factors that affected American Indian students' persistence in higher education in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College. The study gathered information regarding the importance of first year support programs offered to students by the Tribal College that assisted them in their persistence in their higher education experiences.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College identify as factors that influenced them to persist in their higher education experiences?
 - a. What did American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College report as the ongoing academic barriers or challenges in their higher education experiences?
 - b. What did American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College report as ongoing personal barriers or challenges in their higher education experiences?
2. How did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College rate the level of influence that specified factors had on their persistence in their higher education experiences?
3. What did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College identify as college sponsored programs from their first year of college attendance as influential in their persistence into their second year of college?
4. How did second-year American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College rate (in terms of importance) college sponsored programs from their first year of college attendance that influenced them to persist into their second year?

In order to address the research questions, the researcher created a survey based on research found in the literature. The study's instrument was comprised of 27 items. A mixture of open-ended comments and Likert scale ratings were used to gather information.

Chapter V provides conclusions of the study, discussion, other findings, limitations, recommendations for further research, and recommendations for practice.

Conclusions

Research Question 1 identified factors that influenced second-year American Indian students to persist in their higher education experiences. The factors identified by 19 or 95.0% of participants as having influence their persistence in higher education included: you have a clear understanding of your educational path; the location of the tribal college meets my needs; the college provides adequate opportunities for mentoring with staff and faculty; the college reinforces and supports the preservation of cultural identity and language; and I have adequate peer support from friends and colleagues. In order for students to persist in their education, they need to know and understand their educational path. Tinto (1999) found that institutions that provided settings with clear and consistent information about institutional requirements were more likely to have students who persisted and graduated. The study found all but one student identified a clear understanding of their education path as instrumental in their education persistence. The average mean for participants who reported having a clear understanding of their educational path was 3.70.

Tribal colleges throughout the United States provide opportunities that are less likely available to remote, geographically isolated tribes. Higher education provides economic and social development in American Indian communities, regardless of geographic location (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2007). One factor identified by 19 or 95.0% of participants was that the location of the tribal college met their needs. According to Benham and Stein (2003), “The catalyst for the tribal college movement was in large part due to mainstream

higher education's lack of attention to and failure to address the unique needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students nationwide" (Foreword, p. xiii). Additionally, respondents reported at a 95.0% rate that the college provided adequate opportunities for mentoring with staff and faculty.

Research Question 1 Part a. identified ongoing academic barriers or challenges American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College reported in their higher education experiences. Lack of money and resources presented challenges for students. Respondents identified finances as a barrier to their academic and personal challenges that they still experience. One respondent wrote, "Financial issues- grants and scholarships don't cover everything." Another respondent mentioned not qualifying for financial aid because his/her father made too much money.

History illustrated that American Indian students experienced failure in non-indigenous education systems. Tribal Colleges have shown to reverse that point of view. They provide a supportive learning environment. American Indian students believed they were welcomed for the first time in a classroom (Benham & Stein, 2003). Students identified staff and faculty as helpful in assist students achieve success in their higher education persistence. One student wrote, "School and teachers have been good with learning styles that help me learn and retain information. Instructors are available to assist and make sure you are learning and passing." The researcher was given the opportunity to join classes while conducting the study and observed that this to be true of the instructors. They were respectful of the students and established special bonds with them. The students appeared to be very comfortable in class and in their participations in discussions.

Research Question 1 Part b. identified ongoing personal barriers or challenges American Indian students in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College reported in their higher education experiences. Numerous health-related issues have been associated with poverty including drug abuse, alcoholism, diabetes/unhealthy diet, and lack of quality health care. The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (2007) reported, “Federal policy has had a tremendous impact on the economic and social fabric of the American society” (p.15). A barrier theme that emerged from the study survey was behavioral health. Chemical dependency, mental health, and probation were all reported by participants. Poverty still impacts students who are attending Tribal colleges in northern Minnesota.

Geographic isolation has also contributed to the ongoing poverty cycle of American Indians (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2007). People living on reservations are widely disbursed across tribal land. Small communities within the reservation border have been established. Many of the study participants reported transportation as an academic and personal challenge in their persistence. Relying on tribal gaming transportation was reported by participants on several of the survey’s responses. It is suggesting students and their families are lacking reliable transportation to get to school. The school does not have dormitories available for students. The students may live on the reservation but live in distant, smaller communities which could be over 40 miles away from the tribal college. Poverty is still a problem on the reservation.

Research Question 2 participants rated the level of influence of select factors that influenced them to persist in their higher education experiences. Results from the survey revealed a mean score of 2.40 for family support provided by emotional support, ranked highest

in the category of family support. Providing food ranked second with a mean score of 2.00. Transportation ranked lowest as a form of family support with a mean score of 1.55. Connections to their nuclear family and extended family may help students to persist and overcome many difficult situations (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

Students' and their families' finances also played a major role in pursuing higher education (Nora et al., 2005). Nora et al. (2005) stated, "The stress associated with financing one's education was found to negatively impact the decisions of students to remain in college" (p. 135). Research suggested that students who received full financial aid were nearly twice as likely to persist. When asked about financial support in their persistence in their higher education experiences, respondents reported scholarships and grants as the most influential in their persisting in higher education. Financial support provided by scholarships and grants received a mean score of 2.85.

Traditions of American Indian students were sustained in tribal colleges. This is the result of the many tribal colleges' establishing mission statements to preserve and protect tribal culture, language, and traditions of their tribal communities (Benham & Stein, 2003). Respondents identified "the college reinforces and supports the preservation of cultural identity and language" as a factor in their persistence in their higher education experiences, rating it with a mean score of 3.60. While visiting classes, I observed culture and language. In the speech class, all students introduced themselves in their tribal language before they began their speech. The tribal language instructor worked one-on-one with the students. Students said the phrase in English and, then, in present and past tenses of the tribal language. The instructor then told a story explaining the history of the Tribal College location.

Research Question 3 asked participants to identify the most influential college-sponsored program and Research Question 4 asked participants to rate (in terms of importance) Tribal College-sponsored programs. Higher educational institutions have developed a wide range of First Year Experience (FYE) programs. Approximately 95% of colleges and universities have some type of First Year Experience program (Jamelske, 2009). Jamelske (2009) found, “Evidence suggests that students involved in some type of organized first year intervention report higher levels of satisfaction and involvement in campus activities achieve higher grade and are more likely to be retained and graduate” (p. 376). The study revealed that students at the Tribal College in the study identified “first year experience course or seminar” as a factor specifically from their first year of college attendance that influenced them to persist into their second year. Students ranked a semester long course with a mean score of 3.60. First year experience course or seminar was ranked second with a mean score of 3.35. The information is consistent with research that suggests that students who attend first year experience programming are more likely to persist in higher education.

Demographic Findings

The survey asked three demographic questions that included where the respondents attended school (on, off, or both on and off reservations), whether their parents graduated from college, and their age.

According to Guillory and Wolverton (2008), “Students from Indian reservation high schools in their states are not afforded the type of good quality education necessary for successful transition to college” (p. 73). Native students had the lowest high school completion rates in the United States.

The survey results showed respondents rated high school preparation low on the survey with a mean score of 1.85. The survey data also revealed that 50% of the respondents reported attending high school off the reservation, 30% attended both on and off the reservation, and 20% attended high school on the reservation. The results may suggest that American Indian students are not afforded the education necessary for successful college transition, regardless, of attending on or off the reservation. One theory could suggest that poverty and the educational system both could influence the higher education experience. With low levels of income in tribal communities, it has taken decades for tribal communities to catch up to mainstream United States (Brayboy et al., 2012). In fact, the study data identified that finances have been continuous ongoing academic and personal barriers or challenges that American Indian students experienced in their persistence in their college educational program. This confirms the information provided in the conceptual framework of the study. The need for the study was affirmed by the following: The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (2007) found that education may assist in breaking the cycle of poverty for Native American students since higher education provides economic and social development in American Indian communities, regardless of geographic location.

Research studies found that a mother's educational attainment also made an impact on student persistence year to year. According to Nora et al. (2005), "Specifically, at the end of the second year, students whose mothers had attained an undergraduate degree were 57% more likely to re-enroll for a third year than students whose mothers did not complete a college education" (p. 133). The survey showed that 55% of the study respondents reported neither parent graduated from college, 20% reported both parents graduated from college, 15% reported

only their father graduated from college, and 10% reported only their mother graduated from college. The survey data suggest that most of the respondents were first generation college students.

The Tribal College staff suggested the researcher add students' ages on the survey, and the researcher agreed to add that item on the survey. Tribal College staff mentioned that most American Indian students attending Tribal College were non-traditional. The results from the survey revealed that 50% of respondents reported their age as twenty-six years or older.

Limitations

Limitations of the study included:

- Only one Tribal College was included in the study thus limiting generalizability of the study results.
- Not all Tribal Colleges had their own IRB Board. Some were controlled by a Tribal Council. Obtaining permission to conduct the study was a difficult process.
- The Tribal College's classes were cancelled one afternoon during the study, and weather caused several students to miss class.
- The Tribal College requested that only paper and pencil surveys be administered.
- Some of the Tribal College's upper level courses were only online prohibiting the researcher from administering the survey personally.
- Low enrollment in the Tribal College's upper level courses and low attendance on days the surveys were administered limited the number of study participants.
- Students were reluctant to participate in the survey outside of class time.

- Several students were enrolled in the same upper level courses, so trying to locate other qualified students was difficult.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations for further research are offered below:

1. It is recommended that a study be conducted to include more than one tribal college. The study may be expanded in scope to include American Indian students who graduated from one of the tribal colleges or American Indian students who transferred to a mainstream college or university.
2. It is recommended that a future study include more than one method of survey delivery. Utilizing online and paper-pencil surveys may result in a greater number of respondents and the generation of a greater volume of data. An online survey could generate more results.
3. It is recommended future studies focus on American Indian students who have graduated from the Tribal College and transferred to a mainstream college or university. Including a wider demographic of American Indian students who have persisted in their college experiences may assist in securing a greater understanding of problems of low attendance and low enrollment in Tribal Colleges.
4. It is recommended future studies be conducted at the beginning of the semester. Students are more likely to have higher attendance during the first weeks of class.
5. A future qualitative study is recommended to replicate the study utilizing face-to-face interviews with second-year American Indian students who attend tribal college in northern Minnesota.

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations are tendered to college decision makers in deciding which programs should be retained and supported and those additional programs and support services that should be considered for future implementation.

1. It is recommended that Tribal College leaders assist students with transportation needs through a shuttle service either provided by the Tribe or the Tribal College throughout the day.
2. It is recommended that Tribal College leaders provide longer hours of operation for the library and/or the learning center to assist students who need more time to complete their homework at school.
3. It is recommended that Tribal College leaders consider providing dormitories or other housing opportunities for students who live a distance from campus.
4. It is recommended that Tribal College leaders continue offering semester long First-Year Experience courses to new students.
5. It is recommended that Tribal College leaders continue the preservation of the Tribe's cultural identity and language through its programs.
6. It is recommended that Tribal College leaders collaborate with local school districts, establishing a quality working relationship to prepare American Indian students for higher education.

Summary

The study was believed to be important because American Indian students attending a select Tribal College in northern Minnesota identified factors that assisted them in their

persistence through higher education. American Indian students comprise most tribal colleges' student bodies. The study was designed to examine factors that affect American Indian students in their persistence in college and continue their enrollment until graduation in a select northern Minnesota Tribal College. The study also sought information regarding the importance of support programming offered to students to assist them in their program completion.

The study found that the Tribal College provided a unique learning environment to assist American Indian students' success in higher education including, as example, that the Tribal College reinforced Tribal culture and language, students had a clear understanding of their educational path, and semester long courses seemed to benefit student persistence at the Tribal College.

The ongoing academic barriers or challenges identified by study participants included time, money, commute/transportation, and not being academically prepared for college courses that they continued to experience in completing their educational program.

The ongoing personal barriers or challenges identified by participants included finances, family, transportation, and behavior health. The challenges continue to present obstacles for students to overcome in their persistence in higher education.

Even with a slight increase in enrollment, retention of American Indian students in higher education institutions continues to be a problem, particularly in their persistence to complete their college experiences to graduation. Tribal colleges are answering the need to assist American Indian students' persistence in higher education. They continue to strengthen cultural identity and language, which in return affects American Indian students' persistence in their

college participation (Guillory, 2009). Programming and support services provided by the Tribal College continue to promote students to the next level of their college experiences.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval



Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Delana Smith
Email: dlsmith1@stcloudstate.edu

IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION: Exempt Review

Project Title: Factors Affecting American Indian Student Persistence in Attending a Northern Minnesota Tribal College

Advisor: Kay Worner

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.

- Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Chair:

Dr. Benjamin Witts
 Associate Professor- Applied Behavior Analysis
 Department of Community Psychology, Counseling, and Family Therapy

IRB Institutional Official:

Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan
 Interim Associate Provost for Research
 Dean of Graduate Studies

OFFICE USE ONLY

SCSU IRB# 1851 - 2370	Type: Exempt Review	Today's Date: 11/5/2018
1st Year Approval Date: 11/5/2018	2nd Year Approval Date:	3rd Year Approval Date:
1st Year Expiration Date:	2nd Year Expiration Date:	3rd Year Expiration Date:



Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South MC 204K, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Continuing Review / Final Report

Principal Investigator: **Delana Smith**

Co-Investigator:

Project Title: **Factors Affecting American Indian Student Persistence in Attending a Northern Minnesota Tribal College**

If the project has been completed (no longer collecting data on human subjects) please indicate your projects status under Final Report and complete questions 1 through 5. If you have completed collecting data on human subjects but continue to analyze the data, as long as no new data is being obtained, your project would be considered completed.

If the project has not been completed (you are collecting data on human subjects) please indicate the status of your project under Continuing Review/Project Continuation and answer questions 1 through 5.

Final Report

- The Project has been completed.
 Project has not and will not be conducted. Explain:

Continuing Review/Project Continuation

- Data collection continues with enrolled participants.
 Participant recruitment continues following approved IRB protocol.

Have any changes been made to your research project (changes in subject recruitment, informed consent documents, design, methodology, procedures, etc.) since it was approved by the IRB?

- No
 Yes, explain:

Final Report and Continuing Review/Project Continuation, please answer the following:

1. How many participants have participated in your study _____
2. Have any adverse events (complaints, unexpected reactions, discomfort, or problems) occurred during this research project
 No
 Yes, explain:
3. Have any participants withdrawn from the research, either voluntarily or at the researcher's request?
 No
 Yes, explain:
4. Has any new information been identified that may affect the willingness of subjects to participate in this research project?
 No
 Yes, explain:
5. Have any changes been made to your research project (changes in subject recruitment, informed consent documents, design, methodology, and procedures, etc.) since it was approved by the IRB?
 No
 Yes, explain:

 Principal Investigator's Signature

 Date

SCSU IRB#: 1851 - 2370

Appendix B: Letter from Tribal College

Greetings Doctoral Candidate Smith –

The Leech Lake Tribal College Institution Review Board Committee held a meeting on 10-04-18 to discuss your proposed research titled Factors Affecting American Indian Student Persistence in Attending a Northern Minnesota Tribal College. The IRB reviewed your application while we have concerns, there is nothing that would prevent you from conducting your research at the institution assuming that you agree to all these terms;

1. [REDACTED] Receives a complete copy of all raw data for inclusion in our archives
2. That [REDACTED] is not named specifically anywhere in your research
3. Prior to formal submission to your committee we get a copy for review
4. At any time in the future you intend on using the data/material that you inform us (this would be in formal presentations/speeches or similar events).

If you agree to these terms, then with the permission, and authority granted through the Leech Lake Tribal College Board of Trustees, and President the IRB grants permission for you to conduct your survey at the tribal college.

I will not bore you with the details of the discussion but there was group consensus on the following topics, and we would like to know how you are going to address them;

1. *American Indian, Native American, or Indigenous: used interchangeably in the research; are the Indigenous people of the United States (p. 10)*
 - a. Discuss surrounded how you were going to define these terms. Are students going to be able to self ID, membership in a tribal organization (Band), or formal government identification and recognition (BIA). The group discussed there are a variety of ways to define this term and would ask that you provide further clarity to this.
2. Discussion surrounded your sample/population size. The committee felt this is something that you would want to discuss with your committee and have a plan in place in the event that you get a poor response rate or sample. The committee agreed there was limited research in and around Native Americans within higher education, and there is a need for this type of research.

For the logistics of your on-campus research, we request that you work with Dr. Matthew J. Stiehm, Dean of Students Michelle Saboo, and student services for delivery of the survey. We will allow you in conjunction with the representatives listed to make logistics regarding delivery of the survey.

We wish you the best of luck and look forward to your results and research.

[REDACTED]

Appendix C: Implied Consent

Factors Affecting American Indian Student Persistence in Attending a Northern Minnesota Tribal College Study

Implied Consent

You are invited to participate in the study on factors that affect American Indian students' persistence in attending a tribal college. Your responses to the survey may be helpful to other American Indian students who are thinking about attending a tribal college. This research project is being conducted by Delana Smith, for a doctoral dissertation which is part of a degree requirements for an Educational Doctorate through St. Cloud State University.

Background Information and Purpose

The study is designed to examine factors that second-year American Indian students identify as contributing to their persistence in higher education at a select northern Minnesota Tribal College. Information from this study will be used to reaffirm best practices and to suggest improved support services for American Indian students attending tribal colleges in northern Minnesota.

Procedures

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete the survey which is completely anonymous, so no one will be able to identify a specific individual's form. It is important that we have as many people as possible complete and turn in this survey to compile an accurate representation.

Risks

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study. In the unlikely event there are adverse psychological risks, please contact one of the following therapists/doctors to treatment

1. [REDACTED]
2. [REDACTED]

Benefits

It is the hope that this study will help college decision makers in deciding which programs should be retained and supported, and what additional programming and support services should be considered. Information from this study will add to the current body of literature addressing American Indian student persistence in higher education, specifically, results will shed light on American Indian students attending tribal colleges in Northern Minnesota.

Your information will be confidential, and no questions presents identifiable information.

Confidentiality

All surveys are anonymous. No identifiable information will be used. All raw and aggregate data results will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office with only the researcher having access

ensuring confidentiality. All digital data will be kept on a personal laptop computer with a protected password. Participant names will not be collected guaranteeing anonymity. The identity of the institution supplying the data is kept confidential.

Research Results

If you are interested in learning the results of the survey or have any additional questions, please contact the researcher at dsmith1@stcloudstate.edu (218) 368-8179 or the advisor, Kay Worner at ktworner@stcloudstate.edu (612)810-7986

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal

Participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University, the researcher or [REDACTED].

If you decide to fill out the survey and there are any questions you are not comfortable answering, you do not need to answer them. I ask you to please remember this information is confidential. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Acceptance to Participate

Your completion of the survey indicates that you are at least 18 years of age and you consent to participation in the study.

Note: If you have questions about the study you wish to ask of someone at the Tribal College, contact [REDACTED]

Appendix D: Survey Instrument

Factors Affecting American Indian Student Persistence in Attending a Northern Minnesota Tribal College

Thank you for participating in this study that examines factors that affect American Indian students' persistence in attending a tribal college. Please answer this 27-item questionnaire. Your participation is very much appreciated. Results of this study will be used to determine program improvement and support for Native students.

Background Information:

1. Where did you attend high school? (*Select the one*)
 - On the reservation
 - Off the reservation (Urban, City or Town near the reservation)
 - Both on the reservation and off the reservation
 - Other (GED, Adult Basic Education, etc.)

2. Did either of your parents graduate from college (either 2 or 4-year institution)?
 - No
 - Yes, both parents
 - Yes, father only
 - Yes, mother only
 - Don't know

3. What age group best describes your current age?
 - 18-21
 - 22-25
 - 26-35
 - 35+

Student Persistence:

For the purpose of the study, student persistence is defined as the act of continuing toward an education goal such as graduating or obtaining a degree/certificate.

Please rate each of the factors that influenced your persistence in your higher education experiences.

4. Financial support is provided by **family and friends**.

Very Much	Quite a bit	Some	Very Little	N/A
-----------	-------------	------	-------------	-----
5. Financial support is provided by **scholarships and grants**.

Very Much	Quite a bit	Some	Very Little	N/A
-----------	-------------	------	-------------	-----
6. Financial support is provided by **employment**.

Very Much	Quite a bit	Some	Very Little	N/A
-----------	-------------	------	-------------	-----
7. Family Support (immediate and extended family) is provided by **transportation**.

Very Much	Quite a bit	Some	Very Little	N/A
-----------	-------------	------	-------------	-----
8. Family Support (immediate and extended family) is provided by **food**.

Very Much	Quite a bit	Some	Very Little	N/A
-----------	-------------	------	-------------	-----
9. Family Support (immediate and extended family) is provided by **emotional support**.

Very Much	Quite a bit	Some	Very Little	N/A
-----------	-------------	------	-------------	-----
10. Family Support (immediate and extended family) is provided by **money**.

Very Much	Quite a bit	Some	Very Little	N/A
-----------	-------------	------	-------------	-----
11. Family Support (immediate and extended family) is provided by **housing**.

Very Much	Quite a bit	Some	Very Little	N/A
-----------	-------------	------	-------------	-----
12. You have a clear understanding of your educational path (the courses you need to complete your program of study)

Very Much	Quite a bit	Some	Very Little	N/A
-----------	-------------	------	-------------	-----

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|-----------|-------------|------|-------------|-----|
| 13. | High school preparation (PSEO, advanced placement, etc.) provided prepared you for higher education. | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very Little | N/A |
| 14. | Counseling support services are provided that meet my needs. | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very Little | N/A |
| 15. | The location of the tribal college (the convenience of where it is located) meets my needs. | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very Little | N/A |
| 16. | Staff/faculty of the college provides sufficient advising to meet my needs. | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very Little | N/A |
| 17. | The college provides adequate opportunities for mentoring with staff and faculty. | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very Little | N/A |
| 18. | The college provides opportunities for establishing connections and relationships with faculty/staff/coaches. | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very Little | N/A |
| 19. | The college reinforces and supports the preservation of cultural identity and language. | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very Little | N/A |
| 20. | Community and Tribe provides ample financial support. | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very Little | N/A |
| 21. | Community and Tribe provides ample medical support. | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very Little | N/A |
| 22. | Community and Tribe provides ample political support. | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very Little | N/A |
| 23. | I have adequate peer support from friends and colleagues. | Very Much | Quite a bit | Some | Very Little | N/A |

First Year Programs/Services:

First Year Experience programs are designed by colleges and universities to assist students in the transition process into college. These are often required by the college or university and go by various names (First Year Experience, First Year Seminar, etc.) The programs/services often provide information on topics such as but not limited to financial aid, student services, counseling services, campus tours and resources, academics, and other first year student-centered resources.

Open Ended Questions

25. What are ongoing academic challenges/factors that you still face? (Programs, Support, Faculty Relations, etc.)

26. What are ongoing personal challenges/factors that you still face? (financial, relationships, mobility/transportation, health, etc.)

27. Do you have any recommendations for the tribal college to do better in assisting your academic persistence through program completion?