

The American Indian Institute: A Case Study

Jason Felihkatubbe

Faculty: Kim Wilson

Department of ISLE, College of Applied Studies

The overall high school graduation rate for American Indian/Alaska Native students is 74% compared to 89% for White students. On average, less than 1% of postsecondary students identify as Native American. One of the challenges faced by these students is a lack of access to advanced placement and/or college preparatory courses in high school. Several programs have been tried throughout history. In the past, boarding schools were not effective because they focused on assimilation, not college preparation, thereby causing trauma and creating an entirely new set of problems. Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) operated schools and tribally controlled (but BIE funded) schools weren't effective, with 35 schools having a high school graduation rate less than 67%, because of the emphasis on culture, rather than academics. Charter or community schools, such as the Sovereign Community School (SCS) in Oklahoma City, provided scant impact, only 15% of SCS' students are at grade level in reading, math, and science according to state test scores, because of a lack of understanding of the system and financing. One school that did work was the American Indian Institute (AII) which opened in 1915 in Wichita, Kansas. At the time, it was the only college preparatory high school in the United States for Native males and operated for nearly 20 years before closing. The research question addressed by this study is: What program components promote increased access to a college preparatory program for Native students? This study seeks identify the most empirically supported method of providing a college preparatory program to Native students through the examination of different programs that have been instituted through time.