AIHEC Accreditation Working Group  
September 8, 2010  
Bismarck, ND

- Do we need consensus from everyone to move forward, or do we just do it: Goal of making a recommendation for establishing an accrediting body?

- How much time is involved – what is the time frame for developing an accrediting body?

- If focus is on language and culture, then why accredit it? Is Western accreditation really what we want to talk about?

- Should it be voluntary or involuntary (mandatory for AIHEC membership?)

- Should it be part of AIHEC or separate? (Are we mixing advocacy with accrediting?)

See summary of Accreditation Questionnaire.

Key Activities/Issues for This Working Group:

- Benchmarks for the Working Group:
  - Eventually, this could be part of the criteria for membership in AIHEC?
- Timeline
- Focus of Working Group
- Who is serving as evaluators

- Foundation of our existence is our tribal knowledge, yet some TCUs (e.g. NWIC) do not even have a Native language requirement:

  Some treaty people (and others – including Dr. Manning) say that if you don’t know your language, you don’t really know yourself

  TCU accreditation is a way to strengthen tribal identity: how do TCUs help strengthen identity as an individual and tribe?

  Tribal identity is not an add-on, It is the living culture that you (we) are in. It is foundational for TCUs and permeates everything and all aspects of the college.

- Community; Place; Personal Gifts; Tribal Sovereignty (i.e. Indigenous Evaluation Framework)
• **JUDGMENT MODEL v. Self-improvement model**

Step One: Establish a Mission Statement: First question, full (general) accrediting body or specialty?

• CCB supports general because a specialty entity feels like an add-on.

• LB: general permeates everything – our ancestors; foundation; spirituality is the over-viewer of everything that goes on; economics, governance, etc.

• Some presidents express concerns (governing board approval, transferability (big for 2-year schools))

Does Validation mean a judgment of quality? If you are talking about unique tribal groups, people might object to even tribal outsiders coming in.

**Elements:**
- Guiding principles
- Core values
- Framework that is place-based
- Guidance for process, reviewers
Grove Worksheets:
Today we will do Steps 1-3:
- Articulating the Context
- SWOT (or SPOT)
- Vision Mapping

Worksheet One: CONTEXT MAP:
Development of Tribal College Accrediting Body

- **Trends:**
  - Specialty: use of CHEA as option
  - Specialized accreditation is a “status-“related experience
  - Philosophical viewpoint re culture and language as an opportunity
  - Opportunity for reciprocity
  - Powerful academic structure in the US
  - Impact of colonialism
  - Evolution of public accountability and consumer protection

- **Political Factors:**
  - More restrictive political climate re new models
  - Support of HLC leadership is positive
  - Congressional and public attitude toward accreditation

- **Economic Climate:**
  - Concern by TCUs of cost
  - Federal system is related to infrastructure
  - Still many disenfranchised people in our communities
Customer Needs:
- TCUs want focus on culture and mission
- Strengthen identity as an individual/tribe
- Integration of federal institutions

Key Elements of TCU:
- Language
- Indigenous Knowledge
- What does it mean for “Indians” to be in Constitution?

Action Items:
- Costs
- Options
- Guiding Principles
- Core Values
- Framework that is place-based
- Guidance for process, reviewers
- Create a transitional process from regional to a TCU process

(2) Worksheet Two: SPOT MATRIX

Strengths:
- Very knowledgeable about accreditation
- Know our identity as tribal people (knowledgebase)
- Removed from standard cultural identity of US – can see the worldview (more diverse, objective)
- Holistic world view; we see a value in people having individual identity
• Connection to land: place to do this from
• Very knowledgeable of about impact of oppression and colonial impact, therefore we know the strategies to help our people overcome this
• Link between traditions/governments and communities
• Hope, opportunity, confidence that TCUs give communities
• TCUs are a local experience
• TCUs provide a venue for free expression

Problems:
• Cost
• Reporting
• Increased federal regulations strain resources
• Concern with AIHEC relationships
• Concern about maintaining transferability

Threats/Challenges:
• Change
  • Some TCUs have used accreditation as a shield to minimize political involvement
  • Building allies among ourselves and external
  • How to ensure accreditation maintains this: not be duplicative
  • Might have an impact on participation of Native Serving Institutions
  • TCUs can be between tribal government and community – can be positive and negative
  • Accreditation is a shield to minimize political involvement
  • Not to be duplicative
  • TCU can be between tribal government
  • 2-year institutions are very concerned about transferability issue and will demand “credibility”

Opportunity:
• We have a place to do this work from (“people of a place” – homeland)
• PR: this is a good thing to do, for example… (see next bullet)
• This is a step in the ongoing progression of maximum control of Indian education (i.e. federal policy)
• Create a new model
• Opportunity to capture and strengthen our TCU identity
• Strengthen other worldwide Indigenous efforts
• We are already successful and don’t have anything to lose
• Hope, opportunity, confidence that TCUs give to communities
• Extend to other tribally-charted educational entities
  ▪ Transformation; Transformative, Transform
  ▪ Restorative
  ▪ Affirm
(3) Worksheet Three: JOURNEY VISION

Mission:
- Creation of a standalone fully functioning accrediting body for TCUs (and tribally-controlled pre-K-12 schools).
- Moving from where we are not in accreditation to where we want to go and this is us
- Transformation; restorative

History:
- Creation of tribal education departments/codes
- Creation of TCUs and tribally controlled schools
- Studies of Accreditation
- Creation of AIHEC
- Types of Change:
  - Developmental; transitional, transformational
  - Pride moves from ego to humility and humbleness

Guiding Principles/Values:
- Indigenous knowledge/language
- Community-based
- Integrity
- Student focused, including transferability and terminal degree programs
- Our history is continuous and culture-based
- From where the community is
- Academic integrity: disciplined, confident
- Recognition that education is a path toward spiritual and cultural integrity
**Vision Elements:**

1. Leadership
2. Reform of Systems
   - We are telling our story to capture our vision
   - Culturally Relevant: foundation is tribal; oral tradition
   - We are speaking from each other
   - Recognizes the mandates of our communities and also our inherent rights
   - Voice of truth: comes from who we are and who we want to be in the world
   - Tribal people and their participation are embedded in study and review
   - Incorporates our natural, native processes and organizations
   - Self-improvement process (WINHEC indicators)
   - We are designing/building as we go along
   - Immerse ourselves in our historical and current knowledge toward our future: knowledge of who we are creates confidence
   - Recognizes the mandates of our communities and also our inherent rights:

**Core Competencies:**

- Created from the community
- Most knowledgeable about tribal people
- Risk takers and future thinkers

**Organization:**

- Framework focuses on community-based elements
- Want a continuous improvement model (not a judgment model)
- Action oriented-intellectual sovereignty

**Critical Issues:**

- Challenge to define what “tribal” foundation looks like:
  1. Identity of TCU
  2. Values
  3. Describe Indigenous knowledge

- How is this recognizable as accreditation

**Environment:**

- Place-based technological access
**Discussion – Purpose:**

JS: Our rituals (create setting, opportunity) are constructed over generations to lead our people from one point to another (to create a different human being), to open the mind, to consider other perspectives: *outcome of individual* [see: Indigenous Evaluation Framework Focus Group Discussions]

This discussion is good because it is taking us back to what we are really trying to do, as opposed to duplicating a western model.

**KEY ACTIVITIES:**
1. Time line- evolutionary
2. Benchmarks
3. Focus of working group
4. Who is serving as evaluators
5. Answer the questions:
   a. How does this apply to my college
   b. What will my board think – will they support the idea?
6. Cost
7. Options

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

Creating/Creative  
Permeate with every aspect of Indian Society  
Descriptive of what a community looks like  
Spirituality as a the foundation  
What are we trying to do: Validate, judge, supportive, focused  
Holistic facilitators, we are a totality  
Voluntary or required  
Role with AIHEC  
Nation-building

**WHAT?**
- Spirituality, Treaties, Compassion, Laws, Customs, Values, Inherent Rights;  
  Community; Sovereignty, Self-termination

**WHO?**
- Tribal Colleges and Universities: *Chartered or Controlled*

**HOW?**
- Treaties/Sovereignty  
- Curriculum  
- Governance
• History
• Value, Integrity:
  o Language
  o Curriculum
  o Pedagogy of Teaching/Learning
• Indigenous ways of knowing

Evolution from where tribal nations are now to where we envision tribal nations to be in the future: Why are we doing this?
• Better people; more tribally-based; grow to a higher standard (Currently, accrediting bodies don’t understand the mandate that TCUs have from their tribal community.)

This will frame the reason for tribal accreditation.

Possible Mission Statements:

The mission of the TCUs who are tribally-chartered institutions of higher education and are governed by a separate tribal accrediting agency are founded on preserving and strengthening tribal self-determination, spirituality, treaties, laws, and customs through respective Native languages, curriculum, pedagogy of teaching and learning and Indigenous ways of knowing.

Accredit tribally-chartered institutions through support of tribal higher education missions and organizational practices toward evolution of our communities and people to a [more] spiritual, cultural, and environment-based in self-determination and Indigenous knowledge.

** Inherent rights, as recognized by treaties. (Use this type of phrase rather than “rights conferred through treaties – CCB)

Possible Vision:

All tribally controlled colleges will be accredited by an entity they collectively determine.

Maybe we are talking about something bigger/different from standard, status-quo or modified Western accreditation (see above). Is there another word that better describes our intend goal/process? What word describes what we want to create, sanction, and implement (and is not loaded with the “accreditation baggage”?

• Affirmation
• Sanction
• Certify
Some things to remember/consider/address…

- There may be unintended consequences of our actions
- Could be viewed as a threat
- This effort is not duplicative if it is the only one we are using
- Majority of TCU Questionnaire respondents said they needed more information or that they would agree to an accrediting body only in addition to existing accrediting structures: this issue must be addressed through education, outreach, information sharing, and allowing/encouraging all to be part of the creation process.

TO DO on Thursday:

  (1) Draft Mission Statement  
  (2) Draft Guiding Principles  
  (3) Time line and benchmarks  
  (4) Education/Information-sharing Strategy (Marketing & Advocacy)

Goal: Report to Board in October 2010