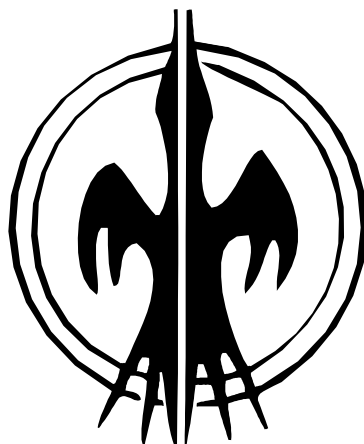


HOW MANY STUDENTS DO TRIBAL COLLEGES SERVE?



Since the initial years of the Tribal College movement, enrollment at the colleges has increased at a rapid rate. In 1982, enrollment at the colleges stood at approximately 2,000 (O'Brien, 1992). By 1996-97, however, enrollment over the 12-month academic period reached 24,363 undergraduates and 260 graduate students.¹ The number of undergraduates averaged 870 per school, and ranged from several thousand at Diné College to less than 200 at the Institute of American Indian Arts. Because Tribal College students "stop-out" or skip semesters more frequently than do traditional undergraduates—similar to students at community colleges overall—fall enrollment figures are lower. In 1996, fall enrollment totaled 16,689 undergraduates—approximately half of them full-time and half part-time—and 151 post-baccalaureate students. This represents a substantial increase—42 percent—from the fall of 1990,

in which the colleges reported a total of 11,767 students (NCES, 1990-1997).²

In a sign of the growing influence of the Tribal College movement, during the 1990s Tribal College enrollment has increased more rapidly than has American Indian enrollment at mainstream institutions. Between 1990 and 1996, fall enrollment of American Indian students at Tribal Colleges increased by 62 percent. Today, Tribal College students account for 7 percent of all American Indian students. In comparison, American Indian enrollment increased by 36 percent at mainstream colleges over the same period. The growth in enrollment at Tribal Colleges was concentrated in a few states: California, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, and South Dakota. In each of these states, enrollment of American Indians increased at a faster rate at Tribal

Colleges than at mainstream institutions. Moreover, in three of these states—Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota—the majority of American Indian college students in the state are enrolled at Tribal Colleges (NCES, 1990-1997; Hines and Higham, 1997).

Measures of enrollment

The National Center for Education Statistics uses several measures of student enrollment at postsecondary institutions:

- *An unduplicated headcount during a 12-month period* measures the total number of students enrolled during the 12-month reporting period in any courses leading to a degree or that are part of a vocational or occupational program. Each student is counted only once during the reporting period. Unduplicated 12-month enrollment at Tribal Colleges reached 24,623 in 1996-97.
- *Fall headcount enrollment* measures the number of students enrolled for credit or in a vocational or occupational program at the institution as of October 15 of that year, or on the institution's official fall reporting date. Each student is counted only once during the reporting period. Fall 1996 enrollment at Tribal Colleges was 16,840.
- *Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment* attempts to adjust enrollment figures by attendance patterns. All full-time students are counted, plus a portion of part-time students. FTE enrollment can be used for either 12-month or fall periods. FTE enrollment at Tribal Colleges for fall 1996 was 11,221.

In addition, a special enrollment measure is used by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for Tribal Colleges in particular:

- *Indian Student Count (ISC)* measures the number of FTE American Indian/Alaskan Native students enrolled according to a specific formula, for the purposes of distributing funds under the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act. In FY 1999, the ISC count for colleges funded under this Act was 9,212.

¹ These enrollment figures include data from only the 29 colleges that reported to IPEDS; Little Priest Tribal College, White Earth Tribal and Community College and Red Crow Community College are not included. Graduate numbers include only Oglala Lakota College and Sinte Gleska University.

² Figures for 1996 include data from 28 colleges (in addition to the colleges noted in the previous footnote, the College of the Menominee Nation is not included), while 1990 figures include only 20 colleges.

Comparison of Indian Fall Enrollment, 1990 and 1996

State	Indian students at non-tribal colleges, 1990	Indian students at non-tribal colleges, 1,996	% increase	Indian students at tribal colleges, 1990	Indian students at tribal colleges, 1996	% increase	Tribal college students as % of total, 1990	Tribal college students as % of total, 1996
AZ	7,418	10,140	37%	1,424	1,604	13%	16%	14%
CA	21,253	22,852	8%	123	190	54%	1%	1%
KS	1,141	1,865	63%	831	819	-1%	42%	31%
MI	3,563	4,229	19%	N.A.	261	—	—	6%
MN	2,010	2,985	49%	N.A.	27	—	—	1%
MT	991	1,426	44%	1,442	2,320	61%	59%	62%
ND	666	913	37%	950	1,382	45%	59%	60%
NE	488	862	77%	241	272	13%	33%	24%
NM	4,440	6,979	57%	170	939	452%	4%	12%
SD	778	883	13%	1,134	1,555	37%	59%	64%
WA	3,868	6,140	59%	N.A.	567	—	—	8%
WI	2,051	2,335	14%	N.A.	298	—	—	11%
Total:	96,656	131,902	36%	6,315	10,234	62%	6%	7%

Source: NCES, 1990-1997.

Notes: Data on Tribal College students for fall 1996 include 28 colleges, while figures for fall 1990 include 20 colleges. Data in 1990 were not available for some of the colleges because they did not report to IPEDS in that year, did not provide fall enrollment figures, or had not been established.