UNITED TRIBES® TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Strategic Plan Annual Report

2019-2020 Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2019-20 UTTC STRATEGIC PLAN ANNUAL REPORT

UTTC is nearing completion of its Five-Year Strategic Plan. The United Tribes Technical College strategic plan was developed as a tool to ensure that "UTTC continues to operate at the highest level possible in the provision of programs of study that prepare the student for the ever changing workforce."[1]

The UTTC Strategic Plan is aligned to the institutional mission to provide a quality post-secondary education and supports the institution's core values. The major institutional accomplishments that are highlighted in this report include:

➢ UTTC sets up remote learning in response to pandemic

➢ UTTC makes decisions based on assessments of Institutional Learner Outcomes

➢ Faculty at UTTC are diverse and highly qualified

➢ UTTC engages with national partners to improve student support

➢ UTTC sets new institutional goals for student success and completion

➢ UTTC assesses student learning in the Co-Curriculum

➢ UTTC updates its Retention Risk Model

➢ UTTC improves employee benefits and wages

➢ UTTC responds strategically to the pandemic with Coronavirus Response Team

➢ Program Review process guides institutional action

➢ Institutional Review Board protects human research subjects

➢ Renovations make campus more student and environment friendly

➢ College Relations continues fundraising efforts at UTTC to grow Endowment

➢ UTTC Land Grant Office contributes to health, food security, and food sovereignty

Following, is a more detailed narrative of the progress made toward achieving the strategic goals.

Mission and Values

UTTC Mission

United Tribes Technical College provides quality post-secondary education and training to enhance knowledge, diversity, and leadership for all indigenous nations.

UTTC Core Values

Diversity
Education
Leadership
Integrity
Valor
Empowerment
Respect

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[1] UTTC President Leander "Russ" McDonald, PhD (Dakota/Sahnish/Hidatsa), President's Message; UTTC Strategic Plan 2015-2020

THE UTTC STRATEGIC PLAN ADDRESSES SIX STRATEGIC AREAS

1	**Commitment to Student Learning**	*1a: Improve and sustain instruction through the assessment of student learning outcomes* *1b: Employ highly qualified faculty*
2	**Student Success and Completion**	*2a: Improve quality and integration of services throughout the learner experience* *2b: Increase degree completion rate* *2c: Increase internship and job-shadowing opportunities and job placement rates* *2d: Deliver comprehensive alumni services*
3	**Recruitment and Retention of Students and Employees**	*3a: Develop and implement student recruitment and retention plans* *3b: Offer student academic and athletic scholarships* *3c: Develop and implement a marketing plan* *3d: Develop a competitive salary schedule for the college – collective bargaining* *3e: Staff professional development*
4	**Institutional Research, Culture & Effectiveness**	*4a: Be proactive in maintaining accreditation and exploring trending opportunities* *4b: Develop and implement a concise, sustainable institutional assessment system for continuous improvement* *4c: Develop an institutional research agenda* *4d: Institutionalize and sustain American Indian culture*
5	**Infrastructure Improvement, Renovation and New Construction**	*5a: New construction* *5b: Renovation of existing structures* *5c: Improve and update technology*
6	**Expanded Funding for Self-Sustainability**	*6a: Search for additional funding sources (federal, state, private, etc.) to provide for self-sustainable campus* *6b: Increase external and internal funding opportunities*

STRATEGIC AREA #1: COMMITMENT TO STUDENT LEARNING

UTTC sets up remote learning in response to pandemic

Concern was growing about the rate of spread of COVID-19 in March 2020. President McDonald assembled a Coronavirus response team comprised of administrators, student services, safety, and wellness personnel. This interdisciplinary team discussed the best course of action to respond to the growing concerns while minimizing disruptions to learning. Students and faculty were on spring break. In order to maintain students access to their teachers and their classes, and to reduce risks of the virus, the response team elected to move the campus to remote learning. The full campus went into action.

- Campus procedures were developed to support student adjustment to remote learning;
- Housing, bookstore, IT and administration worked together to get students what they needed to continue their classes at a distance;
- Faculty support was provided to facilitate smooth transition to remote teaching;
- Campus processes were developed to support remote working and social distancing for employees;
- Student supports were adapted to support students remotely;
- Campus data systems were adjusted to track students whose education was disrupted by COVID-19;
- Wellness provided regular updates on COVID -19 data to drive college decisions regarding human resources and students.

Within 10 days, all classes were delivered remotely, alternative work schedules were put into place for non-essential workers, and safety protocols were developed and implemented for essential personnel. Career and Technical Education coursework that could be offered remotely was offered remotely and the coursework that needed to be completed in a lab space was completed during the summer months.

## UTTC makes decisions based on assessments of Institutional Learner Outcomes

Assessment of communications skills leads to faculty action

The Communication Institutional Learner Outcome (ILO) was the first ILO to be fully assessed institution-wide. The assessment rubric for written communication was field-tested, revised, and field-tested again from 2017-2019. Revisions were made based on faculty input and to ensure that the tool measured what was intended with a satisfactory level of interrater reliability. The Assessment of Student Learning (ASL) Committee used the rubric to assess end of program student writing compared to beginning students' writing samples. Faculty used the results to determine institution-wide strategies for improving student learning and performance in writing, particularly with regard to grammar and mechanics. Written communication is scheduled to be reassessed in three years to see if the strategies impact student performance with written communication.

A rubric was also field-tested for Oral Communication in the COM 110 courses. The first field test indicated a weak distribution of scores and some challenges with interrater reliability. The rubric has been revised and is in the process of another field test. The scores will be analyzed and shared with faculty for interpretation. If this field test yields satisfactory levels of distribution and interrater reliability, the next step will be to use it across the curriculum. The results will be used to benchmark student outcomes and to determine faculty course of action.

UTTC pilots the Test of Everyday Reasoning (TER) to measure Critical Thinking.

The college began the process of assessing student performance with another ILO, Critical Thinking, in the 2019-2020 academic year. The ASL Committee decided to pilot the Test of Everyday Reasoning (TER), after looking at a number of other critical thinking tests. The TER has been standardized and calibrated for students up through the community college level. The readability is appropriate for the population and the results are reported according eight attributes of critical thinking. The online format made it ideal for students to access, particularly given the remote learning situation.
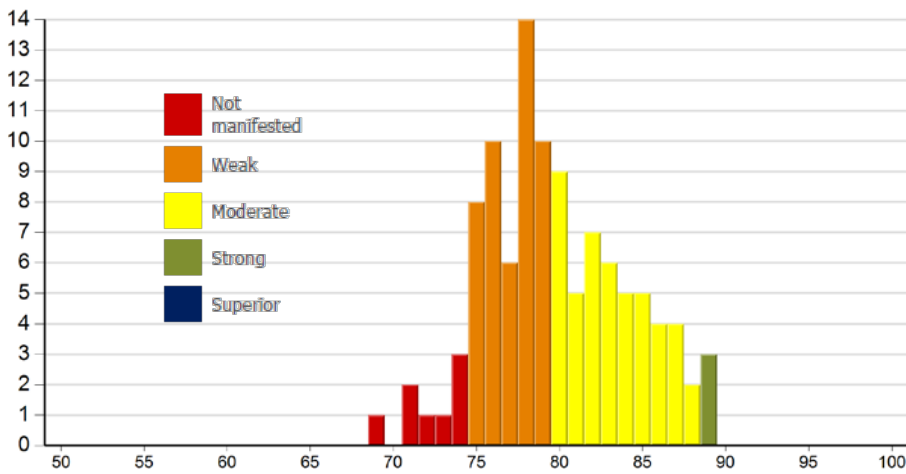
The TER was piloted with 22 students in spring 2020. This pilot showed reasonable results for our students. The mean scores for each attribute were above the first quartile and below the third quartile. The bell shaped distribution of means suggested the TER is an appropriate tool to measure critical thinking with students at UTTC. The TER was administered to a larger group of students in fall 2020 in selected first year and capstone courses. Faculty will analyze the results to determine appropriate instructional strategies in the current academic year.

Faculty at UTTC are diverse and highly qualified

UTTC has worked diligently to ensure highly qualified faculty are employed. There are 37 full time and 7 adjunct faculty members teaching courses at UTTC as of fall semester 2020. Three of the adjunct faculty serve in other non-faculty fulltime positions at the college. Adjunct faculty not only provide needed class coverage in a cost-effective way, but also provide complementary perspectives, viewpoints, and lived experience from the field.

Faculty turnover is typically low at UTTC. The mean tenure for fulltime faculty at UTTC is about 7 years. The mean age for fulltime faculty is 48 and about one-fifth of the faculty are elders (60 years or older) who contribute valuable life experience from which the students can benefit. The faculty to student ratio is 9:1, which means students have opportunity for individualized attention.

UTTC supports faculty development and continuing education. Professional development opportunities are regularly offered both on campus and off campus. Several faculty have completed advanced degrees. Over half of the faculty at UTTC hold a graduate degree with nine holding a doctorate degree. Four faculty members are currently working on earning doctoral degrees. Faculty with certifications teach specialized courses and those with associate degrees teach in the Career and Technical Education fields. They have specialized credentials and the tested work experience required to help prepare their students for employment upon graduation.
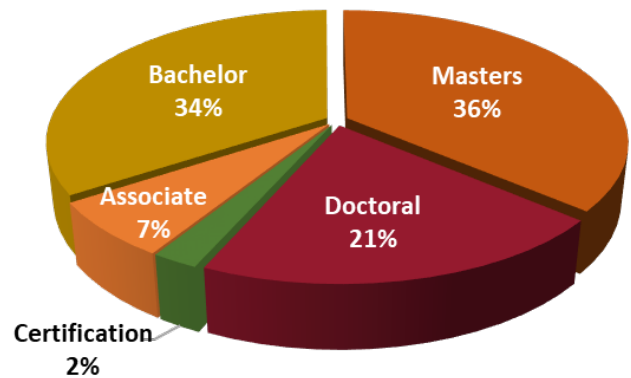
## STRATEGIC AREA #2: STUDENT SUCCESS AND COMPLETION

UTTC engages with national partners to improve student support

UTTC is working with the Achieving the Dream Holistic Student Support (HSS), American Indian College Fund Cultivating Native Student Success (CNSS), and the National Student Clearinghouse Postsecondary Data Partnership (PDP) toward improving student success. The HSS project is focused on refining the first-year experience for all students new to UTTC, expanding the college's reach and outcomes through the use of financial aid dollars, and providing effective professional development and helpful tools to consistently and accurately deliver advising processes that contribute to student success. The CNSS project builds on the HSS project and focuses on improving recruitment strategies to increase enrollment, streamlining the enrollment, orientation, and registration processes to increase enrollment rates, and improving academic advising to increase student persistence and retention rates. The CNSS project integrates institutional research work designed to help the project identify at risk populations and to track enrollment and retention rates for those populations toward

institutional benchmarks. The PDP provides interactive dashboards and filtering tools that help the college to measure outcomes for students that can be disaggregated by a variety of characteristic. It also helps the college to benchmark against other like institutions if desired. UTTC is just beginning to utilize the PDP.

UTTC sets new institutional goals for student success and completion

Fall to Spring Persistence
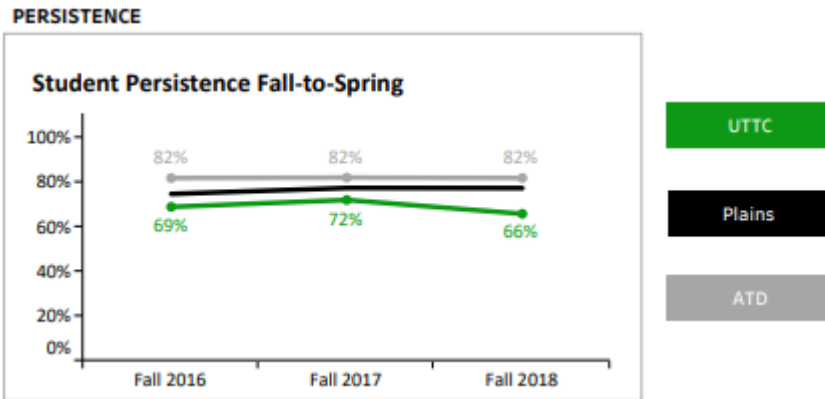
Student persistence at UTTC is measured based on how many students persist from the fall to spring semester in a given academic year. Persistence for first time, full time students ranged from 45% to 68%. Another source of persistence data is the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) summary report provided through the HSS project (shown left). According to that data, fall to spring persistence rates for all students who started at UTTC in the fall semester ranged from 66% to as high as 72%. This is slightly below the rates for other colleges in the plains region of the country and the ATD colleges overall. Student persistence from fall to spring is generally higher for males than females, for students over 25 years of age, and for non-first-time college students. There are other sources for persistence data, including AIMS data through the American Indian Higher Education Consortium as well as internal sources that were reviewed. The college determined an overall institutional goal for fall to spring persistence based on first time ever in college students. ***The institutional goal for fall to spring persistence of first time, full time students is 70%.***

Fall to Fall Retention

Student retention at UTTC is measured based on how many students remain enrolled or graduate from fall to fall in consecutive years. Retention for first time, full time students has ranged from 19% to 49% in recent years, Retention for all students new to UTTC ranged from 42% to 45% according to the NSC summary report provided through the HSS project (shown right). Retention rates for students at UTTC are below rates for other colleges in the plains region of the country and the ATD colleges overall. Similar to the persistence by subgroups, females, older students, and non-first-time college students tended to have stronger persistence rates. ***The institutional goal for fall to fall retention of first time, full time students is 55%.***
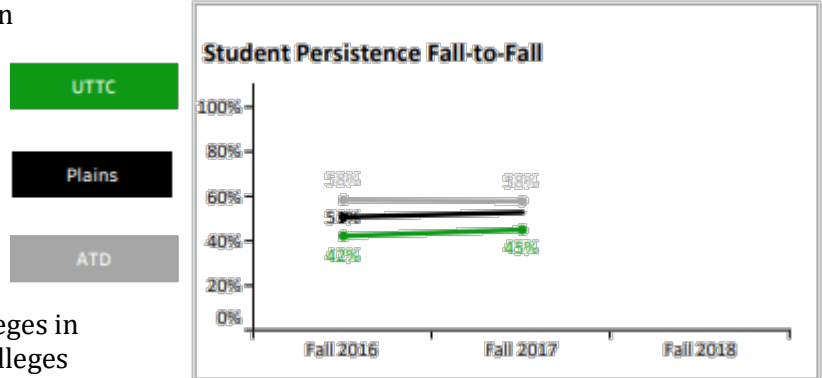
Completion within 150% Time from Enrolled

Student completion at UTTC is measured based on the percentage of student who complete a program of study within three years of starting at UTTC. The calculation includes students pursuing certificate, diploma, and associate degree programs of study. Students entering UTTC in a particular semester and completing within three years determine the cohort. The three-year time period represents 150% time of the expected time to complete an associate level degree. The NSC summary report suggests that 27% of students completed within three years of enrollment. Females had higher completion rates at 32% than males at 19%, as did non-Native students, students aged 25 and older, and non-first-time college students. First time ever in college students had 150% graduation rates ranging from 13% to 17% over the last four years. The national average completion rate for first time full time Native American students is 27% according to IPEDs. ***The institutional goal for 150% completion of first time at UTTC students (including transfer students) is 30%.***

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UTTC assess student learning in the Co-Curriculum

The second of four co-curriculum goals is *Student Leaders are prepared to learn, regularly attend class, complete assignments on time, and demonstrate other positive work habits that contribute to achieving career pathway goals.*

Data collected from the retention system is used to measure student learning of this co-curricular goal. The alerts are indicators of the kinds of challenges students have with work habits. The first time we looked at the alerts, we found that the data collected needed to be more definitive. As a result, we refined the alert types to be aligned with the types of work habits that are reflected in the first co-curriculum goal. This helped us better analyze the data. The retention system data that was analyzed indicated that most of the alerts were due to quality and timeliness of assignments and attendance. This is consistent with data collected over the last several semesters. Approximately 51% of the alerts are related to academic assignments and 38% related to attendance.

Early Alert Types Submitted

	Assignments	Attendance	Counselor	Other
2018 Fall	595	358	18	13
2019 Fall	559	505	20	11
2020 Spring	447	342	290	12
Total:	1601	1205	328	36
Percentage:	**51%**	**38%**	**10%**	**1%**

Now that we have determined our students' current performance, we are in a position to set goals for improvement and benchmarks to work toward as well as strategies to meet those benchmarks.

STRATEGIC AREA #3: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES

UTTC updates its Retention Risk Model

UTTC students have many risk factors that impact retention. The retention system at UTTC is designed to help the college identify students who are at risk in advance in order to help them. The college's retention model, which was developed about 4 years ago, was called into question when retention managers noticed that there was no longer a clear distinction of risk levels among incoming students. The model had been impacted by the strategies and systems the college had put into place in order to address the identified risk factors. It no longer reflected current risk factors for the college's incoming students. It was time to update the modeling for student risk. UTTC worked with Jenzabar to determine current risk factors and develop a new student retention model. A regression analysis uncovered three main indicators. Students who are from outside of North Dakota are at higher risk for attrition
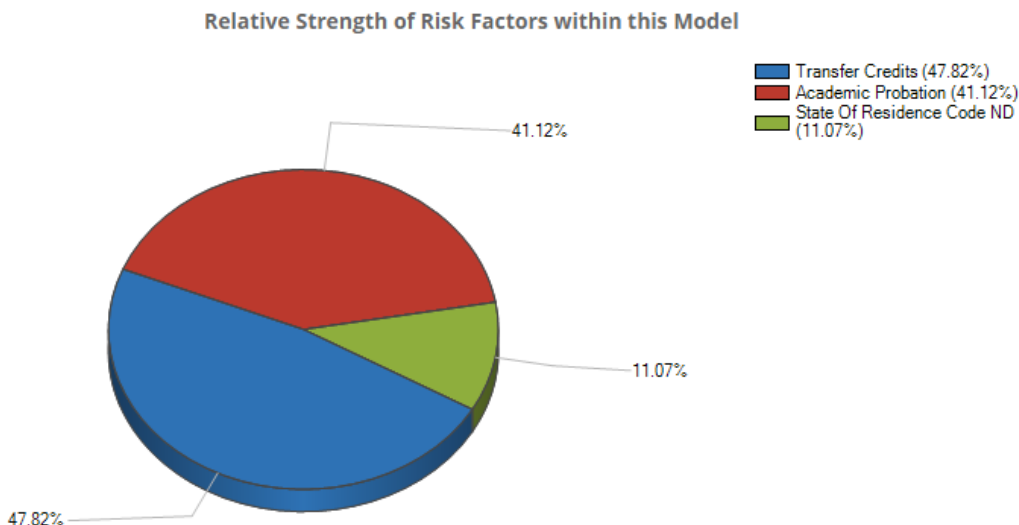
than students from the state. Students who enter the college on academic probation are at significantly higher risk for attrition than those that enter or transfer in with good standing. Finally, students who enter with transfer credits already attained are more likely to succeed than those who do not. This automatically puts first time students at higher risk than transfer students who enter in good standing with credits. In fact, the more credits they transfer, the more likely they are to be retained.

UTTC improves employee benefits and wages

UTTC had identified high employee turnover in positions that are lower than director level, including supervisors. The positions that are toughest to fill and retain are in security, daycares, general laborers, and housing. Some of the primary reasons identified by Human Resources Department that people left those positions included lack of training, higher wages offered by other employers, and the nine-month contract period. Training is an inevitable cost in turnover that can be difficult to maintain because of constraints in time and expertise. Those citing the nine-month contract limitation indicate they need to work 12 months. General laborers, specifically, can earn higher wages doing seasonal contract work that do not require drug testing. Tied to wages was the cost of family health care insurance at UTTC, which was prohibitive for many, especially for lower paid positions. Of the approximately 200 employees at UTTC, only about 57% (116) had elected to purchase health insurance from the UTTC plan. Most of these (113) had elected the single coverage package, which was affordable for most at $132 per month. Just two had employee-child plans and 1 had the employee-spouse plan. No employee had elected to purchase the family plan, which was approximately $2000 per month. Health care costs were prohibitive for most employees and were cited as reasons for not accepting positions of varying levels offered by UTTC.

UTTC became aware that we were eligible in the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) federal health plan during the summer of 2019. The Benefits Coordinator researched the FEHB plan and determined FEHB would result in a cost savings to the College and the employees in comparison to the existing self-insured health plan. The FEHB would make possible wider participation for single, married, and those with children at no cost except for the deductible or at a significantly lower cost for those who had children. The FEHB was launched on July 1, 2020 and we are anticipating this will result in enhanced workforce recruitment and retention. The cost savings for this initiative allowed UTTC to increase the minimum wage for entry level shift positions to $14 per hour, which, when combined with affordable or no cost health insurance, will enhance retention for this high turnover group and the entire workforce. Lastly, a request for proposals (RFP) was advertised for the retirement plan. The provider at the time was not being responsive to the needs of employees, and as we looked into the plan, they were charging us at higher rates than their competitors. Thus, UTTC used the procurement process to advertise and award the retirement plan to another contractor who will provide better overall service.

STRATEGIC AREA #4: INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH, CULTURE AND EFFECTIVENESS

UTTC responds strategically to the pandemic with Coronavirus Response Team

Increasing concern regarding the novel coronavirus pandemic prompted the college president to convene a strategic Coronavirus Response Team comprised of representatives from across the campus. The team's charge is to make data informed decisions regarding how to best keep students and employees safe while limiting disruption to the learning process. The team relies heavily on its Wellness Center and Safety & Security departments to make informed decisions. The team considers data provided by the Wellness Director regarding state, community, and college virus positivity rates as well as safety protocol information from the Safety & Security Director when making decisions. They have worked together to ensure the college has appropriate personal protection tools in adequate supply. Academic personnel provide input regarding students' and faculty needs. IT responds as needed to ensure the technology is available to support remote teaching and learning. The Chief Financial Officer ensures that funding through CAREs act and other resources are responsibly allocated to support students.

Program Review process guides institutional action

In the past year, a new Program Review process was implemented. The current program review process at UTTC is a comprehensive program self-study that includes member perspectives, objective quantitative data, and a method for documenting and following up with decisions made. The process leverages and complements other processes at the college. Faculty complete the program review document using data derived from regular assessment of student learning documentation, the college website, advisory boards, external reviews as applicable, the Curriculum Committee, course evaluations, and departmental action plans. The Office of Institutional Research provides student enrollment, retention, and completion data for the program review and conducts a student focus group to collect student perspectives on the program. Each section in the review includes an opportunity for the program faculty to provide analysis and interpretation of the data provided.

Findings from program reviews have resulted in changes to the programs. An external consultant (Culinary professor at a university) evaluated the Culinary Arts and Nutrition degree plan and made recommendations for curriculum changes to increase retention and completion and recommended one additional instructor to teach two classes. This evaluation information was included in the data submitted as part of the program review. These recommendations were implemented and other institutional supports designed to improve student retention provided as a result of the review. The Environmental Science review identified challenges with the degree plan and student completion. The degree plan was revised, a course sequence was adopted, and the bachelor's degree total credits were reduced to 121. A first year advisor was assigned to all three of the programs participating in the review as an additional layer of support for student success.

Institutional Review Board protects human research subjects

The UTTC Institutional Review Board (IRB) continues to be fully functional and registered through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The IRB is responsible for ensuring the protection of human subjects in any research that is conducted on the campus or with its students or employees. The IRB Committee currently consists of 12 members, one of whom is an external member who is not affiliated with UTTC.

The IRB Organization number for UTTC's IRB is IORG0004269. This can be validated through the US Department of Health and Human Services website. In addition, the UTTC IRB has Federalwide Assurance (FWA) for the protection of human subjects. This applies "whenever the institution becomes engaged in human subjects research conducted or supported by any US federal department or agency that has adopted the Common Rule for protection of human subjects."[2] UTTC FWA is FWA00027336. Information regarding how to submit a research protocol and the forms needed are available on the college's website.

In the past year, the UTTC IRB has approved four new human subjects research protocols in 2020 and several continuing protocols. The IRB has also determined processes for non-research surveys asked of students as well as a statement that distinguishes research from evaluation study along with recommendations regarding publication of evaluation results.

STRATEGIC AREA #5: INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT, RENOVATION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

Renovations make campus more student and environment friendly

Several renovation project have been completed or are well underway toward completion.

The Education Building, a structure that comprises over 46,000 square feet, is ahead of schedule for renovation. Geothermal heating is being installed, which will make this building one of the most energy efficient buildings on the campus. Upon completion, the building will house the administrative offices for the VP of Academics, Institutional Research, faculty offices, classrooms, and the college archive, and the college library.

A new covered picnic area is being installed next to Itan'can Hall, the co-ed dormitory. The space will feature a cement base, a community grill, picnic tables, and protection from the summer sun. The picnic area is conveniently located next to the sand volleyball courts and the cafeteria. In addition, Tai chi workout stations have been installed along the walking path that circles the college campus.

A Student Union is under construction. An old gymnasium and seating area located above the college gymnasium is being converted to be a place with college students can gather, relax, study, and interact. The space includes the Cozy Creek Café, which will serve a variety of hot, and cold food options.

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[2] https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/register-irbs-and-obtain-fwas/fwas/fwa-protection-of-human-subjecct/index.html#sectiona

The college is installing internet fiber to each of the student residences. This includes all of the dormitories as well as the single-family housing. Funding was provided through the CARE's Act. The goal is to make sure that all students have the technology tools necessary to attend classes remotely, online, or through any hyflex options that may be necessary as we work through the pandemic.

A large solar array was installed at the Skills Center. This makes the Skills Center more energy efficient. In addition, the parking lot at the Skills Center was rerouted to provide additional parking and redirect traffic away from the heavy equipment program area. A new sidewalk was installed to accommodate foot traffic from the new parking lot to the front door of the Skills Center rather than side doors. This renovation enhances curb appeal of the building but also provides additional safety features that reflect Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

STRATEGIC AREA #6: EXPANDED FUNDING FOR SELF-SUSTAINABILITY

College Relations continues fundraising efforts to grow Endowment

Fundraising activities include attracting donations and sponsorships as well as building the endowment fund for scholarships. Events Week, which includes the Tribal Leader's Summit and International Pow Wow, was canceled this year along with other events that coincide with that week, including a softball tournament, fun run, and golf tournament. In spite of the cancellation, some contributors for these events have committed for the 2021 Events Week. The proceeds from the week are used for student scholarships. Other strategies are being developed to grow the endowment fund for scholarships. The four primary funding campaigns include: a) Events Week Fundraising, b) Athletic Fundraising, c) Annual support for scholarships, and d) Capital Funding for building renovations.

UTTC Land Grant Office contributes to health, food security, and food sovereignty

The UTTC Land Grant Office has expanded the college's capacity to grow food. Several acres of garden spaces and greenhouses provide fresh produce for the campus community cultivated and grown by staff and students. Each week when the produce is ready for harvest, Land Grant students and staff offer free, campus grown produce. Campus and community members can pick up pre-packed bags of freshly harvested produce. Produce includes greens, vegetables, fruits, and herbs. This summer and fall, the produce was distributed using face masks and social distancing protocols.

The Land Grant program offers cooking and nutrition workshops. Participating students and staff can learn how to make salsa, can vegetables, or make healthy meals. Summer camps are provided for youth and ServSafe certification is available for adults.

The Culinary Arts and Nutrition program of study is offered as part of the Land Grant program for those interested in a culinary career. The Culinary Arts and Nutrition program along with the instructor and students were featured in the North Dakota Living Magazine in February 2020. The article was titled *Recipe Roundup: More than Something to Eat.* Students shared their aspirations in the article, found at https://www.ndliving.com/content/recipe-roundup-more-something-eat.