

Ursidae: The Undergraduate Research Journal at the University of Northern Colorado

Volume 3
Number 2 *McNair Special Issue*

Article 5

January 2013

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Recommended Citation

Nirschl-Coats, Valerie (2013) "Native American Retention: Factors, Programs and Practices Contributing to the Completion of a Four-Year Degree by Native American Students in Higher Education," *Ursidae: The Undergraduate Research Journal at the University of Northern Colorado*: Vol. 3 : No. 2 , Article 5.

Available at: <http://digscholarship.unco.edu/urj/vol3/iss2/5>

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Native American Retention: Factors, Programs and Practices Contributing to the Completion of a Four-Year Degree by Native American Students in Higher Education

Valerie Nirschl-Coats

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Abstract: This study examines the factors that contribute to the completion of a four-year degree among Native American students at a mid-size university in the Southwestern United States. In the United States Native American retention in higher education is at a low. Programs and practices have been implemented among universities to improve retention rates, but nonetheless retention rates are still minimal. Research in the field indicates that the factors contributing to Native American retention include familial support, support from faculty and staff, institutional commitment, and connections to homeland and culture. However, the research does not seem to show factors in relation to specific institutions. This study will be a program review of in which the researcher will look at the Native American programs of the University of Northern Colorado, the University of Colorado at Boulder, the University of Colorado at Denver, Fort Lewis College, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, and Yale University.

Keywords: *higher education, Native American, retention*

Retention in higher education is an area of discussion that results in either a positive or negative connotation among individuals. When discussing the dropout rate among students in higher education in the United States the words retention, attrition, and perseverance will often be used. Retention refers to the act of a student returning to university after their freshman year, attrition refers to the student population among a university decreasing, and perseverance refers to a student moving toward a degree despite the obstacles ahead of them. Among all ethnicities large gaps exist between the number of students entering college and the number of students graduating college (Larimore and McClellan, 2005). Among these ethnicities minority groups seem to have a significantly larger gap than those of the majority (Larimore and McClellan, 2005). Among minorities Native American students seem to be at the forefront of low retention rates in higher education (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993). Research specifically related to Native American retention rates in higher education are very low, and exact percentages are difficult to come by. In the research that has been conducted it has been found that there is a 75% to 93% attrition rate among Native American's in college (Brown and Robinson Kurpius, 1997).

The problem with Native American retention in higher education begins at the high school level. One third of Native American's never graduate high school, making this the largest minority population to not finish their secondary education (Reyhner, 1992), and of these students only 40 percent will enroll in college (Tierney, 1992). Native American's are the least likely to enroll in four-year universities, and likewise the least likely to continue to graduation (McEvans, and Astin as cited by Pavel, 1992). Of those who do enroll in university and continue on to graduation only 0.7 will attain bachelor's, associate's, or higher degrees (Guillory and Wolverton, 2006). This extreme high school dropout rate directly coincides with the number of Native American students who attend college each year because if the number of Native American students who graduate high school is low, then the number of Native American students who enroll in college each year will therefore be lower. It is not relevant to say that the reason Native American retention is lower than other minority groups is due to the fact that the majority do not attend college, but it is valid to point out that there are other factors that may lead to lack of perseverance among Native American students.

THEORIES PERTAINING TO NATIVE AMERICAN RETENTION

Many scholars have researched different aspects that relate to retention among all individuals in higher education and the majority have regarded certain theoretical frameworks as a focal point in their research (Larimore and McClellan, 2005). These theories include Tinto's theory of student departure (1975, 1986), Pace's theory (1982), and the resiliency theory (Clark, 2002). Tinto's theory focuses on the idea that students enter college with certain goals in mind. As these students progress in their education they adjust their goals based on social interactions, academia, and their interactions with faculty and staff. Positive interactions and experiences create higher student retention, and vice versa. The two other theories mentioned above support Tinto's theory in that they both speak to the idea that students' backgrounds, and interactions and experiences in college can either play a positive, or negative role in continuing on in their higher education (Gillory and Wolverton, 2006). Researcher's such as Pavel and Astin consider these theories as inadequate in relation to Native American students and higher retention rates because these theories do not take into account the different "cultural clashes" that exist specifically for Native American students (Gillory and Wolverton, 2006; Larimore and McClellan, 2005).

The majority of researchers have also concluded that support from family, support from faculty and staff, institutional commitment, and connections to homeland and culture play the largest roles in Native American higher education retention (Larimore and McClellan, 2005; Reyhner and Dodd, 1995; Jackson and Smith, 2001; Guillory and Wolverton, 2006). It has also been stated that financial aid, prejudice, and social factors play a role in Native American student retention (Gillory and Wolverton, 2006).

Support from Family

In a study conducted by Reyhner and Dodd (1995) Native American students were asked what played the largest role in success in higher

education. Their response? Family. Family support among Native American students in higher education can be broken up into two levels; the microlevel and the macrolevel (Guillory and Wolverton, 2006). At the microlevel familial issues such as child care, transportation, substance abuse, family issues, family violence, and history of family depression play large roles (Guillory and Wolverton, 2006). At the macrolevel issues such as lack of knowledge about career planning and how to deal with social discrimination come into play (Gillory and Wolverton, 2006). In some instances families of Native American students resist education due to the fact that often Native American students who were successful in their college education would permanently leave the reservation (Davis, 1992; as cited by Reyhner and Dodd, 1995). It has also been noted that Native American students have said that they are not from "stable, well educated, financially comfortable" homes. (Davis, 1992; as cited by Reyhner and Dodd, 2005). In many cases Native American students believed that familial support helped them cope with college life, especially in a life where they felt like an outsider (Montgomery, Miville, Winterowd, Jefferies, & Brayden, 2000). This support came in many forms from physical conversations, to memories, to wisdom passed down (Montgomery, Miville, Winterowd, Jefferies, & Brayden, 2000).

Support from Faculty and Staff

Hornett gave the idea that faculty and staff "are the persons who can most directly affect the motivation and desire of Indian students to remain in school" (as cited by Larimore and McClellan, 2005). Support from faculty and staff plays a crucial role in the retention of Native American students in higher education (Larimore and McClellan, 2005). Faculty and Staff need to be aware that many Native American students have the need to stay connected to their tribal identity, and not to assimilate to the culture of the university in which they attend (Guillory and Wolverton, 2006). Guillory and Wolverton (2006) point out that if staff and faculty pay more attention to this particular need of these students then the retention rate could significantly

decrease. Non- Native American faculty and staff need to make a conscious effort to really look at Native American history, and make it a point to familiarize themselves with this history and how this history may affect their Native American students (Gillory and Wolverton, 2006; Larimore and McClellan, 2005). Reyhner and Dodd (1995) pointed out that when it comes to Native American retention Native American students themselves said that what made the difference in their college education was caring and supportive faculty and staff. It is a general consensus among researchers in this field that faculty play a large role in student retention, and an even more general consensus among Native American students that faculty and staff make all the difference (Larimore and McClellan, 2005; Guillory and Wolverton, 2006; Reyhner and Dodd, 1995). Studies show that Native American and Non- Native American students alike believe that teachers are generally uncaring (Reyhner and Dodd, 1995). That is a saddening thought in of itself, but put with the thought that “teachers want to put us aside, us Indians...they just wanted to get rid of the Indians” (as cited by Reyhner and Dodd, 1995) shows that the importance of faculty and staff, and the role they play in Native American student’s lives cannot be ignored.

Institutional Commitment

Institutions should implement programs that help Native American students deal with instances of campus hostility and that help these students better transition from high school to higher education (Guillory and Wolverton, 2006). Universities need to take into account the social, academic, cultural and psychological needs of Native American students (Guillory and Wolverton, 2006). Guillory and Wolverton (2006) point out that if universities took all of these factors into consideration, and implemented programs to help Native American students than persistence among this demographic would significantly improve. As part of institutional commitment Guillory and Wolverton (2006) suggest that more universities higher Native American faculty and staff. Doing so will show Native American students that the university has

taken them into consideration, as well as give Native American students the opportunity to have individuals around with whom they can better relate. Many studies have noted that there is a connection between the lack of institutional support and the decreasing retention rates among Native American students in higher education (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Falk and Aitken, 1994; Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1998; as cited by Larimore and McClellan, 2005). Shutiva (2001) suggests that culturally sensitive academic and career guidance programs are needed for Native American students in higher education (as cited by Larimore and McClellan, 2006). Other researchers such as Brown and Robinson Kurpius (1997) suggest that institutions need to enact more intrusive advising programs for Native American students attending four-year universities (as cited by Larimore and McClellan, 2006). It is clear that institutions need to take steps toward making more of a commitment in regards to Native American students.

Connections to Homeland and Culture

Often times when a first year college student is going to attend a university it is labeled as a “traditional university.” Traditionally “traditional universities” are four-year, public institutions. “Traditional” does not mean the same thing for a Native American student as it would for a non-Native American student (Montgomery, Miville, Winterowd, Jefferies, & Baysden, 2000). “Traditional” in the Native American sense means a focus on emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual connections (Bray, 1997; as cited by Montgomery, Miville, Winterowd, Jefferies, & Brayden, 2000). This idea of “traditional” clashes with four-year public universities ideas of traditional which general consider only consider academic and social aspects, which are seen as separate entities (Bray, 1997; as cited by Montgomery, Miville, Winterowd, Jefferies, & Brayden, 2000). Connection to Homeland and Culture can begin with social interactions, and feelings of hostility from non- Native American students. Native Americans students often feel isolated based on perceptions from white communities on college campuses (Benjamin,

Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993). Often these feelings come about from verbal attacks made by non- Native American students in the form of racial slurs and name-calling (Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988). These forms of bullying often contribute to Native American students exiting college and returning to more familiar settings among their family, tribe, friend, and homeland (Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988). More times than none universities insistence on conforming to the environment plays a large factor in low Native American student retention among higher education (Reyhner and Dodd, 1995). In addition to interactions among non- Native American individuals the perceptions that educational institutes give non- Native American individuals of Native American's plays a significant role in Native American perseverance. As Reyhner and Dodd (1995) point out often time textbooks portray Native American cultures as primitive cultures who have little to contribute to contemporary society, and history often points out the idea that Native American people should be seen as a savage people who should be civilized.

These issues along with the belief that all Native American peoples receive government assistance, own casinos, are alcoholics, and take from the government, but never contribute their own ideas lead to Native American individuals not wanting to live in an environment outside of the reservation (Reyhner and Dodd, 1995). It is important to note that many Native American students are very connected with their people, their culture, and their past as a tribe. The more individuals know about Native American people's and the importance of their culture to their lives the easier it will become for Native American's to feel as though they belong. There is a strong connection between Native American students in higher education and their culture, and they need to be able to partake and feel comfortable in these certain areas of their lives. Successful Native American students "were able to retain their Indian culture, and be a successful student in the white middle class system" (Davis, 1992; as cited by Reyhner and Dodd, 1995). In order to create

cultural relevance it is important that these two cultures coincide.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature does a great job of explaining the different areas that relate to Native American retention. It explains retention well, and relates it back to Native American students particularly well. It points out the fact that there has not been much research conducted in regards to Native American retention, and points out the need for more. It lacks in the sense that it speaks on behalf of Native American students, but does not seem to be the actual opinions of Native American students. The opinions are a little too academia presented, and not presented enough in a personal way.

In regards to further research it would be beneficial to focus more on the opinions of Native American students themselves, as well as to ask opinions of those students who did not complete their education. Too often the research was focused on what successful students had to say, and not enough on the targeted student population which would be Native American students who did not continue on with their education.

PURPOSE

This study came about one day in a discussion with the head of the University of Northern Colorado's Native American Student Services program. In this discussion it occurred to me that there is excitement for Native American Student Services on the University of Northern Colorado's campus, but a lack of excitement on the end of the Native American students themselves. I am one of those Native American students who has shown little excitement for the Native American Student Services program on campus. My father's side of my family is Choctaw. Growing up we never discussed our heritage, it was either something that my grandfather saw as "secretive," or it is a heritage that my family has not learned to be proud of. It wasn't until I came to college that I realized that being Choctaw was something that I am proud of. As my discussion with the head of Native American Student Services proceeded I

realized that there is a great need to study the question of why aren't Native American students drawn to the University of Northern Colorado? Have students not heard of it? Are there not enough resources available at this particular campus? What is the reasoning behind the lack of Native American student involvement? This leads straight to the purpose of this study.

The purpose of this study is to identify the characteristics that relate to retention among Native American students in higher education, and in particular to the Native American students of the University of Northern Colorado. Along with retention this study will also focus on the different accommodations and practices that occur in other universities around the United States that are enacted to help Native American students continue on in their postsecondary education.

Retention is a problem that occurs among every university, and among every race. More times than none certain situations occur and college students have a difficult time moving past these situations. These situations include; problems with financial aid, problems with textbooks, and problems getting work started (Larimore, and McClellan, 2005). As Larimore and McClellan point out it is problems in more areas than one that encourage low student retention, as well as issues with students feeling like they do not have a place that they belong. Practitioners in higher education and colleges would be smart to pay attention to the changing experiences of students in higher education (Larimore, and McClellan, 2005).

Being that retention is at the forefront of education research, but that retention of Native American students seems to be on the back burner it is important to focus more on this particular minority group. At the University of Northern Colorado the number of Native American students enrolling each year is at a decrease, with an average of 60 Native American students amongst all four years (Freshman-Senior). With this low number of attendance the fact that the retention rate of Native American students is at about 20 percent is a frightening statistic. This means that

on average the University of Northern Colorado has 48 Native American students enrolled. The questions then become why are there so little Native American students enrolled at the University of Northern Colorado? And what can be done to help these students, and to increase the program efficiency?

METHODOLOGY

The methodology that was seen as the best form of research for this study is a mixed methods approach. This study will involve content analysis and a program review of Native American student programs among eight institutions within the United States. For the content analysis portion of this study the websites of the Native American programs at the University of Northern Colorado, the University of Colorado at Boulder, the University of Colorado at Denver, Colorado State University, Fort Lewis College, Harvard University, Dartmouth College, and Yale University will be analyzed based on the different features of each individual universities website. These features include the layout of the website, the functionality, the accessibility, and the visual design.

For the program portion of this research informal interviews along with reviews into each individual universities program websites will be conducted. These universities include the University of Northern Colorado, the University of Colorado at Boulder, the University of Colorado at Denver, Colorado State University, Fort Lewis College, Harvard University, Dartmouth College, and Yale University. These different universities will be reviewed based on what they can offer Native American students in regards to what the literature has regarded as factors that contribute to Native American retention in higher education. This means that the researcher will be looking into what each university offers Native American students in regards to familial support, support from faculty and staff, institutional commitment, and connections to homeland and culture. Once all of the reviews have been conducted they will be analyzed for similar themes amongst the programs

that seem to contribute to Native American retention at that university.

In order to show consistency among the analysis of the different programs each program will be looked at in terms of number of Native American students in attendance each year, number of Native American students retained each year, the location of the Native American center in which the program is housed, the efforts of the university in regards to reaching out to Native American students within their secondary education, and whether or not there is special financial aid allotted to Native American students. Each program will also be analyzed based on whether or not there is an undergraduate Native American studies program, if there are Native American faculty and staff, whether or not there are services provided to Native American students in order to help them become accustomed to the new college environment, and the number of Native American students from an Indian Reservation.

When the content analysis, review of programs, and review of surveys have all been completed the three areas will be compared to one another based on the different themes the three share. These themes will be looked at in order to see the commonalities amongst the three content areas. Once commonalities have been found these commonalities will be analyzed to see which of these areas can be attributed to Native American retention in higher education.

Programs and Practices

Fort Lewis College. Fort Lewis College is a mid-size university in the Southern portion of Colorado that is known for its large Native American population. Located about forty minutes from Fort Lewis College is the Ute Indian Reservation. This seems to play a large role into the large Native American population at Fort Lewis, but what seems to pay an even larger role into the large Native American population is the Native American tuition waiver. When Fort Lewis College was originally established it was deeded the land by the Federal Government with the promise that “Indian pupils shall at all times be

admitted to such school free of charge for tuition and on terms of equality with white pupils.” To this day Fort Lewis College upholds this promise to Native American students who have proper documentation. Fort Lewis thrives off of making sure that their Native American students are taken care of. This is done through academic, social, cultural, and spiritual support within the Native American Center. Along with these four support services Fort Lewis also helps their Native American students with textbook loans, calculator loans, in-house laptop loan, faculty office hours, academic advising, and also hosts classes that lends assistance to students who are preparing for graduate or professional schools. Fort Lewis College also makes sure to inform the community of Native American culture through Native performances and informational sessions and activities.

Along with a Native American Center for students Fort Lewis also offers a program in which students can major in Native American and Indigenous Studies. This program focuses on students understanding of Indigenous philosophies “which ground the field and knowledge of tribal governance and sovereignty, cultural revitalization and continuance, economic development, creative and expressive arts and in the employment of appropriate and relevant research benefiting Native and Indigenous communities. Additionally, the major connects the historic and contemporary experiences of Indigenous peoples both within and beyond the United States through a critical examination of colonialism and the manner in which Indigenous people the world over have countered, resisted, and struggled for justice.” Due to this program along with the support Fort Lewis gives to their Native American students this institution has a Native American population of 800 students from 120 different tribes, making it one of the largest Native American populations among the United States.

University of Colorado at Boulder (CU). The University of Colorado at Boulder is located against the beautiful landscape of the Flatiron Mountains. This university is known for its

renowned Engineering and Sciences programs. The University of Colorado at Boulder offers its Native American students the ability to join the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES). This program was developed to increase the number of American Indian and Alaskan Natives in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). The American Indian Science and Engineering Society is a national society with chapters among different universities within the United States. AISES offers scholarships, internships and assistance to Native American students who are enrolled in these degree programs. Along with AISES the University of Colorado at Boulder also offers their Native American students with the opportunity to be involved in the American Indian Law Clinic. Unfortunately the website for this particular program was under construction and information was not available.

The University of Colorado at Denver. The University of Colorado at Denver is located in Denver, Colorado. This capital city is bustling, filled with diversity, and entertainment. The University of Colorado at Denver is known for its Physician and Law programs, along with its top notch education. DU offers its Native American students with the opportunity to get involved with American Indian Services which provides support for Native American students attending the University of Colorado at Denver. Along with DU's American Indian Services program they also offer resources within the Center for American Indian and Alaskan Native Health (CAIANH). The Center for American Indian and Alaskan Native Health promotes the health and well being of American Indian and Alaskan Natives of all ages by pursuing research, training, continuing education, technical assistance, and information dissemination that recognizes the unique cultural contexts of this particular population.

Colorado State University (CSU). Colorado State University is located in Fort Collins Colorado and is known for their Agricultural Sciences and Engineering programs. Like the University of Colorado at Boulder, CSU has a

chapter in the American Indian Science and Engineering Society. Colorado State University also has the Native American Cultural Center (NACC) which aims to help Colorado State Universities Native American population through four main service areas. These service areas include recruitment, retention, graduation, and community outreach. The Native American Cultural Center at CSU also assists Native American students in personal, social and academic growth. This is done by empowering individuals with the skills and strategies that will ensure a successful transition from traditional home culture to the life at a four-year university.

University of Northern Colorado (UNC). The University of Northern Colorado is located in Greeley Colorado, or about forty minutes southeast of Fort Collins. This university is known for its Education, Theatre, Music, and Nursing programs. At the University of Northern Colorado Native American students are encouraged to join Native American Student Services (NASS). NASS provides assistance for Native American students through the building of new friendships, a place to study and to talk with other Native American students on campus. The Native American Student Services Center at UNC also offers a program known as First Nations. First Nations is a group of Native American students who are there to inform the community about Native American culture and to provide UNC students with access to information they may not have known before. Another program that the University of Northern Colorado provides is the Native American Innovative Leadership Program (NAIL). NAIL is a program that aims to prepare Native American educators to successfully lead high-achieving culturally responsive schools serving Native American youths and communities. The Native American Innovative Leadership program is a two year program in Interdisciplinary Masters of Arts in degree program in Educational Leadership and Special Education with dual licensure as a principal and special education director. All of these courses are offered online through UNC.

Harvard University. Harvard University is an Ivy League institution in Boston, Massachusetts, United States. This historic university is known for its academic excellence along with its Law and Doctoral programs. At Harvard University Native American students are welcomed and encouraged to join the Harvard University Native American Program (HUNAP). HUNAP was established by the Charter of 1650 which states that Harvard University pledges to the “education of English and Indian youth.” Along with this pledge the Harvard University Native American Program focuses on interfaculty scholarship and teaching, as well as Native outreach, student recruitment, and support. Due to these areas of focus Harvard University has over one thousand Native American Alumni. HUNAP is not the only area of access for Native American students at Harvard University. HUNAP is located within the Cultural Center and is associated with other clubs and organizations on the campus.

Harvard University also invests in the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development. The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development “aims to understand and foster the conditions under which sustained, self-determined social and economic development is achieved among American Indian nations.” This program constantly undergoes to research to ensure that the benefits of the project are accurate and beneficial to Native peoples.

Currently Harvard University is home to one-hundred and thirty two Native American students. These students come to Harvard from across the United States and are often found through recruitment. Harvard University invests in recruitment of students through sending representatives from Harvard to Indian Reservations throughout the United States. Financial assistance for Native American students is dependent on the college of attendance and does not relate specifically to Native American students who attend Harvard.

Dartmouth College. Dartmouth College was established as an institution for the “education and instruction of Youth of the Indian tribes...and also

of English youth.” Dartmouth is home to the largest Native American population among Ivy League universities within the United States with nearly seven-hundred Native American students having graduated from Dartmouth. These seven-hundred Native American students come from a total of two-hundred different tribes throughout the United States.

Dartmouth College has been devoted to helping Native American students attend this institution by showing dedication through a Native American Studies program, a Native American Program for the wellbeing of Dartmouth’s Native American student population, and through the help of tribal mentors. The Native American Studies Program at Dartmouth College is open to any student in attendance, and focuses on understanding the history, culture, and politics of Native American society. This program has been in place since 1970 and is aimed to help people better understand Native American peoples.

Along with Dartmouth’s Native American Studies Program they also have the Native American Program (NAP) which helps Native American students at Dartmouth College to become better acquainted to college life along with helping them to meet other Native American students on campus. NAP helps students by ensuring that they have what they need at Dartmouth College to become leaders and constant learners within Native American society. Within NAP Dartmouth also has a Native American House in which the Native American Program describes as a living and learning environment. This house serves as living quarters for Native American students at Dartmouth College (students must apply and then get accepted to live within the house) and as a place where Native American students can come to discuss, spend time, and socialize with their peers.

Along with the Native American House Dartmouth also has a main office where students can go to discuss educational, spiritual, and social problems. This office is located within the cultural center at Dartmouth College. Although Dartmouth

College does not offer specific financial assistance for Native American students they do offer assistance with helping Native American students find scholarships and fill out scholarship applications. Along with aiding in finding scholarships Dartmouth also offers Native American tribal mentors. These mentors are members of Native American tribes who have gone to an institution of higher education and offer assistance and support for Native American students at Dartmouth College.

Yale University. Yale University is an Ivey League University located in New Haven, Connecticut. Known for their prestigious Law and Medical programs Yale University is one of the most prestigious universities within the United States. At Yale University Native American students are encouraged to join the Native American Cultural Center (NACC). NACC at Yale University provides Native American students with the opportunity to be able to work alongside other Native American students in order to build lasting friendships and community.

Website Review

Technology has become a prominent and necessary tool in today's society. With the use of computers and cell phones many individuals have become dependent on technology to access information. Many institutions of higher education have utilized technology to help their students and prospective students become more aware of the institution and what the institution has to offer. In regards to this study the websites of Native American programs were analyzed based on the following; accessibility, links to other websites, accessible contact information, visual appeal, and a question and answer section.

As shown in Table 1, the eight institutions of higher education that were to be analyzed for this study were reviewed based on their websites. Some of the institutions were shown to have had all components of a good website; where as other institutions only had some components of a good

website. The website analysis portion of this study is used to help determine if the institutions Native American program's website seems to have any sort of correlation with the program itself and the retention rates of Native American students at that institution. The problem that arose with many of the websites is that there were instances in which the website was either down for maintenance for a long period of time (longer than one month), the links on the website did not match up with the web page, or the contact information was not accurate.

Program Review

Every institution this study focused on had some sort of Native American program in place for its Native American student population. What this study focused on was the program itself, and what factors seemed to play the primary role in Native American retention among institutions in the United States. When analyzing each program there were certain aspects that were to be analyzed, these factors include; Student Population, Native American Student Population, Native American Student Retention, Program Location, Native American Recruitment, whether or not there are Native American Staff and Faculty or a Native American Studies Program and Financial Aid available to Native American Students (Table 2).

These factors were chosen for analysis due to the fact that when reviewing the literature familial support, support of faculty and staff, financial status, and institutional commitment seemed to best coincide with these factors for analysis. When analyzing these programs it was seen that each institution had a different set of programs in place. Some institutions had one central program, whereas others had a central program along with a few smaller programs that coincided within the main program. Due to this the analysis of these programs were shown to be analyzed as a whole, as opposed to having both the main and smaller programs analyzed separately.

Table 1
Review of Select Institutions' Native American Program Websites

	Harvard	Yale	Dartmouth	Fort Lewis	University of Colorado at Denver	University of Colorado at Boulder	University of Northern Colorado	Colorado State University
Easy to Navigate	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES
Workable Links	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES
Contact Information	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES
Visually Appealing	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Q&A Portion	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

FINDINGS

From the research that was conducted and the information that was accessible a program review was developed to show the best practices in place to ensure Native American retention in higher education. From the research that was conducted it seems that the most effective practices that ensure Native American retention are Native American faculty and staff, financial aid availability, and a Native American Studies program. It seems that the institutions of higher education in which these three factors are present have both a larger Native American student population as well as larger programs. Based on the literature these three factors seem to relate directly to institutional commitment, support from faculty and staff, connections to homeland and culture and financial aid. Based on this research it is assumed that Native American students find Native American faculty and staff as beneficial to their college completion due to the fact that they have a closer connection to their homeland and culture. Financial aid assistance seems to be most beneficial when the aid is directly given to Native American students through the university as opposed to being given out to Native American

students through government funding. In regards to Native American recruitment it seems as though Native American students are more likely to attend an institution in which the university reaches out to the Native American reservation and shows the students what there is available to them at that particular institution. If institutions of higher education want to increase their Native American student population it is recommended that they look into making sure there are measures in place to ensure connections to homeland and culture. These measures include; Native American faculty and staff, a Native American studies program, and both supportive and culturally aware faculty and staff. It is also recommended that institutions of higher education develop their websites for their Native American programs, and facilities. With the development of technology young adults are more likely to go on to the internet to research a facility as opposed to calling or setting up a meeting to find out more information in regards to a program. It would be beneficial for Native American programs to develop their websites in order to become more accessible to Native American students who are interested in that particular institution of higher education.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was originally meant to be a study of Native American students at a mid-size university in the Southwestern United States. Due to lack of resources the study shifted to a program and website review of Native American programs among institutions in higher education. It is recommended that to further this study researchers develop a qualitative study in which Native American students are interviewed and asked about their experiences within higher education. It is also recommended that more research be done in regards to Native American retention rates among Native American students in higher education, as well as research into the different programs in place within institutions of higher education. Future researchers could also consider looking into budgets for Native American programs among higher education, as well as looking deeper into the recruitment methods being used among institutions of higher education in regards to Native American students.

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Table 2
Review of Native American Program Characteristics

	Harvard	Yale	Dartmouth	Fort Lewis	University of Colorado at Denver	University of Colorado at Boulder	University of Northern Colorado	Colorado State University
Total Population	*20,000 (Cambridge, Boston) 6,400 (Harvard College)	11,906 (Fall 2012)	6,277 (Fall 2012)	3,856 (Spring 2013)	5,087 (Spring 2013)	30,000 (Spring 2013)	12,497 (Fall 2012)	29,500 (Fall 2012)
Native American Student Population	132 students	N/A	700 students	800 students	N/A	N/A	~100 students	N/A
Recruiting	YES	N/A	N/A	YES	N/A	N/A	NO	YES
Native American Staff	N/A	N/A	YES	YES	N/A	N/A	YES	N/A
Native American Studies Program	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Separate Center or Joint Center	Joint	Joint	Separate and Joint	Separate	Separate and Joint	Joint	Separate	Separate
Financial Aid Options for Native American Students	No specific Native American Financial Aid	No specific Native American Financial Aid	Assists in finding government aid, scholarships	Financial Aid Waiver for Native American students	No specific Native American Financial Aid	No specific Native American Financial Aid	No specific Native American Financial Aid	No specific Native American Financial Aid