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CHARTING A COURSE FOR
STUDENT SUCCESS

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FROM THE PRESIDENT—DR. SHERRY ALLISON

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As I reflect over the past four years and particularly now after the visit of the Higher Learning Commission evaluation team, I find my head and heart filled with thoughts of ‘establishing a new normal’, developing a plan to sustain this new normal, and in the spirit of continuous improvement, not only sustain, but keep moving SIPI and our campus community forward.

Note that I said, ‘as I reflect’. I firmly believe that we, as a community, must be committed to critical reflection. I believe that this is where we should begin our sustainability plan for the ‘new normal’. We must collectively rarely if ever be satisfied with our performance at the course level, department or program level, or institutional level. We must always engage as a campus community in ongoing efforts to improve for the sole purpose of serving our students. We must always strive to ‘do it better’ in ways that support our mission, vision, and goals.

Another critical component of our sustainability plan must be data and our commitment to building a culture of evidence. We have just begun this journey, but we know enough to know that data is the key for SIPI to sustain and move forward its agenda of student success. We must continue to collect and use quality and actionable data to determine whether the College’s policies, programs, and practices are having the desired outcomes. We must commit to using evidence to guide changes that promise to improve student engagement, learning, and persistence.

SIPI’s campus-wide leadership must sustain the College’s commitment to student success unequivocally and take action to promote it. Without this kind of visible commitment, losing sight of student success can be all too easy. Leadership must look for opportunities to explain to others the importance of the student-success agenda on campus and expand the numbers of faculty and staff who understand why the promotion of students’ engagement in effective educational practices is needed to increase student accomplishment. Leadership must make sure stakeholders beyond the campus—including Board of Regents, Tribal Leaders and Communities, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, the American Indian College Fund and other higher education organizations—are aware of the good things happening at SIPI. College leadership must always remind faculty and staff of SIPI’s commitment to help students succeed.

It will take a huge effort to stay focused on maintaining and building effective educational practices that are linked to student success. But, by committing to this effort, we can work to embed the changes we have made and will continue to make across the College. Our work will be well worth the continued effort as we renew our commitment to the students and Tribes we serve.

Newsletter staff:
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SIPI IS MOVING FORWARD!

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

From December 2012 through March 2013, faculty developed assessment plans that included an alignment of the program mission to the department and institutional missions, long term goals for students, program-level student learning outcomes, direct and indirect measures of student learning, and targets for student performance. The faculty collected assessment data throughout the spring and summer trimesters. During August and September, program faculty analyzed the assessment results, summarized those results, and drew conclusions about student learning. They determined whether student performances met expectations for student learning. Where expectations were not met, faculty developed one or more action plans that specifically target those areas identified for improvement. Where expectations were met, faculty were encouraged to develop action plans to sustain practices that have proven effective, and to further improve student learning. The assessment results and action plans were submitted in mid-September. Action plans were submitted to the President's Cabinet for the September 30 budget deliberations in preparation for the October 1 start of the federal fiscal year.

COLLEGE OPERATIONS

SIPI has been working to develop a standalone audit for the past three years. Initially, the College attempted to utilize the U.S. Department of the Interior's existing audit contract. After much work and research, it was determined that the Bureau could not amend the existing contract to add a task order for SIPI. SIPI then worked to acquire a standalone audit contract. Due to the Federal nature of the College and the federal finance systems, it was determined that the firm would only be able to do a Financial Review. This was echoed in the final report that was completed August 28, 2013. The contract was awarded to a local CPA Firm, LeCompte PC, on 08/27/12. LeCompte PC, in conjunction with Moss Adams LLP, worked with SIPI personnel to complete the financial review within one year. This was the first ever standalone Financial Review completed for the College.

FACILITIES

SIPI was successful in accomplishing significant capital projects previously identified by the 1999 Facility Master Plan performed by David Sloan and Associates (including the construction of a state-of-the-art science and technology building, and Early Childhood Education Laboratory School, and a cultural learning museum/center). SIPI has contracted with Johnson, Smithipong and Rosamond Associates (JSRa), Inc. to complete a new facility master plan; this contract was awarded on August 20, 2013. JSRa will review the previous facility master plan, review the existing condition of the facilities and the current needs of the student population. The final facility master plan report is due on November 15, 2013.

THE OFFICE OF FINANCIAL AID

The Office of Financial Aid completed a Policies and Procedures Manual; it was recommended for approval by the President's Cabinet on September 10, 2013 and was approved by the President with concurrence of the SIPI Board of Regents on September 13, 2013. This manual defines general institutional policies and standard operating procedures as they related to basic statutory and regulatory provisions of federal, state, and institutional programs of financial aid.

BOARD OF REGENTS

SIPI's Board of Regents (BOR) consists of 11 Board members representative of tribes from throughout the nation. The Joint Oklahoma Tribes recently appointed Mr. Darrell Flyingman. Mr. Flyingman is a member of the Cheyenne Arapahoe Tribes. Nominated by his tribe, he is a former Tribal Governor and holds a Master's degree in Business Administration. The SIPI BOR confirmed his membership on October 3, 2013. Welcome, Mr. Flyingman!

SIPI's planning processes and Strategic Plan identified the following necessary strategic objective as an essential part of its Title III program to strengthen institutional capacity:

Title III, Comprehensive Plan for Student Services Objective 5: Develop an action plan to establish a Development Office, define its functions and responsibilities within the purview of the College's Board of Regents that will exist to support SIPI's mission and ultimately improve student outcomes for implementation in 2012-2013.

Critical to the success of SIPI's mission, achievement of its goals and strengthening institutional capacity, is the establishment of a Development Office. The Title III project director devoted planning time during Year One to defining the tasks and responsibilities of a Development Officer and this position's role in supporting the College's Board of Regents and the Board's operations.

The Board of Regent's Development Office will assist with bringing external funding to the College for high priority programs and projects identified through the College's strategic planning process. The primary responsibility of the Office and its Director is "to strengthen and improve contributions from alumni and the private sector". Development Officer Mario Ward started September 16, 2013. Mr. Ward's role will be to develop fundraising capacity, ensure that funding meets the mission and vision established by the SIPI BOR and the College.

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH, EFFECTIVENESS AND PLANNING

SIPI's strategic plan was developed in 2009 and began the 2010-11 fiscal year. Each department identified strategic activities they would engage in the next three years as aligned with the strategic goals identified in the plan. As the plan entered year three (fiscal year 2012-13), the SIPI Leadership Team decided to extend the plan for an additional two years. This allowed departments to complete activities that were delayed and to revisit what activities they will engage in for the next two years with the emphasis on innovation and measurement. The Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness and Planning completed the 2012-13 Strategic Planning Report that provides a background of strategic planning at the college, reports on accomplishments and status from 2012-13. Finally, the report describes preparations for the next strategic plan that will begin in 2016-17 and conclude in the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

The SIPI President's Cabinet met to draft and finalize the 2013-14 fiscal year budget on September 30, 2013. The budgeting process incorporated continuing operations budget planning from all major departments, assessment action plans with budget requests, program review budget recommendations, and strategic planning proposals for the 2013-14 fiscal year. The finalized budget was developed, and formally approved by the President's Cabinet by a unanimous vote. This was the first year that the President's Cabinet incorporated major institutional effectiveness processes into the budget planning process.

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SIPI is located in the heart of Indian Country, in the center of New Mexico's high-tech corridor. The College was established by a consortium of tribes including the All-Indian Pueblo Council (19 New Mexico tribes), the Navajo Nation, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the Mescalero Apache Tribe, the Southern Ute Tribes and other southwestern tribes. On September 16, 1971, SIPI officially opened its doors for classes. Today, the College as a federally-operated institution offers advanced technical education and a university transfer degree to students who are members of federally recognized tribes.



Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute

A NATIONAL INDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE THAT
PREPARES NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS TO BE
PRODUCTIVE LIFE-LONG LEARNERS, AS TRIBAL MEMBERS,
IN AN EVER-CHANGING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT.

SIPI MOVES TOWARDS ITS GOAL— ACCREDITATION

SIPI has completed its candidacy period as required by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). As such, SIPI has been engaged in a process of comprehensive self-study. On October 7–9, 2013, SIPI completed its on-site review by a HLC evaluation team. The next steps will be:

- The evaluation team will complete a report of their findings and recommendations (target is the end of October 2013).
- This report will be submitted to SIPI's point-of-contact at the HLC.
- The HLC point-of-contact will review the report and return comments/report to the chair of the evaluation team.
- The chair of the evaluation team will send the report to SIPI's President for a factual review of the content (purpose is to ensure facts within the report are accurate).
- SIPI's President will communicate the review/corrections of any facts to the chair of the evaluation team.
- Report is then submitted to the HLC Institutional Actions Council Hearing (meeting is scheduled Dec. 16-17, 2013). SIPI's President and the chair of the evaluation team will attend. This Council makes its recommendation to the HLC Board of Trustees.
- The HLC Board of Trustees receives recommendation from the HLC Institutional Actions Council and renders a final decision of SIPI's HLC accreditation status (meeting is scheduled February 27-20, 2014).

For initial accreditation SIPI must satisfy fully not only the Eligibility Requirements and the Assumed Practices, but all the Criteria for Accreditation in full.

Once granted initial accreditation, SIPI will enter into the new HLC Pathways Program to maintain accreditation; specifically the Standard Pathway which includes a ten-year cycle with a focus on assurance (meet the threshold standards) and continuous improvement. Assurance Reviews will take place in Years 4 and 10 (i.e., comprehensive evaluations), along with the use of the HLC electronic Assurance System. The HLC Pathways Program requires: annual filing of the Institutional Update, annual monitoring of financial and non-financial indicators, and adherence to Commission Policies and practices on institutional change.