TCUs Building Sustainability Pathways

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2013 Study

- Inquiry areas with students
  - Perspectives on environment and sustainability
  - Opportunities and resources
  - Interests and aspirations for impact
- Inquiry areas with faculty
  - Programming strengths and needs
  - Professional development and resource needs
  - Partnerships
- Inquiry areas with presidents
  - Institutional needs (programming, faculty, research, facilities, partnerships and training, energy audits)
- Methods
Demographic data

- 13 TCUs (MN, ND, SD, WI)
- 1419 Enrolled (2011–12)
- 168 graduated (2011–12)
- 111 inquiry participants
“Sustainability, the ecology and all of earth’s creatures and plants, and how the soil lives and functions are influenced by the overarching values of Native American culture. Sustainability is about connections between water, land, and the people and how we need to take care of it. Sustainability requires creating an infrastructure. Tribal communities need to be able to create economic infrastructure. Social and educational resources are components of sustainability.”
Culturally Informed Sustainability

“Native elders (educators) are teaching younger community members about sustainability. They take them out to wilderness to educate them about the lands and resources; and it is their desire that the young people growing up will follow in their footsteps and learn traditional knowledge.”
Traditional Plants and Food Systems

Learning of Traditional Medicine

− Student participant,
  “I took a plant and herbs class and I enjoyed identifying traditional plants; I learned to make traditional tea! I think it would be great to work more with traditional plants and help our people make the traditional medicine. Our elders know what the plants are used for and I would need them to help me identify, document and create a book or a database so the community would have access to it.”
Research opportunities are relevant to the community, restore and preserve culture and traditions, increases technology skills to better assess sustainability issues, and is shared with other TCUs with common interests and goals.
Former President Gipp, “We really need to utilize technology in a cultural way so that young people are engaged in technology and we have that ability and knowledge to train our young people. We need more research conducted with Native youth and technology. We need the access to funds so that we can do the relevant research.”
Contextualizing Education

- Education is contextualized as community-based action—restoring, revitalizing, preserving resources, recycling—to increase food sustainability, community awareness, and resources that promote sustainability.
Faculty participant:

“We are examining the interaction between wildlife and natural beef production systems on the reservation so that we can create and establish a management program at SBC. Prairie dogs are a food resource for local wildlife, and they serve as a traditional balance to the ecosystem in our area, providing continued food production.”
Partnerships

- Solid partnerships with tribal agency offices
- Funding needed for student internships
- Sharing of research findings, equipment, resource materials
- Creation of zoning and policies for systemic environmental practices across tribal communities and enforcement of policies
- Professional development and training needs
  - Some TCUs provide trainings when experts are available
  - Supervision of student interns
Infrastructure Capacity

- TCU environmental and sustainability institutes/centers
  - Goal:
    - Steward student leadership to make an impact

- Resources needed
Energy Audits

- Most TCUs have Energy Audit and planning for alternative and renewable energy
- Use of green building, renewable and alternative energy
- Cost prohibits complying with federal government’s Energy Efficiency Plan and with older buildings on TCU campuses
TCUs Building Sustainability Pathways Program

- Building programs with emphasis on cultural lifeways, intergenerational, community based research
- Grow our own approach to capacity building at TCUs
  - Faculty fellowships
  - Student fellowships
  - Place-based research internships
- Sharing and learning through Clearinghouse of resource materials
QUESTIONS?