Division-13 / Proposal Number-13096
Contexts, foundations, and methods

Title of Proposal
Micro-decisions and Macro-purposes: Identifying the monsters and weapons in achieving tribal sovereignty and transformation in the Academy

Abstract
This holistic symposium addresses the micro-decisions of Native scholars persistence toward collective macro-purposes of sovereignty centered on serving the Native community. Non-Native faculty contribute insights of respect and advocacy toward Indigenizing the Academy. We share our monsters and weapons’ stories that illustrate our collective vision to transform the academic space.

Format
First Choice: F03- Interactive Symposia
Second Choice: F00-
Third Choice: F00-

Content
Title
Micro-decisions and Macro-purposes: Identifying the monsters and weapons in achieving tribal sovereignty and transformation in the Academy

Introduction & Significance
Of the doctoral degrees conferred in 2013, 0.6 percent of degrees were conferred to Native American students. When compared to other ethnic groups, Native doctoral degree attainment is the only group in the past five years that has lower doctoral degree attainment (NCES, 2014). This symposium challenges Eurocentric assertions that graduate student’s pursuit to a doctoral degree is mainly a reflection of individualistic desires to better themselves and their chances for a better future. We uncover intersecting circles of family, community, and tribal affiliation as an influential force for Native graduate degree attainment (Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, & Solyom, 2012). This session intends to be a continued conversation from the featured keynote address by Dr. Cheryl Crazybull by sharing the experiences and perspectives of four Native American scholars and their non-Native doctoral advisors. The University of Arizona’s Center for the Study of Higher Education is premiered as a modeled-program in recruiting, retaining, and graduating Native scholars. As of spring 2015, there were eight Native American students pursuing graduate degrees - one of the largest Native contingencies in the study of higher education in the United States. The research questions guiding this symposium are: 1) How can micro-decision making influence macro-purposes embodied in the completion of doctoral programs for Native scholars? 2) What strategies and personal philosophies do non-Native scholars use to encourage recruitment and graduation of Native students in graduate degree programs?

Session Objectives:
● Participants will be presented examples of how scholarship is Indigenized through the doctoral process and how these examples can improve policy, research, and practice that supports not just Native Americans but also marginalized groups.
● Participants will learn how Native students can, with the support of non-Native faculty, transform the dominant Eurocentric academic space into a more inclusive, socially just place.
● Participants will be provided examples of ways non-Native faculty can serve as a source of “weapons” in guiding Native and marginalized students to overcome the “monsters” and in
navigating them through micro-decisions that they face.

- Participants will be encouraged to engage in a safe space to explore how they can collaborate with Native scholars experiencing in the doctoral process.

Background of Presenters & Contributions

The presenters and moderator selected for this symposium offer a wide range of perspectives and wealth of knowledge on the doctoral process for Native students.

Dr. Regina Deil-Amen

I am a Professor of Higher Education and Sociology at the University of Arizona. In my scholarship, I challenge normative thinking about the college-going challenges of nontraditional students of all kinds and explore how they attempt to manage success in college. Through my research, I have published a book, book chapters, and various articles exploring and analyzing the experiences of a diverse range of college students, including, underrepresented racial minorities, community college students, transfer students, returning adults, first-generation, commuting, urban, and rural. I have also addressed the institutional norms and dynamics that shape college-going contexts for these populations at two- and four-year as well as for-profit institutions.

Contribution: As an underrepresented minority scholar myself who also studies such issues for student transitions and success in college, my key points will focus on the intersections of my own experiences with those of the Native students with whom I’ve worked. I will discuss my personal transformations and realizations as a first generation student of color and how I use those experiences to mentor graduate students. I will discuss the delicate balance I face as a faculty advisor and teacher who has managed to maintain cultural respect while also demanding the highest standards possible of engagement and intellectual rigor.

Karen Francis-Begay

I am the Assistant Vice President for Tribal Relations at the University of Arizona (UA), serving as a key liaison between tribal leaders and the University administration in efforts to strengthen partnerships and advance mutual goals. I’ve worked in higher education for 25 years advancing educational opportunities for Native American students. I am in a doctoral student in Higher Education Administration and my research focuses on Native American administrators at non-Native serving institutions. I was born and raised on the Navajo reservation and who I am is defined by my four clans that are my foundation and my identity as a Navajo: Edge of Water, Towering House, Mexican People, and One Who Wanders Around.

Contribution:

My contribution is sharing my experiences in navigating and negotiating in the myriad of interests of both the institution and that of the tribal communities, what I refer to as being in two different worlds. I serve the interests of Native people at the highest level of the university administration advising non-native leadership on how to best work with many sovereign Native Nations that strive to enhance economic and educational opportunities of their communities. My work is being both an advocate and a mentor to many Native American students who need encouragement and support to complete their college education.

Dr. Jenny Lee

I am an Associate Professor at the Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Arizona and served as a mentor and advisor to Native students throughout my career as well as co-founder of Native SOAR. In many ways, I served as an “outsider,” not being of American Indian descent. As a Korean American (born in Korea and raised in the US), I partly identify with Indigenous Knowledge principles and values as they relate to my Asian American background.

Contribution: My key points, based on my experiences in mentoring Native students would be the importance of a) maintaining high standards for Native students and b) engaging in mutual learning, as opposed to one-way advising. I will also discuss the founding of Native SOAR, a mentoring program to promote Natives mentoring Natives towards college access and my role as a non-Native partnering with Natives.

Dr. Christine Nelson

I am from the Navajo and Laguna Pueblo tribes of the southwest. My mother from the big
roadrunner clan (or Sh’áá’shkráá’ in Keres) and my father is from the Zuni clan (or Náneesht’ézhí dine’é in the Navajo language). I am a first generation college student that grew up in a bordertown of the Navajo reservation. I have ten years of combined practical and research experience in higher education. It has been through my graduate education that I can understand why I did not “fit” into the Eurocentric educational model presented to me as early as kindergarten. I have tapped into my identity and the political status of being an enrolled member of that Navajo tribe to expand what it means to navigate the Academy.

Contribution: In this session, I will share my experiences as a Native scholar engaging with non-Native organizations through internships, funding, and seminars. I aim to demonstrate how these experiences expanded my research skills and how, at times, I was disenfranchised by a system that was meant to break the glass ceiling to being an Indigenou doctoral recipient.

Dr. Gary Rhoades (Moderator)

I am born of mid-Western parents who were the first in their families to go to college. My roots are like those of so many Americans, unclear, crossing various boundaries that I am largely unaware of. The identity that I carry externally is of a privileged, upper middle class white, straight male, but my professional/political/personal lives have always expressed inwardly and outwardly a dimension of oppositional, alternative, outsider. My professional career, of being situated entirely in two place, is counterpoised to a pre-college life of mobility from Midwest to New England to South to Pacific Coast to Southwest. From our Native students, and indeed from our other students at the UA, many of whom are first generation and many of whom are Latino/a, I have learned the importance and power of place. In addition, the collective professional projects in which I am engaged are enhanced immeasurably by sharing part of the educational journeys of Native graduate students and advisees.

Contribution: As I have studied and worked towards a more democratic, socially just system that more fully lives up to its ideals, I have learned the on-the-ground reality of this culturally foreign, peculiar space we call academe, from our students, as I first learned it from my parents. From that deeper understanding has come a commitment and flexibility and ongoing collective project to transform that space.

Dr. Amanda Tachine

Ya’at’eeh, she ei Amanda Tachine yinishye. Náneesht’ézhí Táchii’i’nii nishli, aadoo Tl’izilani ei ba shishchiin. Tábaahi ei dashicheii naana Ashiihi ei dashinali. Akot’eego ei’ asdzani nishli. Lok’aahnteel dee naasha. Greetings my name is Amanda Tachine. I’m from the Zuni Red Running into Water clan born for the Many Goats clan. My maternal grandfather’s clan is the Water’s Edge and my paternal grandfather’s clan is the Salt clan. I’m from Ganado, Arizona, a rural town located on the Navajo Nation. As a Navajo woman, that is a way in which I identify myself. In May 2015, I graduated with a doctorate degree in Higher Education at the University of Arizona. In my research, I revealed the “monsters” or challenges, and the “weapons” or sources of strength that Navajo students faced on their journeys toward college. Through the doctoral journey, I not only learned about the systematic challenges and personal strengths that the Navajo students’ shared, I was in turn transformed into a more confident and conscientious Navajo scholar who is eager to serve others through research.

Contribution: I offer my story as I navigated through the doctoral process. In that journey, “monsters” were revealed such as feelings of self-doubt, invisibility, isolation, and marginalization. Through a community of support from family, friends, and faculty, a “weaponry” developed which help me to establish transformative intentions to move beyond the asterisk concept.

Natalie Rose Youngbull

I am of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma and the Ft. Peck Sioux and Assiniboine Tribes of Montana. As a Gates Millennium Scholar alum, I utilized the funding throughout my educational career. My dissertation topic is focused on the experiences of American Indian Gates Millennium Scholars who did not persist to graduation. This research is my way of giving back to an organization that gave me such opportunities, in addition to highlighting this particular group of Native students’ experiences in higher education. My journey through the Academy has not been without its struggles, but I continue forward because of the strength that I’ve received through prayers and support of my family, tribal community, trusted colleagues, advisor and faculty.

Contribution: My contribution will focus on the types of support that I received, both at the institution and beyond, including my advisor, faculty, the collective of Native graduate students within the
program and Native faculty within the field of higher education.

Theoretical Framing Directs Presentation Format

Deloria and Wildcat (2001) use three overarching concepts that Power + Place = Personality to elucidate their take on Indigenous Knowledge. In this context, power does not refer to the Eurocentric thought of individual power, rather “the living energy that inhabit and/or composes the universe (p. 23). Place “[is] the relationship of things to each other” (p. 23). Place is not the physical location where the interaction occurs, but the relationship that develops from the interaction. This relationship needs to remain balanced in order to maintain positive living.

The Indigenous concept of power and place strongly contrasts the mainstream scientific method of disaggregation, compartmentalization, and classification. Eurocentric ideologies place the human at the top of the pyramid of interaction, while Indigenous perspectives see the human as an equal point in the ecological system that is surrounded by all beings and all actions impact the balance of life. In continuing with Deloria & Wildcat’s concept, personality results when power and place interact. Personality is the everyday occurrences that fills the world, and in regards to Indigenous Knowledge, individual actions are never singular or linear, but cyclical (Cajete, 2005). To understand Indigenous Knowledge in the Academy, one must recognize that the learning process is forever molded and progressive.

This interactive session is framed by Power + Place = Personality. Each panel member represents a Power and our interactions through the doctoral process represents the Place. The symposium meeting represents Personality. The symposium format is envisioned as a sharing circle, where all presenters and participants will be positioned in a circular format to create a space to share and learn about Indigenous perspectives in the Academy. Dr. Gary Rhoades will serve as the moderator of the symposium with each presenter strategically developing the context of their experiences as it relates to the Native doctoral process and its intersection with the mainstream concepts related to organizational culture and new models of graduate student support.

The focus of the discussion will be on “place” of interaction for both the Native and non-Native scholars and how at each stage of the doctoral process the student and advisor both had to acknowledge their monsters and overcome them with their weapons. To articulate these components various mediums will be used, including video demonstrating how the Native scholars and their advisors decolonized the dissertation defense.

Discussion & Potential Questions:

Indigenous scholar questions:
1. How have you developed your understanding of the Academy? How has your identity been influenced through your understanding?
2. In what ways were you encouraged to indigenize space within your program, college, and/or institution? Who advocated for you to indigenize this space?
3. What monsters did you encounter? And what weapons did you use to help you defeat those monsters?
4. What circles of support have been influential in your doctoral process?

Non-Indigenous scholar questions:
1. How have you mentored Native students and what were some unique approaches, if any?
2. What have you learned about Native students in the process?
3. What monsters did you encounter? And what weapons did you use to help you defeat those monsters?
4. What recommendations do you have for other non-indigenous scholars?

Attached File

Reference(s)
