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Indigenous Student Retention in Arctic Higher Education

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INDIGENOUS STUDENT RETENTION IN ARCTIC HIGHER EDUCATION

By

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Capstone Project

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E.S.B.

“We are tired of anthropologists, environmentalists, church-related organizations, and other specialists speaking for us and using us for their self-interest. Please respect our self-determination to make our own decisions.”

- Tashka Yawanawa, Chief of the Yawanawa (2012)
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The primary focus of this capstone research is to identify the process of indigenous student retention policy in Arctic higher education institutions and compare these practices to existing retention and social theory. Much of the dominant literature on student retention addresses Euro-centric models, not fully addressing persistence issues with subjugated groups. There is a gap in the research with regard to indigenous Arctic student retention. By conducting a case study, data was gathered via the utilization of a variety of tools including archival records, interviews, direct observations, and document reviews. By adding to the body of work regarding student retention, institutions of higher learning may have greater opportunity to apply strategies to aid in their student persistence plan, particularly for subordinate groups. Most notably, the recognition that the culture from which a student derives may not be well aligned with the expectations of the culture of the institution. Many indigenous groups value group dependence and cohesion, often in direct opposition to frequently espoused higher education goals of economic and social success. A different retention strategy is needed to address the goals of indigenous students, framed around their cultural ideals and community attachments.

KEYWORDS: Arctic, Indigenous, Student Retention, Higher Education, Self-Rule
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The issue of student retention in higher education has been an increasing focus of study for several decades. As a swelling economic demand for an educated and skilled workforce is developed, as well as an effort toward improved institutional accountability, greater pressure is placed on higher education institutions to ensure that student educational experiences are aligned to social and economic expectations (Winslow, 2015). Additionally, as tighter budgetary constraints shape the collegiate landscape, leadership at higher education institutions are seeking new ways to ensure financial stability in an era of decreased governmental support. Student retention is one of the areas in which many institutions seek to improve to facilitate economic strength. There have been numerous studies on the process of effective student retention strategies (Seidman, 2005; Sidle an McReynolds, 1999; Tinto, 1993), focused primarily upon the ability for institutions to provide services that aid in students adjusting to collegiate culture. Many colleges face difficult struggles with retaining students in their programs. As Yorke and Longden (2004) describe, student retention and attrition are important issues concerning higher education institutions worldwide.

There is a gap in the research that focuses on student retention with indigenous students at Arctic colleges and universities. These institutions are frequently rather small and geographically remote, often only accessible by boat or plane. While there are some studies regarding these institutions as a whole (Gaviria, 2013; Richardson and Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; Langgaard, 1990; Grydehøj et al., 2012; Hovelsrud et al., 2011; McDonald, 1996), and of international and rural retention strategies (Thomas, 2002; Yorke and
Longden, 2004; Young, 1998; Vineyard, 1979) there are no studies that specifically review the retention strategies at Arctic colleges and institutions. Part of this gap in the research may be due to the relatively recent establishment of many of these institutions and reflective of the limited research on indigenous student populations as a whole.

The following case study has identified that retention policy in Arctic institutions is developed as a reflection of many factors, including long standing deficiency in meeting indigenous student needs, ongoing barriers to indigenous student success, institutional and accreditation pressure to focus on student retention, negotiation of Eurocentric models in favor of self-rule models of education, increasing economic and environmental awareness in the Arctic region, and a lack of prevailing standards in indigenous student retention. There are overlaying and intersecting influences on these retention strategies, similar to what Thompson (1975), Thompson, et. al (2013), and Willeto (1997) identify with the struggles of cultural conflict in educational provision.

There is some variation between Arctic higher education institutions, primarily regarding details surrounding accrediting and governmental regulation. As to be expected, different nations have different attitudes and expectations for these institutions. There are some similarities, however. Many of the institutions are geographically remote, tend to serve a high percentage of indigenous students, offer a variety of indigenous cultural courses or trainings, and have, or in the process of, adapting to varying degrees of self-rule governance structures. For a list of prominent Arctic higher education institutions, please refer to Table 1. There is a sharp distinction between North American, European, and Russian institutions. North American Arctic institutions exhibit a high degree of self-rule ability, clearly setting forth a priority of Inupiat and
Inuit prosperity (Yukon College, 2016; Aurora College, 2015; Northlands College, 2016; University College of the North, 2016; Nunavut Arctic College, 2008, 2014; Ilisagvik College, 2016; Ilisimatsurarfik, 2016). European Arctic institutions are still negotiating their ability to serve the interests of the Saami, while it would appear Russian Arctic institutions express deep interest in providing occupational training in natural resource extraction for their indigenous population (University Center in Svalbard, 2015; Sami University of Applied Sciences, 2016; Arctic University of Norway, 2016; Lulea University of Technology, 2015; University of Lapland, 2016).

This qualitative case study sought to answer how indigenous student retention policies are developed in Arctic higher education institutions. Also, efforts were made to identify how self-rule political policy and global warming trends influence indigenous student retention policy in Arctic higher education institutions.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Retention Models, Cultural Theory Exclusion, and Relation to Indigenous Populations

Student retention policy in higher education may be defined as a reflection of governmental and accreditation edict and also in contrast to student departure trends. Berger, et. al (2012) identify the differences between the terms persistence and retention, "Persistence refers to the desire and action of a student to stay within the system of higher education from beginning year through degree completion. Retention refers to the ability of an institution to retain a student from admission through graduation" (p. 12). Student success for many institutions is defined as completion of a certificate or degree, while persistence is often referred to as the process of students returning semester after semester (Young, 2004). Tinto (2012) and Seidman (2012) identify that retention is a success when the student completes their higher education goals, whether or not they graduate.

The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) definition of retention is often used by institutions as it is frequently what they must abide by in terms of compliance efforts, "A measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational program at an institution, expressed as a percentage. For four-year institutions, this is the percentage of first-time bachelors (or equivalent) degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall who are again enrolled in the current fall. For all other institutions this is the percentage of first-time degree/certificate-seeking students from the previous fall who either re-enrolled or successfully completed their program by the current fall" (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016). IPEDS, or
similar data resources outside of the U.S.A., data and reporting are often used as the baseline from which retention data is formally measured. Regardless of the specific approach to defining retention, despite the significant attention over the last several decades by researchers, and the many and varied efforts by institutions toward the issue of student retention, there has been no significant improvement in higher education student retention as a whole (Seidman, 2012).

Foundational research on the issue of higher education retention often refers to Tinto’s (1975) seminal work on student integration emphasizes that effective retention is mastered by providing institutional commitment to all students, placing the issue as top priority. Such proficiency requires the development of social and educational communities that integrate the student into the institutional culture is part of this priority and as the center aspect of the institution. The student integration model was adjusted over the subsequent decades to include research on student goal commitment, motivational theory, and student optimism as well as the process of matching student needs to institutional mission. Tinto (1993) further criticizes the efforts and limited impact of “adding a course” process of retention policy. Tinto (1997) later introduced the importance of intensive student advising during the first year of a student’s educational experience as being a significant influence on their retention.

Effective student retention involves dedicated effort toward quality education production and a cohesive, collaborative college culture. Tinto (1993) identifies six conditions for student success: institutional commitment and resource allocation, high expectations for students, student’s social and financial support, feedback monitoring, social involvement, and learning enhancement. Through his theory of student departure,
the ideal of academic and social integration is tantamount to student success. Essentially, the more involved the student is in various aspects of the institution and the greater separation that occurs from other factors such as family, high school, and community, the more likely the student will remain with the college. The degree of separation from their communities is thought to be highly predictive of student success (Tinto, 1997). Student success is also reflective of the presence of family members who had attended college, placing the likelihood of first generation students at a significant disadvantage (Tinto, 1997; Petty, 2014). The degree to which there is alignment between the student and the values held at the college is also a predictor of student success (Tinto, 1997, 1993). The various interactions, and the meanings derived from such interactions, influences a great deal of the student’s decision making process with regard to staying in college. These factors as related to student retention have largely been accepted by many institutions as a foundation for developing their retention policy.

Employing meaningful academic experiences tied to personal development and enhancing contact with collegiate peer groups and academics can increase student retention. Tinto (1997) describes the process of developing a classroom as a community to aid in student performance and retention, to which Demaris (2008), Endo and Harpel (1982), and Hannum et. al (2008) concur. Specifically, having students be engaged and active in the learning process limits issues of isolation and fosters an environment of social integration. Essentially, student involvement in the classroom aids in student retention through the process of developing shared knowledge, shared knowing, and shared responsibility. Developing learning communities is also of interest to researchers of student persistence.
Another prominent retention theorist, Bean (1980, 1983), noted the influence of a student’s prior academic performance, geographic location in relation to the institution, socioeconomic status, peer influences, and overall student contentment with their collegiate experience as influencing their retention. Additionally, Bean noted that the process of student retention was akin to the process of worker retention, in that an organizations procedures and incentive structures can have a significant impact on student persistence. Astin’s (1984) model of student involvement, further adding to the baseline of student retention research, focused on the developmental aspects of college students as they progress through their education, highlighting the influence of socioeconomic status and prior experiences (noted as “inputs”), collegiate culture (the “environment”), and their attitudes toward education (the “outputs”) as all being factors influencing their retention. Astin (1975) also noted that prior grades, aspiration, study habits, family education experience, and marital status impacted student retention.

Seidman (1996, 2005) provided a formulaic model of student retention, identifying that early identification of student issues, combined with intensive and continuous intervention provided groundwork for increasing student retention. Reaching out to students prior to their enrollment, identifying skills gaps, monitor, asses, and instill interventions at key points in the student journey. Further, Seidman notes that the process of navigation for the student should be smooth, fluid, and with an aura of complementing factors, but that students should experience a powerful transformation toward pursuit of their goals. Students, from his perspective, should be able to identify a path to their goals with relative ease (Seidman, 2012; Sander, 2014; Talbert, 2012).
Yorke and Longden (2004) offer cross-cultural insight into student retention policy, and in the process of evaluating international research develop a series of elements that institutions should consider upon sculpting their retention efforts. Their arguments may be summarized as such; Institutions should develop paths to sounder program choices by offering sufficient and welcoming information and attitudes to a broad population. They should develop a pipeline drawn upon students with a high chance of success, engaging them well prior to their arrival. It is important to align student advising to the interests of the student while providing a central support center for their concerns, particularly for first year students. Being supportive of teaching and learning techniques to enhance instruction and provide an environment of student centered learning. Institutions should offer clear expectations and accommodation for learning, as well as deliberate, early formative and summative assessment in student’s programs. Understanding the varied social impacts that may affect student retention and performance is also advisable. Yorke and Longden (2004) further note that students have significant responsibility for their education as well, stressing the importance of understanding the process of the institution, the awareness of their own goals, and to treat failure as a learning experience. Likewise, higher education systems may find importance in ensuring recognition of teaching and intentional policy implementation debate regarding processes that could negatively impact student success. Consistent adaptation and reflexive analysis is needed by institutions to refine their retention approaches (Kurantowicz and Nizinska, 2013). Also, it is advised that institutions recognize that there is simply a wide assortment of issues impacting student retention that are external to their efforts (Hovdhaugen, et. al, 2013).
Longden (2006) evaluates retention policy through consideration of the response that West Coast University (a pseudonym for a UK school) provided in reaction to changing student expectations and the impact on retention rates. He identifies the need for increased study on student retention, categories of student departure, impact of various elements (pre-course engagement, university choice, family support, institutional response to pre-course preparation level, academic engagement with the university, employment impacts, social engagement, and social isolation) and other problem areas in student persistence. Comparisons to other student retention researchers (Tinto and others) highlight the need for first-year student attention and support. Longden offers an important case study for the analyzing of common student retention practices, and offers support to cross-cultural similarities in student retention problems.

By analyzing these various and popular approaches to student retention, a series of central factors may be identified as influential to student persistence in higher education:

1. Student demographics, background, and academic preparation
2. Academic performance and faculty and staff approachability
3. Student support services including academic advising
4. Student Engagement in learning experiences
5. Student involvement and engagement in college culture
6. Social and family support and connectedness
7. Technical aspects of financing and college structure navigation
8. Student attitudes and satisfaction with the institution
What is largely missing from this summative list, and from the bulk of popular retention models, is the influence of culture on student retention. Certainly there is mentioned the degree of social influence through family support and connectedness, but this factor is not abundantly addressed in the literature with but only a few exceptions. Berger, et al (2012) do suggest that there has been a growing interest in social integration as a factor in student retention. They further suggest that research into subjugated groups may interpret and perform the process of higher education differently than those of other groups. Specifically they state, "...there is growing recognition that successful retention of underrepresented groups may require that campuses move away from the assumption that successful retention requires integration as a one-way street" (Berger, et. al, 2012, pg 29). Crisp and Nora (2009) and Goncalves and Trunk (2014) share a similar view, noting that subjugated groups are impacted by lower socioeconomic characteristics that have a large impact on student retention. Summers (2003) observed that students that worked full time and had significant family obligations impacted the decision to stay in college, along with other factors of intent, integration, and fluidity of the enrollment process. These approaches only brush the surface of cultural influence, focusing instead on the influence that social burdens impact retention. A group's traditions, identity, and awareness as components of their culture are not fully addressed, with perhaps the exception of the brief mention by Berger, et. al (2012).

Swail, et. al (2003), in focusing specifically on minority populations in higher education, parallel much of Tinto's retention model of student integration. They offer that factors of greatest influence to minority student retention are the degree of student academic preparedness, the campus climate (including the degree of diversity in the
student body, faculty, staff, and curriculum), student commitment to educational goals and the institution, the degree of social and academic integration, and financial aid support. The authors propose a student retention model, entitled the Geometric Model of Student Persistence and Achievement, highlighting the importance of measuring and meeting student cognitive, social, and institutional factors throughout their educational pursuits. This model, while offering specific retention objectives to various departments within an institution, differs only modestly little from the basic models of Tinto and Seidman. Emphasis is placed upon institution-wide efforts to align personnel with retention efforts, offer intensive advisement throughout the student journey, direct students to institutional culture, and offer supportive activities and resources to a diverse population.

While some of the lowest rates of retention and persistence have been experienced by subjugated indigenous student populations, only modest research has been accomplished in this area. Discussing Native American higher education retention, Larimore and McClellan (2005) identify the dramatically low rates of persistence and graduation students within the subpopulation. They determine that persistence among Native American students is enhanced by social network supports, institutional commitment, and cultural connections. Barriers to retention include poor preparation, vague goals, financial difficulty, prejudice, cultural barriers, and isolation. Students are frequently caught between trying to assimilate to the dominant culture of the institution and maintaining cultural ties to family and community (Larimore and McClellan, 2005). There is a difference in culture climate perception, with minority students reporting less equitable treatment, pressure to change their behavior to conform to hegemonic
expectations, and greater racial and ethnic conflict (Ancis, et. al, 2000). With indigenous higher education students, there is a discord between their expectations and the structure of many higher education students (Cabrera and Nora, 1994). Attention to family obligations, community ties, and social support are all central factors influencing indigenous students, while financial issues, lack of family support, and poor academic preparation are all barriers to student success (Guillory and Wolverton, 2008; Clark, 2012). Should a college offer programming that is attractive to indigenous students, greater retention and completion could possibly be achieved for the group (Guillory and Wolverton, 2008; Clark, 2012).

There has been little effort and even less success in approaching and securing indigenous student retention strategies. Guillory (2009) implores institutions to build an environment of indigenous student success based on maintaining student connections to family and tribal community, addressing single parent and family issues, and offer more peer mentoring opportunities. Clark (2012) further argues that institutional attention to cultural matters with indigenous students may enhance the student perception of the institution.

Flynn, et. al, (2012), Carne (1999), and Larimore and McClellan (2005), identify barriers to success experienced by native populations as they move through higher education to include; a general lack of advisement and resources, significant financial strains, mixed messages in programming options, generalized academic unpreparedness, racism, discrimination, and difficult norm adjustment away from reservation life. Euro-American theoretical approaches to retention mentioned above, are frameworks most commonly used across many types of institutions. Indigenous-based learning theory
approaches reflect cultural frameworks to explain student retention, but are not frequently used. Identifying a framework that best explains Native American student persistence has not been realized. Instead, more focus and study has been placed upon the low participation rates among Native Americans as a reflection of continued racism, discrimination, and distance from home reservations. There have been very limited interventions that have been introduced to combat these factors, with the noted exception of the development of Tribal Colleges and Universities (discussed later) and the creation of indigenous learning centers (Larimore and McClellan, 2005).

Recommendations by Larimore and McClellan (2005) on studying student retention for Native Americans include a focus on revealing complex individual characteristics and institutional factors. They suggest that more effort through student affairs personnel needs to be made to develop comprehensive and intentional efforts to retain indigenous students. Also, efforts to share best practices in retention and meeting learner needs must be realized between institutions, as well as genuine effort to streamline often complicated enrollment and registration procedures. There is general progress toward these goals, but much work has yet to be accomplished. Meeting the needs of indigenous students while formulating practical means toward graduation and economic viability requires dedicated efforts, amicable funding models, and devoted personnel aware of the cultural and economic nuances of Native American students.

It is important to note that indigenous identity is not uniform, being comprised of hundreds of different nations, unique histories, customs, languages, worldviews, traditions, and difficult responses to colonial domination and oppression (Ashburn, 2007; Lowe, 2005; Evans, et. al, 2009). There are, however, some characteristics that are
reflective of shared identity between many indigenous groups; that of ethnic heritage and also of systematic and generational oppression. When researching native populations, both an understanding of immense in-group diversity is necessary, while also recognizing ethnic, economic, and political similarities for the group (Evans, et. al, 2009). A deeper understanding of the various barriers to indigenous student success is necessary as well (Belgarde, 1996).

There are significant higher education structural and social impediments to Native American and indigenous learning, such as seated racism and structural cultural bias (Lowe, 2005; Garrett and Pichette, 2000; Mihesuah, 2004; Pewardy and Frey, 2004; Tierney, 1992). Additionally, current student development theories do not accurately portray Native American needs (Schooler, 2014). While Horse (2001) frames Native American identity as being shaped largely by linguistic, genealogy, traditions, and tribe membership, he does not address fully the process of higher education integration for Native Americans according to Schooler (2014). Further, Schooler criticizes Chickering's (1969) Identity Development Theory, stating that it does not fully aid in explaining the difficulties of college experiences for indigenous peoples, primarily as the concept of independence conflicts with a worldview of interdependence. In consideration of these discrepancies, Schooler (2014) offers the Native American College Student Transition Theory based upon the following perspectives:

- Existing development theories fail at capturing the unique challenges facing Native Americans in college transition.

- Modifications of Chickering's (1969) Identity Theory and Horse's (2001) Perspective on American Indian Identity Development are necessary to establish a
model reflective of not only Native identity, but also difficulty in Native transition through college.

- The six stages of Schooler’s (2014) Native American College Student Transition Theory include:

  1. Remembering History: Identifying the impact that centuries of subjugation, genocide, and racism plays in current identity.

  2. Learning to Navigate: Relationship development during incorporation into the higher education environment is reversed from Chickering’s theory.

  3. Moving towards Independence: Community and family ties are deeply maintained during the college experience, making independence not always desirable.

  4. Building Trust and Relationships: Student affairs and faculty relationships with Native students must be established early on built on trust and dedicated interest.

  5. Re-establishing Identity and Reaching Out: Comfortability on campus allows greater participation by Native students into various campus organizations.


When comparing this identity theory to modern higher education policy and leadership, it may be recognized that many universities and colleges are reflective of
neoliberal policy, seeking seemingly ever-increasing accountability and economic independence (Winslow, 2015).

This modern structure would appear to be in at least partial conflict with several Native worldviews that stress the importance of humility and community. It is argued that structural changes to higher education (such as movement toward clarified purpose, meaning, and practice) are necessary to assist in increasing Native student completion (Schooler, 2014).

Leadership styles of the dominant group may neglect the ability to effectively provide paths for desirable outcomes for non-dominant groups. When analyzing cultural influences on leadership, Hofstede (2001, 2010) notes the differences that various national cultures may exhibit in leadership style, divided among four dimensions (Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism-Collectivism, and Masculinity-Femininity). When comparing leadership styles of the nations of Canada and the U.S.A. to many of the indigenous populations that reside therein, there are clear contrasts. The dominant cultures of these large nations exhibit medium power distance, weak uncertainty avoidance, high individualism, and masculine traits (Hofstede, 2001, 2010). In contrast, Bryant (1996) argues, using the example of certain Native American groups in the USA, indigenous leadership characteristics include decentralized leadership, imminent value of all things, a value of non-interference, a self deflecting image projection, a reduced sense of the importance of time, and collectivist decision making approaches. If higher education institutions are a means and extension of reproducing dominant cultural ideals, and the leadership thereof is also reflective of larger societal trends, there could be a negative impact on the success of students that desire different
leadership style guidance. Bryant (1996) also notes that Hofstede’s framework, while primarily applied only to select nation-level analysis, may be helpful in identifying the dimensional preferences for indigenous groups. Some efforts have been conducted to delineate Native American leadership styles in contrast to dominant U.S.A. leadership environments and suggest subordinate group assimilation is necessary for economic and self-rule success (Stewart, et. al., n.d.).

The Globe Project, a massive research project focused on identifying cross cultural leadership dimensions in 62 countries, exhibits a similar difficulty in regards to indigenous populations (House, et. al., 2001). Utilizing Hofstede’s framework, cultural values of these various nations are analyzed, focusing on leadership practices, ideals, and economic characteristics of each. Few nation subcultures are analyzed and no indigenous cultures are examined. The scales used, however, could possibly be helpful in explaining some Indigenous leadership styles. Bryant (1998) argues that indigenous cultures have low tolerance for uncertainty, low power distance, high institutional collectivism (at least within their culture), high in-group collectivism, high gender egalitarianism, low assertiveness, low future orientation, low performance orientation, and high humane orientation. These characteristics are not parallel to the analysis of Hofstede’s country cluster designation for Canada and the USA (Hofstede, 2001). In particular, Hofstede does not identify any nations with a small power distance and a collectivist identity (Hofstede, 2001), as Bryant (1998) suggests is present in some indigenous groups. It would appear that greater research is needed to discover indigenous leadership practices.

Lowe (2005) offers advice to institutions that seek to satisfy the unique needs of Native American students. Much of the advice parallels the suggestions by Tinto (1993),
albeit with specific efforts tied to Native American Populations. Lowe’s suggestions, based heavily in reference to Szasz, (1999), are as follows:

1. Work with Native American students prior to their arrival on campus.
2. Orient the student to the university, both as a campus and as a system.
3. Orient the student to the local area and to living in the area.
4. Help the students feel they are a part of the university family.
5. Students must have some place where they feel they belong.
6. Find out what local services are available to Native Americans.
7. Provide help and be proactive about it.
8. Never generalize; treat each student as a unique person.
9. Orient yourself to Native models or ways of thinking.
10. Foster and support the student’s Native identity.
11. Focus on the importance of schoolwork and classes.
12. Find ways to identify and nurture Native American students’ own strengths.
13. Perceive and treat each Native student as able to succeed.
14. Conduct more research.

It is clear that higher education student retention policy and procedures have developed greatly in the last several decades. Limited attention has been provided toward Native American and indigenous students’ persistence patterns (Lowe, 2005). By identifying relevant historical policy, current barriers to success, and specific
characteristics and needs of indigenous higher education students, there is opportunity for institutions to drive their practices to boost indigenous retention.

In discussing the role of learning styles in relation to student retention, Flynn, et. al (2012) note that while general efforts toward embracing diversity are attempted, many universities fall short in meeting the different learning styles of many ethnic and minority students, Native American and indigenous students included. Freeman and Fox (2005) and Pewardy and Frey (2004) illustrate the persistent continued attempts by institutions to measure Native American student experiences, performances, and outcomes by using Euro-centric models. These models continue to fail to meet or measure indigenous student retention characteristics or individual educational goals. As noted regarding a broad definition of student retention as embraced by Tinto (2012) and Seidman (2012), the higher education and/or learning goals of the student are not always factored into the Euro-centric, strict, model of retention measurement. This, combined with the institutional and social barriers noted by (Flynn, et. al (2012) and Larimore and McClellan (2015), identifies that higher education institutions, in their attempt to improve student retention, need to address the social and structural barriers to success, the process of intake and servicing of indigenous students, and identify effective measurement means for diverse population success in college. It is also important to note that finding cultural identity in an education system structure that conflicts with indigenous culture is difficult and significant organizational changes are necessary for greater outcomes (Brayboy, et. al, 2012).

Further recommendations on studying student retention for Native Americans from Larimore and McClellan (2015) include a focus on revealing complex individual
characteristics and institutional factors. Effort through student affairs personnel needs to be made to develop comprehensive and intentional efforts to retain indigenous students. Efforts to share best practices in retention and meeting learner needs must be realized between institutions, as well as genuine effort to streamline often complicated enrollment and registration procedures. There is general progress toward these goals, but much work has yet to be accomplished. Meeting the needs of indigenous students while formulating practical means toward graduation and economic viability requires dedicated efforts, amicable funding models, and devoted personnel aware of the cultural and economic nuances of Native American students.

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Self-Rule, and Arctic Indigenous Higher Education

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) is a leading organization in advocating for tribal college recognition and inclusion, as well as protecting an ideal of self-directed Native American higher education policy (AIHEC, 2017; Bureau of Indian Education, n.d.). AIHEC was responsible for gaining recognition of tribal college needs prior to, and the subsequent passage of, the Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (AIHEC, 2017). This Act helped to spread the availability of higher education to long standing subordinated populations while also adding to the food security and technology education needs of the nation (AIHEC, 2017). In the interests of continuous improvement, AIHEC conducts routine quality control research activities through the American Indian Measures of Success (AIMS) initiative, looking at issues of
accountability, participation, and completion at Tribal Colleges and Universities (AIHEC, 2017).

The USDA 1994 Tribal Land-Grant Colleges and Universities Program offers help for institutions in maintaining food security in the USA (USDA, 1994, n.d.).Primarily, this involves significant oversight on development, regulation, and evaluation of programs in line with the 1994 tribal land-grant colleges and universities (USDA, 1994, n.d.). Additionally, the USDA works with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium to make certain that programming and funds are available to the 1994 land-grant institutions (USDA, 1994, n.d).

The Tribal College and University movement developed out of the identification that many Native American groups have poor access to both the provision of higher education as well as the expected subsequent economic benefit of a college education (AIHEC, 1999). Additionally, what higher education was available to Native students primarily focused upon assimilation tactics to hegemonic Western ideals (AIHEC, 1999). Since the late 1960’s, there has been increased effort toward the creation of Tribal Colleges and Universities, emphasizing self-directed policy while servicing the needs of local tribes (AIHEC, 1999). Likewise, there has been an effort in many locations throughout the world to enhance the access and validity of learning opportunities for indigenous peoples (World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium, 2016).

Within the USA, Tribal colleges and universities generally receive little to no state support due to the physical placement of the institutions on reservations that are designated as federal trust territories, not under the purview of property tax levying (AIHEC, 1999). As such, a significant amount of their funding comes from Federal
sources including sources allocated from the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act (TCCUAA) of 1978 (AIHEC, 1999). This fund is enrollment based and has never met the maximum authorized funding levels (AIHEC, 1999). Other sources of funds come from tuition and fees, some Perkins funding, Title III funding under the HEA, various block grants, and of course the many resources, funds, and grants associated with being declared land-grant institutions in 1994 (AIHEC, 1999).

Tribal colleges and universities face several ongoing issues: 1) facility upkeep, 2) faculty recruiting, 3) distance learning issues, and 4) changes to laws affecting students (AIHEC, 1999). A high portion of faculty who teach at most TCU’s are Native American, but there is an ongoing issue of retaining qualified indigenous faculty that both meet the increasingly constrictive accreditation demands and that would like to teach in geographically remote institutions (AIHEC, 1999). Low faculty salaries, reflective of ongoing financial strains, also make faculty retention difficult (AIHEC, 1999). Facility obsolescence is of ongoing concern as well, particularly considering the general financial difficulties in geographically isolated areas and utilizing donated or abandoned buildings (AIHEC, 1999). Federal funding through TCCUAA has been authorized for facility renovations, but is not funded accordingly (AIHEC, 1999). Online learning has benefitted students that are too remote to come to a campus, but expanding the services offered and creating a more reliable connectivity system is limited by funding issues (AIHEC, 1999). Welfare reform has caused many Native American groups that experience exceptionally high unemployment rates to have individual difficulty meeting the increasingly higher tuition demands in higher education (AIHEC, 1999). The USDA and the AIHEC have developed an agreement to expand access to USDA programs and
services to TCU’s, increase employment opportunities through career fairs and programming, increase development of instructional and curricular support, and to generally increase the cooperative educational and career networks between the two groups (USDA, 2010).

President Bush in 2002 ordered the establishment of a Board of Advisors for Tribal Colleges and Universities within the Department of Education, comprised primarily of members of Tribal Colleges and Universities (Bush, 2002). The goal of the board was to guide the fulfillment of the mission of Tribal Colleges and Universities as they seek to maintain language diversity, quality education, cultural traditions, and job training (Bush, 2002). Further, efforts to build endowments, improving accountability, career technical facility improvement, general facility improvement, and implement No Child Left Behind initiatives were under the purview of the board (Bush, 2002). Annual performance reports of the initiative were required by the plan, with an intended goal of significant improvements under a three year timeframe (Bush, 2002).

Recognizing an urgent need, President Barack Obama issued Executive Order 13592, intending to improve the opportunities for Native American students and the viability of Tribal Colleges and Universities (Office of the Press Secretary, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The specific focus of the executive order was directed toward improving the achievement gap, dropout rates, language preservation, and preserving tribal self-determination (Office of the Press Secretary, 2011). Through the establishment of the initiative, President Obama sought to establish a defined, aligned, and financially supported enterprise, focused on cooperation with the Bureau of Indian Education to enhance education provisions for Native American tribes and Tribal
Colleges and Universities (Office of the Press Secretary, 2011). Data driven decision making was determined to guide efforts to align education provision to tribal needs (Office of the Press Secretary, 2011).

The gradual political and cultural movement toward self-determination since the late 1960’s, both in the U.S. and Canada, has occurred at mostly associate degree institutions, involving mostly first generation and non-traditional students (Deyhle and Swisher, 1997; McLean, 1997). Many colleges offer efforts that are respective of individual cultural identities and generally supportive of welfare of the subpopulation. There is sincere effort to provide comparable programming as non-tribal colleges and also to provide linguistic and cultural tribal education (Belgarde, 1996). McClellan and Larimore (2009) note that many institutions are dedicated to programming reflective of specific tribal needs. Much of these efforts focus upon increasing employability while preserving cultural and linguistic indigenous groups (Bollag, 2002; Csonka, 2005).

Flaherty (2013) notes that through programming offered at the Nunavut Arctic College, Inuit language courses have been offered. The study by Flaherty looked at views of 24 students who had taken at least one language course, measuring the effectiveness of the program. Two acts by the Canadian Government encouraged the development of indigenous language programming; the Inuit Language Protection Act and the Official Languages Act. These acts were designed to aid in incorporating non-English speaking Inuit into economic opportunities. One of the issues that came to light from this study was the inability of Inuit elders in understanding public service and social net providers due to a language barrier. Other examples include members of Inuit being unable to pass along linguistic training to their children due to their own inability to
speak their native language. While government support has increased, the affect on indigenous populations has yet to be fully realized.

Students in the language program studied by Flaherty overall felt the program was valuable, that there was a need and urgency for learning the language, and that it is a means to preserve and develop culture. Recommendations from the study include expanding course options and delivery to more campuses. The ability to aid adult learners in learning their indigenous language and allowing aid workers to learn the language of those they serve enhances the quality of life for indigenous peoples, furthering both economic and humanistic development for the Nunavut region (Flaherty, 2013).

The role of Nunavut Arctic College is noted by Gaviria (2012) as the realization of indigenous self-determination after the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement in November of 1999. The Nunavut Arctic College navigates the process of educating Inuit in both cultural and economic means, attempting to shape educational provision in the form of indigenous interests while formulating a path toward economic prosperity. Self-determination is not necessarily realized as the structure of formal, Westernized higher education limits the ability to formulate meaningful and worthwhile experiences. Further, the private sector market economy is driving interest in natural resource extraction, but must do so with the cooperation of (and at a potential cost to) the self-rule government of Nunavut. The Nunavut Arctic College is seeking to navigate these disparate interests while creating meaningful experiences for students and maintain enrollment and retention. Ultimately, Nunavut Arctic College is attempting to design vocational programming that prepares Inuit to be the primary benefactors of resource
development, while trying not to harm cultural traditions. There is, however, a pressing immediate need to answer growing capital interest in the region. There is a feeling that answers must come fast or both economic and cultural value will be lost for the Inuit. Shaping meaningful adult learning experiences as well as meeting economic needs is a difficult balance for this institution. These efforts are shared among other institutions in Canada and Alaska (Jeffress, 2012; McLean, 1997).

Gaviria (2013) emphasizes the analysis of higher education in Nunavut and Greenland as a reflection of self-determination contrasted with the need for global economic partnerships. As these two geographic areas have gained greater independence through self-rule, they are seeking to define their future, separate from their colonial forebears. However, in order to operate and grow these institutions are trying to navigate the extremes of self-determination (de Laine, 1994, 1995). Gaviria advocates for meeting these divergent goals by identifying that Inuit culture is cross-national, affecting regions instead of just nations. By designing education to reflect a cultural basis for self-determination as opposed to a national basis for economic prosperity, the goals of the institutions may be fruitful, particularly in light of growing international interest in the region. Further work needs to be accomplished in delineating the parameters of self-determination, social stratification, and political representation. Additionally, recognition of unique identities and knowledge pathways are key to developing meaningful educational opportunities. Gaviria gives valuable insight into the varied and different pressures on Arctic colleges and the interests of Inuit populations, particularly in the realm of decolonizing the educational curriculum while still maintaining a structure that is similar to Western patterns.
Studying studied aboriginal student retention at three colleges in Ontario, Canada, Iacovino Hinds (2014) interviewed 31 students in total at several Aboriginal Resource Centers. The institution’s interpretation of data from the form of several indigenous paradigms and worldviews purposefully neglected Euro-centric viewpoints and methods. The study found that institutions are generally attempting to meet the needs of aboriginal students in a manner that respects their culture and viewpoints on education. This process is ongoing, showing growth, and reflective of shared efforts between government entities and indigenous groups. Iacovino Hinds found that some barriers to effective education provision still exist, however, primarily with longstanding issues of campus racism and isolation.

Other efforts made by the Canadian government to give greater voice to indigenous peoples are being pursued (Iacovino Hinds, 2014). Overall, there are more postsecondary credentials being earned at more institutions, colleges are working hard to create a welcome environment for indigenous peoples, and Aboriginal Resource Centers are connecting students to various social institutions and communities. Greater funding, mentoring, consultation with indigenous communities, holistic learning, role modeling, orientation, pathway access, and breadth of education providers are all requirements to increase student success. Much of these needs mirror the limited literature on indigenous student success, retention, and learning strategies.

Richardson and Blanchet-Cohen (2000) examined the different aspects of adult education provision for indigenous peoples in Canada. Various governmental and non-governmental agencies, international organizations, and indigenous organizations were reviewed, and surveys were administered to assess present and past educational
opportunities, as well as challenges for educational provision for indigenous peoples in Canada. Different approaches to adult education are discussed, revolving around formal and informal opportunities, self-rule approaches, partnerships, and skill set development. The study notes that progress since the pre-1970's governmental assimilation strategies is being made in achieving indigenous control of indigenous education, but much still is left to conquer. While many challenges in adult education persist, primarily regarding the negotiation of the variables of cultural identity preservation, economic need, and resource availability, success in outcomes and satisfaction is being realized in many areas, particularly where there is close alignment between provision of education sourced directly and to the direct benefit of the indigenous population. One of the large barriers to success in adult education in the region is the lack of qualified experts that may assume positions of responsibility and leadership in education (Richardson and Blanchet-Cohen, 2000).

Ilisagvik College in Utqiagvik, Alaska, has developed many programs in conjunction with regional government to satisfy the needs of the local native population ("AIHEC Welcomes Members", 2008; Edwardson, 2010; Hollingsworth, 2015). Heritage courses as well as vocational education are offered alongside numerous traditional college courses (Bates, 2013; Ilisagvik, 2016; “Ilisagvik College Earns”, 2008; “Ilisagvik College Given”, 2003). Like other institutions in the Arctic, Ilisagvik is navigating a path between responsibility to indigenous populations, natural resource industry, and accrediting regulation.

Research by Rønning and Wiborg (2008) looked at the issue of equitable education in the Arctic region in the interests of providing information for the UNESCO
objective of Education for ALL programming. While not a fully complete study due to
the limitations of access, language barriers, and time allocation, the study does provide
valuable information into educational access and procedures in the Arctic region. Several
regions (Alaska, Canada, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden)
were discussed in regard to the process of education and indigenous peoples. Issues such
as educational quality and focus were deliberated, as well as changing political and
economic ideology influencing the practice of educational programming. Within
Alaskan and Canadian regions, there is the clearest effort of any region to build
educational opportunities in the interests of indigenous peoples. Another finding from
the study includes the noting differences in educational opportunities between urban and
rural areas, with dramatic educational access challenges to the extreme rural areas of the
Arctic. Additionally, younger people (particularly females) are emigrating from the
Arctic in search for economic and educational opportunity. The availability for educators
(qualified instructors are hard to find and usually inexperienced), economic means, and
facilities are large challenges to educational access in the Arctic due to the vast expanse
and small population centers in the region. This causes education to be at a higher per
student cost than in urban centers, leading to issues of culturally relevant material, lack of
support services, and issues of educational quality. Moreover, while relevant data on
education outcomes for the Arctic region is difficult to ascertain, there is a suggestion
that poor retention and poor scores are characteristic of student performance.

Rønning and Wiborg (2008) further note that, in addition to the lack of qualified
instructors, there is a general lack of instructors with an indigenous background, made
more difficult with fewer students pursuing educational opportunities in the region.
Curriculum varies in adaptation to local needs, although it would appear that Alaskan and Canadian regions perform well in this aspect. Other variations exist in perception of educational worth and labor market demand for graduates. Finally, Rønning and Wiborg (2008) find that there is increasing national and international economic interest in the Arctic, and education programs can be an opportunity to capitalize on these interests. However, alignment to both cultural preservation and economic competence are challenges to each geographic sub-region.

The University of the Arctic (UArctic, 2017) was founded to establish collaboration between higher education institutions interested in, or located within the Arctic (UArctic, 2017). Their efforts are geared toward addressing cultural, economic, and environmental education in the region. Bollag (2002) discusses the reasons for the creation of the University of the Arctic cooperative was to meet the needs of a changing dynamic for students and adult learners in the Arctic region. Increased training to meet global employment demands as well as maintenance on cultural and linguistic preservation is in great demand and over the last several decades some governments have allowed self-rule for indigenous peoples in the Arctic (most notably in Canada and Denmark). With the freedom of self-rule and self-determination, so comes the need for developing sustainable educational programming to meet regional needs. The changing dynamics of economy and populations in the Arctic, both indigenous and otherwise, are driving development in educational provision. Further, the drive toward indigenous education being reflective of self-determination is emphasized and has many active parallels toward current theoretical efforts in U.S. Native American education.
Csonka (2005) expresses the development of study regarding Inuit historicities and proposes that their changing composition is a reflection of changing regional and global realities. More so, the process of historical awareness framed in modernity is a result of post-colonial developments. Essentially, there is an increased demand for the study of regional history and for preservation of indigenous cultural components, helping to identify the cultural and identity issues that lead to Inuit and Arctic social change. This demand is being realized through the increased ability for local and national governments to allow self-rule and self-determination in indigenous education processes.

The process of colonization served to neglect the traditions, identities, and histories of Inuit groups (Csonka, 2005). Formal education processes emphasizing Eurocentric viewpoints of history, culture, and identity were pressed upon indigenous cultures by immigrants, as part of a systematic subjugation of these groups. As self-rule was fought for, allowed and encouraged by local and national governments, the subsequent education development reflected both local historicities hybridized with Euro-centric traditions. The development effort continues, as impact from globalization is felt throughout the Arctic. Navigating this development path is central to many research agendas at higher education institutions in the Arctic. Recently, the notion of combining Inuit knowledge systems with those of other worldviews has been termed qaujimajatuqangit. As indigenous cultures of the Arctic continue to navigate these issues, the process of higher education may reflect both the humanistic as well as economic development of learners.

The history of the formation of the University of Greenland prior to the declaration of home rule by Denmark for Greenland is discussed by Jakobsen (2014) and
necessities, as well as creating greater social solidarity in the area. There was a
difference in approach between the University of Greenland development compared to its
predecessor, the Inuit Institute. Langgaard explains that The University of Greenland has
a much more focused mission to create globally competitive Greenlandic Scholars, to not
only meet the demands of society and economy, but to also be active creators and leaders
in the interests of the region. The Inuit Institute did not have such an emphasis, focusing
instead primarily on efforts of cultural preservation and, in some cases, skill development
for graduate employability.

After several years of negotiated development, Langgaard clarifies that the
formation of the University of Greenland was reflective of the interests of self-directed
cultural and economic realization by the Inuit and other Greenlandic peoples. Shaping
the institution with consideration for indigenous preservation and economic success was
no easy task, but was alleviated by governmental allowance and autonomy. Ultimately,
creating an institution that exhibits worthwhile ventures reflective of diverse stakeholders
may offer greater meaning to participants, greater worth to a culture, and greater retention
of participants.

McDonald (1996) highlights the University of Greenland’s course offerings,
school structure, and development plans prior to their move into the more modern facility
in Nuuk today. Much like Langgaard’s (1990) work, this piece illustrates the
establishment and vision for the institution, along with the long term goals for growth.
From a small group of 40 students at its beginning, to 150 at Langgaard’s publishing, to
250 at the time of McDonald’s piece, to now 650 students (University of Greenland,
2016) is steady, albeit measured, growth. This growth has paralleled institutional goals
and social demands for the region while also attracting scholars from Europe, Scandinavia, and Canada. The University of Greenland, at the time of McDonald’s publication, through the government of Greenland, funds the education of all students, including those Greenlanders studying abroad.

A background into the development of Greenland’s first and only higher education institution is given by Woodard (2008). The development of this institution has been in relationship to the needs of the small population on the large island, comprising primarily of Inuit and also some European immigrants. The framework of the University is in effort to provide education, partnerships, and economic opportunities to the area. Also, further studies expanding on social sciences and humanities are offered in their expansive campus, providing skills training beyond technical and scientific proficiency.

Experiences at another Arctic college are noted by Grydehøj, et. al (2012) who identifies the transitional difficulty of the archipelago of Svalbard from loose independence under Norwegian sovereignty to a more direct governance by Norway. Arctic exploration has recently become dramatically increased, primarily as resource extraction in the region becomes increasingly possible by a variety of nations. International negotiation and politics is shaping the viability of Svalbard as an international territory, leading to significant difficulties in the region. The University Centre in Svalbard (UNIS), established in 1993, is the world’s most northern institution of higher learning and focuses on climate and Arctic science, drawing students primarily from Mainland Europe (University Centre in Svalbard, 2014). Beyond the location
benefits for Arctic research, the institution aids in establishing Norwegian sovereignty of Svalbard.

Some of the issues present at UNIS include problems with the transitional residency of students and citizens, as there is neither economic assistance nor long-term medical care on the island. Still, due to the nature of the specific focus of UNIS, there is significant efforts to align student curiosity to academic fields and national interests. Many of the students are upper level or graduate level, seeking a unique and intensive learning environment. Specific strategies to meet the distinctive needs of these students is worthy of further study. It should also be noted that the students attending UNIS differ greatly from those attending Arctic colleges in Canada, Greenland, and Alaska. There are very few indigenous students at UNIS as compared to the high percentages of indigenous students in many other Arctic institutions.

The history of Inuit education in Northern and Eastern Canada is a focus of McGregor’s (2010) work, particularly upon the researcher’s role in navigating the governmental and tribal requirements, and expectations for research into Arctic education. The transition from marginalization to post-colonial self-rule affects the process of formal educational development. Navigating the provision of cultural tradition preservation as well as skills training for a globalized economy are priority efforts through this process. More so, the development of education parameters is with the culture of Inuit at its center, while only associated trade skill training is at the periphery. There has been significant effort since the early 1990’s to reverse the attempts at assimilation through education, a trademark of pre self-rule governmental and cultural management. Significant ground was made in discovering and developing relevant
education for Inuit, although McGregor is adamant that the structure (primarily through system centralization) remains particularly Westernized in composition, limiting the ability to fully connect to the needs of citizenry and hindering significant meaningful experiences for learners.

German (1997), writing directly before the formation of the Nunavut Territory, notes that there are two primary changes affecting indigenous inhabitants of the North; that of a continued changing cultural climate, and that of greater economic and global interests in the region. In order to aid in preserving indigenous customs, education systems are adopting technological means and procedures that allow the pursuit of knowledge into native traditions and language. Additionally, formal education systems are aiding in skill development that is deemed necessary for self-government. The Northern Student Education Initiative was put into place in effort to ease the path of indigenous peoples toward formal education and employment. Problems with this program include transitional adjustments of students as they are required to leave their home communities, causing stress. Retention is difficult in the program, as the outcomes are seen as misaligned to cultural and individual goals, and displacement is often not negotiated well by the student. Support systems have been developed to aid in the transition and adoption of academic achievement and job placement.

**Social Theory regarding Culture and Higher Education**

There have been numerous strategies and techniques that have been applied to education to attempt to harness greater student outcomes. The process of such technique in education it is perhaps best explained by the main thesis of one of the primary works of Jacques Ellul, author of, “The Technological Society” (1964), in which he outlines
how the adoption of technique has supplanted traditional meaning behind modern life. In short, he explains that how we do things has become far more important than why we do them (emphasis E.Brown). Such an understanding provides significant support to the idea that the value of higher education, and perhaps education in general, is not simply a means to an end, but more so intrinsically valued in and of itself, and that the adoption of technique negates the very purpose of education.

In his work, Ellul makes a variety of comparisons between traditional and modern societies (similar to the types of societies Emile Durkheim described more than a half century prior; less-complex, egalitarian, and mechanical versus more complex, stratified, and organic). When discussing the relationship of the individual to the centralization of power, he notes that in a less complex societies (he also uses the term traditional in naming these societies) the individual is connected to the centralization of power by their deep connections to the community and extended family. If a person in such a society has intent to change the society, they need only to present their opinion to their community for evaluation. In essence, a person in a less complex society is a direct part of the power base that rules that society. In a more complex society, this is most certainly not the case. The individual in a more complex society is connected to the centralization of power by mass media, bureaucracy, public opinion, and technique. If a person has intent to change the society, they need to proceed through a series of attempts at coercion, exchanges, and power trades, to which they have little influence and even less confidence of success, as Ellul explains.

When comparing moral determination, Ellul notes that less complex societies tend to be more egalitarian and morality is determined by shared cultural beliefs. The source
of morality in these societies limits individual power; no individual gains significant
authority over others as the society would then collapse from a lack of egalitarianism and
differing viewpoints. The individual has the best interest of their society at hand, because
it is only through the group effort that they can deal with the various issues of life.
However, in a more complex society, moral issues become much more difficult to
maneuver. More complex societies are highly stratified and morality is determined by
what advertising, bureaucracy, mass media, public opinion etc. say what morality is, not
necessarily based upon the lessons derived from communally shared beliefs and values.
Moral action is given little, if any value, as it takes away individual power in such a
society. Power and authority is seen as a distinct value in a complex society, and a main
source of guidance for members within the society. Stratification in complex societies is
dependent upon the goal of power attainment. The individual in a more complex society
is primarily concerned with their own interests and often becomes self-centered out of
practicality. As such, in a more complex society there tends to be a loss of civic duty and
an increase in aesthetic individualism. Because power is important in more complex
societies, any method to gain power is seen as positive. Any new technique is seen as
good, proper, and desirable in such a society.

Ellul offers that the attainment of technique has become the chief determining
factor in modern society. Instead of retaining communal, cultural, and socially shared
beliefs and values found commonly in less complex groupings, society has chosen to seek
efficiency at any cost through the adoption of various techniques to adapt to an ever
changing society.
Ellul suggests that under such adoption of technique there is a loss of individual purpose and meaning, while at the same time life dramatically increases its pace. He further argues that the approval of technique is in nearly every aspect of our lives, including in education. As existence for the individual becomes increasingly stressful, busy, and complicated, they seek to find answers and methods quicker, easier, and in new fashions or trends. Efficiency is sought in every aspect of life, even, as Ellul notes, vacations (the process is clear through the use of travel agents, and more recently with websites with the best fares, timeshares, etc.). No aspect of modern society, as Ellul identifies, is free from the grasp of technique application.

This whole process is supported by a society’s socialization agents, our symbolic presence, and our visual images. The process of transmitting information, particularly through advertisement and propaganda but also through education, becomes decidedly vaguer in more complex societies. In addition, Ellul argues that visual images have gained extreme power and coercive abilities. The individual is inundated by logos, pictures, and sounds, automatically prompting images to come to mind, many times supporting elements of commodity fetishism and/or conspicuous consumption. Ellul argues that there is less and less significant meaning behind specific words, and more effort toward creating imagery with various sets of sounds and ideas. People in complex societies tend to mistake images for reality.

It is clear to Ellul that in a more complex society, an individual loses touch with meaningful activity and connections to others. To fill this void, technique provides the structure, stability, and relationships for public opinion. Public opinion is seen as superficial but frequently emotional, becoming a way for the individual to relate to the
rest of society in a complex society. Public opinion, however, does not always address issues of significant social importance and necessity, but more so gives a false sense of worth and freedom, replacing the value of authentic relationships in less complex societies.

Ellul argues that technique and efficiency offer little of value to the individual. In a less complex society, shared morality gives answers and meaning to why individuals exist, and gives insight into larger life questions and processes. Technique does not offer such insight according to Ellul; it only tells us a process, a strategy, not a meaning. As technique replaces shared values, meaning and purpose are being replaced for the sake of efficiency.

When we apply Ellul’s theory to the work of educational leadership and student retention, there are several elements worth noting. Ellul (1965) notes that progressive education is primarily focused on the mental and social happiness of the student, whether or not the student is enjoying their activity, and whether they are adapting well to their environment and social peers. Individual attention is sought on all parts, and is not focused entirely upon the raw learning of facts and figures through instruction. This learning atmosphere and technique is, however, simply another method of applying efficiency under the guise of (albeit minimal) discovery. This technique is centered around the teacher (of which high demands are placed), who must be very adept at maneuvering through the seemingly endless manners in which to provide such an environment. There is the added emphasis that continuous adaptation in technique provides the required outcomes, of which there are vague boundaries. Effort is consistently made to develop the social awareness of the student at all costs, but in the
framework of technique. Instead of supporting the student’s aptitudes, cultural milieu, and interests, efforts are made in attempt to broaden their social awareness, adaptability, and ultimately their economic capacity. This emphasis is ever present in most retention models, including Tinto (1997), Bean (1980), Astin (1984), and Seidman (2005).

Higher education graduate employability is a striking motive within modern education policy, particularly in higher education, placing student interests, culture, and talent as more subordinate interests.

Ellul further notes that there is little freedom of deviation in this technological system. The structure, while it is constantly changing in style and technique, provides the process for orientation. All this is for not, however, as there is no satisfied agreement as to an appropriate outcome, since all effort has been made in the how, not the why. Individuals have little choice in the process and must abide by techniques given by others, all to an end that is vague, ambiguous, and seemingly without well-defined purpose. The student suffers through this process, being corralled through endless techniques and measurements, focusing on social awareness, pushed to achieve, but most often forcefully distanced from their personal and cultural goals. Technique is a requirement for this conformity and system, but in the process creates well adjusted workers that are poor at innovation and are often at a loss for meaning in their daily activity. In a larger picture, Ellul argues, society produces less innovators and more technicians. This is ultimately unsustainable, as societies change at varying rates and degrees. A society requires adaptable and innovative leaders, not simply competent workers.
Stivers work, “The Culture of Cynicism” (1994) and also in his work, “Technology as Magic” (1999) offer similar, if not updated, insight as Ellul into the affect the technological society has upon society. He offers specific clues as to the influence of technique on education, particularly higher education, “The growing technologization of the university is reflected in its bureaucratic structure, which means centralization of power and technical rationality, among other things. Our educational administrators are magicians par excellence as they recycle models and magical practices from the business world, including various assessment and accountability measures and planning exercises” (1999, p. 208). Additionally, when discussing the nature of the classroom and teacher, he offers, “The resurgence of interest in teaching in the university is not about the content of courses but about the style of the teacher. The search for the perfect technique that will both motivate students and make learning painless is as magical as the search for the Holy Grail” (1999, p. 209). Perhaps most clearly, Stivers states, “We have unintentionally created a technological and magical world in which there is no room for reflection, normative reason, and moral judgment. The university has abandoned its historical mission, always only imperfectly realized, to teach students to learn as much about themselves and their culture as they learn about the larger universe. We are training students to be unreflective technicians and magicians” (1999, p. 209). Such an argument fits well, not only with the narrative that Ellul offers, but also with the practice of modern higher education. Seemingly endless techniques for teaching, student progress measurements, student preparedness, etc. are proffered, with continuous attempts at identifying ideal types in methods.
It is clear from both Ellul and Stivers, the modern classroom is an environment of satisfying social needs, as opposed to personal knowledge development and training to pursuit of individual aptitudes, culture, and goals. By pursuing the technical satisfaction of creating positive student retention, institutions are perhaps neglecting a great value of higher education in the process, that of individual development reflective of their ability and culture.

More recently when discussing the practice of education and the interests of students, popular education critic Sir Ken Robinson (2013) notes, "there is no direct link between what you study in school and the work you do when you leave and the life you may go on to lead" and further, "...young people are often steered away from courses they would like to take in school by well meaning parents, friends, or teachers who tell them they will never get a job doing that. Real life tells a different story" (p. 28).

Robinson additionally clarifies that instead of trying to force an occupation upon a student, which is predominant in modern educational systems, emphasis should be placed upon encouraging the student to pursue their goals, while giving them the tools needed to complete that goal. Essentially, he believes that by aligning the educational system to meet the needs and expectations of the student instead forcing them into preconceived and arbitrary structures, greater outcomes may be had by both graduates and society.

Robinson explains that there are two primary means in which education limits your potential: 1) the structure of education teaches and measures a limited range of ability, forcing excessive conformity and, 2) educational environments neglect to address different learning styles (2013, 63). There is low status given to supposed nonacademic work, and high emphasis on verbal and quantitative reasoning (and measurement
thereof). This is of course reflected in nearly all the standardized testing from elementary through college, and even entrance exams for graduate school. The view of value and worth is narrow, and the view of “other” is broad. Our paths are shaped by these views, often guiding us to areas that are separate from our desires. The failure to address the individual visions results in students not being attentive to lessons they could care less about (2013). Providing an encouraging environment that allows students to pursue their interests provides an avenue for them to explore and generate ideas.

Robinson further identifies five broad areas that affect the well being of an individual: career well-being, social well-being, financial well-being, physical well-being, and community well-being (2013). Arguably, the only area of well-being that is concentrated on through modern educational structure is that of financial well-being. When you combine these areas with what Robinson states are the three core principles of finding your element (that each individual’s life is unique, that they create and recreate their own lives, and each life is organic, not linear (2013, 214)), it becomes clear that an individual’s path to personal success is hindered, not helped by the formal educational process.

Renowned sociologist David Riesman, in his book “The Lonely Crowd” (1950), offers deep insight into the change in society from traditional shared values to more chaotic situational morality. Riesman offered a theory on three different personality types: traditional, inner, and other. A brief summary of this theory follows, with further application to his views on education with respect to these social personality types.

The tradition-directed individual is defined by Riesman (1950) as, “…relatively unchanging, the conformity of the individual tends to reflect his membership in a
particular age-grade, clan or caste; he learns to understand and appreciate patterns which have endured for centuries, and are modified but slightly as the generation succeed each other. The important relationship of life may be controlled by careful and rigid etiquette, learned by the young during the years of intensive socialization that end with initiation into full adult membership.” (p. 11). Riesman also mentions that people in tradition directed societies place themselves in relationship to ritual and religion. Much of their culture surrounds issues of ongoing environmental and social issues. As such, little real effort is made to completely rectify the society of these problems, as it would remove the very binds that hold them together and give them purpose.

The inner-directed individual is explained by Riesman (1950) as such; “…the source of direction of the individual is ‘inner’ in the sense that it is implanted early in life by the elders and directed toward generalized but nonetheless inescapably destined goals.” (p. 14) Inner-directed people live by the rules and expectations they were taught in childhood. They tend to be confident and perhaps rigid in their views. Inner directed people are bound by tradition through the choices they must make, but in contrast to tradition-directed people, the inner-directed person recognizes and can adapt to other trends, values, and mores, so long as the primary goal of realizing their childhood rules and expectations are met. Through greater complex societies, the inner-directed person loosens ties with the community, making less intense relationships with principal social groups and agents. Morality is exercised to support implanted lessons from their childhood, instead of reinforcing communally accepted beliefs.

The other-directed individual is explained by Riesman (1950) as such, “What is common to all the other-directed people is that their contemporaries are the source of
direction for the individual – either those known to him or those with whom he is indirectly acquainted, through friends and through the mass media. This source is of course ‘internalized’ in the sense that dependence on it for guidance in life is implanted early. The goals toward which the other-directed person strives shift with that guidance: it is only the process of striving itself and the process of paying close attention to the signals from others that remain unaltered throughout life.” (p. 19). As organizations and bureaucracy enlarge, this type of person is promoted since other-directed people are flexible and desire to accommodate others to win their approval (and hopefully reap the rewards of that approval). Other-directed people consistently need to have their emotions reinforced and approved by others. Riesman offers that the desire to be approved, perhaps even feel loved, consumes current society. Relationships with others would many times appear to be less of an intense compassion and more so a desire for emotional support and authentication.

Morality for the other directed person spurs from contemporaries and the mass media, not from tradition or compassion. The preoccupation for mobility and success is driven deep into the character of the child. “...it depends less on what one is and what one does than on what others think of one – and how competent one is in manipulating others and being oneself manipulated.” (1950, 45) Other-directed individuals practice aesthetic individualism, the idea of doing good not for the sake of authenticity, but more so to look good in the process. Success and progress is linked to efficiency and is inseparable from the other-directed individual.

When we look at how these personality types impact education, Riesman notes that for the tradition-directed classroom, teachers tend to teach children to learn morality,
appropriate behavior for adulthood, the societies' history, culture and political practices of the society. Students have freedom to do a variety of tasks, but are limited by responsibility to the group and culture.

Within the inner-directed classroom socialization becomes separate from education. Emphasis is placed on learning the facts and figures and spending a minimum amount of time on discipline and organization. The teachers do not address emotion or social concerns. Riesman explains that morality and goal-setting are expected to be the responsibility of the parent.

Finally, for the other-directed classroom, teachers are expected to address the emotional and individual talents of the student, to reward the student at all effort and to make class fun. More emphasis is placed upon the child's emotional and psychological adjustment than on their academic progress. Happy, attentive, and obedient is the goal. Appropriate adult behaviors and ideas are hidden. Only proper interaction between students is emphasized.

Riesman further argues that as society gradually moves from predominantly inner to mostly other-directed types, generalized goals and broad standards characteristic of traditional and, to some affect, inner style are not emphasized in the classroom, but instead an importance is placed upon social adjustment, academic progress, and uniformity of the student. Instead of educating students on various boundaries of culture, teachers are trained to value conformity to ideals and cooperative play. The teacher, as Riesman (1950) puts it, becomes more of an opinion leader for learning groups, emphasizing "their cooperation, their (carefully stylized and limited) initiative and leadership" (p. 63) as opposed to their production or scholarship. Riesman notes that the
emphasis on cooperation and leadership often leaves the student without tangible results, leading them to continually, and fruitlessly, seek deeper meaning in life. Authority is exercised by the other-directed teacher by shaping the curriculum, feeding the process of discovery, maintaining systematic order and progress, and getting everyone to some arbitrary minimum goal. This effort does not offer the student latitude for personal inquiry or discovery, limiting their growth in the ability in the future to investigate and innovate. Essentially, students in the other-directed classroom have learned to play nice and to be evaluated, but certainly not to be inquisitive or obtain attitudes of a productive nature. Technical skill becomes less important, giving way to features of teamwork.

Shared values, beliefs, and common baselines for morality disappear as a result of the development of the other-directed society, not the least of which education plays a major role. Meaning, purpose, a sense of identity, are all but lost in one of our most prominent socialization agents (Riesman, 1950).

Riesman notes that there is also an educational emphasis on developing more holistic learners, providing general education in place of strict technical or skill positions. This often has the affect of denouncing the intent and practice of technical professions while elevating the position of general studies, all under the guise of becoming better citizens (1950). This effort, however, rarely produces a broad understanding of life, but more so provides learners means of maneuverability, efficiency, and niceties. The result is only greater stress on the student/worker to be everything for everyone, but lack an understanding of purpose.

We may apply the lessons provided by Riesman to the study of leadership, particularly in education. Through several examples we can show the failings of other-
directed personality to effective leadership. First, when there is the expectation of the other-directed classroom, there is absent meaningful vision and mission, replaced by social nuance training. If the goals are to educate students on society’s culture, knowledge, and purpose while giving them experiences to boost their aptitudes, the other-directed classroom do not meet these goals. It is difficult to build a brand, as Collins (2001, 2005) and Hirt (2009) suggest when the mission does not match an outcome that is not shared among the populace. It is tough to build advocacy and enthuse evangelists, as per Crutchfield and Grant (2012) when the entire structure of education is not necessarily on educating youth. Riesman is also easily connected to Robinson’s work discussed earlier. When there is less support for student developed ideas and abilities, there is more emphasis placed upon on standardization of knowledge. In other words, if the goal of education is to be other-directed, to act nice, then it really doesn’t matter what is taught outside that goal, and that is reflected in the ineffective method of standardized testing.

Impact of Climate Change on Arctic Populations and Education

Due to the climactic changes in the environment, societies in the Arctic have to adapt rather quickly to meet the economic, social, and political needs of their populace (Hovelsrud, et. al, 2011). Globalization and resource extraction in the Arctic are creating increased economic partnerships, tourism, shipping and general activity, leading to a number of logistical, legal, and structural problems for Arctic societies. How these societies are adapting is of concern, particularly in light of such a great rate of change. Hovelsrud, et. al, (2011) note that it will continue to be an issue for indigenous populations to maintain their culture in light of employment opportunities for non-Arctic corporations. With as much change that is occurring in the Arctic region there is
economic opportunity, but at a cultural cost. Issues of land rights, pollution, health, sea-level rising, and thawing permafrost are increasingly becoming impactful issues for indigenous peoples.
CHAPTER III

METHODS

*Instrumental Case Study*

The research design chosen for this topic was an instrumental case study. Data was gathered via the utilization of a variety of tools including annual reports, interviews, direct observations, and related document reviews. The case study approach is appropriate for this research, as Yin (2003) and Yansan (2015) suggest that the focus in a case study is on answering “why” and “how” questions, the participants of the study are not manipulated, context is sought for explaining the phenomena under study, and the boundaries are unclear between the context and the phenomena. Through the gathering of data for this research the primary source of information was derived from seven semi-structured interviews. Other resources, such as institutional annual reports, course catalogs, direct observations, and print materials were analyzed.

Instrumental case studies are used to accomplish an understanding about a larger issue, using the case study as a supportive role (Baxter and Jack, 2008). In this particular research, the case study looked at a specific Arctic college student retention process compared to other institutions in hopes of identifying further indigenous student retention characteristics. This choice of method is appropriate due to the small population size of both the number of institutions to be researched and the small population size of retention policy decision making leaders at these institutions. Obtaining data was best determined by the use of a case study method due to the very specific details and parameters of the study group. Additionally, by retrieving records of student persistence, strategic planning documents, accreditation standards, as well as a variety of other source documents light
was shed upon this research topic. Quantitative research methods are not ideal for very small population samples (Creswell, 2015), although future research on this topic may warrant student or population surveys.

The unit of analysis for this research is the decision making process of leadership at an Arctic higher education institution in regards to student retention policy. By analyzing the variety of parameters that influence such decision making and the various influences on student retention, greater insight into retention policy is identified. The boundaries to this case study are by time, place, and activity. Recent efforts across many educational bodies have had a determined focus on student retention policy (Tinto, 1997; Seidman, 2005). Arctic colleges and universities tend to have unique circumstances regarding their student composition (very high percentage of indigenous students), environment (Arctic climate undergoing significant change due to global warming), and several other institutional characteristics (Gaviria, 2013).

This case study is instrumental in nature, with the general purpose of refining higher education retention theory. By offering insight into a unique population, area, and culture often overlooked by researchers of student retention, greater insight into policy may is achieved. Some cross-case analysis is also completed for comparative purposes.

The case study sample frame included semi-structured interviews with staff and administrators that are associated with retention procedures at a single education institution, document analysis, annual reports, and some direct observations. The were several Arctic institutions from which to choose, most are accessible by flight, and most have either English as their main language or as a prominent second language. Specific staff and administrative participants from one of these institutions were requested via
email inquiry (see Consent Letter, Appendix B). After completing the required Institutional Review Board process at Governors State University and after obtaining proper research site institutional permission, the researcher contacted specific staff and administrators to arrange meeting times, traveled to the institution, conducted semi-structured interviews, collected associated documents, made direct observations, and gained greater insight into retention strategies and implementation at the specific Arctic college. Other institutions in the Arctic were also reviewed via documents available on the internet. Creswell (2015) notes the population for this type research methodology should be, "...a group of individuals who have the same characteristic" (p. 140). These leaders who were selected have authority or are associated with the production and execution of retention strategies at the respective institution. The participants were asked a series of prepared interview questions (Many included in the transcription portions in the Analysis section). The data collected through these interviews allowed the researcher to gain significant familiarity with the retention strategies developed by leadership at the Arctic institution of higher learning.

For this research the researcher utilized purposeful sampling, which Creswell (2015) describes as, "...researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon. The standard used in choosing participants and sites is whether they are information rich" (p. 205). Further, Creswell (2015) emphasized that purposeful sampling is, "...based on places and people that can best help us understand our central phenomenon" (p. 204). Purposeful sampling applies to both individuals and sites, and was appropriate for this case study research due to the uniqueness of these types of institutions and locations. As the population size (selected administrators in
charge of retention strategies) is small it is necessary to review the specific stories and ideas of a specific location and individuals that can best address the research questions. Specifically, the researcher utilized Extreme Case Sampling as it is used to describe particularly enlightening cases and to which Creswell (2015) describes as, "...a form of purposeful sampling in which you study an outlier case or one that displays extreme characteristics. Researchers identify these cases by locating persons or organizations that others have cited for achievements or distinguishing characteristics" (p. 206-207). Due to the very nature of the scarcity of these institutions, their existence alone may be considered extreme cases. Also, due to the uniqueness of the variables studied (retention and Arctic colleges) this sampling technique is the most appropriate for the study as per the guidelines set forth by Creswell (2015).

Permission for access and research were obtained from the President of the Arctic college chosen for the study. In late 2016, an explanatory email was sent to the President discussing the background of the researcher, requesting permission to conduct the research, and included a detailed explanation of the research topic, sample questions for the interviews, and a copy of the IRB Informed Consent form. The President requested two letters of recommendation, subsequently provided by two members of the researchers Capstone Committee (it is important to note that the letters were not addresses specifically to the Arctic college or to the President, but letters of recommendation in general support of the researcher). Request to contact staff and administrators in order to interview them regarding retention policy was subsequently granted by the President. The researcher contacted and requested via email (with explanations of the research topic, a copy of the informed consent form, and sample questions) nine staff and
administrators, received eight replies, and set up interviews with seven respondents for a period in late January, 2017. One of the respondents could not accommodate an interview as they stated they had many obligations to fulfill with specific institutional reports at that time.

The Governors State University Institutional Review Board approved the research proposal and informed consent form on November 14, 2017, assigning it project number 16-10-10 (See Appendix C and D for approved forms). Informed consent forms were presented twice to each respondent, first in the initial email request to interview, then again prior to the start of the interview. All seven of the arranged interviewees reviewed and signed the consent forms. No tribal permissions were required nor sought to conduct this research.

Data Collection and Procedures

The choice of a specific institution is reflective of scheduling consideration, flight cost, and availability of interviewees. For the focus of this research question (looking at retention strategies implemented by administration) students were not interviewed, although the opportunity to do so may be valuable in future studies.

It was considered best to conduct interviews when semesters are in effect and administrators are most available. Travel to the Arctic was more fiscally possible during the winter months, despite the weather conditions being quite harsh (the local wind chill factor was frequently between -30° and -70° Fahrenheit during the data collection period). The research site is located north of the Arctic circle and located a few miles outside of a town with a population of less than six thousand.
Specific leaders at the selected institution were asked to participate in 1 hour semi-structured interviews that took place in areas most beneficial to the interviewee, typically their offices. These leaders are in charge of determining the best course of action for their institution and are in the position to evaluate the needs of students and the implementation of retention strategies. Over the course of four days, seven interviews were conducted. During the interviews, the researcher asked opened-ended questions to retrieve data about the subject of student retention. Interviews were recorded and notes were taken during the interviews. All records and information that may potentially identify participants were kept under lock with the researcher and destroyed after transcription and analysis. The researcher recoded variable values to preserve anonymity, for both the individuals interviewed and the institution as a whole. Every effort was made during this recoding to limit impact on data interpretation. Due to the specificity of the role of each participant, confidentiality is of utmost concern. Pseudonyms are used for each participant and potentially identifying characteristics of the participants are omitted.

*Data Analysis Plan*

After the interviews were conducted it was necessary to, as Creswell (2015) states, explore the data, “...to obtain a general sense of the data, memoing ideas, thinking about the organization of the data, and considering whether you need more data” (p. 242). After transcribing the recorded interviews, the researcher reviewed the transcriptions and developed a basic understanding of the overriding concepts contained therein. Next, it was necessary to code the data, signifying and identifying themes in the data. By selecting specific commonalities and issues of importance and disregarding extraneous
data, it allowed useful information to be voiced. Creswell (2015) offers several steps as general guidelines to coding qualitative data:

1. Conceptualize the work and note ideas as they come.

2. Choose one interview text and identify a few major concepts within.

3. Identify text segments that are unique and assign a code word or phrase to that segment.
   a. You can use in vivo codes (in the participant’s own words) as appropriate.
   b. Lean code, only identifying a few codes the first time through

4. After coding a whole text, list each code word or phrase and group similarities, reducing the total number of codes to a more manageable amount.

5. Compare the pared list back to the data and see if they fit, identifying new codes along the way and using participant’s words as they support the codes.

6. Reduce the number of codes to 5-7, identify those that have the most support and/or are the most unique. These categories are the themes of your data.

By using coding to develop an awareness of the themes of the data, the researcher was able to understand the broader meaning put forth by the respondents. With this particular study the researcher was interested in finding out how institutions guide student retention in spite of rather unique geographical and social conditions. Effort was made to triangulate the data sources by comparing findings (and themes) between different participants, compare findings with supportive documentation and other data sources, as well as comparing findings with some basic campus observations.

In addition to interview coding and analysis, it was also necessary to examine the associated data derived from document analysis, direct observations, and archival
information. This was accomplished by, as Baxter and Jack (2008) note, “pattern matching, linking data to propositions, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis” (p. 555). The overarching goal being to understand to what degree the variety of data points are contributing factors to the research topic.

Validity Issues

As Creswell (2015) states, “validating findings means that the researcher determines the accuracy or credibility of the findings through strategies such as member checking or triangulation” (p. 258). Ensuring that the findings are both accurate and credible is of course very important. A few ways to ensure validity is to check the data using multiple data sources, establishing context using detailed descriptions and procedures, and by using overlapping methods and in-depth methodological descriptions (Creswell, 2015). It is important to address the researcher’s personal biases and assumptions as well as note the limitations of the study (Creswell, 2015). During the interviews, the researcher asked each interviewee differently phrased questions regarding the same topic in order to discover any individual or group variance on the topics. There was effort to triangulate the data sources by comparing findings (and themes) between the different participants and with supportive documentation.

The potential to allow member checking in which the researcher would ask one or more participants of the research to check the accuracy of the account would be a possibility, however, this procedure was seen as too difficult, as returning to the sites will be prohibitive due to time and finance issues. Also, being such a small sample size, anonymity and protection of respondents to their colleagues would potentially be in danger should cross-member checking occur.
Ethical Considerations

Due to the potentiality of private issues being discussed during the course of interviews, it was necessary to obtain and maintain trust with the respondents. The purpose of the study was disclosed to participants prior to the interviews. Respondents were free to participate or not with no harm developing from their choice. There was a refrain from deceptive practices and participants were informed of the researcher's role. The research site was respected by the researcher, ethical interview practices were maintained, and confidentiality of the participants was upheld. Appendices A, C, and D contain the CITI completion certificate and IRB approval for this project. Specific quantitative data regarding particular retention and persistence trends from this institution was not included due to the potentially identifying features. As there are relatively few higher education institutions in the Arctic, specific quantitative data could potentially identify which institution was studied, and subsequently the specific personnel interviewed. The exclusion of such quantitative data was made as a protective choice for the respondents as well as seen as peripheral information in the scope of the research. Future research may warrant quantitative data comparisons across the regions, much of which may be found from annual reports and data readily available online.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Seven interviews were completed with administrators at the college. The information contained in this section is not arranged in chronological order, but grouped into coded sections. The main topics approached are student preparedness, homesickness, attendance, alcohol and substance abuse, student pipelines, cultural inclusivity, staffing, infrastructure, distance education, relationship building, cultural integration, and curriculum development. Below are their pseudonyms and their titles at the institution followed by the transcribed dialogue from their interviews, arranged by topic of importance.

Alberta    Director of Adult Basic Education
Banu       Registrar
Anaaya     Director of Financial Aid
Dagmar     Dean of Academics
Ipiktok    Dean of Students
Kuvageegai Director of Native Studies
Biisaiyowag President

Student Preparedness

Homesickness and Attendance

Homesickness and attendance issues are very frequent concerns with their college students. Often, it is a difficult choice between continuing studies and returning to the student’s family or village to assist with subsistence living. There is generally a lack of support shown by families when students initiate their educational pursuits, although
there appears to be some general approval upon completion of a degree. Some of this lack of support may possibly be explained by a level of distrust by prior generations regarding Western style education. As mentioned in the literature, prior generations of indigenous groups were subject to onerous and traumatic assimilation attempts by the government, taking children away from their families and communities, educating them in the Western style in far away camps, and frequently causing them to never return. It doesn’t appear that such fears arise to the same level with native citizens today, none the less; there is an apparent degree of hesitation along those lines in the community.

In order to aid in meeting current student needs, to help provide avenues for students to experience education and maintain cultural and family ties, several interviewees discussed the merits and efforts of distance education, individual attention, hand holding, and creating a student pipeline. These efforts are not made without difficulty, but illustrate a common commitment to student success, both at the college and within the community. Alberta discusses the unique needs of the students and the college’s efforts toward satisfying student expectations regarding family and subsistence obligations.

EVAN:  What is unique about your student needs and your efforts to address those needs?

ALBERTA: There is a huge cultural influence up here, with the subsistence life. There are needs to make the schedule flexible and offer online learning. It’s tough to motivate students to show them it enhances their life. Many are disenfranchised and need individual attention, tutoring, listening, goal setting… We also try to align our goals to their goals.
Banu had much to say regarding student preparedness, particularly addressing the specific needs of first year and first generation college students. She also notes the negative opinions in the culture surrounding Western education styles. There are often a set of barriers to entry and persistence that students must surpass. Perhaps most notably, the achievement of a degree holds little to no economic or occupational benefit, although that is changing. Individuals on the job market within the region with a high school diploma enjoy ample opportunities for high paying, long term employment. Essentially, there is no need to acquire a college degree to satisfy many prosperous occupational goals. Such barriers are fairly unique to the region and are addressed by unique strategies.

EVAN: From a registrar’s perspective, what are some of the unique issues do students at this institution have that affect their persistence and retention that you can identify?

BANU: Right, so because we are a native college, and because of our unique location, a lot of our students come from very different background than from what I would say other areas call a typical college student. So most of our students, ninety, ninety-five percent of them are first year college students, first generation. There is a lot of negative opinions from this culture about education because the western world kind of pushed the earlier generations here to go boarding schools to get rid of their culture. Some people have come up and said they were forced to learn English instead of the native language in order to be a citizen. So that’s a very big thing. So because the parents and grandparents don’t
really have a positive outlook of education, the students don’t see it as a necessity. I would also say that here you can get a job without anything more than a high school education in the six figures, no problem. You know, that’s not something that is needed to be successful. Just the way that the region is. Pushing the importance of education definitely hard. And then retaining the students, the ones that are here in town, especially village students, the come in and live in our dorms, then once they are here they can see that they can get a job with the regional government with very minimal experience, so why should they get more than a twelve credit certificate? You know, why would you get an Associate’s or Bachelor’s?

EVAN:  
_The prior assimilation attempts by the government, that clearly would have a big impact on opinions and ideas. How does this institution separate from that, how does it strike forth in a different way? How do you combat those types of opinions?_

BANU:  
I think that is an ongoing struggle for us. I haven’t been here very long, but I am still learning the culture and how we attack different things, I mean definitely when I go to conferences to get training, or other people go and they come back, our struggles are so different than other peoples. For instance, our student services center is set up, and their spending time waking up students for their classes, because the students just don’t see that as an important part, but student services in a regular institution doesn’t deal with waking up students or making sure they’re getting their homework done. They’re there for support, mentally if they’re struggling through that, it’s just different.
Along with the struggles to get students through the process of entry and addressing their attendance, administration must also attend to rather dramatic student academic preparedness concerns, often longstanding, in the community. Banu speaks further to this issue.

EVAN: How are remedial needs addressed? It seems now that most institutions do it a bit different, so I am very interested to know how you identify and align those specific students to their needs.

BANU: So we have a few different ways of doing this. Once students register for classes they have to meet the prerequisites. Most of the time the prerequisite for a one hundred level class is an Accuplacer score, ACT score or SAT score and those scores are outlined by our math and English faculty, they have like a little commission that meets, as well as the Dean of Academic Affairs. They talk about what goals they want, what needs that are necessary for a student to get into a business, an entry level class and how much reading they need. They, in the past, have done three levels of English, zero hundred level courses, and we also have three levels of math zero hundred level courses. A math faculty member, the head of the math department, has worked very hard and done a lot of research for her dissertation about this, figuring out how to help students. She’s found that students, if they to succeed enough they can be placed in a one hundred level course, we call it Math 105, as long as they have enough time with the instructor. So we have two levels of Math 105, one is just your typical two days a week, but then one is your four days a week. You have that extra communication
with your faculty member and students can get extra homework help, ask more questions. Some of the days aren’t as mandatory, like you don’t have to come to class this day, it is a homework day, or a help day, but she has purposefully set up that time in their schedule. They’ve actually seen a lot of success with that. My husband actually works in the school district. So we are seeing a lot of the difficulty and how the students are struggling, and needing remedial needs from the high school. The middle school doesn’t have a requirement for the students to pass their classes to move on to the next grade. As long as they were there at least one day of the whole semester, they move on to the next grade. In a typical middle school, you have to pass your courses and succeed in order to move on to the next grade. Once I get to the high school then, math, English, history teachers are seeing fourth grade all the way through twelfth grade levels in one class. And so the difficulty there is extreme. I don’t think the remedial course issues fall back on the high school, because the students come there and that’s a crazy difficult job to try to bring everybody up to the level, while still challenging your higher succeeding students. So, I think the way students come to us is very different. Yeah, I don’t know if that helps.

Banu also discusses at length students being unprepared for the navigational aspects of enrollment and financial aid. This too appears to be a result of a lack of individuals from the community that have attended college. With a lack of experience from family members in navigating the process of college enrollment and with such close student/family ties, it is often no surprise that individuals find the process laboring.
BANU: As far as students, I get the lack of knowledge about schooling has a large impact. The fact that students don’t understand really that there are consequences. Like I was saying, the middle school students, there’s no consequences for not showing up to school. So when they come into my office and ask why do I have these grades or why do I have a large bill and the come back to me about this, well it’s because you weren’t attending classes and there are consequences there. You’re getting put out in the real world. And so that is not really understood before they get here. So it’s a big shock for a lot of students. I know we had one student, so we work really hard to get them through financial aid and everything, so yes I’m the registrar and yes I’m the admissions head, but I also help students get through the financial aid process. It goes admissions, financial aid, and then back to me for registration, so Anaaya and I work very closely and, I mean, it’s a lot of handholding. One student went to get her Bachelor’s down south, transferred down, good student, very driven, she was going for nursing, but she went and didn’t understand all the consequences of the financial aid side of things, so she got a ten, fifteen thousand dollar bill from this private institution, when here, because she is a native student and Anaaya does a whole lot of work to help them out, you know there was never a bill. So, getting them to understand those little barriers that cause them to fret.

The situation of attendance is not solely a college concern. In a follow up question the researcher inquired as to the long term reality of attendance and
handholding. Graduates often do not meet the occupational attendance expectations of their employers.

EVAN: If they aren’t prepped for basic soft skills and work related skills like showing up, and if they aren’t getting that starting in middle school, yet they don’t need more than a high school education for a lot of the positions around but they need these types of skills at least. Are we seeing from your contacts in the community are we seeing that problem, from high school graduates that don’t go to college but go into industry not showing up?

BANU: Absolutely. Attendance is a big issue up here. Even my employees struggle. I mean, I didn’t grow up here, even in the region. I grew up further south, so I grew up under the expectation that you show up to work, you show up on time, and you’re there, no exceptions. Unless you’re truly, truly sick. That’s really not the case up here. That is really not the case up here. Anything family takes priority. Anything personal, they subsistence live up here, they need to prepare for whaling, or whatever the case might be, the students just drop off, because that is more important than their education. If a student's family is part of a crew that caught a whale at 5pm, they’re gonna be up all night butchering it. So they're not going to show up. So I do think we run a fine line even here though about holding hands, holding hands too much, or trying to get them to go on their own, and that's a struggle too. Figuring out how to get them to be independent.

My supervisor is the Dean of Academic Affairs and her favorite story about one of our graduates here is eye-opening. She told it to me when I first moved up here. On graduation day, a student was getting his AA, came up to her and said,
"Dagmar, I feel I have succeeded because I can wake up on my own without an alarm." Like, that's the definition of success. That's very different then what we would think. It's just, yeah, different struggles and learning.

Banu further describes the pull from family and community having an affect on student attendance. As the literature notes, the closeness that the students feel with their communities and families is not a unique characteristic for indigenous groups.

EVAN: *When students enter, what are their biggest concerns?*

BANU: In my opinion it would be the leaving home side of things. Because of the subsistence living and different ways of living up here, it's important for the student to be home and helping out the family. Um, then it's very family oriented community. That's one of their morals. So, being away from home if they live in the dorms, that's a big problem. More of that I see with the construction trades because of those classes, those students really need to be here, because they build, they built the mini-house last semester. They have to be here in order to see how to weld or whatever it might be. So being away from home is I would say the number one on that.

EVAN: *Some of the most persistent students are in the trades, but also those students have problems with homesickness?*

BANU: Yes.
In attempting to identify the differences that students at this institution experience as compared to institutions elsewhere, the researcher asked Banu to offer some insight. It is clear to her that the student struggles at this college are unique and impactful.

EVAN: *Is there a difference between this native college and native colleges elsewhere? Can we pinpoint that difference? What are the differences between here and the other Native Colleges?*

BANU: I think there's major similarities, especially with the native colleges on reservations. But, I guess the differences would definitely be where our students background and where they come from. I was mentioning with the schooling, the middle school and high school struggles that we have, I don't feel like, I mean yes they have students in remedial courses in other native colleges, but I feel like ours is a little bit of a bigger struggle for some of those reasons we already talked about.

Annaya offered similar thoughts on the student preparedness issues brought up by Banu. Often, the basic expectations of enrolling and registering are quite foreign to incoming students. They are often ill-prepared to navigate the numerous processes and duties required of them. Despite this, the college makes significant attempts to provide pathways to enrollment and registration, with some success.

EVAN: *Can help identify any common issues or concerns your students regularly have navigating financial aid?*

ANAAYA: Certainly the first shocker is, "what? We've gotta pay for college?" That is the big deal. Just plain old education that it is a normal, a normal thing to
have fees and tuition associated with higher education. So, educating them that this actually is actually is an affordable institution, it's a good stepping stone to other institutions, it gives them a good, it could give them a good foundation by coming here and continuing on somewhere else, if they want to go somewhere else. But, we have programs here that will get them what they need vocational and degree wise for our community. Um, so just getting over the initial shock, that you know, they need to find funding, or pay for it out of pocket, that's shocking. And then there are deadlines of gaining funding, there's most students do not plan ahead. They live in the moment. The students I deal will, that's a big deal. Working on the deadlines. Knowing the college environment, because there are the normal college things.

Evan: *So when they come to you and you help them navigate these deadlines, the shock of the tuition, does that turn some of them away? How do they react to that?*

Anaaya: Thankfully I have a mix. I mix of people, like, "okay let me get it done, I'm doing it, here we go". But the majority of them are like, "aw, man, I don't think so." Or they'll be super passive and you have to handhold all the way. And remind and follow up all the way. It goes both ways. There's a few that are very motivated and can do it themselves but the majority like personalized attention and guidance. And if they want to live in the dorms they get a lot of guidance, because it costs more to go to school here if you're going to live in the dorms. The housing costs as well as having a meal plan.
EVAN: *How do you see financial aid affecting retention rates here, as far as navigating, how much influence does the cost have on this population?*

ANAAYA: Once they figure out the system, they're good to go. It's just that every person lives up here always feels like they're the exception. I'm sorry, it's like a community mentality. I'm the exception and you have to make that exception for me. So, like "oh, I missed the deadline, that's ok because you push it through for me right?" "Oh, I'm so and so's so and so. You know. I get to go right?"

Thankfully I have some government guidelines for some government programs that it doesn't matter who you are or what you do, if you don't qualify you don't qualify, if you don't meet deadlines you don't meet deadlines. That's out of my control, but the other stuff is just everything. Retention, they just have to know it and know they can do it and do it.

EVAN: *So confidence is a big issue?*

ANAAYA: I would say so. And, um, a lot of our people I don't think have, I think we have a lot of first generation, first year students. Even though we've been here for twenty years.

EVAN: *Do you see the students being aided by their family as far as social support? Not only in the college in general, but in this process, navigating financial aid?*

ANAAYA: I don't see that at all. Unfortunately, I think you get the support when you're done. "Yeah you did it, you got an education", but in the meantime, no I don't see it.
EVAN: Do you think a lot of the families know about the scholarships and financial resources?

ANAAYA: No. Only the educated ones. And there aren't very many of the educated ones. You see, we have a lot of jobs up here, and not very many people to fill them. Especially if they're bigger jobs, so why go to the school if you can get a good job? And you have more opportunity and I'm grateful for that because I've started, I came on slope with an AA already, and I was able to start at the bottom and work my way up. I actually did data entry, learned how to run an office and now I have my own department, but I'm a department of one. One and an intern.

EVAN: That's very interesting. Is there a big issue with attendance?

ANAAYA: Umm, kind of. It depends on which students you are talking about. We have students that are not, they may be admitted to a program but they are not full time. Those ones, they have a full time job and go to school at night. Those students tend to not have the issues compared to other people not employed and going full time. There is a different motivation for, I'm not saying all of them, but the ones that I deal with a lot, that get a lot of my attention, because we need to follow up through, and guidance and encouragement, and every student, you know, their impact, not finishing is a big deal.

EVAN: Considering that, how is your role different than the same position at a different institution? What do you encounter differently on a regular basis that a person in a same position at a different institution would experience?
ANAAYA: Well, people, students seeking an education in the traditional system are usually more self-service. Here we really having to recruit more than, just like, people who are on the fence about it, you know, we really have to give them a lot of attention to get them to actually try.

EVAN: *What type of recruiting, and this may be more of a marketing question, ...*

ANAAYA: No, we work together actually, we have a recruiter in our department, I'm part of student success, I'm not part of the business office, we're academic.

EVAN: *So what type of marketing is done then?*

ANAAYA: We have a real live person who goes out to our villages and does recruiting visits. She attends conferences that deal with the students that we need to see. You know we are having a big traditional celebration soon, she's going to be there. We have a regional conference, she was there, a big regional conference with the traditional native games, and while that is going on she's there. All the college and career nights at the high school, she's there, I'm there. And we're actually going to the elementary school tonight. But our recruiter goes everywhere.

Students often lack cultural experience outside of their direct communities and families, leading to some difficulty in navigating the expectations of higher education. At least part of college is discovering new forms of knowledge from expansive sources. As such, the process of learning may require students to expand their abilities beyond
their experiences in a manner perhaps different than with other colleges. Ipiktok explains further.

EVAN: How do your students have unique needs as compared to students in other institutions?

IPIKTOK: I think one of the things that is really unique among our students is that a lot of our students are from rural communities. They've never seen, a lot of them have never been outside of those communities and a lot of them have never experienced anywhere outside of our hub communities. Like for example, we have several outlying villages and the town as our hub community, so a lot of our students have been to the town but they've never been to a large city. So the experience that our students have might be completely different then students further south have. You know, I remember a time where we took students down to do job shadowing during summer camp in the big city and walking into a large department store was an overwhelming experience because they've never seen a store like this big. They're used to their little community stores, or you know, since you've been here you've seen our local store. That's it, that's our store..., so that whole experience is a lot different. You know one of the things that I think is unique with our students is that our students don't have that experience of outside of the region, and for a lot of them outside of their communities that they're aware of.

EVAN: How does that play into effect when they come here with regard to education? Do they have differing opinions about education than other students might have?
IPIKTOK: It does affect them. I think one of the biggest problems that we face with our students as far as persistence and retention go is homesickness. You know, a lot of our students are used to subsistence life, they're used to helping their families and a lot of them that is what is, that is what a lot of families depend on. For a lot of our students that are here, it's, it's a hard choice to make to either go to college or just stay home and help my family, to get a job and help my family pay the bills, or a lot our students babysit, they have younger siblings. We don't have daycare in our communities. It's pretty much find somebody that stays home and is able to watch your kids. So a lot our high school students are used to missing school to stay home to babysit and watch their younger siblings. It is always a tough choice of having to decide between family and coming to school, and there are often some of our students that don't have their family support being here. So a lot of times their here on their own and really learning the ropes to make it on their own. We do have a few students that succeed and a few students that end up going back home.

EVAN: So how do we, to that effect, that decision to come here with not as much family support, what is the deciding factor for these students? Why do they say, "you know what I'm going to go to college, I'm going to do this", in spite of not having a family necessarily wholeheartedly in support?

IPIKTOK: Well, for some of the students that I have had in the dorms and some of the students I do have in the dorms now the deciding factor with them is that they wanted something more, they wanted something more, they wanted to experience what it is like outside of their communities. We have a couple of
students here that are even looking into transferring into a four-year degree program because they want more out of life. Some of them see this as an opportunity to grow, to develop and then, and then we have some students that see this as an opportunity to better their communities and work in their communities. I know we have an health program that focuses on growing our own, getting our people trained and get jobs so we are limiting the task on hiring outsiders to come here. As you can see our weather is, it's a huge factor into people staying here. The darkness is another huge factor. It's always too something, too cold, it's too dark, it's too something. And we end up wasting money when people, when the outsiders we hire end up leaving. So we have this huge goal of being able to grow and train our own, and our college is the only institution within the regional communities that can provide that training, which is why we try to partner with other entities and employers here so that we are able to provide those trainings to grow our own. So, you know, there is a lot of different factors on why our students decide to come to college even when they don't have the family support. And some of those are why.

Accountability is a reoccurring theme with several of the interviewees. There is apparently a difficult line to walk with regard to student servicing. It may be that significant opportunity for student retention success is made as the college attempts to navigate the behavioral and cultural expectations of the students and community with the academic and social expectations of providing a college education. Ipiktok notes the basic tasks of such a negotiation, as she describes the need to wake dorm resident
students up for class. She also discusses the draw of family responsibility as a significant reason for student departure.

EVAN: *What are the struggles that you have in your position at this institution that factor into student's success and retention? What are the issues that you feel like you continually have to address that directly impact student's success?*

IPIKTOK: That's a tough question. I have been with the college for seven years now, but I just transitioned into the Dean of Students position six months ago. But prior to that I oversee our health program and worked with specifically with health students. But I can say that since I have been here, in the six months that I have been here, one of these things that we have been working on is of course, training and making sure we are compliant with government regulation and student safety and whatnot. But as far as helping students succeed I think the one thing that we've been working on is getting students to be, to take more accountability for their own education. I mean we do a lot of great things with our students, and we try to get them to be accountable in a way that they wake up on time for their own classes, that we're not knocking on their doors to wake you up. And that we work with them on mentoring them, and providing leadership skills. I think one of the biggest things is that we've dealt with is getting students to go and get the services that we provide. We can say we have a tutoring center, but are they going? Obviously not if you're getting the same referrals from faculty saying they student still hasn't completed work, the student, so... we have the services, the problem we are finding is, that a few students are utilizing those
services to pass their classes and then we have students that just don't go.

EVAN: _So attendance is a factor as well?_

IPIKTOK: Right. Right, a huge factor into that. You know, and a lot of it has to do with, you know, students, like I said you know, teaching students to take accountability. It's a lot different in the communities because they will miss school just to babysit. They will miss school just to do anything but go to school. So training them to remove that habit or that schedule they are so accustomed to is something we're facing here at the college.

EVAN: _So why do you think that is? That they'll miss school to babysit, they'll miss school for a variety of reasons? That attendance is a factor? That they are reluctant to get the services that the institution provides? What do you think some of the core reasons for that are?_

IPIKTOK: I think, you know, you know, at a very young age a lot of these students are trained and I fully understand coming from a big family myself, to support your family, you know, be there for your family, to help wherever you can so when you grow up in a household that demands that you hold up, that you help support, sometimes it's not even a question whether you go to school, or help your family, or help your siblings. We had a student last year who ended up going back home because there was so much going on at home and he just couldn't focus here. And we find that is a distraction for a lot of our students when there is a death in the family. That is a complication for a lot of our students because they can't focus. And being, living in a small community, everyone is related to everyone. Everyone knows everyone, so when somebody passes away
in a community it really distracts our students, especially if that's their hometown. If their aunt or their uncle, I mean we had a student leaving, she had two uncles that had passed away. You know, it's a lot for our students to stay in school and try to focus when that is going on, especially if you are away from home and you can't be around family. And your here, and pain, you can't be home, and so, a lot of times we have students that end up going home and don't come back.

EVAN:  

Must be hard to try and work them back into college.

IPIKTOK:  

It is, it is. And you know we do have students that eventually do come back and work on getting their degree, but you know life happens and a lot of the time when you live in a small community, you know, when something tragic happens it affects everyone.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Alberta mentioned that alcohol and substance abuse was at least one of the barriers to success for students. Other interviewees noted similar concerns, despite the difficulty of access to alcohol in the region. Likewise, as with many other human services offerings in the region, there is a lack of safe spaces in the area.

EVAN:  

What kind of specific barriers to you see existing for your students?

ALBERTA:  

Alcohol and substance abuse. They also have issues with core basic skills, single parents, and there is also really no safe place for them to go to. Lots of times they have to go outside to get treatment.
Anaaya goes into further discussion regarding the issue, particularly in regards to student well-being and success. It is clear that the issue of substance abuse has been an issue for a while and the topic does not have a clear path towards resolution for the region.

EVAN: *With all experience that you have in your different roles and seeing college from different vantage points, if you had the ability to change anything for the betterment of students, if you could change something be it in financial aid or somewhere else, what would you do or what would you have done?*

ANAAYA: That's a very complicated issue. Cause one train of thought, yeah make education free, the other point is I know the results of education free, it doesn't mean anything. They don't care, and come back next year and try again. There is no accountability. So, what would I do? I really don't know, cause I think if I could change society as a whole I would want our communities up here to lead sober, healthy lifestyles and have the emotional stability that that can bring. To be able to excel in anything they do. It doesn't have to be a Western education, just being sober and emotionally stable will bring you success or make it easier no matter what you do, whether they live the subsistence lifestyle or work in education. It's just really important to not cut your potential by ruining your brain, ruining your mental faculties. We could do so much for our community here if people were motivated, if you know cause marijuana is big.

Related to the topic of student preparedness is the process of creating a student pipeline that aids in attracting and maintaining a consistent student body. Anaaya
discusses the impact of the college presence in the community, as well as leadership qualities to that effect.

Evan: What have you seen has been the most successful in getting and retaining students?

Anaaya: The fact that we are still here. Just being available, we're an option, is a big deal. They start recruiting as young as middle schoolers here. We have summer camp programs and all these programs start young, get them started thinking about college. Just that they know we are there, we are an option, I think is good. I don't know, our current administration is really the most transparent President we've had, and she just recently became a doctor, she got her Doctorate, and I think that is a very good thing. A role model to show our students, and she is half native as well. I think her and I are alike in that we didn't grow up here. I think she had more access to here than I did, so, yeah. So we had the luxury of more Western education.

Institutional efforts to increase enrollment at the college are limited due to the nature of their status as a native college. As discussed elsewhere in these results, distance education has been a great success in many ways for the college as a whole and for students, but such success is limited due to enrollment guidelines, as Dagmar points out.

Evan: Has there been any marketing efforts to try and draw in students from elsewhere for these online blended formats?
DAGMAR: Yes, and no. And it's a double edged sword. We are a native college. We need to maintain a large portion of native students. And we have to be very careful if we fall under that we lose our status as a native college.

EVAN: *What is the rate now?*

DAGMAR: It's in the sixty's. And we are actually on the lower end of the spectrum for the simple reason that our region doesn't really have reservations and typically, native colleges are on reservations, which means that's largely where their population comes from. The town is about, I want to say sixty-five percent native. The villages are ninety percent or more. So the town is very mixed and that is where many of our students come from. So in terms of trying to recruit from outside, we've tried to form partnerships with other native colleges and we form partnerships with native entities. We just started a partnership with a native health consortium and have a dental health therapy program, an Associate’s degree. We try to be strategic about that. Most of their students are native. Either they come from other regions in the area, so we try to serve the rural areas of the state, but we are very, we're cautious about the partnerships that we form in terms of overall attracting students from out of the region. I would say we don't ever turn anybody down, but I would say in terms of aggressive recruiting, no.

Dagmar offered further thoughts that the current efforts to attract and retain new students works well, but could use some development. Such efforts must be under the umbrella of the unique cultural lens of the region. As many native individuals are not aggressive in demanding solutions to college navigation concerns, the college must adjust
their habits to be proactive in determining student needs. Additionally, clear, step by step paths toward completion, with benchmark achievements along the way, appear to be received well by students, their families, and the community.

EVAN: Is there anything that maybe hasn't been done but that you've seen or thought about that maybe should be implemented that would hopefully increase student retention?

DAGMAR: Um, you know we're constantly, I think, like any organization, trying to improve, trying to tweak things. I think if there is anything I can think of is to really have students in sort of this pipeline and make sure there are no gaps. Our students, and I think that's very typical of a native culture, will not go after things as aggressively. Some of them will, I don't want to say all of them, but the majority of them, they're quiet. So if, maybe you're a student and I'm your advisor and I forget to contact you, you would not be coming to me saying hey what about the next semester, the fall semester what do I need to take. So I would say, to some degree, based on my experience, they tend to be passive. So we try to close these gaps with staff and faculty to make sure that students are aware of what is coming up, that we are interested in their success, that we care about them and that they're in this structure that they're part of this framework this scaffolding, that carries them forward. As I'm thinking too, some other things that have worked with retention that have worked to backtrack, certificate programs. A two-year degree for our students might as well be a Doctorate for anyone else. It seems like it is a long, long way. So we've created for almost all our programs a certificate one, which is like a fifteen credit, a certificate two, of course the
courses all roll over into the next one, which is thirty credits and then degree. Students find that helpful, it encourages them in moving on, they can walk across the stage, they have completed something. So, I just wanted to add that. It's been very helpful in terms of encouraging, in terms of taking, it's kind of when you took your English 111 course when you go to school, that first research paper, ten pages seems, might as well be one hundred pages. But you know the instructor, no don't worry about it, you do first this, your outline, your note cards, your bibliography, you do all these small steps, and the idea is to realize that it really isn't all that bad, you take it one step at a time. And we do it the same way. And in the last in our liberal arts degree we have a liberal arts certificate which doesn't mean something in the end in terms of overall accomplishment, probably not a whole lot, but it signifies that you've take a certain amount of your core classes, you're halfway there and we want to recognize that. And students find that encouraging. And you know they post on Facebook, and you know obviously this is a small community here, and you get a lot of encouragement through the community then, they say, "oh, way to go" and you can do this next step and so forth.

EVAN: *So there is that type of support from families and friends when they complete?*

DAGMAR: Yeah, yeah.

EVAN: *What about leading up to that? Is there a large portion community that gives them support on the front end? Applying, pushing, encouraging to start?*
DAGMAR: No, I would say there is not that much. In part, I want to distinguish between the town and the outlying villages. I think in the outlying villages, family fear to some degree that the children leaving will mean that they will become white, they will lose their culture, they feel they want them to stay close to home. So I would say there's not always a lot of support. It's also difficult at times when students come here in the dorm and, let's just say and example I can give you, students get homesickness, it's inevitable. We try to work with them but you know, but it's inevitable. They call their parents, and parents are very quick to, "oh, don't worry, here's a ticket come back home". Another parent, in maybe a Western culture, might say, "you know what, tomorrow you'll feel better you just have to stick it out" and give them the encouragement. Here I think is very quick the impulse to, "oh don't worry about it, come on home". I think what, on that retention, another one, I should have made a list beforehand, what has helped is the concept of the pipeline. We have got a significant amount of dual credit students. This gives them the familiarity of what college life is like, we have middle schoolers come. So the idea is that the college is not, so the high schoolers take actual credit classes. So the middles schoolers they come and visit. We have regular, called The Glimpse Program where different faculty, we have a group of middle schoolers come in for activities in the various disciplines. So the idea is from early on at least to, for the students to have an awareness of college, to have an awareness that college doesn't mean that you have to sit behind a desk, that you can do a variety of things there, you can do a number of things. So, that is not so much in the retention but I
think overall in knowing or thinking what my path will be and being familiar, so this not just not being unfamiliar entity in their life.

Awareness and acceptance of the role of college for pipeline students is one thing, but the cultural competency of students is yet another issue that is addressed. The structure of primary and secondary education limits the ability to effectively provide language preparation. Students entering the college have limited knowledge beyond their family and community regarding their culture, particularly language. Kuvageegai notes that there are certainly efforts to rectify that issue at the college, but without foundational support it remains a difficult task.

EVAN: So what struggles do you have in your position? Do you have any struggles?

KUVAGEEGAI: Um.... Yes, I actually do. So, as you might have heard our native language is not spoken as much as it should be, um., so the people that are fluent are actually ages you know in their forties on up, but people under that are not fluent. So, the people who are fluent and have been teaching the language are, you know, retiring, they're in retirement age, so kind of having to teach what I know, I'm not fluent but I know some, and just teaching what I know is a struggle, if that makes sense. The language is a big thing up here. It's just hard finding instructors. I guess, there are efforts up here like you know Rosetta Stone now, there's a computer program, um... that the school district does, but...um let me just explain.

EVAN: Go ahead.
KUVAGEEGAI: So, the kids are in school, they have let's say, ok the elementary, middle, high school. Especially the elementary school, they have what, like twenty-five, thirty minutes, forty five minutes to learn a day. And you know, you can't learn a language that way. So like if the parents aren't fluent and they can't teach their kids, but when they're in school they'll only learn a little bit ... yeah...it doesn't work that way.

Creating a culture of inclusiveness is vital to aiding the institution in meeting its retention and persistence goals. Different aspects of the college work with a knowledge of fluid integration of cultural awareness, student support, and dedication to finding a balance between satisfying student needs and preparing them for the future. Biisaiyowag discusses the role of cultural integration and community cooperation throughout the college. Often these efforts are successful, but frequently matters relating to community or family are sources for student departure.

EVAN: *Can you give some specific examples of cultural integration?*

BIISAIYOWAG: Sure, I think you know for instance, let's take our math class, where we do some instruction in some of our indigenous numerical systems and make connections between those systems and the Western system and utilize that as a topic of conversation. A lot of our cultural events we have that happen throughout the year, classes either go to them or assignments are structured around them. A lot of our business programs in support and connection to our native regional corporations. So that our students really are able to think of real life examples and things that affect them on a day to day basis, in regards to
whether it's customer services, or investment, or financials or things like that, so, making these connections. In addition, then you kind of go out of curriculum, of course we have our whole native studies program, which is completely infused with all of those pieces. But then you go to the kitchen and we try to serve things that are a little bit sometimes connected to our students. We can't serve our traditional foods of course because they're not governmentally approved, but other things like reindeer, we're able to put those into a dish, which is kind of caribou and gravy over rice, different things like that. And then of course within our dorms, and within our student success center, a lot of the activities they do are all based within culture. So we do a lot in regards to that, that's a huge mandate of ours and something we take very seriously. Um, the other things we've done that have been successful are, I think our learning resource center has had some really good success. In regards to supporting different students we do different hours, we do different locations, to find where, where we meet. We have, what else have we done. I'm trying to think. There's a long slough of things. So those are some of the most important things. When we talk about challenges, I'll be my broken record because we were just talking about it out in the hallway, but I think that a big challenge is, that is everybody is different and it is hard to pinpoint why a student isn't retained or doesn't persist. It's hard to find out exactly what took them away, and every student has some sort of different reason. I guess I would say that a majority of them often are just focused on family, responsibilities, work, things like that, that require them to leave. We have this thing, we deal with a lot of homesickness, and being called back home by family members.
Often our students that come here are the ones that, are the ones who are doing a lot in their communities prior to them thinking that they're going to take advantage of the opportunity to get an education, and then they get here and there's such a big gap, there's a void with where they were in their communities, within their families. And often, family members say, "come home, we miss you". So, we deal with that a lot, every semester.

Navigating such diverse and intense factors to attempt to maintain positive student retention is difficult, as is the process of discovery with regard to student struggles. It is clear that Biisaiyowag cares deeply about the success of students, but finding out what is wrong is difficult, and helping them is often out of her control.

EVAN: *How do you find out this information about these struggles that the students are having?*

BIISAIYOWAG: So we do a number of surveys, we have quite a robust institutional research report and one of them is called our Early Leavers Report that does address both retention and persistence. We also have retention and persistence reports as well, but, within that one report we actually do survey the students and ask them. And so when I say that everybody is different, of course there might be three that say family, well there's different reasons for the family situation and there are different reasons for needing to go back to work. We don't often find that it was anything that had to do with us. I think that is also a big challenge, is that often retention and persistence isn't institutional, it's personal, and so how do you try to address that for every single student is very, very hard.
EVAN: So with that knowledge that a lot of things that draw them away from the institution are out of the hands of the ability to frame and solve, for those things that are possibly in your realm, how do you use this information, do you use it to guide policy, is there a formal approach to this, regulatory, internal regulatory situation? Or collaboration?

BIISAIYOWAG: I would say it's both, kind of formal and informal, we definitely, as President I mandate that my Deans and Directors absolutely look at the retention reports, look at the institutional research that we do and create some of the top ideas on how we're going to address some of the issues that have come to us. And one of them absolutely is this issue of retention and persistence, so what do we do with this information. Well, sometimes it can be used for policy and we take it and say, ok, so how is our policy supporting this or how is it not? On the flip side some of it is a little more informal, where it's like, ok well we can change that really quick, or we can, you know for an example a couple of years ago there was something to do with, you know, students didn't have money for long distance phone calls home, so all right, well let's just get them all phone cards. Why don't we just address them right her right now. And so it's things like that that are very, in some ways they're very small but they have a big impact, and those are things we try to implement right away.

Faculty and staff development is addressed by Dagmar, but it is worth noting that the President does press the importance of faculty in engaging the students in this issue of
navigating between understanding the technical aspects of the college and their cultural understanding or familial obligations.

EVAN:  I was hoping you might be able to speak to the faculty role in retention, in student retention. What type of initiatives have been done that have been shown to be successful in faculty support and development to help aid in student retention?

BIISAIYOWAG: Ok, So within the faculty realm I think one thing is we've really tried to implement kind of a more intrusive advising structure where students, where faculty are a little more involved as advisors, a little more involved in the student progression through, now you know we have some positives, and some of it hasn't been as successful as we hope and we have to kind of address those in different ways.

EVAN:  What's been the faculty feedback on that?

BIISAIYOWAG: Um, it's mixed. Some like it, and some do not, or some think there are different ways that we could do things.

EVAN:  What's the student feedback on this?

BIISAIYOWAG: I think it's mixed as well. Some of them like it, and some of them don't. I can't, you know, too that some of our faculty are good advisors and some aren't as good and I think that also plays into it. Just recently, a great example is that I had a student contact me about some financial aid dates, I said great, and I forwarded this to the financial aid manager and asked her to work with registration, and the student and I said, you know, you as a student can register a couple of months prior to our registration event. She said, well I had no
idea we could register prior to the registration event. Now, and she gave me some feedback that she was frustrated with her advisor for not telling her, now one hand absolutely, her faculty advisor should have, now it's also right there in our catalog and if she'd had read the catalog she would have known that she could register this early and, but at any rate it's information sharing, so it's kind of a give and take.

EVAN: Some of your colleagues have also mentioned the difficulty of the level of handholding with some of your students, and how that might, sometimes it's helps, sometimes it doesn't. Can you speak to that a little bit?

BIISAIYOWAG: Sure, for us, I can't say just how much the fact of this progression of education has really affected our indigenous people around the world, but especially in the Arctic and in particularly here region. We think about education in a sense that just, you know one generation ago, my dad's generation, they were shipped off to boarding schools, not able to speak their own language in schools, not able to participate in their community activities, totally kind of stripped in some ways of their culture. So you have, you know, a thirty to fifty year period in this where people still feel the pain of all of that, of all those issues, so here we are trying to really change, and the school district has the same issues, but really change the face of education. So, a majority of our students that come through our door are first generation college students, first time college students, first generation. Also, not necessarily all in tune to the bureaucratic nature of what education, higher education means. So it's our job in a lot of ways, when we talk about higher education to somehow alleviate those issues of this kind of non,
I guess it is hard to translate that, within this indigenous context. So we do, we do have to hold the hands of our students in this sense of walk them through every single step of the way. Now, on one hand that can be really positive because we can give the students a great start and have everything ready at their finger tips so they can move forward and maybe the retention, and then retain and persist. On the flip side, devil's advocate would say, well, are you just trying to reinforce or just perpetuating this issue of not doing things for themselves and figuring things out for themselves, and I think it's a really great conversation and one that I don't think really does have a good answer for. But, I suppose in some ways we've found more positives with it than not, but at some rate, and here's a great example of this, we, have for years, and I've been at the institution for almost ten years now, in various roles, um, but every semester we have new students who arrive at our doorstep to stay in our dorms who didn't even bring shampoo, let's put it there. They didn't bring shampoo, they didn't bring soap, they didn't bring deodorant, you know they didn't bring, they brought some clothes and that was about it. And so when it comes time to take a shower they come walking in to student success saying, I need shampoo, and conditioner and soap. And, it's like, well, you didn't you know bring any of that. So for those of us, you know I grew up traveling, grew up going places, a camp here, a camp there, you know that was just the norm, you just brought all your toiletries with you and, and so... in light of that, this semester was actually the first time I honestly got my act together and actually communicated, but, why don't we create a little welcome bag for all of our dorm students in particular. So on one of our trips to the big city, you know
let's get a whole bunch of toiletries from the travel size type of a thing, and forty bucks, a gift card to the local store. And of course, up here, forty bucks doesn't go that far, let's be really honest, but it's something, and so we handed a gift bag to all of our students that walked, you know to all of our dorm students. And said, here you go. So, on one hand, very, I mean, very nice and it gives them a good start and they aren't struggling when they're first trying to cope with being away from family and being in this new place and getting ready for school, they're not struggling trying to find shampoo. On the other hand, are we just perpetuating this needy, the fact that they need something and we're just going to hand it to them. So, I said well let's, we'll just do this and see how it goes, but I definitely take the criticism that shouldn't they already know. And even though we provide them with a list of things that you should bring to the dorm, of course they don't. And I mean, maybe in the majority of their places they probably don't have little shampoos, I mean it's kind of cost prohibitive, and they don't always come with any money. Um, in, ah, so, um, one of our students, needed his transcript to apply for financial aid, but he needed to pay ten dollars to pay for his transcript but he didn't have any money. And so in that case, in our, and actually was probably, you know, we told our controller, well that was really nice of you, you didn't, but our controller said, I'll pay your twelve transcript fee and I'll get it for you. Which was nice of her, I told her, but, she said, well I just felt so bad, and I said, well he got it, you know, he got a free pass there, but be careful because now everyone's going to... I wouldn't advocate for you to continue to do that. But that's a situation; they're just not really prepared.
Biisaiyowag further emphasizes the importance of leadership to listen to students and make them the center of all institutional efforts. Likewise, elsewhere she stresses the importance of listening to the needs of other shareholders in shaping their institutional policy.

EVAN: *What type of advice would you give to higher level administrators at other institutions to aid in their retention policy?*

BIISAIYOWAG: Wow. What advice would I give. I think, um, perhaps just overall, you need to listen, listen to students and make students your center, your focus. I think you need to have somebody, have employees that students can connect to. To really make some, make differences.

EVAN: *Is that for everybody, would you piece out non-native college and native colleges?*

BIISAIYOWAG: I think so. Yeah, I think that native colleges, they do understand that a little bit more than non-native. They understand those needs.

EVAN: *But the same advice.*

BIISAIYOWAG: I do see, yeah. Because that's I think how you really try to, you really need to know what the students need.

**Staffing**

*Role Complexity*

Many of the administrative roles at the college require considerable effort to navigate, incorporating numerous roles that are often singular in larger institutions.
Banu, makes note of the complicated process of the many roles that are required of her position. It is clear she feels she has a closer relationship with other registrars at native institutions because they share similar loads of responsibility in the position. Further, it is apparent that she feels her role and her institution are different than other colleges and requires additional effort to function appropriately.

EVAN: How does your position differ from those in other institutions? You say you came from further south, did you work as a registrar down there?

BANU: I didn't, this is my first registrar position. Um, I have worked in higher ed though before. And even, I wouldn't say that I can't, not I can't, I would rather be friends with other registrars with other native institutions, because we understand each other a lot better. But I guess the differences would be the load of the job. When I go to the big registration conferences.... When I go to those conferences and have a one-on-one conversation with another registrar, they're the registration department and then they have somebody to do graduation and do records, and to do all these little things. And then they have a whole 'nother department for reports and a whole 'nother department for admissions. That is not the case, and so they don't quite understand everything, and so there are a lot farther and different things than I am, but at the same time they have a lot more staff, they have a lot more donations from graduates, they have a lot more... So, I guess that's where the difference is. I very much bond with the registrars that are in a similar boat.
Anaaya gives some insight into the often difficult roles that college employees must inhabit and the difficulty in maintaining qualified personnel at a native college that is geographically remote. Here, she discusses the duties and expectations of the college's recruiter and the difficulty in retaining qualified personnel, along with a few words on employee turnover.

EVAN: That's got to be a big expense, I understand that traveling to these other villages is expensive?

ANAAYA: It is. The bigger budget in our system, not only does she go and present, she has to come back and follow through. So she'll call, or she will put them in our systems so we will know that they had an interest, you know. She's just one part of it all. Sometimes instructors make connections and those are very meaningful and helpful. We have a lot of stuff going on, but the worst part, a big challenge besides our students when you're talking about an institution, is just maintaining and attracting qualified people, because you might have somebody here, but then their spouse hates the town and they have to leave. I am the third person in this position in the last ... four years.

Staff Transitioning

Speaking to trends in the process of employment in the region, Anaaya discussed her development as both an employee of the college and also as resident in the region. While there is great variance to the path of employment for many people in the region and Anaaya's experience highlights the unique difficulty of navigating the region and the college.
ANAAYA: I came to the region with an AA already, and I was able to start at the bottom and work my way up. I actually did data entry, learned how to run an office and now I have my own department, but I'm a department of one. One and an intern.

Later in the interview Anaaya added the following, showing the development of her emotional intelligence and path to her current position in financial aid. Her path to and within the college is similar to several other personnel at the institution.

EVAN: How long have you been with the college?

ANAAYA: I started working for the college in the late nineties, due to politics of their administration, I decided to leave in the early 2000’s, I went and worked for the school district until our daughter was born, then I was a stay at home mom for a while. Then we moved away and I got, oh, in between there I had little jobs for the college here and there, then I wound up closing out and managing a grant they had for them from our home further south. So that got me back in the door and then they wanted to keep me when the grant ran out, they wanted me to do something else and I had like three other jobs offered to me at the same time and I was weighing my pros and cons, and went back to the district because I needed a job and it was the better pay. I made a promise to that person, I'm going to stay until you retire. You're just giving me until you retire, and he's like, “No problem, I'm going to retire in like three years!” Turned out he retired that year. So I wound up staying at home again. And, um, then some stuff changed in our life and I decided that I would, we got the business, then some jobs came up over here
and they asked me to do this grant job before and I went ahead and applied. It turned out that somebody was more qualified than me, but they wanted me, but they were more qualified than me. So they hired us both, they hired me as a placeholder really, so that when they had a job that would come up in the future, I don't know if they knew if this position would come open, it's just they had it, they brought me in, the person that got it, she's an accountant, it's way better fit for her. I realized as far as grants administration goes, I'm not a grant administration, I'm a grant program person, there's a difference between a writer, a program person, and an administrator. I'm a program person. This job is a mix of grants management, cause that's federal program that we're running, that's grants, and people.

Evan:  *This is just what you were talking about, the ability for them to keep qualified people on, requires a bit of negotiation of position.*

Anaaya: It's taken my experience from the late nineties to know, to prove my worth, to know my worth, and to negotiate for it. So, they got me at a steal, I still bargain here, but for them, but I'm really, I've actually found what my career choice is. I've done a lot of things, but this is the one I really like. And I like the native college system. The people I can relate to. And I am half native, half .... The types of people we serve, I get it. So if I can stay in financial aid in a native setting that is the route I would go. Or even with a native college fund. Something like that and I'll be happy.
Kuvageegai also experienced transitioning through various college roles, although her dedication to the issue of indigenous culture preservation has held throughout all her positions. Her passion for her community and the students of the college is authentic and inspiring.

**EVAN:** *How did you come into this position?*

**KUVAGEEGAI:** Ok, I, there's a lot of transitioning. I worked for the President, I was like her assistant's assistant, a way down there on the pay scale. But I worked there and then I moved up to the front desk, then I moved into Assistant to Native Studies Coordinator and then I moved, when they left, then I moved up into my position. But I got my associates here at the college in Native Studies, so... yeah. I mean it's something I love, something I'm very passionate about.

**Hiring and Turnover**

Employee turnover is also a significant issue at the college. In the following dialogue, we see that it is not only difficult to maintain qualified personnel, but also to provide the necessary employee support. Anaaya also gives insight into how her level of emotional intelligence factored into her persistence as an employee. Housing, illness, and cost of living are all factors that affect faculty and staff departure.

**EVAN:** *That's tough to maintain institutional knowledge from year to year with that type of turnover. You gave me one example, a spouse may not like the town, what are some other reasons for that turnover?*
ANAAYA: You weren't a real good fit. You may have interviewed well, but when it comes down to it you just can't do it. Illness too. Illness happens. Oh, housing. They got here and they no longer have housing, or they couldn't find a place. They stayed in the dorms for a period of time. There is a faculty and staff area, but it's temporary, it's supposed to be like for a year, and then you can get it extended depending on the situation, but dorm life is not fun. It may be convenient, but it's not fun. You saw the commute. Housing is a super duper issue for us. Super-duper.

EVAN: Is there a plan to tackle that issue?

ANAAYA: Not really, no. Now that the oil is laid off it is a little better. The hospital, they are building their own, they've built several new duplexes, they're still building them for their people, so that's several more housing opportunities that might come back to our community. So, I mean housing is a big deal. ... The turnover in people, seriously, there are only so many educated people that exist here or came back here, native or non-native, but then everybody has to be brought in to fill the jobs.

EVAN: That's gotta be difficult to attract them and then keep them. You mentioned a few issues, housing, illness, as reasons for why people might depart. Do people have an issue with the pay scale?

ANAAYA: Usually no. We tend to get paid more, but our costs of living are higher, but if you're not going to stay here permanently, like you're going to retire somewhere else, if you're on the regional retirement system, which a lot of jobs
here are, you get your highest years here, so that when you retire somewhere else you will have a higher retirement.

EVAN: So that actually hastens the departure?

ANAAYA: The highest two years is what they need. I had someone that came here, he planned on only working two or three years, and then at that point, well, at that point I might as well stay for five, because five is on the first tier of retirement, like vesting. But there's a lot of people, you just don't want them to go, but they get talked in to staying a little longer, then a little longer, then a little longer. So, just keeping qualified people and you know, I did grants management, then I was asked if I would like to move over here, and this is a better fit for me and I'm really glad, but I wasn't a financial aid person before they gave me this opportunity.

Ipiktok also identified the difficulty of finding qualified staff and how it affects the services they offer, as well as the impact of stress on current staff to maintain services. She also provides a little bit information on her leadership style.

EVAN: What could make your job easier?

IPIKTOK: Oh gosh! Um, I think you know, one of my biggest things is being fully staffed first. That is something we are constantly working on. Getting more funding so we can do a lot of the stuff that we, you know, when you are losing funding it is really hard to try and get programs developed and trying to get things that our student focused done when you don't have a lot of funding to do that so sometimes having to weigh maybe we should do this and not do that. It's hard, I
feel that we are really not giving the students the opportunity or we are really not
developing the programs I would like to see or that I would like our students to be
a part of, um, because we don't have that, you know, and staffing is always a
constant issue sometimes. You know when you are short van drivers, we put out
an advertisement and sometimes you don't get the response that you were hoping
to get, you know. The beginning of, when I took over Dean I drove the van
several weekends because we didn't have um, I think just, and like I said we have
to be able to adapt and when we don't have a van driver, well guess what, I'm
driving the van. Um, It really just shows, for me it shows, my staff that I'm
willing to help, I'm willing to provide that support.

The President discussed the difficulty of finding qualified staff and the impact of
employee turnover on student success, noting that consistent staff or faculty replacement
leads to students finding it difficult to attach meaning to the educational process. Further,
the desire to find native employees from the region is hindered by credential
requirements. It is apparent that successful employees at the institution, including those
in leadership roles, are marked by integration into the culture, adaptability to the
geographic region, and also flexibility with transitions within the college.

Evan: Speaking of turnover, I've noticed in the short time that I've been
here that a lot of the positions are transitional, they move from one to another.
Do you think that affects student success outcomes?

Biisaiyowag: Absolutely, I think that actually goes all the way down to
the district level with basically K three through P sixteen, but we've had this issue
in the region and I think many rural communities do, that retention for professional positions and especially in education, is very low. And so, some years within a district within a school you could have seventy to eighty percent turnover. It's incredible, and so these students, these kids, who are trying to go to that school in a small community, you know they go back after summer break and all of a sudden, I mean almost every single face is new. And so, when you're thinking about, I guess the value that someone puts on education or that continuity, it just isn't there. And so you start then as a student, as a child, to think well, do I not matter, does the school not matter, does my community not matter, you know, why don't people want to stay, and you kind of have this, it's kind of a vicious cycle. Now, for us, at our institution, yes, absolutely, it sometimes feels like as students we take a couple steps forward, somebody leaves, and we have to take a few steps back because we have to retrain and relearn, and yeah, sometimes the process to even find someone is long. There have been some, like student success right now might be one of the highest average years of service than anyone, of course Ipiktok is newer in her position, but she's been here a long time. Franco and Sam have been within the department for years now, which is wonderful. They are my go to guys. And then of course Beth is newer, and Lori has been here a couple of years now so. So there's absolutely some value there. And Katherine is new within recruiting, but um. But you know Ipiktok, Franco, and Sam create a really great team with those years of service, absolutely.

Evan: So when you advertise for new positions, I imagine it must be a tough row to hoe because, being a native college you want to infuse native
individuals in these positions, but they might be not certified in the specific areas, is that right?

BIISAIYOWAG: Yeah, absolutely. They're all so. I think we face the issue that, because education isn't always looked at as super positive, not only do we not have a lot of native people in professional education jobs, but they don't often, people don't often want to go into those professional education jobs because of this kind of long standing negative context that education has been placed in. So I think we also deal with that, because just institutionally we don't have a high percentage of native employees. I would bet, I'm hoping, and I would be that within twenty years, thirty years, I bet that will change. Because finally we are getting into this idea that education is important, education is something that I want to consider, this idea, this concept, is positive. So I think there is some real opportunities for change. The fact that we've just been a higher education institution for twenty two years, that's not a long time, that's not a long time to change things. Generations, you need generations to change, um, to change concepts and ideas and, so.

EVAN: Do you think it's different for other native colleges, others that have been around for more, for longer?

BIISAIYOWAG: I think so, I think just because they've been around longer and they've had more graduates. You know Dine has been around for 60 years, so they have a lot more, so you times us by three and yeah, and I think in another forty years I'm excited to think we'll have a majority. And hopefully some faculty, but these are struggles, and if there's anything that keeps me up at night, or that
frustrates me it's that, it's trying to figure out how to get our native, you know people here. And into, to really add to that context.

EVAN: How do you feel your position as President of this institution differs from the position of President at other institutions, non-tribal?

BIISAIYOWAG: Non-tribal? I think one of the main differences is that, my research what I found, I think I'll bring up two things, number one is that it's very place based, and the length of time served is very different between an indigenous, and me in particular, an indigenous leader within an indigenous organization and a non. You look within Western organizations and Presidents, Chancellors, Provosts, their average years serving is about three, and then they leave, or they get promoted, or um, and I think within, myself and my other, especially native college peers, you know, we're talking anywhere from, you know some have been a part of their institution since they began, you know, for forty years ago. Um, myself, I've been President now for five and I don't intend to, when I came into this position I said I want to at least commit to seven to ten, and a big part of that is why are we here, well we aren't here to be promoted within a large bureaucratic system, we're here for our people and our residents and to make changes and to do good things for those who we serve. And so I think that is one big difference and I think the second one is just the amount of connection that one has, and one great example, and not, as a quote that I actually use that is one of the native college President's said, you know, we have people who are picking up students to, we have leaders who are picking up students to makes sure they get to class, we have leaders who are you know, ironing star quilts before funerals, you
know I know the names of almost every single one of our students, I know, and you know so things like that. I have never spoken, I went through my entire schooling without, well I did my Associates degree further south, but, I, you know I'd been a student at a large university for years. Cause they went through most of my school. I've never once spoken to the President of that institution. And here, I'm hosting student government at my house for dinner, once a semester to say thank you and when we have student government, when we have a student government I invite them over, we don't always have a student government. But, um, I like to have them over for dinner, I cook dinner twice for the students this December because our kitchen closed for awhile so I came out and cooked dinner for them. So I think these are those differences between... Is your connection to your students, your connection, and that's key.

Dagmar adds additional information with regard to hiring qualified local faculty being an ongoing process. Regulatory bodies require certain credentialing that simply is not present with most local applicants. Not only does the college need to find such qualified faculty from outside the community, but they have the additional requirements to effectively mentor, train, and integrate these faculty into the local culture. Dagmar also discusses the ongoing influences of faculty retention and departure.

EVAN: I want to follow up a little on the hiring and composition, demographics of the faculty. You mention that few of the faculty are native individuals.

DAGMAR: Very few.
EVAN: Very few. And can you speak to a little bit of the hiring? How do we go about the hiring process? Obviously, you seek out a diverse population, what are some of the troubles you're having finding qualified staff that want to come here? Can you speak a little bit to the hiring practices?

DAGMAR: I would maybe say, differentiate between faculty, staff, and entry level positions. So, I would say for entry level positions and staff positions we, are goal is always local first and native first. But we really make it a point if we have applicants from various locations that we try to employ local, because that is part of the mission, really, of us doing that. When it comes to the position, the more professional positions, the trouble is the more local applicants, most of the time, do not have the qualifications. What we do with, where we can, we really believe in mentoring, we may hire individuals on a plan to further develop the person. I can think of two staff, two coordinators that we've hired on that, where I would say traditionally at another institution might think it wouldn't be qualified, but then we do an intensive mentoring and in this case, both of those that I'm speaking of, in my department where I would meet three times a week with them initially, we make a training plan, we talk, it is something that is done jointly, and gradually increase the number of responsibilities and try to really encourage them that they are hired because we feel they have the important cultural input and that presence that we would like. And then gradually over time I think over time they are able to exert that. For faculty it is a little bit different because I think there are the qualifications if I may say, are a little bit less negotiable because of the accreditation. We have, we always try, I would say for us the guiding principle is
always to find somebody who is the best fit. We've had people who've maybe had credentials who've lasted a year and leave, a few a lot shorter than that. So we look for that, but in terms of the qualifications I would say it is very difficult locally to find anybody. So, um, we uh, the process is we advertise internally first, and then it goes out externally, we always encourage locals and we send it out to other organizations to apply. Once we have, say a pool of applicants, we have a screening committee for faculty. We have faculty, it's usually the majority of the committee consists of faculty. We screen applicants, we decide on phone interviews, since none of them live here, then from there to usually the top applicants or top two to come on a site visit, just for them to have a sense, they need to have a sense of what this place is like.

EVAN: I know it probably varies per discipline, but what size of pools do you get for your applicants?

DAGMAR: Yeah, I would say that varies. I wanna say, well we've had some that are like 10 people, a pretty good size, and others that are maybe three, three-four. And it is very interesting when you look at the applicants, you know, some, it is very clear, they have no concept about where we are, or what we are. And, it's interesting. Those are usually things that get sorted out in the interviews.

EVAN: And retention of faculty, what are some of the issues that are brought there? You mention that some leave within a year or so. What are some of the factors that play into retaining good faculty?

DAGMAR: Those things happen. I can think in my time here I can think of two that have left very shortly after coming here. The majority of faculty is, I
think we have quite a, I think, good, a reasonable rate of turnover. Probably I want to say about six years? Five, six years? Which for our location, you know, and logistics here I think is very good. We've had a number of faculty that have been here ten, twenty years. And the reasons for turnover you asked. Some have to do with family issues. Family is obviously not here. Some when they have smaller children, I think it's difficult in terms of students, schooling for their children. They might perceive, another area might be better. Some is, I think it's just, we get younger. I'm trying to think. Some of them are maybe younger, less experienced and they're moving on either to having gotten their basis, kind of introduction here, to either maybe an advanced degree or maybe another area. Some faculty transition, we've had several that transition within the organization.

The President also sees the hiring of native faculty and staff as a long term goal for the institution, as she sees it important for increasing indigenous student retention.

EVAN: Anything else that you would like to realistically see to help improve student retention?

BIISAIYOWAG: I, um, you know, something of interest I guess I would say, and I'm not sure one hundred percent if it would improve it, but I would like to see more local natives as a part of our employee makeup. More people here that, more faculty, yeah. More employees.

EVAN: Why do you think that will impact student retention positively?

BIISAIYOWAG: I think it's one of those things where you see people that,
that you can connect with that are like you and makes you think, “Oh I could do
that too”, or “Oh I can be a part of that.”

Employee Development

Significant efforts are made to try and not only maintain quality employees, but
also to incorporate them into the college culture. Integration at this college may perhaps
be more difficult than for colleges in more traditional settings, as there is a need to
develop both the individual as a prosperous faculty member, as well as an incorporate
them as a member of the community and culture, even though many adjunct faculty work
remotely. This practice has a perceived impact on the success of student retention.

EVAN: What types of efforts are made to try and encourage faculty to get
on board with student retention? What is being done for faculty to either
encourage them or enhance their drive for student retention?

DAGMAR: I think in terms of faculty, our organization is a little bit different
because faculty are not as removed as they may be at a larger institution. Our
faculty are all of the program advisors. We're a small school, so they are
definitely interested in retaining their students in their programs. Where at a
larger university I think you are much more removed from the numbers that the
institutional researchers often worry about. I think here there is the direct
reflection of participation in program. I think we work together with student
services, we have a persistence and retention committee. We just sort of re-
divided that a little bit, but we have teams that meet regularly. Faculty is always a
part of that. So faculty I think have a significant influence on the measures that

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we take. This would be, for example, first year seminar, this would be orientation, faculty are participants and help organize the orientation. The first year seminar is run by a faculty. So those are ways in which they participate. We encourage them, in terms of retention, to work closely with employers, so I think that all of the faculty have ties to the community, they know their students. I think that is a big part as well. And again that comes down to just having smaller numbers. I'm not so sure that would be feasible at a larger institution. If you wanted, I might add, I'm not so sure if that's directly incentive, but our faculty have the ability to earn overload. And then obviously also factors into retention, you know. Not getting new students, but retaining the ones you have.

EVAN: How many full time faculty are there?

DAGMAR: Twelve.

EVAN: Do you rely much on part time faculty at all?

DAGMAR: Yeah, we have about twenty.

EVAN: The part time faculty, do they persist as well, as far as ...?

DAGMAR: Yeah, we have a very stable pool. And they're somewhat divided in terms, several are here from the town. They work at the school district, so our adjunct faculty have been here for a long time. The other ones are out of the district, from further south, but they have lived here. We have one who's been with us for probably ten to twelve years, she used to be the public health nurse here, so she was medical. Her position has changed with the state, but she stays with us to continue teaching. One used to work here in student services and has
now moved on and lives further south. But those, we've had one here we know is from the East Coast who has been teaching for several years.

EVAN: So they do teach remotely, online courses then?

DAGMAR: Yeah, online or teleconference. We use a lot of teleconference as well. Or blended, like with any institution I think there aren't these formal separations, I think there are these new modes evolving all the time. But yes, when we don't have the expertise locally we have adjuncts that live elsewhere, but we have quite a few that are local and having been doing this for a while.

Faculty input into various college committees is seen as both desirable and part of the mission of the institution. Few activities or initiatives fail to involve faculty input. Such incorporation is thought to retain faculty at higher rates and create greater involvement in the college.

EVAN: When this department or the institution as a whole is pushing an initiative, what do you find the most successful ways to motivate your faculty and also your staff to accomplish this goal? What type of leadership styles, what types of things do you find work well with the staff and faculty that you have?

DAGMAR: Um, I would say definitely I think participatory approach. And I think that applies to all the administration, to have the dialogue. In terms of faculty, I would say we meet regularly and the college has, I meet with the faculty, it's a Dean's Assembly, it's partial social, it's partially work. The faculty drives the agenda largely. My items I usually are usually for information. Faculty have input. All faculty have the Faculty Association, so if they have
concerns they bring them forward. Any initiatives I would say are presented to them. I would say faculty participate in virtually everything. We have a Grants Committee, faculty sit on that. We have a long term facilities master plan for a new facility, faculty sit on that. We have a President's Cabinet that meets, we have a faculty representative on that. So I would say faculty is an integral part of everything. I think the most of the decisions are arrived at jointly I would say. Not always, but I think for the majority and I would think that if you talked to faculty that you, my guess is that by and large they would agree that it is a dialogue. I think sometimes with some issues, there is always a certain skepticism. I would say our faculty whenever you hear initiative on, in some way student retention maybe, like the first year seminar, I don't think was, we had, we were part of a large grant as part of a native education fund, and I think initially faculty kind of thought this is a student services thing. And don't necessarily have the, you know, the support. Support yes, but don't necessarily feel as enthusiastic about it. But, since faculty have now taken it over and administer that first year seminar, I think that has changed to, so... But I think in terms, I think we are small enough that, you know, you know each other I think you know each other's work style and we work too closely together to not have that participatory style. Again, I think it is by nature when you have a larger university, I came out of a large university system, and you know, honestly I couldn't who the Dean was, I probably couldn't tell you who the President was when I went to school. It was a larger institution. I never saw any administrators. Students come into this office all the time. Sometimes they come to complain, sometimes they come to tell me
that they've been doing really well on something. Sometimes they come with suggestions. But I think the dynamic is just very different in a smaller institution like this. And it's the same with faculty by the way.

The President discusses a bit of the difficulty with leading an institution and motivating employees to greater achievement. The small size of the institution allows greater interaction between leadership and staff, but also provides perhaps greater frustration when expectations are not met.

EVAN: What are your most successful ways of motivating your staff and faculty and other leaders?

BIISAIYOWAG: Um, you should ask my staff that! I have to admit that I, I'm a little fond of 360 degree evaluations because I don't really know. I think that I would probably say I really try to lead by example. I try to be out there and be a force that, and try to get other people to jump on, and get on board with me and move forward. I also really try to bring it back to our students. The fact that the reason we are here is for our students and let's try to figure out ways that we can support them in any way possible. And so I talk a lot about our students, um I don't know if it's always motivating. I can give an example and we'll see, this is more recent, um just last Wednesday, um what I've done um, we do staff and faculty surveys every year. And every year I get criticized, well, the leadership gets criticized for either too much communication or not enough communication but all in the same survey you know, so who knows what, who wants what. At any rate, one of the ideas was, why not host a monthly reception where you know,
or one of the ideas was, well alright maybe in communication why don't I hold a monthly President's reception where we deal with the birthdays, we have some food, and I can give updates on some things that are going on. So whoever wants to come can come, whoever doesn't, doesn't. So we started this. We've been doing it for, since the fall. Anyway, so our last one was last Wednesday and I had um, I got frustrated, I announced something to all staff, and that was we had a student that did a survey in the fall semester on student government. And, in, at the end of the semester, in the end of the semester, Ipiktok, the Dean of Students said to me, you know that survey that Andy sent out only, um, only six faculty and staff completed it. Out of, you know, eighty to one hundred faculty and staff that we have. And only seven students. I can't really deal with the students at this point in time, but I absolutely can deal with the faculty and staff. So I announced that, at the event, and I said, I'm really disappointed at the turnout, and I said, you know, there was probably sixty people in the room and only six of us, and me, I was one of them that completed it. I said, raise your hand if you completed this, raise your hand if you received this email, and almost everybody, and I was like, so what's the disconnect here? This is a student needing assistance for an assignment they were doing, this needs to change, so, who knows how motivating that was, but that was something that was just trying to get everybody really seriously think about, so we're here for our students, but only six of you completed an online survey that really took probably ninety seconds.

Evan: What was the feedback from that?
And, people were pretty quiet and I think they were actually really, um, I think that, I'm hopeful they took notice of it, that I was serious and I was really disappointed with that kind of support for one of our students. Say that Michael found the email and was going to send it out again, but I said no, it's already over and, you know, we can't do anything about it, but, the fact of the matter was. We'll see how motivating that was with the next round, the next survey.

EVAN: *Do those types of issues come up often?*

Um, you know I think, honestly I think it's surveys. I meant this is what we find with our retention and persistence too, I mean, how many times can you ask somebody, you know, why, and so I think surveys sometimes come off as being, you know getting support and sometimes they don't. And so, I think a lot of times people are a little reluctant to these surveys because they get them so often.

EVAN: *Have you thought about other ways to get that type of information?*

Yeah, yeah, thought about calling, well we do calls, but I guess the calls are the surveys. We need to figure out other ways to address, and there were some best practices I'd be happy to hear about them. So, motivating, I, I, I don't know, I'm trying to think, you know it's always hard to be self-reflective in some of those questions. I think that whatever I do seems to, sometimes, at least sometimes work. I think we have a pretty good relationship, I think we have a really good environment here. People really like working for the college, they like working here rather than working for other organizations around town.
because we are much more familial, and that's something I try really hard to continue to support.

EVAN: *Thank you, that seemed like a difficult question.*

BIISAIYOWAG: I was like, crap, I don't know! I don't know how I motivate! By a paycheck, I mean, ....

EVAN: *Actually, speak to that... As I understand the pay at this institution is, higher than other institutions in the state, is that right? Is that real? Why do people come here if they're coming from out of the area?*

BIISAIYOWAG: I don't know! Um, I do know, I do kinda know, to some extent. I think the...So let's talk about pay for a moment. We have just recently gone through a whole compensation study because we were not keeping up, it is very hard for us to keep up with the rates, especially here in the region. And in comparison we have now just kind of, when we finalize this comp study and get everybody on the same track, I will be really proud of the fact that we are pretty competitive now. But it is difficult, now in comparison to the other parts of the state we do pay higher, but we also have a higher rate of living. So I think why people come, partially, I think we do have a great environment for working here, we're very, we try to be very family oriented and I think that the experience of living here is a big part of that, as well as working within, for a tribal organization or within that tribal context can be, ...a plus or something interesting for somebody to be a part of.
Infrastructure and Distance Education

Need for New Campus

The importance of the construction of a new facility for the college is expressed by Alberta, underscoring the ability to provide necessary services to students. The current building in which the college resides is outdated, several miles from the town center, and lacks many of the amenities expected by students, staff, and faculty alike. It is believed that the placement and condition of the facility makes it difficult to recruit students at a desirable level.

EVAN: *If you could change one aspect to improve student retention, what would that one thing be?*

ALBERTA: I think, it would be to probably relocating our facility in town. Even though we have free van service with people coming out, I think if we had a new facility, internet, internet is big, that would really enhance the services we provide.

Anaaya notes the difficulty that internet related technology poses when connectivity is slow. Required reporting is made especially onerous with the slow internet connection speed at the current facility and in the region.

EVAN: *Do you see anything specifically under your purview in financial aid you would like to see change?*

ANAAYA: I don't know. Well, we have issues. There's verification is really not so fun with our government programs, but it's necessary to prevent fraud, but it is also a hindrance to some of our students in gaining funds because it's just too
hard for them. Right now, we have a tax retrieval tool in our government financial aid database, and it'd be nice if we could actually use it, but it usually doesn't work for our students up here so we get selected for verification. I think it's not working because of our satellite connection, I think it times-out to their security stuff before it can actually do what it needs to do, so that option no longer becomes available. It's like, errors, so you can't... I've been told it could be because the people doing the applications haven't been educated, or the whoever is helping them is causing them to get flagged. I was just thinking, dang. The data registration tool is something everybody is having issues with as well, but I'm new to this position and if it weren't, if you're wanting things about my program, I'm a one-person department, I would change that. But that is not governmental, state, or ....

Ipiktok also discusses the need for a new building and campus centered in town, and the current stage of that process.

Evan: Anything else that would come to mind that would help with some of these issues?

Ipiktok: I think us having a own campus would probably be beneficial to a lot of our students. So we rent this place from our local corporation, and so a lot of the things are really old. I mean this used to be a military base, years ago a research laboratory. And then it's now transformed into our native college. I think having our own building would really benefit our students. You know we have students that prefer to have classes only in town because it's closer. We try
to make, we try to have, just our library and our native studies so we try to rotate other courses there and try to find other places because a lot of them don't like coming out here. I think we are the only native college that has a polar bear warning, you know, now that's one of our alerts, you know polar bears. And when we have winter storms it's hard to get out here because the roads get blocked. And, sometimes it snows really hard and it's hard to see, or it gets foggy. So there is a lot of problems with here, and just safety overall is a big concern for us and especially for our students. I mean one of the things we are working on and will hopefully have this in the fall is a basketball team. Having the space to have activities and allowing the students to have activities that's more hands on opportunities or, where we can invite people to come and host a training. I mean we, as you can see, we don't have a lot of rooms or classrooms to be able to do that. Our classrooms are in the huts and we have offices in there too for the faculty, so the classrooms are fairly small, we try to take, we try to move people so we can have classrooms, we are definitely in need of a lot more classrooms and a lot more space to be able to do things. We created a kitchen here. Prior to the kitchen coming in we had like the little hot plates and that's what our students used to cook on. And now we now have a kitchen because our students wanted to be able to cook their traditional foods and not have to go down to the kitchen there, or cook that in microwaves or on hot plates. So we created the kitchen, but we would like to have a space for our students to do a lot of their traditional activities, do sports that they do on their native youth Olympics, but we don't have that space. We have a gym here, but it's like the one basketball court and we have
some gym equipment...

EVAN:  *Well I know that there's a little bit of discussion on a new building. I don't know where that stage is, but it seems at least in the realm of possibility? What would it take to get that done?*

IPIKTOK:  I guess its funding, a big one, and then right now we have, we're just waiting on getting notice to say that the land is ours, you know? It will be exciting, and I think that it will provide a lot of programs that kind of foster mentorship, leadership, diversity awareness, all of that into that space just because we don't have the space we can't do it.

The President also noted the need for constructing a new campus, an updated facility to provide students cutting edge education and be a more attractive center in the region. Such a building would not be without cost, and she discusses that issue in detail.

EVAN:  *What would you like to see happen, realistically, to increase student retention here at this institution? May be tough or long term, but what would you really like to see happen?*

BIISAIYOWAG:  A new college campus. I believe that having a new, state of the art, beautiful college campus would completely change the face of higher education.

EVAN:  *Why do you think that?*

BIISAIYOWAG:  Because, I think that there's a lot of value added in the new facility, you know, to be quite honest we are in one of the oldest facilities in all native colleges. My grandfather built most of this facility and where as that is a
great story, great kind of historical, the aspect of running this facility and keeping it, you know this wasn't built for higher ed, it was built for classrooms, it wasn't built for... It was an old research lab. And so, it's hard to recruit students to come out here when not only are we outside of town, you know, it's not, it looks like we're a castaway, and that is what I think sometimes people feel, like we are out here, we are just outside of town, in an old kind of decrepit building. You see this place and you don't think, oh man, I wanna go there. Whereas a brand new beautiful facility I just think it would change the whole perception, of the importance of higher education and, um, people wanting to be here.

EVAN: So, how realistic is that?

BIISAIYOWAG: It's actually, I think it will happen, yes. We're working on it. We have the, the plans are, not the design, the plans are all in place, we know what we need, we have a plot of land that has somewhat been set aside for us. The biggest thing is actually funding it. If I had one hundred million right now we'd be able to move, but I don't. And so...

Need for Health and Counseling Center

Alberta noted the persistent issues with alcohol, substance abuse, and a lack of safe places on campus. While she did not necessarily advocate specifically for a health and counseling center, it is clear she feels that such a facility would aid in helping to solve issues that persist with students at the college.

EVAN: So, what kind of specific barriers to you see existing for your students?
ALBERTA: Alcohol and substance abuse. They also have issues with core basic skills, single parents, and there is also really no safe place for them to go to. Lots of times they have to go outside to get treatment.

Anaaya goes into further detail as to the difficulty with alcohol and substance abuse, as well as how it affects the lives of students. She discusses the process of alcohol retrieval. She also does not discuss the possibility of a health and counseling center, but such a facility would perhaps aid in some of these concerns.

EVAN: If you had the ability to change anything for the betterment of students, if you could change something be it in financial aid or somewhere else, what would you do or what would you have done?

ANAAYA: That's a very complicated issue. Cause one train of thought, yeah make education free, the other point is I know the results of education free, it doesn't mean anything. They don't care, and come back next year and try again. There is no accountability. So, what would I do? I really don't know, cause I think if I could change society as a whole I would want our communities up here to lead sober, healthy lifestyles and have the emotional stability that that can bring. To be able to excel in anything they do. It doesn't have to be a Western education, just being sober and emotionally stable will bring you success or make it easier no matter what you do, whether they live the subsistence lifestyle or work in education. It's just really important to not cut your potential by ruining your brain, ruining your mental faculties. We could do so much for our community here if people were motivated, if you know cause marijuana is big.
EVAN: How? I asked an associate of yours how alcohol got in, because I know the sale and distribution is not allowed in the community, but I could see that being flown in, but marijuana, that's gotta be?

ANAAYA: It's legal now in our region. It comes with the visitors and whatever’s, but that's not going to increase who was already smoking it here. I don't know how they get it, cause I don't lead that lifestyle and I have too much to do, to even. If I told somebody I wanted to buy some they'd be like, you gotta be kidding me, you're a nark right?

EVAN: That's very strange though, because resources getting here is, it's an extra few steps at least. For plywood, for books, all these things...

ANAAYA: For the alcohol, we are a damp down, we're not a dry town. It gets, you have to prove to the city that you have not committed crimes related to alcohol and then you get a permit, it's like a permitting process, you get a permit to be able to bring alcohol up. When you do that, you've call them make and order, they have it sent over to the airport, the airport has it transported here, it gets taken from the airport to the distribution center and then you go to the distribution center and pay for them to hold it for you and then pay to get your allotment out, and then you can drink what you are allowed to have. Every permit holder can have so many hard spirits, or something spirits and then beer and wine. You can only have so much distributed to you each month. Once you reach that limit you can't have any more. And you know what's really cool about that? I love the fact that if you've committed a crime with alcohol, a domestic violence or drunk driving, no you can't get a permit. What's really cool is they'll
close down the distribution center around community events, so we have all these
villages coming in, or kids coming home from wherever they’re at, the
distribution for alcohol will be closed the day before an event all the way through
an event. So those people visiting can’t just go over, get their alcohol, and be
drinking the whole time they are here. So, that requires a lot of planning, a lot of
money, a lot of extra money, because you have to pay to get your permit, pay to
have it flown up here, pay to buy it, pay for them to hold it, and pay to get it.

Ipiktok was perhaps the most adamant and specific about the need for a health and
counseling center for students, citing the long process of seeking care for students. Such
difficulty in retrieving necessary support assuredly has an effect on student retention.
Ipiktok specifically expresses continued concern for the need of a clinic to aid in student
success.

EVAN: To address some of these issues, to encourage them to gain more
education, what strategies would you like to see put in place that might help with
some of these issues?

IPIKTOK: Well what I would like to see is that, I would like the college to
have a student health and counseling center. That is something we lack here. We
don't have that, so when we need to refer students to see a clinician, we have to
send them over to the town health department. It's gotten a lot better, but a couple
of years ago it would be months before students would get an appointment and by
then we're at this point where, ok, we need to get help now, so I think having a
health and counseling center would benefit our students because they would have
that direct access to a clinician. I mean we, a lot of our students have a lot of behavioral and mental health problems. And we don't have direct access to a clinician or a provider. And some of our students, they don't, they are not comfortable going to the health department because they know somebody that works there. I mean, it is of course it is a small community, so finding somebody you can trust and talk about what's going on at home or what's going on with you, it's hard, it's hard to find. Some of our students wait until the last minute to go find somebody and by then it's sometimes it's too late.

EVAN: What could make your job easier?

IPIKTOK: It would just make my job easier because as of right now we don't have anywhere else. We have one place we can refer students, but if they don't go, we don't have nowhere else we can send them. But then we get complaints from faculty, you know, the student's having a hard time, you know, what do we do? I've had faculty say, you know, it sometimes got to the point where I fear for the safety of the other students and myself. What do we do? You know, at this point I don't know. We are looking at that, we are meeting with our health department to hopefully get something, to work on the MOU or MOA that will allow us to maybe have one of their commissions once a week or something, just anything that would help us with our students. More and more we see a lot of our students have come from homes where they see a lot of domestic violence, where they see a lot of alcohol and drug abuse and that is something they struggle with here. We have students who have some kind of alcohol deficit syndrome, you know, from...so...it's just getting that necessary help to help our students succeed
and sometimes if you don't have that you feel like you aren't really doing your job in helping your students succeed.

*Distance Education*

Alberta speaks to the need for distance education for the institution, the usefulness of the varied formats of delivery for students, the difficulty with connectivity, and the hope for improvements in the near future.

**EVAN:** *What role do you see online education providing for your adult population?*

**ALBERTA:** It has an important role, particularly for the younger generation, they’re more tech savvy. Lectures don’t often fit well. Online and blended courses let them move forward at their level. Most have smart phones, but we do have problems with the internet, slow.

**EVAN:** *Is there any issue with access or the capability of getting online?*

**ALBERTA:** We have lots of problems with the internet. That is a big barrier in the Arctic. And the thing is, most people are accustomed to it. It doesn’t frustrate them like it frustrates me, because they are more accustomed to it. Most of my students are conditioned for the internet challenges than I am. I heard someone say we were are going to get fiber, hopefully that is going to happen. Yea, the internet can be a challenge. But we just kind of work through that and the internet is slow, but the access, most people have smart phones, most people have the library, we have the Learning Resource Center, it is here but just not to the level we know elsewhere.
Banu expressed the unique need and opportunity that distance education and internet connectivity provides for their region. Because so many students live far from the main campus, sometimes several hundred miles, and with costs associated with travel quite onerous, the distance education course offerings (fully online, blended, and teleconference) help to meet the needs of the region.

EVAN: And almost all the students are located here on campus?

BANU: We are actually very much of an online institution. This semester I think we only had ten students in the dorms. Our dorm capacity isn’t much, it’s about twenty. We have village liaisons in all of the villages, there are several villages in the region, and um, being that we are a native college we to maintain a high percentage of native population, so we definitely recruit more to those villages. I focus my time with the village liaisons making sure their online portals and everything is set up for them to take their courses online. We rely on internet a lot, which is sometimes unreliable. A lot of online courses, a lot of teleconference, every course has a teleconference number and students can call in from the villages. And everything, the notes or the slides, whatever the instructor uses are posted on their MyCampus which is like Blackboard or Moodle. So yeah, a lot of them aren’t here.

EVAN: Do students every have to ever come here to campus physically, or can they do all of it remotely? Register online? All their coursework online?

BANU: Yeah, unfortunately our registration isn’t quite online yet, but it is paper and they can send it in via email or the village liaisons work a lot with that,
and then they get an email regarding their college email in MyCampus and from their they are good to go. The only time they would ever come to campus here is for graduation, and again, that’s not really seen as important as one might think, so we pay their ticket to come here, it’s about $400 to travel from one village to the next because you’re using a bush plane. Like when I travel just to visit with the students in the villages, a round trip ticket is $400 just for a 20 minute flight. So yeah, different. But to buy a ticket from here to a large city is like $400.

Banu further discusses the interrelatedness of updating their records procedures, distance education, facility issues, housing concerns, and student retention. Each component must work somewhat in tandem in order for the college to function. Any development in any of these areas can impact outcomes from the system.

EVAN: As far as retention and persistence, is there anything else that you could think of that could aid students or this institution in helping in persistence or retention?

BANU: We do have a persistence and retention task force. That's actually we meet pretty regularly to tackle, like ideas we come up with. Interesting that you're asking about this. One of the things my department is working is online registration, like you kinda previously brought it up. We still have paper, we using this paper. So, working towards that will hopefully help out. We hopefully have fiber optics coming in, um, and it's supposed to come this year, we'll see. And so the internet is supposed to get better, so we are working towards that. We're trying to do some things like, um, we hired a film or videographer person,
that actually worked in, ... other great things, has a great resume, to help us video
different lessons, or different things like that. So we can have students watching
the lessons online, because online classes do pose a problem and difficulties for
students because they are not getting enough knowledge or enough from the
lesson. Um, for our students here we have created, I guess this is kind of past
tense, but we created a learning resource center, so we call it in one of the huts
and um, there's tutors there every night and they specialized in different topics
and they everything laid out for the students. We have a basketball team coming,
we're organizing a team and we are just trying to get the team together. That's
kind of like their sport because they can't do too much outside. So yeah, trying to
get a team together to hopefully bring in the village students and give them
something to do in their free time as they're students here. We are also trying to,
we have the five-year goal of getting a facility, we're renting this facility from a
regional organization and they keep raising the rent on us and different things like
that, and building the land. They are trying to buy the land from them, um, and
uh, create a facility of our own, with um, with family housing as well as student
housing. If we could get the family it's huge part of the culture, people can even
bring their kids to work, like this is just a huge part. And so, having family
housing instead of just single students, housing is really important. Our average
age for students is in the high twenties instead of in your low twenties. Our
students are more progressed in life than the typical college student, so family
housing is difficult.
Dagmar discusses the need for and growth of distance education for their college. Different distance education formats account for about half of all their course delivery. Their variety of delivery formats meets the needs of the region's students and leads to predominantly sufficient access to higher education.

Evan: *Speaking of online, blended, teleconference, that's a significant portion of the course offerings?*

Dagmar: Yes.

Evan: Where do you see that going in the future, both with course offerings being expanded or staying the same, but also fulfilling the faculty needs for that? What's the projection?

Dagmar: I think, over the last years there was a steady increase. But I also think that it to some degree has somewhat stabilized. And when I say that there is a teleconference course, we don't differentiate, we've always had to do distance offerings because we have several outlying villages. On the contrary our students actually do better staying in the village, doing it via distance, than coming here. So we've always had that component. Let's say you have a teleconference course, that doesn't mean that he instructor is here and everybody else is somewhere else, what that means is that the instructor is here with a group of students and there are other students that participate from outside of town. So the classes are actually mixed. Like with any, I think, other institutions, even in town, the convenience of not having to come to class at a certain time, that's a desire here too. It's not unusual that live here that participate in a teleconference or take an online class just because of their personal schedule. So I think that, but I think that is
nationwide, not just here. But I would say, overall, I think we've found a pretty
good balance. I just did our year seven report actually on distance education,
funny that you would ask that. So we're about fifty percent that's offered in the
distance format. The fifty percent is balanced by the workforce classes which are,
most of them are onsite, they are hands on things. But I would say for the
academic classes, fifty percent.

Dagmar further discusses the flexibility in the college's choice for a learning
management system and how that fits their needs for the region. Also, she discusses their
faculty training for distance education delivery. There is no required training or faculty
certification to teach online, but dedicated instructional technologists assist faculty with
developing their distance education designs.

EVAN: The faculty training, with the online technology. Is there an online
certification program that faculty must go through to conduct online, telecourse,
blended...?

DAGMAR: Yes, and no. We do not have a requirement. We switched a
number of years ago from Blackboard to Moodle.

EVAN: Why the change?

DAGMAR: I think Moodle had, I think enabled us, I think it was more
flexible. We felt the platform was a little more web, in terms of appearance it was
a little more web like. The appearance is more like a regular web page. But most
of all, blackboard being proprietary, whenever there was a problem you were put
into this queue. Moodle has a community on its own. Our distance education
department, we have two different coordinators who are very savvy, so they go
find help. It’s more direct and problem solved. Now we have an administrator
who works out of, he used to work here at one time, he works further south now,
if there are major issues, but as a whole we’ve had success. We have had in terms
of certification, we have had a number of faculty go through a certification
program, but that has been voluntary. What we do is, during orientation and for
new faculty, they do spend time with our distance education team, one on one, to
teach, to utilize the platform and we have had Moodle instructors up here for
faculty.

As Dean of Students, Ipiktok has significant understanding of the role that
distance education plays for the students. Highlighted in her discourse is how distance
education helps to weave the student’s desire to go to school, but also satisfy their
familial and community needs.

EVAN: How do your students view online education as a whole, what are
their attitudes, their successes, difficulties, you name it, and what’s your attitude
towards it? And by online I mean any of the blended, teleconference, etc...

IPIKTOK: I’ve gotten more positive feedback from our students that utilize
our online courses because, it does allow them the opportunity to be able to attend
school and work toward getting a degree without ever leaving their community.
We have students who don’t want to leave, who do want to stay in their
communities, or who have families and can’t just pick up and move here. So, you
know, they appreciate the fact that they can call into class or they can log into
class and in every outlying village we have a video teleconference center where
we have computers in there, our online MyCampus folks go down and do
quarterly checks in the village centers, our IT department has gone down and
replaced some of the computers and so we do have that opportunity if they don't
have a computer at home to go to the village teleconference center and attend
class that way. And then we also have liaisons in the villages, and some of them
work for the regional government, and then we have a village advocate in the
village wing, who works part time for us who helps with students who come in
there and are in need of help. And so they serve as that advocate person and that
liaison person that either provide the help or send us an email, saying hey, I have
this student who needs help logging in or we don't have login information, so just,
that we have that. And then our Board of Trustees are individuals from villages,
so we have a representative, a board member in each village who also are huge
part of our persistence and retention and also in recruitment in general of students,
because they know their communities better than we do, and when we come in
there we try to notify them that we are going to be there in town and you see a lot
of them are pretty good at meeting us or setting things up, or help us plan our
village trip into their community. They want to make sure that the youth in their
community do know what we have to offer and the opportunities that we have.

EVAN: To that effect, online and distance education can often have
internal issues with connectivity, access, ... have students expressed frustration
with that in particular with their ability to actually get online? Are these direct
videos?
IPIKTOK: We have the capability to do a direct video teleconference, so, um, we have that accessibility here and we have it in our library, but then we also have most of our classes are online where it's like a MyCampus or Blackboard, Moodle. Students can log in and access, so if it's an online class we do have teleconference where students can call in and listen to class.

EVAN: Have they expressed specific difficulty with these methods at all?

IPIKTOK: You know, not, not, not to my knowledge, I haven't. We do have, you know, our distance education department has an on-call phone, and so they are always getting phone calls from students if they can't access or if they can't get online or if they're are having email, we had just a couple of days ago an email from our village advocate saying they had no internet connection in their community, you know, we got that email, I forwarded that to our distance education program and they followed up and made sure faculty, I mean, I think a huge part of this is communication, letting us know what is going on in your community and letting us know if you are not able to get online, letting us know so that we can, I mean there is really nothing you can do if you don't have internet connection and can't get onto class, the only thing you can do is communicate that to faculty so they are aware so that when a student is able to connect that, you know, you can help them or give them time to get caught up. I think our faculty does a great job in not only responding but also creating a plan for students who weren't able to connect or you know were having problems with online classes or teleconference courses. They've been really good. I think when you work at a
native college in a rural area it's just one of those things you have to be flexible and be able to adapt to whatever situation arises.

With the wide variety of cultural events offered, it can sometimes be difficult to integrate such opportunities into distance education offerings. Kuvageegai briefly discussed the movement toward such incorporation. Here we see that technology can be both a benefit to disseminating information, but often fraught with limitations.

Evan: How does, or does your efforts that you do, do they fit in with the distance learning options that you have here? Is there any incorporation there?

Kuvageegai: Actually there is, it's kind of hard to include them, but then if there is a guest speaker we will use the teleconference option and they're able to call in and listen from there if they wanted.

Evan: Do you record the sessions?

Kuvageegai: Actually, so this Friday is going to be our first video recording, and from this Friday on they are going to be recorded.

Evan: That's pretty exciting!

Kuvageegai: Yeah, we have a new video specialist, so she'll be doing that.

Evan: Then they can maybe be put into your distance learning options?

Kuvageegai: Yeah, we're going to be definitely including the stories into our classes, kind of do that in many ways.
The President highlights the great strides that have been made in offering different
distance education opportunities, as well as discussing the hope for greater connectivity
options in the near future. A Trans-Arctic fiber optic line is in the process of being
installed throughout the arctic region, linking Europe to Eastern Asia. This will not only
bring economic benefit to the region, but it will also allow the college to enhance their
distance education offerings, at least partially.

EVAN: What are some of the difficulties you're seeing with the online
delivery and course development as an institution? I know you have your online,
you have your blended, your teleconference. It's an interesting time in higher
education and I'm interested in seeing your take on this, where are our struggles,
where are we going?

BIISAIYOWAG: In general for us, online and distance ed has really been one
of our shining lights. We've been able to do a lot with what little we have and
we've gotten, boy a couple of years ago, or last year, we got just rave reviews
from our students who were doing online courses. And, that was really great to
hear, that we're meeting the mark in many ways with online delivery. I think for
us in particular the biggest hurdle we have is our connectivity in the region. Our
villages, you know, we just don't have a lot of access. And so we've worked
different ways around this and I would really speak well to our faculty in trying to
figure out different ways, and our distance ed team for the delivery because of our
latency, our horrible, horrible latency. But um, you know there's some interesting
things, there's fiber line that supposed to connect us to, through the northern arctic
to connect London and Japan, wherever it's going to be connected to over there.
EVAN:  

*I haven't heard much about this, is this a reality, or...?*

BIISAIYOWAG:  

It is a reality. They're putting in this fiber line that should be up and running next summer. It was supposed to be this summer but they had some issues. They've got the houses and they've got it connected in areas already. They're actually going to make landing sites at towns in the region. It would solve connectivity, those villages that are connected, we still have to connect to our other communities across the region. So we're gonna have an interesting issue is that we're going to be super duper fast in a couple, but not as fast, still have the issues in others. So there's, I think this is our biggest issue is this connectivity issue.

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**Relationship Building, Cultural Integration, and Curriculum Development**

Alberta articulates the importance of not only building relationships to improve student success, but also the lasting impact such relationships have on subsequent generations.

EVAN:  

*If you could change one aspect to improve student retention, what would that one thing be?*

ALBERTA:  

I think relationships, kind of professional development for instructors on building relationships, emphasizing how important it is for you to literally care. To look at this person and know that, ok, I am providing education, which is going to help this person, enhance their lives, gonna change their lives, affecting their kids, the next generation, because, you know, educated parents
help their children, just really, turning things around and making people realize
that life is the cake, education is the icing. It enhances everything.

Anaaya also spoke regarding how successfully faculty are marked by their ability
to integrate into the society and culture. Consistent turnover, as discussed elsewhere,
makes it difficult for students to establish relationships, but also for faculty to gain insight
into cultural, community, and regional interests. As Anaaya states toward the end of the
passage, “It’s one thing to work here, it’s another thing to live here.” Highly successful
faculty must live the job and the community, not just pass through.

EVA:  I know that's not under this office, but can you speak at all to the
faculty here, the successful faculty, what stands out about them?

ANAAYA: I don't know if it's self-preservation, because they have contracts
and if they can't teach, if there's no one to teach, but they're getting paid to teach.
I think the ones that stick around, that stay buy the homes, raise their families
here, have a better connection with our kids, because their own kids were
educated here. They make more connections and they know what, they know
these families, they know where these kids come from. We have a teacher here
that was my son's teacher, and my son is now twenty-seven, he's here, his wife is
the vice principal to a lot of the kids he had, their kids. And his grandchildren,
actually still, his children live here, their married here and have children here.
They understand the people, they do more than just go to the office, go home,
they get involved. Cause like, the hospital itself, those people are those people.
They stay to themselves, they come do their job, and leave. They don't get
involved. Same thing with people in the school district. There was only like two
I knew of in our district in the town that actually stayed during the summer, the
rest are gone. They don't buy home here; they buy their homes somewhere else.
It's the people that actually live here. It's one thing to work here, it's another thing
to live here. And the ones that generally care, and have the social skills to, just
people that care and follow up with who they are, give them opportunities to
succeed, there's, you know we're, we got a lot, our students have a lot of
challenges, and so when they succeed it's great to celebrate them.

Banu strikes at the heart of the importance of leadership at the college and within
the nation embracing diversity throughout education. Passionate, caring people work
hard to improve the lives of students, but they must also deal with issues of funding and
staffing. Included in this struggle is working with student preparedness and planning
difficulties.

EVAN: If you could change things, what would you work with, to improve
student retention, persistence, attention to matters, what would you like to see
done?

BANU: Yeah, that's a loaded question. I would say technology that is a big
ting. Because of the funding, yes we do get extra funding because we are a
native college, actually a lot of my job is reporting to differently things, like
college funding organizations, different things like that. That's where we get
different people to go to the capital and lobby for native colleges. But I think if
we are going to be a world embracing diversity, which I don't know if we are or
not, I'll leave it at that, then we need to be focusing some more attention on these native colleges. We are a community college, but we don't fit into a community college group. Even from our short conversation, I'm sure you understand that. I'm not sure anybody in the capital quite understands that. There's some people working really hard and really passionate about us native colleges. There's some incredible moral, and incredible groups of people that are native. But, that is very diverse and very different, and they run things a different way. I'm not sure if the people here think that they think they are part of the rest of the country as much as we may think. Because they are so isolated, so...off. It's different. I guess that would be funding, and funding problems also bring staffing problems. We don't have enough staff at all. I'm the registrar, the admissions person, and I do the reports. Um, That's a lot of work. I think would be very helpful for us to have more funds for that, but I would also say that staff turnover is a huge problem up here. I'm not really sure how we can compensate that, that's just a culture thing. We need people to be here on time, but you also can't expect them to be here for long periods of time. And then, like, when the regional funding comes out that causes problems. The region pays dividends to people if they are residents for more than a year. Those dividends this year were over one thousand for every person, and then the, if you're native, and your student is part of a tribe or corporation, they get around ten thousand every December, for every individual that is a part of the tribe. So in December you see huge drop-offs because a family of ten people, they have a lot of kids up here, so a family of ten you're getting one hundred thousand just like that in December. So, why would they
need to work? The mindset is more, it's not as much a saving mindset as you and I maybe accustomed to. They just focus on living through the season. So right now it's slipping through the winter on the whale that they have saved up and it's getting prepared for the spring whaling so that they can get more to eat. So, it's very short minded instead of our, you know, you and I might have five and ten year goals, it's not as much of a thing here.

Banu also was able to speak to the difficulty of the college offering educational programming that does not often directly address student career goals or needs. While trying to offer worthwhile degrees, the college works with the regional government and industries to facilitate aligned programs. It would appear to be a continual struggle to both provide relevant education that also meets cultural expectations in a remote and harsh climate. Keeping students enrolled, making clear the benefits of higher education, and servicing student needs are the duties of everyone at the college.

EVAN: *What do the graduates here really, what do the most successful graduates do?*

BANU: Most of the successful graduates go and work in the regional government. The regional government is, I don't know how much you'd know about it, it is the government of the whole northern part of this area. It is one of the richest municipalities in the nation. So they definitely, um, the people want to get jobs there. So business is our number one major and we are actually approving a four-year degree here to start in the fall of 17 in business. Because the regional government wants their employees to have, we are trying to convince them
basically that having a Bachelor's is beneficial, but at the same time a lot of our courses and stuff the business economics are focused, yes it's general business economics, but it's also focused on the regional area economics. So we, we actually get a third of our funding, a third or more of our funding from the regional government, a third from grants, and then the other third from other government agencies, some donations, other things. But the regional government, because they fund so much of us, they kinda like to have a big say in what's going on. So we in turn have a tried to, um, promote the business and explain that you know on job descriptions right now it is encouraged to have an AA, and maybe a Bachelor's, but that's so far and these jobs are ridiculous, you know, super high paying. And the benefits are crazy. So I guess it's getting them to change their mind and say an AA is required and a Bachelor's is preferred. So in our business proposal that the head of the business department was working on, it was when help present it to the regional government to get extra money because a four-year degree costs a lot more, we had to present it in a way that it would be beneficial to them. That is kind of the centralizing thing. We have to always do things. Our courses are based around regional interests. Our language, we do not have French or Spanish or anything, we have the native language. We, I don't know, different things. But I guess, our students that persist and are, they're basically we get to show them the benefits of it. I would say a lot of them are more from the carpentry or constructional trades department that are the most persisting students. And that's I think because it's more hands on, it's more, they're seeing the benefits. Whereas, if you're sitting in a business class, we need to help you.
You and I know that, but they don't see that right ahead of time. So because of that, um, students take much longer to complete a two or four-year degree than we would think. Most of our students are working full time, in addition to taking classes. So their taking one or maybe two classes, and they maybe they take a semester off here or there, so their kind of getting through, but then the persistence and retention definition based on the government or whoever is determining it, because it is different across the board, which is also frustrating, that's not seen as persisting because that Student A started in 2010 but still hasn't gotten their AA, but actually I can personally tell you they are still taking courses, so in my opinion, they are still persisting and they're still keeping on. But the world doesn't see it like that. So that definitely hurts our numbers. We don't, and because of different things like that we don't look at those numbers very heavily. We more, our Board of Trustees has put together different goals for us to meet and, some of them are very small, and this last year we met ninety-five percent of the goals, so we were very excited about that, like, maybe our term enrollment was one of the ones that was a little bit down, but you know our graduate numbers are going up, even though student services were helping our students more, there's more positive feedback from the students. We are very focused on our students and how to help them.

Diversifying and dedicating specific initiatives and departments to align to precise cultural, community, student, and industry needs allows the college to have the opportunity to provide successful, employable graduates. Dagmar discusses these varied
departments and efforts and, while not always perfectly successful, they do see a return on their efforts in the form of passing accreditation, skilled graduates, and a growing appreciation in the region.

EVAN: **Could you speak to how your college meets the needs of different parties in your academic pursuits?**

DAGMAR: We have, in terms of communities, most of our funding comes from the regional government. Their needs are not always academic in nature, but a significant percent is workforce development, more short term training. So we include that in our offerings, and what was once one department is now two departments, the academic affairs and then vocational education workforce development. Workforce development is obviously for continuing education units, and those students and those programs are of lesser interest to the commission. They are primarily occupied with and focused on for-credit programs. So we try to serve both populations I would say, and we also have the pre-college programming to really foster that pipeline from high school to college and on. We offer adult basic education programs, I would say like most community college programs we have this three pronged approach to the academics, the workforce side, and what I would say is the non-credit programs, which would also include the cooperative extension programs, community programming. Um, in terms of the negotiation, I would say it's been fairly easy to work that in, I think the commission understands that we are unique in that sense because I think it is probably sixty to sixty-five percent of what we do is workforce development, which is a pretty large percent for a community college.
And, um, we still work on the academic side, to develop it. We are in the midst of developing a Bachelor's degree, we just had approval from the regional government and we are getting ready next month to submit it to the commission, a business degree. And there too, I think serving the community, I think after a number of years, having a number of graduates who do not leave the region, they prefer to stay in the region, we are offering it here. So, I think in terms of negotiating we obviously, it's a top priority to remain accredited, at the same time as a native college, we I think play a unique role in that the indigenous culture is a part of everything we do. Culturally, and also the training of the workforce needs in the region.

Dagmar further describes integrating culture into the curriculum. The adaptation of a Western style education to a predominantly non-western culture cannot be simply that of addition, but instead a dedicated effort of envisioning the entire process through the lens of the students that an institution serves. Tacking on cultural pieces would not appear to work. Instead, it must be an effort to develop the process from the standpoint of the culture. It also requires leaders to have significant emotional intelligence and cultural awareness.

EVAN: That's really at the heart of what I find interesting is, how do you both serve the workforce and the cultural component? Is it a fluid process, does it match one-to-one, are there sacrifices having to be made on either part? Are there just things that must be done with workforce that limit the cultural influence and academic provision on that?
DAGMAR: I think it is very fluid and I think the main aspect to remember is that the culture cannot be something that you add on to a Western curriculum. The cultural component is really viewing education, the interaction in the classroom through the cultural lens. So, um, you know, if you're Japanese you would do workforce or business courses by viewing it through that cultural lens, so I think we do it through the native cultural lens, which means it's not, I think the separated components that you are looking at and trying to fit, I think it's people interaction, it is you know the outlook on what students want to, the role they want to play in their community, how they see themselves moving forward, how they see the community moving forward. So I think it is a big part of that. I don't think that it's possible to do this effectively by saying, "ok here I have my curriculum, here I have my culture, and somehow I now add those two up", I think it has to be fluid. And the challenge I would add is that, um, most of our faculty are non-native. That is what I think is the real challenge. Because I think despite all good intentions, it is difficult to put yourself, because obviously culture leaves an imprint on us, that you know is not right, not wrong just is. So trying to shift that, or trying to become more aware of the ways in which our culture has imprinted us I think helps to be more sensitive and to really deliberately take that view through another culture's lens, if that makes sense.

EVAN: Absolutely. Are there methods of faculty development to assist with that? What do we do to try and help them?

DAGMAR: I would say a lot of things and frequently little things. Like we have a weekly cultural hour that is open to all faculty, that we have community
members, whaling captains, elders, on a number of topics. For example, we have a big cultural festival coming up next month. And this month we have one of the cultural hours is from an elder, a former staff member from us that is going to talk about the history and the meaning of that. So staff and faculty attend those and that gives faculty ideas on how to incorporate that event into their teaching. I think it gives them a better understanding, all of us a better understanding of what is the significance of the event to the community, what is the role that it plays in the culture, and then you can see how you can incorporate that. Other things would be that we always have a cultural component during our orientations. All faculty are very much encouraged and take advantage of having elders in the classroom speak, and our library sponsors a lot of events that are culturally based. Many of our faculty and staff take classes. I've been here for over ten years, and just giving you a typical example, we have a lot of staff that do that, I took language classes, I took some culture classes, again in an effort to become more familiar and to better, with the culture, to better serve our students. I want to maybe just add, I think the key is, not being native myself, I think not to artificially say that you have to adopt the culture, because that is very difficult at best. But I think to really raise an awareness on how are my actions, my practices, shaped by my culture and I think once we have that awareness I find it much easier to adapt and to incorporate it to view it to somebody else's cultural lens.
Dagmar gives a personal example of such awareness, describing her own development within the culture after moving to the region.

DAGMAR: I think an example, a very practical example, I am incidentally German, I'm from Leipzig originally, but I've lived here in the region since about 1990 with my husband, but you know, I come from a culture where time is money, you move forward, it was incredibly, incredibly difficult to come into this culture in which time plays a very different role. And, um, and just sort of to adapt to that. After some time, realizing I really function differently, I go into a meeting differently, then let's say locals would do, you know. I'm more driven by the time, by an agenda. Locals are more driven by the social exchange first. Taking your time, you don't have everything planned out. And I think by becoming aware of that it has been much easier for me to sort of set this aside and approach it differently.

While many programs and events are offered at the college, faculty and staff are not formally incentivized to attend. Instead, the development of a community that is inquisitive, collaborative, and caring creates an environment that is conducive to high participation rates. By discovery in the employee hiring process, the college attempts to find people that are interested in such development, and then fosters their progress through intensive mentoring and opportunities.

EVAN: What kind of, to get into the faculty and staff attendance of these variety of these events a little bit more. Are there incentives, is there no need for
incentives, are there requirements, is there a pattern they must meet certain
attendance at certain events? What kind of procedures are there?

DAGMAR: I'd say that is a very good question. Um, no, there are not incentives. So, people don't get extra compensation. First of all, they are all during the workplace. If there are incentives it would be cookies or little munchies on the side, but I would say no, no formal incentives. And I think the idea is to foster, we are a small, a fairly small college, to foster a sort of a, a kind of somewhat of a family, an atmosphere here. It's an opportunity for people to get together to learn while they get together. While I think there is certainly the encouragement, but at the same time also from myself and from others, I think an understanding that those are things you cannot force. And I don't think those are things that you would necessarily be successful by paying people certain amounts. I think when we try and hire faculty and staff, find people who have a certain openness, who are willing to learn, and a number of our faculty have taught internationally, so they've lived in other cultures. And just, I think, the understanding is that when you come to a native college, I think when they are first hired, that, you know, that is something that you have to have some sense of interest, and some sense of openness. I think otherwise it won't work. I don't think by incentives you can, you can maybe incentivize people to attend, but I don't think that means, that's not necessarily the result you want, meaning a more open, a more openness and a willingness to incorporate the culture into what we do.
Evan: So, fostering, well, hiring individuals that are intrinsically motivated and curious?

Dagmar: Correct!

Evan: And then, throughout that finding the intrinsic motivation, feeding that, encouraging that, but not having formal extrinsic motivators...

Dagmar: Correct! Yes. At this point we do. There has been talk about maybe coming up with a framework for cultural competency, you know, but at this point we don't have anything implemented. And quite frankly, faculty in particular have a lot of input, so, you know, before we do an orientation we come up with suggestions, what would you, when I'm talking about the faculty and staff orientation which always has a cultural component, we ask here's some ideas, what do you think? We've had folks from other native colleges, we've had speakers that have been local from other Universities talk on different topics, native speakers.

Balancing the needs of students between education and subsistence life, through a process of Western education provision to a non-western culture is difficult for the college, but it is a task they continually address, shaping their procedures to hopefully generate greater student success. Here, Dagmar discusses that balance, paying particular attention to the concept of 'career' being much more aligned to Western thinking. She also discusses the success of career ladder development and role modeling.
EVAN: *When you look back and you think about successful initiatives, are there any that stand out with regards to student retention? Any that stand out that was really positive in the right direction?*

DAGMAR: In terms of strategies, well I would have to say probably no, there isn't a strategy that stands out as proven. We have good completion rates, in the eighties, nineties; I think that is very good. They've come down a little bit with persistence rates from one semester to the next. And they've come down further with retention, fall to fall. Some of it I think is culturally based in terms of students always balance the say, western college life or professional life with subsistence life. Another, I think, element is that our students, which are largely first generation college students, do not necessarily embrace or see this concept of a career. A career is very much a western concept. It's an individual concept. Native culture is community based, collective based. So what you do, you do largely for the community. I'd say a career is me. What we try to do is when we talk with students and to our offerings is to really emphasize that the career can strengthen the community, the career can strengthen the well-being of the culture, of family, and the larger community by you know by being able fill say a position like myself that I hold with local people. But I think the career, this is my personal opinion, it has to do a lot with not having that sense of career at this point, I think impacts kind of the determination and the persistence with which you pursue your education. You might have a goal, but then family needs you for this, or something for that, and you're quickly brought off track. Because the student doesn't necessarily see his or her career trajectory and say, "hey, I just
need to make it through those two years and then the next step comes". We try, in terms of retention efforts, so we've had the first year seminar for a couple of years, which I know, I think almost all institutions have that. It's, I think it's been successful. I would say, that a statement that categorically, if you attend that you are successful is premature. In part, we have very small numbers, so that's difficult to track. But it's a preparation I think that we do that we feel is worth the effort to, to you know, help students with helping students continue. I think along with the output that we generate, such as building relationships with students, the first year seminar, orientation, and so forth, I think the counterpart is local industries building career ladders. That was not in place a couple of years ago. But more and more, because there is high turnover and they find they need to really incentivize a little bit. More organizations are doing that. The school district for example, articulated the career ladders. The regional government, now has the career ladders, whereby for every, for however many credits they complete they might get a step increase. And keep in mind many of our students are working students. So I think that those things have helped. So I would think in general, I think one more example, role models. It's difficult to pursue a career if you don't know anybody in your community or in your family that is a professional or has gone to college to pass that on. So there's been quite an effort undertaken in these communities to some of those corporations, and when you walk down the college you'll see posters of young people who are going to the University or who have finished it. In some of the other buildings there are mother daughter or parent child expressing that they are proud of their kids for
continuing. We try to highlight professionals who have finished their education, come back here and are now working in the community. So the role model I would add this as an additional one. I think it is a number of little initiatives. I don't think there is one, one big one where you could say that's been successful.

Ipiktok also discussed the balance between educational offerings, cultural commitments, and industry. Partnering with regional corporations in particular seems to be moderately successful thus far, with increasing achievement being noticed. Specific trainings are offered for specialized and immediate jobs.

Evan: You mentioned partnering with a variety of entities. Can you describe a bit of that? What's the connection between students, this institution, and those entities?

Ipiktok: With other entities one of our strongest programs and departments is our workforce development program and we do a lot of short term trainings. We do a lot of vocational training and a lot of entities here, local industries are always constantly looking for construction workers, electricians, plumbers, administrative assistants … our hospital is always looking for nursing assistants. Or students with knowledge of the health care system. We provide a lot of the training and we partner with them, so that we provide the training that meets their needs and the needs of the people that their looking to employ. And our whole goal is that we can get students to get their two-year degree and if they decide to go to a four-year degree we'll provide all the support we can to make that transition. But if they decide that, "ok, I got a college degree, this is it, this is all I
wanted”, and then hopefully we can put them, you know place them with one of the employers here. Another big place we do partnerships with is our oil fields. Oil companies do provide funding and scholarship opportunities for our students and we work and partner with them to provide the trainings they may need. Whether it be looking for more people to be certified, there's a training coming up that we are looking to fill. I can't remember the training off the top of my head. You know we do a lot of, you know, short term trainings for them.

To address the cultural expectations of students, Ipiktok works with other staff to create meaningful experiences to try to encourage student participation. Such events generally have good attendance and positive feedback from students.

EVAN: What kind of activities are there, you mentioned the basketball team will be coming, what other activities do students do, that we see a lot of participation?

IPIKTOK: Um, sports is a big thing. You know basketball is a huge thing in the region, especially in our communities. Volleyball, they play pool tournaments, the students do. You know, and we sort of try and rotate the activities that we do, so that our RA will do sports activities, our student government would do activities that focus on study nights or... fundraising activities, and then we had a cultural activities specialist, but that position currently is waiting to be filled, so we just completed interviews. Our cultural specialist, they were responsible for doing culturally relevant activities. So Illuak, who is our front desk receptionist, she did traditional cooking, so she would cook.
um, caribou, or um, bowhead whale, or with the students, or she would help the students sew quilts, the traditional shirt, the dress shirt they would wear, she would help them make mukluks, which is your fur slippers, she would do a lot of different activities with them. And when we have community events going on, we have a big festival coming up, we would take the students there to participate and encourage them to participate. In the summer we have other cultural activities, we take students out. We have summer camp students here during the summer so we make sure we take them out and get them to participate and take part in those activities.

EVAN: Do you get pretty good attendance at these events?

IPIKTOK: We do. We actually do, you know we find that our students like to participate in activities that are more hands on. We get a lot of participation in our cultural activities that we do and then we get ok participation in sports activities that we do, especially if there is a tournament going on if our college is involved in the sport tournament, or we have a college team and we get students to play on that and participate, so...

Noting the difference of participation between cultural events and academic pursuits, Ipiktok explains that the process of relationship building and personal attention can have a positive impact, although it is a difficult task.

EVAN: You mentioned before that there’s difficulty sometimes in having students attend classes, participate in the academic side, but it sounds like the cultural events are successful. I'm wondering if there are lessons being learned
from that, how can we boost the academic side by using some of the methods of the cultural events side?

IPIK TOK: Right, well you know a lot of it is, you know a lot of our students, um, have a great relationship with our cultural activities person. Illuak has been with the college for so long so she's been known as our dorm mom because she's been here for a very long time. So students build a really great relationship with her, and so she talks to them, and she advises them on personal and academics. She's here at our lobby. And she's always with the students, so she knows these students inside and out, where versus the faculty member they see them in class, so they don't have that sort of relationship where they also know them personally. And you know we do have students that really do have great relationships with their faculty and communicate openly with them. Some students don't, they just...don't. And sometimes, I wonder if maybe historical trauma plays a part in that. I don't know, I don't know the answer to that.

The issue of assimilation attempts by the government in decades past had been brought up with other interviewees, so I asked Ipiktok to discuss the matter more. There is still a hesitation with trusting formal education, but there seems to be some headway being made with the community.

IPIK TOK: Well, um, you know, this is something that I had when I was working on in grad school and one of the things I had asked one of our clinicians here was, you know, do you think that historical trauma plays a role in the youth today? And he said, I truly believe it does, you know when it is something that is
continued to pass down from generation to generation, you know there are times when you definitely see it. That people, that had a better relationship with me than with our counterpart who may be Caucasian, you know. Sometimes it's just trying to build that relationships with students so that, what they learn or what they know is different, if that makes any sense.

EVAN: *It does, do you feel that, if I may ask, do you feel this area is still quite a bit under the thumb of another culture?*

IPIKTOK: *Well you know, the town is, I would say, has become very diverse, I mean it is a melting pot now, versus before. You know we do have a lot of people who support the diversity that they see in the community and some that are not very supportive and still need to be convinced that it's a good thing. You know I've heard comments that, um, you know, said before about this is our land and whatnot, and why do we continue to offer jobs to outsiders that are non-native versus people from with this community. You know I've heard it all, but you know there is a lot of people who support and who are welcoming with open arms. You know, I grew up in the big city most of my life, and moved up here almost seven years ago. I have family here, I have cousins who are married to women from here, and that's how I ended up here. So I do have family, I have connections, I think the biggest thing is that you also participate and show initiative that you are willing to learn about your culture, that you are willing to take part. You know my sisters and I, we do, we participate in events, we are part of a whaling crew, we help with cutting the whale, we help distribute, we do, and a lot of it is integrating yourself to their culture and becoming culturally aware of*
where they stand. And I think when you show that, it really allows them to open their eyes and say, hey, they really want to learn about our culture. You know I would expect the same thing if they came to my, um, country and said hey, “we want to learn, show us”, you know.

In talking with the Director of Native Studies, Kuvageegai, it was quickly discovered that there is a wide array of cultural activities offered for the college. Such numerous events would perhaps be alarming for a mid-size institution, much less for a smaller college. There appears to be good attendance, consistent programming, and clear relevance to the local population and students. As the events offered are almost always available to both the community and students, they have an additional benefit of furthering the incorporation of the college into regional acceptance.

EVAN: Can we start off, first tell me a little bit about your position and some of the day-to-day things that you do.

KUVAGEEGAI: So, I work in the Native Studies Department and I oversee a variety of native culture related courses. Make sure we're having them, make sure they're offered, making sure we have instructors, some examples of the classes that we offer are, native language conversation, grammar, regional native grammar, and these courses are you know, one through four. We also have a skin sewing contemporary and traditional skin sewing. We have carving, baleen art, we also offer regional history, language and culture courses, native storytelling, and then we also have kind of like topics in, like a variety, it can be anything, like one time we had caribou skin tanning, or like mukluk crimping, I don't know if
you've seen the boots, the boots sole crimping. Beading, just a number, it could be anything anybody wants.

EVAN: *A wide variety of cultural vocational training...*

KUVAGEEGAI: Oh, we also offered one time sled making.

EVAN: *That must be really quite involved...*

KUVAGEEGAI: Well, I guess it depends on how many students, like we offered it but no students applied for that one. We offered it but no students...

EVAN: *So, what are some of the bigger successes you've encountered with your program?*

KUVAGEEGAI: So, what I also do is I do the native cultural hour, and what that is every Friday for an hour, students, staff, and faculty come, they're encouraged to come and join in and what that is, is we bring the culture in to the college and, you know, and again our topics are a variety of things, sometimes we'll have guest speakers come in, it will be hands on. Sometimes we'll have food, for example we'll go whaling, there was one time we brought in some whale meat and different parts of the whale, and students, staff, and faculty learned how to prepare and butcher that. Um, also one time we brought in some geese and they learned how to pluck and cut that for stew. We also, like this Friday, we'll have a lady come in and she'll tell us a very ancient traditional story on how our big upcoming festival came to be, and that's like our, it's like every two years it happens, it will be in February. She's going to tell the story of how it came to be. You just have various topics, dancing, art, food, making food...

EVAN: *What did you have this last Friday?*
KUVAGEEGAI: This last Friday we had an elder, she's a very respected elder. She came in and did a language lesson, on our native language.

EVAN: *How many people attend on average?*

KUVAGEEGAI: So, I guess it depends on how people's work load, because sometimes there's classes or people are too busy, but I guess it ranges from like five to forty. Depending on the topic.

EVAN: *So, these events and courses, and things of that nature that you oversee, and coordinate, how do you see those impacting student retention and persistence? Is this coordinated with the effort of keeping students abreast of changes with the culture? How do we incorporate those cultural components into their academic experience?*

KUVAGEEGAI: So most of our students are native and you know some of them are coming from the outlying villages, you know the town is kind of pretty big compared to their villages. And, so they come in and they're away from home, they're away from, I don't want to say their culture because we all kind of have the same culture, but they're away from their families and over here we allow them to stay with their culture, to be rooted, continuing to be rooted in their culture. Even at the dorms, you've talked to Ipiktok and she can tell you more about what they do, with the students.

EVAN: *How do you determine what events occur and when?*

KUVAGEEGAI: So me and the President, we alternate. Whenever she's available she'll take the Friday, or if she's too busy, like three Fridays in a row I'll do them. But usually, we alternate, she does one week I'll do the other. We
alternate. And then like she decides what she wants to do, and I decide what I want to do.

EVAN: *Do you solicit student inquiries, or community to see what they want to drive that, or do you already have such a great handle on it that you know what people would like to see or do?*

KUVAGEEGAI: So last, I believe it was last semester, during one of the cultural hours we actually asked the audience what they would like, and so we had a whole list of things that they wanted to listen or who they wanted to hear talk and so we've been like kind of following that list.

What is at the center of life in that region of the Arctic is what Kuvageegai described as the Cultural Calendar. This calendar is not necessarily formal, but is regular and guides the pattern of activities and work throughout the year for residents. Whaling is central to the culture and anything else, including education, must abide by such positioning. As such, the college schedule, faculty, and staff does their best to work around the demands and expectations of whaling.

KUVAGEEGAI: So, life up here is very different than anywhere else in the world. We have our own native calendar and in our calendar we have different seasons. If you, I don't know if you have heard, whaling is our center up here. If you schedule a meeting during whaling, nobody will show up. If you schedule anything, you know, you'll have hardly any participants in attendance. So I meant, different seasons, we have two whaling seasons, we have fall which falls in our fall semester. We have spring whaling which also falls under our spring
semester. So, October, around October, September, October is our whaling season in fall. Spring is April, end of April, middle to end of April beginning of May. So, if we have hunters or people who are in whaling, ok, let me give you the whole explanation. We have whaling crews. Whaling crews are comprised of families that are in whaling crews. I think we have over, in the region, I think there are over 100 whaling crews. Not all go whaling at the same time. There's only, in town, um I can't say how many there is, but like a season, like we can only get a certain amount of whales each season. We have quotas. Um. Like if we, some of their students, if they're on a whaling crew and if their crew is successful they won't be in class. So that, yeah. So, our graduation day is usually end of April. So, which is okay, because you know, May, it's like, whaling and geese hunting and like people are, like out of here.

Evan: When does your spring semester start, it must start early if you end in April? Or do you not take off for spring break?

Kuvageegai: We don't take off for spring break.

Evan: I see.

Kuvageegai: You know there was talk to extend it a week into May, but you know it won't work that way. It has to fit our cultural calendar. It's the life up here. If it does not follow the cultural calendar it will not work. Because their life up here, it's so important to us. And you just can't take it away.

Evan: So with the September, October, that scheduling must be difficult too.
KUVAGEEGAI: Well it's like the end of September.

Language training and development is a significant effort by Kuvageegai, but is fraught with difficulty due to the limited availability of fluent native speakers and resources. She is working on developing basic language study courses with the hope that expansion will occur in the near future.

EVAN: What are your long term goals for the department that you oversee?

KUVAGEEGAI: OK, I'm working on an online native language course. That's not really long term, that's soon. I'm working on it currently. I think that will really help, you know not having a fluent speaker, if we come to that problem of not having anybody, we'll have the online course that can be offered every semester, and not like every fall or every spring. So it will be offered like every semester.

Kuvageegai really highlights the direct, meaningful impact of cultural learning at the college on students, particularly native students. Such inclusion of indigenous ways of life illustrates the importance the college places on instilling the student's interests first.

EVAN: Your unique experience having been a student here as well as an administrator, what are some of the bigger factors you see impacting student retention here at this college?

KUVAGEEGAI: Well I think our unique scheduling definitely affects it
positively. Most of the time, cause it's really hard to schedule around our hunting and our subsistence activities. You know having, offering courses that allow students to become rooted in their own culture really affects it positively. You know, you'd be surprised, there's a lot of students that don't know this culture, even though they grew up with it and lived here their whole life. So just like having that opportunity really affects their retention positively.

EVAN: *Is there anything that you see that negatively impacts student's persistence from year to year?*

KUVAGEEGAI: Um, not that I can think of. You know I just think of like the hunters, and you don't see many hunters taking classes, so there are some, but there are not a big number of them. So you know, obviously what would they choose? To be stuck inside or to be out there providing? There, you know me and my boss, Dagmar, you talked with her this morning, we've actually been talking about starting up like a hunting program or a like a certificate or something, so that we don't, they're not stuck in the class but they go out in the field and they do what they love while getting credit. That's, we haven't started on it yet, but it's just being talked of.

EVAN: *Anything else you'd like to include, particularly about student retention or persistence?*

KUVAGEEGAI: Well, one thing that would be good for our students over what they already learn here, kind of balancing both worlds, kinda like balancing traditional life stuff, plus going to school, you know both are important, but we know our culture will always be here, and some people have to make sacrifices to
get their education, which a lot of our leaders have expressed. You know to, education they say is the key to success. But it's like education in both worlds, not just one. Which is what we offer.

Cultural infusion is highlighted by the President, illustrating the need to tailor education to the student’s expectations and community needs. The process of providing education through the local cultural lens is not easy, but is clearly the path that works for the institution.

EVAN: *What are some bigger successes and struggles that your institution has had with student retention and persistence?*

BIISAIYOWAG: So I would say, the successes and struggles. Ok, successes. For us I think the biggest one is the fact that because we are a native college we are able to, and I think we would do this no matter what, but, we are mandated to infuse everything about our institution with our culture, with our native culture. And so, I believe that's a really big contender in aspect of at least with our indigenous students, making them feel comfortable, making them feel at home, making them feel like, education, this system of education is indeed tailored to them rather than sitting in the classroom when, they can't make any connections. So I think it's a big connection piece there.

EVAN: *Can you give some specific examples on that?*

BIISAIYOWAG: Sure, I think you know for instance, let's take our math class, where we do some instruction in some of our indigenous numerical systems and make connections between those systems and the Western system and utilize
that as a topic of conversation. A lot of our cultural events we have that happen throughout the year, classes either go to them or assignments are structured around them. A lot of our business programs in support and connection to our native regional corporations. So that our students really are able to think of real life examples and things that affect them on a day to day basis, in regards to whether it's customer services, or investment, or financials or things like that, so, making these connections. In addition, then you kind of go out of curriculum, of course we have our whole native studies program, which is completely infused with all of those pieces. But then you go to the kitchen and we try to serve things that are a little bit sometimes connected to our students. We can't serve our traditional foods of course because they're not governmentally approved, but other things like reindeer, we're able to put those into a dish, which is kind of caribou and gravy over rice, different things like that. And then of course within our dorms, and within our student success center, a lot of the activities they do are all based within culture. So we do a lot in regards to that, that's a huge mandate of ours and something we take very seriously. Um, the other things we've done that have been successful are, I think our learning resource center has had some really good success. In regards to supporting different students we do different hours, we do different locations, to find where, where we meet. We have, what else have we done. I'm trying to think. There's a long slough of things. So those are some of the most important things. When we talk about challenges, I'll be my broken record because we were just talking about it out in the hallway, but I think that a big challenge is, that is everybody is different and it is hard to pinpoint why
a student isn't retained or doesn't persist. It's hard to find out exactly what took
them away, and every student has some sort of different reason. I guess I would
say that a majority of them often are just focused on family, responsibilities,
work, things like that, that require them to leave. We have this thing, we deal
with a lot of homesickness, and being called back home by family members.
Often our students that come here are the ones that, are the ones who are doing a
lot in their communities prior to them thinking that they're going to take
advantage of the opportunity to get an education, and then they get here and
there's such a big gap, there's a void with where they were in their communities,
within their families. And often, family members say, “come home, we miss
you”. So, we deal with that a lot, every semester.

Discussing the topic of relationships, I asked about the stresses on leadership with
such diverse demands. Stress does appear to be a factor in such intensive leadership, but
a welcome feature in the efforts toward providing meaningful and rigorous education.

EVEN: I think it is very clear some of the very important positives that
come from that close relationships with the students. Are there any problems or
struggles with that?

BIISAIYOWAG: Yeah, I do think so, I think on one hand sometimes students
want you do even more. One of our students who I just love her, but there was
some sort of activity and I was out of town but she came in and very, you know,
constructive criticism, very critical as to why I wasn't there because there, why
wasn't I at this on event? I said, I'm just sorry but I just can't be everywhere all the
time. And she was, that wasn't a good enough answer for her, but she's still a student here. You know I think that's definitely a struggle, you put yourself out there so much that people expect you to be constantly out there. And that's kind of across the board, a couple, two weekends ago we had this huge event in town and I had pneumonia, I couldn't go, and so, but people see that I'm not there and people are like, why weren't you there, and why aren't you supporting my program like you're supporting others. So I think that you have to, there's some struggles with weighing that.

EVAN: *It must be very stressful.*

BIISAIYOWAG: *It can be.* I mean I would have loved, and I was laying there on the couch, just completely out of it thinking, man, you know. I'm gonna get some criticism for not being at this event, or these few events. Well and what do you do? Well, I just didn't want to give anybody else my walking pneumonia, so I... but it is, it absolutely is, there's some give and takes there. And I've tried really hard to just keep saying that, that I, you know, I can only do my very best, I just cannot, I won't be able to always be everywhere all the time. I think those are, some of those, there's really positives by being very connected, but absolutely. And I think the other negative is the exhaustion, I mean, you can only be so many places and you can only do so many things. I have a family too, so.

The President also notes the necessary component to help leadership navigate the demands of students, the community and culture is to practice effective listening skills
that lead to prompt responsiveness. Such leadership style might well fit under the auspices of authentic leadership, delineated by George (2003).

Evan: Between student needs, community needs, industry needs, and regulatory bodies, I've found in other institutions that there's lots of different pulling between industry needs and educational needs, but not too much with culture and community, they are quite often aligned. It's a little different here though? So can you speak to how you lead an institution having to navigate those different pulls.

Biisaiyowag: Absolutely, and I hope I do it well, and enough at least. I think you, I guess the biggest thing is you have to listen, you really have to listen and understand and have a pulse on the community in connection with both your students and one of the things I will say we have done, one of the best things about this institution is how responsive we are to needs. We are able to act really fast if that's needed, but we are also able to really accomplish the goals set out in front of use if we're, and I think we communicate well with our partners if they need something they tell us and we're able to deliver.

The President addresses the need for accrediting bodies to recognize the diverse needs that are exemplified by her institution. The increasing requirement of standardization in educational provision is of concern, primarily for fear of losing the ability to address local and marginalized student needs.
CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS

The main concepts that arose during this research from the interviews regarding factors that impact student retention and related issues are student preparedness, homesickness, attendance, alcohol and substance abuse, student pipelines, cultural inclusivity, staffing, role complexity, transitioning, turnover, employee development, infrastructure, distance education, relationship building, cultural integration, and curriculum development.

Students often come ill-prepared for the expectations of higher education in the region of study. While the college does make significant effort to establish a pipeline of potential students from middle school through high school graduation, there is little family or community support for the pursuit of a higher education degree. The structure and curriculum of primary and secondary schooling, in attempting to adhere to state procedures, does not adequately prepare students for the expectations of higher education, nor provide sufficient instruction in local culture and traditions. Due to family and community obligations, there is commonly a high level of homesickness for college students, often leading to attendance issues. Essentially, formal education in the region, especially at the primary and secondary levels, is seen as a peripheral aspect to an individual’s development and growth. Individual identity is characterized by adherence to cultural and familial factors whereas formal education is seen as a secondary commitment. It should also be noted that there is a degree of skepticism in the region regarding formal education, branching from the systematic assimilation attempts by government entities decades earlier, in which indigenous children were taken from their
homes and sent to western education facilities elsewhere, taught curriculum often contrary to their cultural understanding (AIHEC, 1999). While it does not appear there is currently concern for children being taken away from homes, the idea that a formal, Western, education may cause students to lose their identity is present, thus support for such education is lackluster at best.

Alcohol abuse, substance abuse, and mental health issues are all factors that also impact student retention. The lack of related local care facilities has a negative impact on students and their ability to meet the expectations of the college. Beyond the efforts to potentially include such services in a new institutional facility, there is no discussion on how to satisfy these demands. These issues are not unique to the study site, or particularly recent phenomena (Brod, 1975).

The college is geographically remote and resides in an area that experiences an extremely cold and often inhospitable environment. Temperatures range from highs in the summer to just above freezing to average lows in the winter below -20°F, frequently much lower when factoring wind chill. As with many Arctic communities, winter is characterized by darkness, or at very best a slight aura of light, twenty four hours a day. Summer is just the opposite. Such extremes make it difficult for the college to find and retain qualified personnel (Kaden, 2015). There is considerable amount of transitioning between roles within the institution, as well as considerable role complexity. Staff are often expected to fulfill multiple duties that in other institutions may be split between several individuals or departments. Such stress appears to impact turnover at the institution, leading to continued difficulty for remaining personnel duties.
While much of the staff and administration are either from the region or have significant experience within the region, faculty are often from other areas, typically much further south. Because of the accreditation requirements for the institution, faculty must have earned at least Master's degree in order to instruct most credit course offerings. As there are limited options for local and indigenous individuals to achieve that level of education regionally and considering the impact of prior Western educational assimilation practices on indigenous populations, there are very few local individuals that meet the basic credentialing requirements to instruct. A few administrators from the area did travel elsewhere to receive their education, later to come back and work at the college.

With a lack of local, qualified faculty to fill vacancies, the college typically hires candidates from outside the region. While there is a fair amount of turnover, successful faculty, as noted by the interviews, tend to be receptive to the culture, community, and harsh climate. The institution has a goal of retrieving more native and local faculty candidates in coming decades to hopefully increase the numbers of role models for students, as well as enhance the institutional offerings as related to the region’s culture. Currently, personnel coming to the region are exposed to many opportunities to acclimatize to the expectations, traditions, and practices of the local population. Further, the faculty of the institution have considerable influence on shaping the curriculum and the overall direction of the college.

Distance education has been utilized by the college, typical of many colleges in the Arctic, as a means to reach geographically diverse populations. In particular, as this institution serves an exceptionally large geographic region with no roads linking various
villages, it is difficult and expensive for students to attend classes at the physical campus. Distance education through the structure of fully online courses, blended courses, and teleconference courses allow students from remote, small villages to take the necessary coursework to fulfill several different degree programs. Many of the vocational trades do not have a distance education option, requiring students to attend classes on campus.

Internet connectivity is a concern and currently limits the ability to provide dynamic and engaging web modules, but there is a new fiber optic line that is being installed over the coming years, linking London to Tokyo through the Arctic. Many different institutions, education and otherwise, are linking to this line including the college. This access will allow for greater internet speeds in many areas of the region. Some villages, however, will not be connected to this new line and the college’s administration is trying to identify avenues to assist such communities.

Along with increasing the internet connectivity, the college is looking to build a new facility within the nearby town that will contain all the necessary amenities that are expected of the community, students, and the region. Such a facility is much needed, as their current buildings were not originally intended for education, and it does not allow the college to meet the current and future space, technology, and location needs. Significant fundraising and grant efforts will be needed to build such a structure, but the administration seems positive that a new building will become a reality in the not too distant future.

Perhaps the biggest success and the greatest uniqueness of this college is how they approach culture and relationships into their entire structure. While living expenses in the region are quite exorbitant, high school graduates can expect ample employment
opportunities that pay well. Despite a lack of substantial familial support and absence of
significant economic benefit for pursuing higher education, the college manages to attract
and retain students at levels comparable to non-native institutions. For many potential
students there is essentially no social support nor economic purpose to the pursuit of
higher education. As such, any reason for attending college must align with other
factors, in this case culture awareness acquisition. Intensive relationships are developed
at the college, offering helpful and understanding guidance through the process of
enrolling and satisfying the many expectations placed upon students in higher education.
More so, regional cultural components are not simply added onto the curriculum.
Instead, the entire structure and processes of the institution are from the vantage point of
the culture. While many institutions place student-centeredness as part of their identity,
this college is developed from the perspective of the student, only deviating from such a
reality to satisfy the various required compliance and regulatory activities. In other
words, culture is not simply something that is supplementary, instead, education is
supplemented to the culture. This effort is easily noted through the many cultural events,
curriculum that is native first and western second, the numerous relationships to cultural
institutions in the region, and the mission and vision that puts native culture first,
followed by educational needs.

The intent to pursue a higher education degree is reflective of multiple factors,
both internal and external to each student. Much of Western higher education models
have grown since the late 1960’s to equate higher education as preparation for economic
positioning (Berrett, 2015) and certainly most institutions guide their practices in
attempts to adhere to federal guidelines, much of which increasingly require evidence
toward alignment between the degrees offered at the institution and graduate employability. When faced with a regional economic reality that negates a need for higher education there must be other factors to draw and retain students if an institution seeks to persist. Such draw is the ability for the college to provide cultural activities and awareness throughout their system. Certainly there are benefits beyond the cultural training provided by the institution, but central to the efforts of leadership is the practice of placing cultural identity at the forefront of their activities. Students at the college feel a great deal of obligation to families and communities throughout the region. Whether it is for whaling and hunting support, or even for caretaking of younger family members, there are several factors that may influence the decision for an Arctic native college student to enroll, persist, and complete their education. As evidenced by the interviewees, it is often a difficult process of meeting the varied cultural and familial needs of the students. However, consistent, thoughtful practice of cultural awareness throughout the institutions practices ensures that the institution provides varied and impactful experiences in their attempt to alleviate any internal barriers to student success. Students still must face choices with regard to education participation versus community and/or familial responsibilities, but the process of enrolling, the establishment of value and purpose of higher education, and educational accessibility are all factors being addressed by the college. Students are pressured to depart their educational programming by several factors, but such influences are not primarily a reflection of institutional value, efforts, or support.

The results from this case study illustrate both parallels and detractions from the retention literature, there being overlap with regard to much of the conclusions discussed
by Tinto, Seidman, and others. The case study institution exhibited traits that reflected college-wide dedication to student success, a key component of Tinto’s theory (1993). All interviewees were intimately aware of and concerned for student retention, persistence, and completion issues. Also, there are ample social and educational opportunities provided to integrate the students into the college atmosphere. Intensive student advising is conducted, although due to staff turnover and role complexity this feature is often difficult to provide at the level that Tinto (1997) and Seidman (2005) advise. Student needs were matched to institutional mission, as many indigenous institutions accomplish. Retention policy is not simply tacked onto the activities of the college (as Tinto (1993) criticized of many higher education policies), but instead reflects a genuine, cultivated approach to education, with student interests as central to the institution’s existence.

In contrast to Tinto’s (1998) suggestion that the greater the separation from community and family provides greater prediction of student success, the college in this study found that facilitating family contact while offering community and culturally relevant programming aids in retaining students. While there is a high degree of homesickness, leaders in the institution try to ease that barrier to retention by offering paid phone cards for students, adjusting the academic schedule to fit the cultural calendar, host many events tied to the region’s native culture, and offer flexibility in course delivery systems. These factors allow students to maintain varying degrees of contact with their home communities and families, with the hope that they will continue to pursue their college education.
As a public institution, the college must strive to achieve metrics laid forth by their governing and accrediting bodies. As such, while student success can be measured in the form that Tinto and Seidman offer, in which a student completes their personal educational goals, the institution is none the less focused primarily on standardized metrics of retention. Fall to fall retention is measured and, like several indigenous serving institutions in the Arctic, fairs quite well and is comparable to non-native institutions, despite the harsh climate, lack of specific need for a college degree, lack of defined family support, nearly exclusive first generation students, and historical subjugation.

In order to more fully account for various factors that influence student retention, it may be important to adjust current models and to add an additional cultural component to prevailing theory, particularly when discussing indigenous student success. Such an addition should be well distinguished from models emphasizing social influences for student departure. In other words, culture competency of an institution would explain the degree of awareness that the institution adheres to customs, traditions, and the underlying characteristics of the local population. Social factors would perhaps include perceptions of economic value, regulations of governing or accreditation bodies, and the routine non-cultural practices that organize a population. For the intent of this modification, the social component would entail the technical aspects of functioning in a community, while culture would include the purpose, reasoning, and vision of a population.

Figure 1 illustrates a potential model that would incorporate much of the characteristics of dominant retention theory, but include as a central tenet the presence of cultural competency and awareness on the part of the institution. As mentioned earlier in
discussing the work of Berger, et. al (2012), the effort to conform students to the practices of the institution instead of vice versa may be ill-advised. This may be especially so when working with indigenous students that come from cultures that have been historically subjugated. Additionally, as Berrett (2015) notes, much of the culture that surrounds the purpose of higher education is to seek out paths for graduate’s social, occupational, and economic independence, a trait that Schooler (2014) notes is diametrically opposite to numerous indigenous culture patterns. It should certainly be of no surprise that a large bureaucratic educational system, designed and practiced in the interests of a dominant power, would experience poor reception by groups that have conflicting awareness to the structure and application of such a hegemonic authority. Likewise, success for indigenous students should perhaps not be expected in a structure that in the past has been utilized to suppress their culture and identity for generations. Instead, as the case study institution displays, the institution should adjust their methods to the meaning and awareness of the population they serve. Doing so will aid in aligning the efforts of the institution to meaningful achievement by their students.

Were an institution desiring to meet the needs of their indigenous students further, a good start would be adherence to Lowe’s (2005) suggestions for serving Native American students and achieving an understanding of Schooler’s (2014) Native American College Student Transition Theory, both discussed earlier. Additionally, student success comes in many forms (again noted by Tinto and Seidman), not simply the metric that governing and accrediting bodies impose upon institutions. Greater awareness of the varied meanings behind individual pursuits may help to improve educational programming and student outcomes.
In reference to Figure 1, by establishing an institution that first and foremost places all action through the lens of local culture, greater understanding of student and community needs is achieved. Certainly student preparation and academic performance can also be valuable predictors of student success. Seidman’s (2005) outlining of intensive advising would appear apt for any institution, regardless of demographics, although such advisement may be more beneficial toward indigenous students if it harbored the lessons offered by Schooler (2014) and Lowe (2005).

Establishing high expectations and considerable support to employees to guide them in a path toward student success through cultural awareness also aids in bringing everyone onboard toward institutional mission. Emphasizing and encouraging meaningful engagement through the lens of indigenous learning theory can aid in creating value perception in students. Ensuring that course delivery and academic calendars are
reciprocal to indigenous cultural events aids in integrating the institution into the local population. Many indigenous populations have unique support service needs, and a staff that is supportive, knowledgeable, and competent can aid students in decreasing technical barriers to enrollment. Significant effort to include community and family into the activities of the college can afford the institution greater trust in the local population. An institution that has sound policy and mission but that is flexible with the demands of students and trends in education is more capable of adapting to varying styles, but can maintain consistent service and vision. Lastly, measurement, evaluation, and reflection on institutional action and policy is necessary in order to ensure that needs are met and opportunities are pursued. These factors would appear to all contribute to indigenous student success.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

There have been ample efforts throughout higher education to adapt processes, techniques, and departments in an attempt to facilitate enhanced student retention. Such efforts have been fruitless over the last several decades in changing retention rates as a whole, as pointed out by Seidman (2012), but there is no sign of abatement to these labors. The adoption of technique, outlined earlier in discussion of Ellul and Stivers, is seen as an attempt to gain ground on arbitrary metrics, namely retention percentages outlined by accrediting and government regulatory bodies. Effort to satisfy these goals consumes and guides much of the personnel duties within colleges, consistently seeking to find the methods to extract marginal improvements, all without a proven method or model of action. Many dedicated and caring leaders are trying to achieve admirable goals, however, their efforts are guided by bureaucratic pressure to form efficient technical systems. The institution, in the process of trying to meet such requirements, has replaced concepts of purpose and meaning with technique through the pursuit of efficiency. Emphasis is postured upon the how of educational attainment instead of the why.

Prevailing models of student retention fail to fully account for variance in cultural experiences. While Tinto (1993) notes the importance of social influence on student departure, he avoids addressing the impact of culture on student retention. Other theorists, Astin (1984), Bean (1980), Seidman (2005), all include elements of social support in their discussion of retention, but do not address fully the impact of culture on student retention. There has been in recent decades attempts to identify unique influences
on minority college student retention, notably by Crisp and Nora (2009) and Berger et. al (2012), that the important consideration in structure and practice of higher education is often conflicting with the reality of subjugated groups. It is clear that in order to understand subjugated group student retention, attention should be paid to how their interpretations of college relate to their educational goals. Indeed, if the goal of higher education is framed such that it provides a path of separation from community and family toward financial and social independence, it is clearly at odds with a community that values family support networks and sharing tradition.

Acquiring the awareness of the cultural variety in intent and purpose for attending higher education would seem a rudimentary step in designing retention policy, particularly for institutions that serve a large portion of indigenous students. Such passage is not free from difficulty, as typified by the classic candle problem presented by Duncker (1945) in which it was found that for tasks related to complex problems, intrinsic motivation far exceeded the outcomes of extrinsic motivators. In other words, if the achievement of education may be considered a complex process, the best method to achieve positive outcomes for indigenous populations is to embrace intrinsic motivation (such as achieving an understanding of life) and deny extrinsic motivators (such as completing a degree will award you money from a career). This understanding places a value to education external to economic advancement. The intrinsic value of understanding one’s place in society, the traditions, the practices, the why to life can drive many indigenous students to pursue greater knowledge. Providing basic knowledge of how to navigate college is necessary, but that venture does not provide meaning for the
effort. Economic success can in many cases be a motivator toward completion, but the value of education can, and perhaps should, extend beyond that understanding.

Predominant retention theories place institutions as responsible for driving students to develop behaviors reflective of their policies and behaviors. There is no effort in the literature to encourage institutions to steer their efforts to reflect student or local culture behaviors, expectations, or needs (although there is discussion of the impact of alignment between student needs and institutional practices, but the central theme is that positive alignment is a predictor of student success, students should conform to institutional culture, and no discussion of institutions adjusting their methods to conform to student needs). To be certain, the overriding structure of accreditation and governmental regulation requires strict adherence that may either force this arrangement, or occupy the efforts of college personnel to a degree that they lack the ability to handle such demand and create policy reflective of local interests. Developing institutional retention policy from the cultural lens of the community and students that it serves is often in conflict to regulation and accreditation demands that, in turn, demand constant improvement in student retention.

In order to place the importance of diversity in retention policy into a global arena, it is helpful to refer to concepts by Taylor (2010), who offers a vision as to the opportunities present in the future, particularly on the role of leadership in education. In his speech to the RSA in 2010, he states, "Globalization and public deficits may mean that future generations in the west face tougher challenges than their parents. So the stock of global empathy upon which democratic leaders can draw has to grow if we're to reach agreements which put the long-term needs of the whole planet and all its people ahead of
short-term national concerns” (p. 3). This directly relates to Collins (2005) concept of turning the flywheel within the social sector. It also resonates with Crutchfield and Grant (2012) with their idea of nurturing the networked nonprofit. Clear mission, shared governance, and shared ideals, reflective of local cultures and interests can aid in developing meaningful education ventures that provide for long term needs and bolstering the value of education beyond technical competency.

Taylor (2010) also proposes, “It is to be a world where so many of us feel that the shape of our lives is dictated not by the ideal of a life fully lived but by social convention and economic circumstance” (p. 4). When efforts are directed toward constant, hard work toward superficial goals of income and security, there is a loss of personal vision and what Robinson and Aronica (2013) would term “finding your element”. Taylor (2010) continues, “Creative people who want to make a difference have a million and one opportunities and distractions. To engage them means an ethic which is intolerant of negativity, rigid thinking and self-promotion” (p. 4). The bureaucracy within higher education provides a framework for measurement of various technique, but limited ability to highlight purpose and qualitative value. Honest, empathetic educational leaders can harness the will of society and develop a vision for education’s future. Confining students to an education that has strict preset ideas about what their future behavior can entail limits the growth of diverse ideas, and subsequently, the ability to harness solutions to future social problems. To this end, rejection of the other-directed as noted by Riesman (1950) would require the rejection of standardization and conformity, and the embrace of differing experiences and knowledge, notably such diversity as evidenced in Arctic cultures. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average American will
hold nearly 12 different careers in their lifetime (2016). Such job mobility requires either consistent retraining or the ability of the graduate to negotiate a variety of tasks with only perhaps nuanced guidance. Deviating from current higher education neoliberal policy, as outlined by Winslow (2015), toward a culture centered retention model may align more to indigenous educational needs, and even perhaps to the benefit of non-indigenous students. Institutions that graduate individuals that have experienced more diverse education may be more suited to adapt to varying occupations in their future.

Educational and student success should perhaps be measured by the metrics important to the local population and culture, not by a system that has a history of subjugating certain populations. Effective articulation between institutions is of course in the best interests of students, but standardizing program evaluation from the vantage point of one culture at the expense of another fails to embrace diverse thought and experience, further leading to limited perspectives on current and future social, environmental, and political concerns. Cultural value analysis of indigenous cultures in the framework of Hofstede (2001, 2010) and House et. al. (2001) would aid in identifying effective leadership styles with these groups. Effective higher education leaders would be amiss to not address their institution's subculture leadership values. If there is a goal for higher education to produce graduates that are successfully able to navigate complex tasks for their future, there would need to be great latitude in accreditation measurement metrics.

Limits to research

This study primarily focused upon interviews with selected personnel at a singular Arctic higher education institution. Additional trends from other Arctic institutions were
compared, noting many similarities in processes. The results of this study are perhaps limited to Arctic institutions that serve a high proportion of indigenous Inuit and Inupiaq students. There may be some relationship from these findings to other indigenous groups, but due to a variety of factors (climate, culture, group history, local issues, etc.), the results may be limited in usefulness.

Institutions with clearly defined populations, residing in a region that has a relatively distinct culture and social expectations, may benefit the most from the process of developing programming through the vantage of a cultural lens. Large, diverse institutions may have a much more difficult time identifying cultural commonality, needs, and subsequent effort to perform from those perspectives.

Future research:

Areas of opportunity for future research abound. Further case studies of Arctic colleges and universities would be helpful in determining the degree to which indigenous culture is situated in an institution’s activities. Likewise, seeking out indigenous student responses to issues of retention and departure could shed significant light on the topic. Comparisons between Arctic indigenous institutions and non-Arctic indigenous institutions could be fruitful, as would evaluating Arctic indigenous and Arctic non-indigenous institutions, like many of those in Scandinavia and Russia. For example, it may be helpful to identify any potential parallels educational efforts between North American Arctic Indigenous colleges and universities and institutions in Scandinavia that serve native Sami populations.

Another avenue of research may be helpful in determining the impact of culture on non-indigenous subculture student retention as separate from the economic
environment. Many institutions, particularly community colleges located in urban areas (Crisp and Nora, 2009) graduate well trained students that find it hard to secure a local career due to economic depression, yet still experience enrollment characteristics similar to other institutions in more economically secure areas. It would seem worthwhile to study the draw for students to these institutions with the prospect of limited employment in the area after graduation. If their decision to attend college is not for the potential job prospects, discovery of their purpose for education would seem important to the body of literature regarding retention.

Further research is warranted in determining the effects laid forth by Ellul in discussion of the Technological Society on higher education. After decades of intense education reform, arguments persist that the process of education and the outcomes are consistently worse. Winslow (2015) argues such decline is due to the switch in the role of higher education starting in the late 1960's. If the neo-liberal expectation of institution accountability and graduate employability is a desirable outcome, there is insufficient support that reform efforts have achieved these goals. Further, Robinson and Aronica (2013) argue that the goal of aligning students to future employment opportunities is an impossible task, due to the nature of economic, political, and social change leading to unpredictable needs for the future. What matters most to students and community with regard to educational needs may perhaps supersede the desires of the institution and give clearer insight into retention trends.
REFERENCES


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https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Equity%20In%20Educational%20Land-Grant%20Status%20Act%20Of%201994%20%281%29.pdf


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To: Dr. Andre Manak and Mr. Evan Brown  
From: Institutional Review Board – Governors State University  
      Renée D. Theiss, PhD, IRB Chair  
CC: Fatmeh Tommalleh  
Date: November 14, 2018  
Re: Indigenous Student Retention in Arctic Higher Education  
Project Number: #16-10-10

The Institutional Review Board at Governors State University has granted exempt approval for your project. You may begin your research.

Please be advised that if you make any substantive changes in your research protocol, you must inform the IRB and have the new protocol approved. Please refer to your GSU project number when communicating with us about this research.
November 15, 2016
To: President [-------------]
From: Evan Brown, [------------------]
RE: Doctoral Student interested in studying student retention and college culture at [------ ---]

President [-------------],

I am a doctoral graduate student at Governors State University in Illinois, USA. As part of the requirements of my studies, I am to complete a capstone project. I have had a great interest in Arctic colleges for some time, particularly your institution. More specifically, I am interested in the structure and overall customs of your institution, and would like to know more about your student retention processes and institutional culture. If possible, I would like to visit your campus and conduct a few semi-structured interviews with members of your institution’s leadership. These interviews would only be approximately an hour in length and participation would be completely voluntary. I’m hopeful that some of the information gained from these interviews may be helpful in addressing retention issues at other institutions, particularly indigenous student persistence.

I am writing to you to ask for assistance in gaining permission to visit and conduct these interviews. I will be happy to provide any required documentation, including my IRB approval form, to your institution and would hope to conduct interviews over a one week timeframe late this year or during the very early part of 2017. If it would be possible to interview perhaps 7-10 leaders, staff, and/or faculty at your institution that are associated with student retention policy, I would be eternally grateful.

As I am sure you understand, in order to facilitate the travel preparation required for such a visit, I need to secure plans relatively soon. Obviously, I will need to provide more details as the desired date of visit comes closer, but do you think my project is possible from your institution’s position? Please feel free to let me know of any questions or concerns you might have at this time. Thank you for taking the effort to evaluate my request.

Sincerely,

Evan Brown
Student, Interdisciplinary Leadership Ed.D
Governors State University
University Park, Illinois, USA