



UNIVERSITY OF  
**ILLINOIS CHICAGO**

# **Report of the *Native Americans at UIC* Task Force**

**February 12, 2021**



***In the spirit of healing, this Task Force acknowledges and honors  
the original peoples of the Chicagoland area - the Three Fires  
Confederacy (Potawatomi, Odawa and Ojibwe Nations) and  
other Tribal Nations (Menominee and Ho-Chunk) - and the many  
Indigenous people who call it home – past, present, and future.***

***Adapted from Native American Support Program (NASP, UIC)***

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# Executive Summary

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The UIC Native American Task Force was formed in 2019 to address the question: *What is the status of Native Americans on the UIC campus?* Charged with making recommendations in four key areas – access, achievement, inclusion, and engagement – the Task Force was asked to identify strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement, with the goal of building an optimal learning environment for Indigenous students. It became clear that answering this question would necessitate attending to issues of recruitment, Native faculty presence, data collection and representation, academic programming, and the production of Indigenous knowledge.

This report culminates a year of work in 2019-2020 that marked the 50th anniversary of UIC's Native American Support Program (NASP). This year also marked our perseverance through a global pandemic with overlapping medical, societal, economic and political crises that are having disproportionate impacts on Native communities, and thus are reshaping the realities documented in this report. We see this as a critical time to contribute the findings of this Task Force to the efforts to strengthen and deepen the relationship between Native communities and the University, and to chart a course toward UIC becoming a leader in the advancement of Native visibility and voice.

We begin with a review of the 50-year history of NASP, including decades-old calls for improving Native representation at UIC – many of which are still relevant. Interviews with members of Chicago's Native community, representing multiple generations of involvement at UIC, inform another view of Native history and perspectives on campus. In collaboration with UIC's Office of Institutional Research, the Task Force provides a thorough review of the ways in which Native members of the UIC community are identified, documented, and represented with data – and in particular, to the ways data practices contribute to the *erasure* of Native people. Working with UIC's Academic and Enrollment Services, we reviewed efforts toward recruiting and retaining Native students. These inquiries inform a set of recommendations for improving Native visibility, voice and representation at UIC, which are summarized here, listed in full in Section 6 of the report, and discussed in greater detail in the other sections of the full report.

**Support campus-level structures:** Our highest-level recommendations are to increase resources for the Native American Support Program, establish a Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Native Americans, and create an Advisor position in the Provost's office.

**Build connections with Native communities:** Systematize regular engagement with the Native community. Maintain living documents from community engagement that are regularly updated, and shape future communications. Create accountability mechanisms for tracking progress on recommendations, including regular reporting to stakeholder communities. Above all, when engaging with Native community – *Listen!*

**Hire Native faculty and staff:** Without substantial hiring, the campus cannot sustain a welcoming and healthy climate for Indigenous students and UIC community members. Multiple strands of hiring are recommended, preferably in clusters to avoid isolation and over-taxing of individual hires, including tenure track and clinical faculty and staff at all levels. Hiring should address both the need for Native American Studies programming, as well as building Native representation in departments across the campus.

**Enhance Native student recruitment and support:** Resources should be allocated to relationship-based recruitment efforts locally, nationally and internationally; building stronger connections with Native communities, including reservations and organizations; develop relationships with Tribal Nations particularly in the Great Lakes region; increasing scholarships, fellowships and tuition waivers; enhancing the in-state tuition program for tribally-enrolled students; identifying UIC programs that align with Native interests and needs; and developing marketing materials that highlight Native presence. Most important is to develop a more supportive campus environment, by increasing resources to the Native American Support Program, involving other campus entities in supporting Native students (including directing them to NASP), hiring Native support staff in Admissions, and regularly providing spaces for Native cultural events.

**Improve data practices:** Multiple aspects of the ways data are collected, aggregated and reported contribute to the erasure and misrepresentation of UIC's Native community, with far-reaching implications for policies and decision-making. A coordinated approach to improving this will include: (1) disaggregate "AIAN" from other race and ethnicity categories in reports; (2) explore ways to change problematic race categories and assumptions shaping data practices; (3) facilitate students' options for revisiting answers to race/ethnicity questions; (4) improve the documentation of Tribal identities and affiliations; and (5) improve systems for documenting and reporting the presence of Native faculty, staff, and other employees on campus. Data practices should use regular reporting and feedback to improve the ways data are collected, shared and used, and systems should be put in place to document these improvements.

**Develop academic programming and research:** For UIC to become a leader in the production and teaching of Indigenous knowledge and practices, we must explore multiple approaches: establishing a Native Studies minor or major, integrating Native-focused scholarship across departments, supporting research in Indigenous ways of knowing, and creating credit-bearing courses, workshops, and other programs. Research initiatives should create opportunities for Native students across a wide range of disciplines; should include a focus on the needs of Native communities; and should disseminate findings in Native communities. In particular, the campus should support research efforts that involve Native communities in all levels and aspects of the research endeavor.

**Institute land acknowledgement practices:** Work with NASP and Native community members to develop land acknowledgement practices, especially through relationships with Native communities that were forcibly removed from Chicago. Ensure that land acknowledgement goes beyond words, to permeate practices and representations of UIC at all levels.

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# 1

# Introduction

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This report culminates a year of work at a unique historical moment. Academic Year 2019-20 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University of Illinois at Chicago Native American Support Program, a milestone that is celebrated in this report, but unfortunately, after half a century, not matched by the progress we might have hoped for in terms of Native representation. This report on Native Americans at UIC follows the UIC Native American Support Program's (NASP) and Great Cities Institute's (GCI) November 18, 2018, event entitled *Natives in Chicago*<sup>1</sup>, and the publication in June 2019 of the report *Adversity and Resiliency for Chicago's First: The state of racial justice for American Indian Chicagoans*<sup>2</sup>, researched and written by scholars at UIC's Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy (IRRPP) in close collaboration with Native community partners. Both the GCI/NASP event and the IRRPP report are reminders to UIC that there are Native Americans in Chicago. This Task Force report offers insights, perspectives, and data we can bring to bear on reshaping UIC's relationship with Native Chicagoans as well as Native communities nationally and internationally.

This year's work also had to persevere through the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, and the massive disruptions it has created in all aspects of life. The overlapping medical, societal, economic and political crises it has engendered have disproportionate impacts on Native communities and are reshaping the realities documented in this report.

We see this as a critical time to contribute the findings of this Task Force to the efforts to strengthen and deepen the relationship between Native communities and the university. It is urgent for UIC to step into a leadership role in increasing the visibility and connectedness of Native people and communities in Chicago, nationally, and internationally. In order to confront systemic erasure and settler-colonial racism, we need to honestly and carefully assess where we stand, based on a clear understanding of where we have been, in order to imagine the future that we desire. Our hope is that this document can help us chart a course forward where UIC becomes a leading institution in the advancement of Native visibility and voice.

## 1.1 Task Force Charge

Shortly after Cynthia Soto became Director of UIC's Native American Support Program (NASP) in 2015 she approached then Associate Chancellor and Vice Provost of Diversity, Dr. Tyrone Foreman, to discuss issues facing Native students at UIC. Observing that other populations on campus had the ear of the Chancellor via the various Chancellor Committees,<sup>3</sup> Ms. Soto suggested that there be such a Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Native Americans. Dr. Foreman's suggestion was that a task force first be formed to articulate the status of Native Americans at UIC, serving as the starting point for the Status Committee.

When Dr. Amalia Pallares was appointed Associate Chancellor and Vice Provost for Diversity in Spring 2018, Cynthia requested that such a task force be formed to identify relevant issues affecting the presence of Natives at UIC. In April 2019, the Task Force received its charge from Dr. Pallares and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, J. Rex Tolliver to address the question: What is the status of Native American students on the UIC campus? The Task Force was asked to assess four key areas in relationship to Indigenous students: access, achievement, inclusion, and engagement and to identify strengths, struggles, areas for improvement, and recommendations for the university to consider in order to create an optimal learning environment for Indigenous students.

In furtherance of this goal, the Task Force convened UIC educators, researchers, administrators, students and staff to investigate the current status of UIC supports for the Indigenous community, including historical contexts and possibilities for change. Members of the Task Force reviewed available historical documents on Natives at UIC. We

1 <https://greatcities.uic.edu/2018/12/11/natives-in-chicago/>

2 [https://irpp.uic.edu/pdf/publications/IRPP\\_TheStateOfRacialJusticeForAmericanIndianChicagoansReport.pdf](https://irpp.uic.edu/pdf/publications/IRPP_TheStateOfRacialJusticeForAmericanIndianChicagoansReport.pdf)

3 The various Chancellor Status Committees include Chancellor's Committees on the Status of: Asian Americans; Blacks; Latinos; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues; Persons with Disabilities; and Women.

also invited non-UIC faculty and community leaders to discuss paths toward creating an environment at UIC that will help address issues of access, achievement, inclusion, and engagement for Native students, faculty, staff, other members of the UIC community, and the Chicago area. In going where the data took us, it became increasingly clear from historical documents and community interviews, that a consideration of Native American student experience at UIC would necessitate inclusion of other issues, including recruitment of students, the presence of faculty, the production of indigenous knowledge and the addition of relevant curriculum. Thus, this report addresses these issues as well.

Upon completion of this review, The Task Force on Native Americans at UIC is submitting this report that includes a summary of its findings, identification of key issues that should be addressed, and recommendations for the UIC administration, the most immediate of which, is the formation of a Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Native Americans, who could then be tasked with overseeing the recommendation of this report.

## **1.2 On Terminology: Native, Indigenous, Native American, American Indian**

In this report, we use *Native American*, *American Indian*, *Native*, and *Indigenous* interchangeably, and in doing so respect how Native people refer to themselves, while also joining them in recognizing the history, context and complexity in which the terms arose and are currently used. In Chicago, for example, we have the American Indian Center, which provides direct support services and cultural programming, and at UIC we have the Native American Support Program, which provides support services and cultural programming. In addition, other groups have long used the term Indigenous (e.g., The Indigenous Environmental Network) to further reinforce the message of cross-border connections as original inhabitants of the Americas.

The UIC Native American Support Program was created 50 years ago, largely because of community activism that was fueled by the social movements of the 1960s and 70s. During this time, groups like the American Indian Movement (AIM) spurred a resurgent focus on issues facing Native Communities in the U.S. We are proud and fortunate to have NASP on campus as a lasting legacy of these movements, and we look forward to building a stronger and broader system of support and programs around this cornerstone of Native presence at UIC.

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## **1.3 Overcoming Erasure: Native Presence and Visibility**

Native people have long been subjected to erasure and stereotypes. Not so widely known, for example, is that Indigenous people, through their sophisticated knowledge of the region's geography and their extensive trade networks, provided the foundations for Chicago's contemporary agriculture, transportation and flood control infrastructure. Members of the Potawatomi, Odawa and Ojibwe Nations, for example, established portages that connected water systems in the region, which they used to build their extensive trade networks. By sharing this technology with the first non-Native settlers of Chicago, including DuSable who married Kittihawa, a Potawatomi woman known as Catherine DuSable in English, they set the foundation for Chicago to be established as the major trade and transportation hub that it is today (Dukes 2017). Tragically, through horrific warfare, deceitful treaties and other mechanisms of land theft, exclusion and social control, Natives in Chicago were quickly relegated to the back pages of written history. Nonetheless, descendants of Chicago's first settlers remain in the region and others have come and made it their home.

Indigenous peoples have always resisted the takeover of, and removal from, their land. This includes successful fights to reverse federal termination policies of the 1950s that attempted to dismantle tribes (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). Native peoples have also resisted the efforts to strip them of their culture through multiple means including the forced placement of children in boarding schools, and problematic images and representations that have continuously distorted Native cultures, histories and identities. Chicago's early history, for example, included the

1893 World's Fair: Columbian Exposition, which celebrated technological progress while promoting racialized eugenics, depicting Native Americans as inferior caricatures. Resistance to these kinds of representations occurred back then (LaPier and Beck 2015) and continues today as exemplified by the struggles over the use of Native names and images as mascots for sports teams.

One need only read/see the decades of Native American Studies history, poetry, literature, essays and films to learn about some of the actions and impacts of European and Euro-American conquest of the Americas.

Similarly, presumptions are often made that Native populations are either non-existent – people who existed before but not today – or are living only on reservations (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). In fact, as resilient people who have survived the atrocities of settler colonialism and attempted genocide, they continue to reside in both rural and urban communities, with nearly 70 percent of Native populations living in cities across the United States (IRRPP 2019). In Chicago today, there are 22,000 Native people (IRRPP 2019).

Widespread urbanization in the U.S. was particularly prompted by 1953 policies that stemmed from the 1934 Termination Act, and policies of The 1956 American Indian Relocation Act<sup>4</sup>, all of which came about through the ongoing and concerted efforts of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to push for the assimilation of American Indians and their further removal from what lands they had left. The 1956 Act, for example, resulted in large proportions of Native peoples leaving reservations and rural areas to settle in urban areas including Chicago, a regional magnet. From the start of the BIA relocation efforts, the percentage of Native Americans living in cities jumped from nearly 8 percent to approximately 64 percent in 2000 (from National Archives, see footnote; retrieved August 2020). Through the Act, they had been promised access to employment and housing but instead found discrimination, unemployment and low wage labor, poor housing conditions and blocked opportunities.

A further major impact was the disrupted connection to Native homelands and cultural practices. In this context, the American Indian Center in Chicago, founded in 1953 with the help of the American Friends Service Committee, was among the first such centers to form as a place to provide links to resources and a source of cultural connection. The American Indian Center in Chicago currently serves individuals representing over 175 nations. Today, the need for services and cultural connection remains pronounced among Native communities, a fact that must be central to how UIC moves forward in increasing access, achievement, inclusion and engagement of Native students.

As a starting point for this report, this Task Force calls on UIC to, first, recognize the original inhabitants of this land on which it is built (e.g., see Section 5.4.2 below) and the histories of removal and harm, and second, refuse all policies and practices that result in erasure, invisibility and misrepresentation of Native populations (e.g., see Section 4 below). Our intent is that this report will help the greater UIC community become aware of areas where these policies and practices can be identified and reversed and find ways forward to improve access and agency for Native students, families, faculty, staff and community members.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/indian-relocation.html>



# 2

# Fifty years of Native history at UIC

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We recognize that central to any recommendations made by this task force to improve the presence of Natives at UIC, we must begin by understanding previous efforts in this direction. Thanks to Devon Ruoff, an English professor on campus at the time, there are archival documents from the 1970s that are available to provide an insight into the aspirations and accomplishments expressed by Native Americans who were contemporaries of Mexican, Puerto Rican and Black activists that were demanding a presence at the university that had displaced them from their neighborhoods to build its campus immediately southwest of Chicago's downtown.

## 2.1 Early history of Natives at UIC

These archival documents include vision statements with goals and objectives, evaluation reports, flyers, and newspaper articles. For the purposes of understanding the legacy of previous Native American efforts at UIC, we perused these archival documents<sup>5</sup> to ascertain 1) the aspirations of these visionaries, 2) the articulation of issues and obstacles, 3) accomplishments and outcomes and 4) potential initiatives and recommendations that remain relevant. These archival documents provide us a glimpse into the early history of the Native American Support Program (NASP), which was started in 1970 and originally named The Native American Program (NAP). From these documents, we are able to ascertain the important link and legacy of early efforts by Natives in Chicago that remind us of the significance and obligation for Chicago's largest public institution to welcome Chicago's first inhabitants to its campus. While much has changed in the world – and at UIC - since 1970, this history provides insights on what it will take to create the conditions and resources necessary to recruit and retain Native students at UIC. The themes from early efforts remain salient today.

Themes that emerged throughout the documents conveyed the importance of the following:

- An environment where Native people could feel comfortable
- Recruitment, particularly as cohorts
- Student counseling, academic advising, and financial assistance
- Curriculum in Native Studies
- Tutoring
- Resources for Native American personnel to network professionally
- Connection with outside communities

What we learn from these archival documents, unfortunately, is that despite the obstacles and difficulties, there were more university resources and efforts to encourage the presence of Native Americans on campus back then than there are today. As an example, there were more staff assigned to NAP (now NASP), including a grant writer who was able to obtain external funding for a number of initiatives. Nonetheless, dedicated individuals – staff, students and community members – continue to develop strategies to establish a presence for Native Americans at UIC, then known as the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle. *To support and enhance these efforts, our recommendation is that UIC reinvigorate its commitment to welcoming Native students to UIC, not only to previous levels of support, but beyond.*

The most important accomplishment of those early days of advocating for Native presence at UIC was the establishment, in 1970, of The Native American Support Program (NASP; see Figure 1). Initially named the Native American Program (NAP), NASP began at a time when social movement activists prioritized numerous initiatives for underrepresented students to access higher education. This was true nationwide as well as at Chicago Circle. Recruiting and serving Native American students was difficult due to the extensive financial need, cultural barriers to being on campus and the absence of “a sense of belonging.”

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<sup>5</sup> A full dive into these documents would be worth the endeavor and could potentially produce an interesting graduate thesis.

**Figure 1. Chicago Tribune articles from 1971 documenting the establishment of the Native American Program.**

## Circle Seeks Indians for New Classes

American Indians are being recruited as students for a new Native American Studies Program to begin at the University of Illinois Chicago Circle Campus.

The program initially has been funded thru a \$20,000 grant from the Chicago Community Trust, a private foundation. Heading a fund-raising drive and recruitment program are Matthew War Bonnet, program coordinator, and American Indian students Louis Delgado, Leon Mattigosh and Tonia Ackerman.

War Bonnet said the fall recruitment goal is 75 or more Indian students. "The program will be expanded as students see a need for certain courses and as we receive additional funding," he said.

The first course, "American Indian and Society," will be taught in the spring academic quarter which starts tomorrow. A second course on the American Indians' relationship with urban society is being developed for fall.

Altho the program will be open to all university students, it was developed to meet specific needs of young American Indians, War Bonnet said.

The program offers special counselors for Indian students after they enroll, to help them with academic and personal problems, War Bonnet said.

When recruiting students, the staff will work with the American Indian Center and the St. Augustine Indian Center.

## Indians Get Key to College Success

Thirty-five American Indians are enrolled in classes at the University of Illinois Chicago Circle campus as part of the Native American Students' Program.

It was developed with the advice and assistance of Chicago's Indian community, according to Matthew War Bonnet, program director at the university. The program is financed thru four grants, three private and one federal, totaling \$86,000 for the 1971-72 academic year, he said.

Indian students are not offered special courses thru the program, but they get supportive services to help them succeed in college. Services include academic and personal counseling, tutoring on an individual or small-group basis, some financial aid, jobs in the

Indian community, being in touch with an older student at least once a week, and special lectures on Indian culture.

As part of the program's assistance to the Indian community, many will be asked to work in the American Indian and St. Augustine centers, War Bonnet said. Others will work in Head Start projects in elementary schools.

"By having Indians in the university and also out working in their own community, we hope to show the Indian community that we can succeed," War Bonnet said.

Left: *Circle Seeks Indians for New Classes; Chicago Tribune (1963-Current file); Mar 28, 1971; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune pg. NW4*

Right: *Indians Get Key to College Success; Chicago Tribune (1963-Current file); Nov 4, 1971; Proquest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune pg. W2*

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In 1970 the pilot project was initiated with a director and seven students to provide support for entry and success at UIC Circle Campus. According to an evaluation report, designers of the programs knew clearly what the needs for these students would be, but in their own words, "underestimated" the extent to which those needs "represented a barrier to matriculation." Due partly to issues with financial aid, five of the seven students did not complete the first quarter of work. While the supportive services aspect of the pilot program "proved effective" with students relating well to program staff and facilities, it was the students' ability to relate to the university as a whole that seemed to be the biggest impediment. Students enrolled in a wide range of courses but provided feedback that "none of the courses seemed intellectually stimulating to the students in the program." As a result of the students' consultations with counselors,

- "It was concluded that the University curriculum and social attitudes were not relevant to the Native American students. Many of these students felt that the University denied them as a person, specifically a Native American.

- “It is the firm belief of the staff that the NAP students have very little to relate to on campus. It is the staff’s contention that the NAP students needed to feel that this was their university also. The problem is perceived as a conflict between being able to attend college and maintaining their Indian heritage and culture.” (Progress Report, Native American Program, circa late fall 1972).

Through further concerted effort, in fall 1971, 40 Native students entered UIC Circle Campus. However, several students faced economic and household difficulties, and the virtual lack of representation in the curriculum exacerbated the “no sense of belonging” feeling, resulting in many of these students being unable to continue at UIC.

As more students were added to the program and in an effort to remedy the various concerns, the NAP staff and Advisory Board met with academic departments to initiate courses “structured for” program students. Some of these courses included Native American History, Native American Art, Rhetoric, and a preparatory skills course. Program staff noted that when one or more Native students were enrolled in these courses, “there was marked improvement in performance.” The report further states:

The NAP staff realizes that a few courses are not the entire answer to the problems of Native American students. However, courses such as these ease the transition into the University. The students are beginning to see the University not as an enemy waiting to take away their Indian heritage, but rather as a place that can help retain and enrich their culture (p. 4).

A subsequent NAP Progress report (circa 1972) states, “If the Native American Program is to continue and grow here at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, a curriculum must be initiated that has substance and relativity to Native Americans.” Their “Curriculum Plan” lists a number of courses: Native American in Urban Society; Native American Language; Native American Literature, Arts and Music; Native American Political and Legal Status; Native American Community Development in Urban and Reservation; Native American Philosophy; and Native Americans and Education. The archives clearly establish that participants in the Native American Program – staff and Advisory Board – believed that “the University must better relate to Native American students.” Eliminating “irrelevancy and educational racism” is key to opening doors and “encouraging the main body of Native Americans to seek a formal education.” Figure 2 shows a list of student demands from 1971.

In this same report, we see more details on the NAS Advisory Board, which is comprised of five representatives from each of the following groups: students, university representatives, and community members. An ex officio member from the university was there to consult on fiscal matters. The board’s responsibilities included a role in recommending the director to the Chancellor in reviewing the director’s recommendations for other staff of the program; assisting the director in communication and involvement of the program with the community; and maintaining the project as “a joint university-community effort. This latter role of the Advisory Board is indicative of a theme that runs throughout archival documents and interviews – the importance of relationships and engagement with Native communities external to UIC. *The Task Force acknowledges this crucial aspect of creating an environmental at UIC conducive to student success and UIC’s stature as a welcoming and enriching environment for Native studies. This is entirely consistent with UIC’s mission as an ‘engaged university.’*

Today, the Native American Support Program (NASP) continues under the direction of Cynthia Soto, herself a product of NASP and an alumna of UIC with a Master’s Degree in Educational Policy Studies (as well as a member of this Task Force). In an interview conducted for this section of this report, Ms. Soto states:

It is powerful and exciting to know that your program for support services was the dream of a group of Native leaders in our community 50 years ago – and 50 years later we still have a program – even with reduced budget – and that that consistency is still on campus and hasn’t been merged into other programs (Interview August 3, 2020).

**Figure 2. Press release from Native students at UIC, 1971.**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO CIRCLE  
OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION  
This release by HAL SCHWARTZ -663-3456

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
SEPTEMBER 28, 1971

CHICAGO--Thirty-five American Indians began classes yesterday (Sept. 27) at University of Illinois Chicago Circle campus, opening the Native American Students' Program and "keeping a dream alive."

Part of that dream, explained Matthew War Bonnet, University's program director, is to interest and enroll as many Indians as possible in colleges and universities throughout the nation.

"Another part of the dream--and just as important as enrollment in college--is for the Indian to know the truth about himself. Then, in being aware of the truth about his culture--and by being successful in college--he will be able to help himself," War Bonnet said.

The program, developed with the advice and assistance of Chicago's Indian community, does not offer students a special curriculum but concentrates on providing supportive services that would help them succeed.

These services include academic advisement, student counseling, tutoring on an individual or small-group basis, being in touch with the student at least once a week, working with the Indian community, some financial aid, and providing special lectures on the Indian culture.

"Later, if the students want special courses on Indian studies, we will try to develop them," War Bonnet added. Program is financed through four grants, three private and one federal, totaling \$86,000 for the 1971-72 academic year.

As part of the program's assistance to the Indian community, many will be asked to work in the American Indian and St. Augustine Centers in Chicago. Others may also work in Head Start projects in area elementary schools, War Bonnet added.

"By having Indians in the University and also having them working in their own community, we hope to show the community that the Indian can succeed and to motivate others to enroll at Chicago Circle and elsewhere," War Bonnet explained.

Some of this may already be happening. "One day I was at a meeting of an Indian group and I heard a 12-year-old tell an adult: 'You bet I'm going to college when I'm older; I'm going to Chicago Circle.'

"This is what we're after; this will help keep the dream alive," War Bonnet added.

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Yet it is also extremely important to note that after fifty years, little progress has been made in increasing the presence and importance of the Chicago Native population at the University of Illinois at Chicago. It is both this history and our current status that sets the stage and informs the report of this Task Force. In the 2019 IRRPP report cited above, on the state of racial justice for Indigenous Chicago, Director Soto posed a number of issues that are valuable to consider about UIC's Native American Support Program, including: "as academic institutions across the nation consider what it means to be equitable" (56).

Regarding UIC, The Task Force notes that it is necessary to act on these points to truly provide an environment where Native students will matriculate and graduate from UIC. From our reading of the UIC NAP archives, we suggest the following 50-year-old demands as a starting point:

- There must be a physical space dedicated for Native students to meet and work with each other;
- Native students should see themselves in the fabric of the institution;
- There must be courses that teach all students about the history and the contemporary lives of Native peoples;
- The institution must recognize the Indigenous land the university is situated on;
- The University should provide the support and resources necessary to meet the unique needs of Native students;
- Finally, the institution should collaborate with and connect to local Native Nations or community.

## **2.2 NASP: The key to Native presence and success at UIC**

Through the archives, we observed that in the past there was more commitment made at the University of Illinois Chicago campus to invest resources to actively recruit and support Native American students, staff and faculty, and even to developing relevant curriculum. On one hand, we celebrate the persistence and continuity of the Native American Support Program at UIC, but on the other hand, we lament what seems to be a diminished commitment on the part of the University to the Native population in Chicago and the region: the limited staff to provide essential services of a support center; no programming budget; no funds for professional development; virtually no faculty or relevant courses for Native students; and a dormant minor in Native American Studies. Requests for budget increases are met with, "You don't have enough students." Yet, as one interviewee suggested, how can you recruit the students if you don't have the budget? How can you attract students if you don't have the programming, the faculty and the relevant curriculum? Additional commitment and resources are necessary for the innovation that must arise if UIC is to truly become a player, building a favorable environmental for learning for Native communities.

While the erosion of resources and erasure and invisibility continue to be issues, however, we are seeing more efforts, such as the efforts of the admissions office, the increasing use of land acknowledgements, and the creation of this Task Force. Concurrently, we recognize and emphasize the central and extremely important existence of the physical space of the Native American Support Program. We learned from every written and verbal testimony that the physical space – a home away from home – is critical to creating the environment that Natives need to access and accomplish their higher education goals – and to improve the university's intellectual and cultural environment for all. While support for Native American presence on campus has waned from previous eras, it has at least had a physical space that is identifiable and uniquely their own. *The Task Force concludes that it is extremely important that no further erosion occur in resources for supporting the Native American Support Program and in particular, that unique physical space be maintained as a central aspect of access, accomplishment, inclusion and engagement of Natives at UIC. The Task Force underscores the significance of the following statement from NASP Director Cynthia Soto in the IRRPP report (2019: 57):*

Overall, UIC has been successful in providing a physical office space as well as dedicated professional staff to work with students on campus. It is imperative for Native American students to see each other and to have staff who identify as Native American who themselves experienced what it was like to grow up Native American in a city. While a program dedicated to supporting Native American students is important for Native American students themselves, it is equally important for non-Native American students to see Native American students, faculty, and staff on their college campuses and to be exposed to programs about Native American peoples, cultures, and arts. This is part of the education of all students in college, and in this way

NASP programs reach far beyond their immediate constituency and address the larger mission of universities that value educating *all* students of and about the many cultures and original peoples of this land.

Consistent with UIC's mission as an "engaged university" and with the early advocates for Native presence at UIC, "community collaborations are really helpful and powerful for us" (Soto Interview August 3, 2020). Rita Hodge, the NASP director before Cynthia Soto, developed and maintained many external connections and provided innovative ways to connect Native students with the community. Soto has maintained these practices and states that "consistent collaborations with community engagement gives us innovative ways to connect our students with community, and that collaboration also allows us to do bigger things." One such "bigger thing" was the co-hosting of the Urban Native American Education Conference held virtually in May 2020, which 200 people attended. NASP has also been strong in its relations with local Native American organizations including the American Indian Center, as well as other local colleges and universities, and has organized and collaborated on numerous cultural events and activities. *Unquestionably, the Native American Support Program should receive the support of the University to maintain and further develop its external relations.*

From a 1977 evaluation report of the Native American Studies Program by Ben Lucero prepared for Mr. Chester Eagleman, we learn that when NAS (later NASP) was established, it had as its "basic purpose" to be "a Native American Studies Program, existing for the purpose of providing support services and academic studies in a department for Indian and non-Indian students desiring higher education." We cannot overstate the importance of building relevant curriculum at UIC, not only to counter invisibility and erasure, but to also provide a more widespread understanding of Native history, science, culture and art to all UIC students, and importantly, as a retention strategy for Native students. While we do not recommend that NASP be converted to include an academic program, we do recognize, that in the absence of an academic program, NASP plays – and has played over the years - a critical role in bringing Native knowledge to the UIC campus. Naturally, their involvement in discussions about curricular and academic programming is essential.

Among their current activities, NASP invites Native scholars to speak on various Indigenous issues and topics. For example, the ongoing Indigenous Lecture and Writers Series (<https://sites.northwestern.edu/ilws/>), hosted by NASP in collaboration with Northwestern University and UIC's Learning Sciences Research Institute, which has hosted nine Native scholars, authors, activists and artists as speakers, and supported 21 Native Chicagoans in developing their voices as writers (see Figure 3). Thanks to the initiative of NASP, and with the initial help of the Great Cities Institute, UIC Urban Planning and Policy Program (UPP) in the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs (CUPPA) offers an internship class where students of all races and ethnicities have the opportunity to interface with organizations and agencies serving Native populations.

**Figure 3. Meetings of the Indigenous Lecture and Writers Series in 2019.**



# **3 Conversations with Community**

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The Task Force recognized the need to create new lines of communication between UIC and Native communities in Chicago and elsewhere, and to bring Community centrally into campus efforts to develop a stronger Native presence here. Resources must be dedicated to bringing UIC to Native communities, and Native communities to UIC, including the voices of community members and elders at all stages of this work.

The interviews conducted for this report are a small, initial step in this direction that needs to be followed up in greater depth, as described in our recommendations below. Interviews and group discussion were held with nine community members and alumni, including people from different generations with different relationships to UIC, to gather feedback on the status of Natives at UIC, including reflections on the past and hopes for the future. The various participants represented local community organizations including the American Indian Center of Chicago; the Association of American Indians of Illinois; Northwestern University's Center for Native American and Indigenous Research; California Indian Manpower Consortium's Chicago office; and Visionary Ventures, a non-profit organization in community that focuses on housing. UIC alumni included one recent graduate, another who graduated over a decade ago, and one who was one of the original Native graduates from UIC in the early 1970s.

Participants were asked to provide feedback on what they know about UIC; how they have engaged with the campus; what has been valuable and problematic; current and previous initiatives to support Natives at UIC; how UIC can connect better with the community; and recommendations for the future. Feedback from Community members in the interviews is organized here into the following themes:

1. Impressions of UIC, positive and negative
2. Supportive programs, spaces and staff
3. Native cultural events held at UIC
4. Academic programs
5. Research initiatives
6. Recruitment
7. Hiring Native faculty and staff
8. Building and maintaining connections with Native Chicago communities

## **3.1 General impressions of UIC**

The community members we interviewed shared a wide range of impressions of UIC, from “an upstanding university” and “one of the most diverse Chicago research institutions,” to “a gentrifying establishment” with “roots in a lot of oppression” (P1, P3, P4, P7). People shared reflections on how they see UIC, both currently and in the past, in terms of the administrative culture, the physical environment, relationships with people, and critical awareness and activism.

### **3.1.1 Administrative culture**

Critiques of UIC included concerns about an inflexible administrative culture (P3, P5, P6, P7), captured by P3: “It was very bureaucratic and kind of unwelcoming … squashing the creativity that didn’t fit into their box or vision, rather than thinking outside the box.” This culture has impacted relations with the Native community:

It was really hard for all of the staff and the faculty that wanted to do innovative things because they ... didn't know how many policies and procedures there were, how many things you had to jump through to do things, like to have the pipe ceremony, or take students on a retreat, or to do things that in a community organization you could do easily but that was more difficult here. [P5]

People also voiced the difficulties of an inflexible culture in everyday campus challenges like course registration, financial aid, high-stress expectations, and “overwhelming,” “auditorium-style” classes, with few sources of support for navigating them.

Some community members also voiced the fact that there are support services for students across the campus that assist with navigation of the administrative challenges that were not originally in place in the past. In addition to NASP, these include programs such as The Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services LARES), African American Academic Network (AAAN), Chance, First Year Initiatives and others.

### **3.1.2 Physical environment**

People also talked about the intimidating physical space of UIC as “a massive school … over blocks and blocks and blocks” (P2), and “a cold, big, huge environment” (P5). Several talked about the difficulties they had learning how to get to and around campus, in terms of transportation, parking, and finding buildings and rooms (P2, P3, P5, P7) – especially challenging during winter. Special critique was leveled, of course, at the Behavioral Sciences Building (“the worst building ever,” according to P3), and the UIC architecture in general, with cinder blocks and “not a whole lot of windows” (P3).

### **3.1.3 Caring and supportive relationships**

In contrast to these critiques, community members praised the people and programs that offered caring relationships, and opportunities for growth – especially connection with Native community members, practices and knowledge. As P5 shared, “it’s just having that Native person that someone can go and see and talk to about their problems.” In addition to faculty and staff, P7 noted “students [are] … where I see a lot of the love and support, I get at UIC.” In general, P7 values having met “a lot of amazing people here” – echoing a general sentiment that personal relationships are what sustains the relationship with UIC.

### **3.1.4 Critical awareness and activism**

UIC was seen by some as a place to develop a stronger critical lens and voice. P7 valued the “opportunities and resources here that I don’t think I would have been able to get … [if] I went to a different university.” In particular P7 valued that UIC is “a very activist-based university” where “a lot of students of color and LGBT and disabled students have had a long history of … being very vocal and taking action.” This has led to

growing as a person to fight back, and … also learn tools, not just in the classroom, but from centers and organizations and connections, because there’s so many people I interact with, kind of learning this new language and new tools … to really be critical. [P7]

These general impressions of UIC run through each of the issues discussed in the rest of this section: support, cultural events, academic programs, research initiatives, recruitment, hiring, and connections with the Native community.

## **3.2 Theme 1: Support**

All interviewees mentioned the importance of “support” as critical for Native community members navigating UIC, and as something that must be strengthened. Topics regarding support included the Native American Support Program, other supportive campus spaces, the importance of having Native support staff, and the need to reach out to Native students to involve them in existing support programs.

### **3.2.1 The Native American Support Program**

The Native American Support Program, or NASP, was named by all of the interviewees as a primary source of support and information for Native students on campus. P6 shared:

It was good having NASP there … for things like educational opportunities that were going on, scholarships, things like that. But also, just like regular administrative questions. So, if something happened with class or registration issues, it was good to have a place to go to. You know either Rita or Carol would work that out. … And then we all met every week … You kind of knew who was on campus and what was going on. [P6]

This support involves not just being available, but actively reaching out to Native students. P1 valued the way NASP works to “identify what Native students are there [on campus] .... introduce them to the community, tell them about what programs there are ... have like a welcoming ceremony for them.”

P9 pointed out that for the last 15 years, students have had to self-select to receive this outreach from NASP, as opposed to “when I was a student, NASP was able to put holds on our accounts in order for us to meet with the NASP program ... during the year if we were faltering in our academic courses. That is one of the areas that I felt was really useful ... they were able to keep track on me in a better way.” [P9]

### **3.2.2 Supportive spaces**

Particular programs other than NASP were also mentioned as supportive spaces. P6 remembered a very supportive Anthropology department when he was a student at UIC years ago, and P7 finds the same today, with a particular mention of the Anthropology undergraduate student lounge as a supportive space. P7 also appreciates “my Latin American and Latino Studies department” (LALS) for caring, and being “more direct with me, like ‘Oh ... we see you and we want to help you.’” Other valued supportive spaces mentioned in the interviews included the Native American and Indigenous Student Organization (NAISO), the Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services Program (LARES), the Latino Cultural Center, the Gender and Sexuality Center, the UIC Honors College, and the Disability Resource Center.

### **3.2.3 Native support staff in the Admissions process**

P2 suggested that it would be beneficial to have a Native staff person to work full time only on admissions and financial aid support:

somebody who knows the Native community, knows the admission process. Because it can be very overwhelming, especially for first gen[eration college] students: when to apply, the deadlines, where you should focus [your application], FASFA, everything. Applying for scholarships can be very overwhelming, and then also having someone in the admissions office to read [financial aid] applications, I think, will go a long way. Having someone ... to build a relationship with, “this is the person that I go to for my admission questions.” [P2]

There was general agreement that the current NASP staff are serving as the hub for most Native people’s information and connection on campus, and that there needs to be more involvement of others in that support system. As P7 put it, “they really need to dedicate more people to do that, and not just [the two current staff people], because that’s a lot of work to do.” As Native presence on campus grows, support for Native students, faculty and staff will require a greater investment of resources on the part of the campus (P7, P9).

## **3.3 Theme 2: Native cultural events at UIC**

Many interviewees had memories of events held at UIC that were important in their lives, particularly Native cultural events such as Heritage Days, Indigenous People’s Day celebrations, powwows and workshops. These events provide familiarity with UIC, and confidence in navigating the campus. In P5’s words, “The idea of bringing people to your institutions so that they can begin to feel comfortable, I think it’s still important.” P2 explains,

I have no sense of direction. And so, I feel like, because a lot of these programs happen in like one, or two, or three locations, I know where the Student Center East is. I know I can find that building because I’ve been there since high school for those day-long workshops. So, I feel like when we are invited to campus repeatedly, we can start to build some familiarity and a relationship with that place where it doesn’t seem as overwhelming. [P2]

P1 has attended powwows at UIC since the early days when “the powwow was small ... I’ve been an attendee off and on since then ... I’m getting more comfortable when I do it ... from [knowing] where I’m going, to where to park.”

Heritage Days were mentioned by many interviewees as valued events creating strong connections to UIC. P6 valued the role of students in the event: “we always did the Heritage Days that we always put on, and I thought that

ran pretty well as far as for student-based things. ... it wasn't too overwhelming. It worked so students could still do their schoolwork but then still put on the event." P1 recalled Heritage Days celebrations from 15 to 18 years ago. P2 shared memories of some of these events in her early life:

My early memories of attending programs at UIC was ... Heritage Day. ... My sister and I would get letters in the mail, inviting us to spend the day at UIC for day-long workshops and a powwow in the evening. And, we would have the permission slip to get out of all of our classes, and my mom would encourage us to do that [laughs] ... it wasn't always super engaging, as a high school student, but I feel like, maybe in the day there were a few nuggets of knowledge or like exposure. [P2]

Having these events as truly Native spaces on UIC campus allowed for meaningful life experiences that were connected to UIC. The powwows have created meaningful memories:

Early in the formation of the drum, we set up at UIC's powwow and we were the only drum ... And, at that point we only knew maybe, I don't know, 10 or 15 songs. And for three hours we went through them very quickly. But I just remember all these older singers kinda helping us out and sitting at the drum, and we did three hours of songs, and we just pulled through. And I feel like there are probably few spaces where we can get support from the elders like that. It just felt like a family place, where we could evolve and be new and practice. [P2]

P4 noted the significance of Chicago's Indigenous Peoples' Day movement being connected with UIC (see Figure 4), and wished for more continued participation by Native Chicagoans as there had been in the past:

The Indigenous Peoples Day that UIC puts on is something that people have looked forward to for a long time. It's one of the only celebrations that's been happening in Chicago on that day for years and years. ... it's also problematic that, especially with the movement towards Indigenous Peoples' Day here in Chicago, that we don't see the support [that we saw] from that first event. [P4]

Events like Indigenous Peoples' Day, Native American Heritage Month and powwows can create a bond between UIC and the Native Chicago community, but there was a strong sense that this bond needs to be more intentionally created, cultivated and maintained. In P7's words:

The school itself, outside of NASP, really doesn't do much that I've noticed. If we did not have NASP, I don't think we'd have the rest of the administration really caring about Heritage Month or ... pushing for Native faculty and staff and better support for Native students on campus. ... other departments and the administration should really actually do more efforts into reaching into the community and organizations. [P7]

One specific way this could happen was proposed by P4: "I will say that there are ways: UIC can provide the Pavilion for the AIC [events] and annual powwow!" P5 strongly endorsed this idea, saying that besides benefiting the events, this could serve UIC "as a recruitment effort. People come from other states, so we got used to going there. We are used to the parking, we are used to the facility, I think that can be a marketing thing. ... I think that that was definitely a good marketing tool for the university"

**Figure 4. Indigenous Peoples Day event at UIC in 2015.**



### 3.4 Theme 3: Academic programming

Interviewees had many reflections on the academic programs UIC has had – and has *not* had – with a Native focus. These include individual speakers, workshops and courses; a Native Studies minor or major; and inclusion of Native scholarship, issues, and people across courses, disciplines and departments.

#### 3.4.1 Smaller programming: workshops or mini-courses

Most of the people interviewed mentioned academic workshops, speakers, or weekend or summer activities that UIC has hosted over the years. P6 valued these events, but noted that “speakers are nice, but if you go to something where you’re getting certified, or you’re getting college credit, then … it’s like UIC’s actually giving something real.” Beyond isolated events, P6 suggested

doing something like weekend classes or specialty classes, those like six-week or seven-week courses, mini-courses or something like that. Something that is going to bring people in, and then they’re going to get something, either college credit or certification or something. [P6]

P6 noted that summer activities like this used to be more frequent, but “all of that kind of fell apart.” The ongoing Indigenous Lecture and Writers Series (mentioned above, <https://sites.northwestern.edu/ilws/>) is an example of a current initiative in this direction, though not offering university credit.

A concern about these offerings is the lack of consistency in communication about them. P5 pointed out that “it’s been really hit-and-miss over the years. I’ve been thinking back on those people [who] were being recruited to teach Native American Studies classes – I didn’t even know about the classes or who was teaching them. It’s kind of years later when people go, ‘Oh yeah! I had a [class] at UIC!’”

#### 3.4.2 Native Studies minor or major

There was much discussion about UIC’s previous Native Studies minor, and possibilities for reviving it or developing it into a full academic major. P7 wondered, “How many more students would want to come to UIC if we had an actual Indigenous Studies program?” P6 recalled that UIC “used to have a really good Native studies program but then it just fell apart. … Because when you had Bob Hall and Lavonne and Craig and everybody it was a pretty good program, but then it kind of fizzled.” He noted that UIC should “definitely get the minor back,” and others shared this sentiment.

P6 also noted that the Urbana-Champaign campus “already has a program, so I think it’s kind of odd that downstate has the program, but Chicago doesn’t, even though it’s the same university.” P6 explains:

The Chicago campus should have equivalent programs that UIUC has … expanding the program to not just one campus, but to both campuses. … So, if students know that, “Oh, I can take this course at Chicago instead of going to Urbana,” you know that might help [with recruitment]. [P6]

P7 pointed out that UIC probably loses Native students to other universities where Native-oriented courses and program are offered:

There’s other universities that have it, like, “You can major and minor in it, and we have grad school program, and the classes are related to so many different subjects” – [it’s] very intersectional and very complex, because our lives are very complex. [P7]

Along with recognizing the more-developed programs at Northwestern and UIUC, and the need for UIC to have more Native-oriented offerings, people also talked about the need for UIC to coordinate and collaborate with other higher-education institutions to meet the needs of the Native community. P6 recalled a time when UIC coordinated “with Truman and other colleges as well, so I think that having those educational institutions working with each other helped on just coordinating efforts and events, which could be done again. Maybe that’s where the CAICC education committee comes in.”

### **3.4.3 Beyond Native Studies**

Also, people talked about the importance of having course offerings that are *not* limited to a Native Studies program. Several talked about the value of recruiting Native students into a range of programs across the campus that are of interest to Native communities. For example:

I know with Northwestern when we talked with folks, a lot of it was science, engineering, health care type things, and if we're going to go out [to reservations and Native communities], that's what we should be recruiting for. So, finding out what's the interest in different areas. [P6]

This implies both recruitment efforts, and also ongoing efforts to identify interests and needs for courses and programs in Native communities. P6 emphasized the importance of Native-oriented offerings in the sciences at UIC:

I'm noticing a lot of Native programs are very humanities heavy, but not a lot of science. ... And being that UIC's got the medical school, it's more of a science and engineering college. It would be interesting to see what could be done. [P6]

Similarly, P5 recalled positive experiences being recruited to work in medical research by a Native faculty member at the Native American Educational Services (NAES), which was the only Native American college in Chicago (closed in the early 2000's):

We have worked with... some of the medical people in terms of outreach, looking for students to enter the medical program, and we had done some research. There was a Native woman who worked in the area. ... She recruited us at NAES to work on several research projects that had to do with diversity and discrimination... So that was the first time ever even that NAES had had all Native faculty. So it was really ground breaking in terms of that happening. [P5]

These kinds of research experiences and study opportunities can have an enormous impact on recruitment, retention and learning for Native students.

### **3.4.4 Native studies, or a Native focus across disciplines?**

However, P5 articulated an internal debate between UIC hiring Native faculty into science departments, versus hiring for a Native Studies program, leaning toward preferring "to focus on a Native American Studies faculty member, and one that has an interest in urban issues." Even with her positive experiences with NAES (described above), her concern is the

danger if someone [a Native faculty member] came in and they wanted to study molecular science and they never talked to the community, that wouldn't help us ... grow where we want to grow, in terms of allocating students, working with the community, and building community, and having an impact on the community. [P5]

Rather than this debate between Native Studies versus a Native focus across disciplines, P2 argued for a "both/and" perspective:

We need some more Indigenous molecular biologists *and* more focus on urban Indigenous studies, and we cannot limit ourselves from the get go, like, "Oh, we can only have one." ... Our science fields, STEM fields, and all fields need Indigenous perspectives ... I just think about my husband who is a college student now and being able to work with indigenous scientist faculty members would be really, really great. Just having a range of opportunities, and not only limiting to one or the other.

P9 also shared this perspective: "Our dream is to have a *bunch* of [Native] faculty in all types of areas, in order to have a mass of Native voices on campus."

### **3.5 Theme 4: Research initiatives**

In addition to academic program and course offerings, people talked about "the importance of [UIC] identifying research initiatives and how they can support our Native communities" [P3]. P5 described the lack of funded research on Native communities and issues:

It's like they are not interested in Indian people any longer. People think that they know all about us and there is no need to talk to us, or to talk to the tribe, or talk individually to other [Native] scholars. It's really like they believe that they know everything. Sometimes I'll see a conference on minorities or diversity or something, and I'll write to the person or people organizing it and ask about if they have any Native Americans that will be on diversity, and they won't have anyone and yet they get angry that we even asked. ... It's not just at UIC. The academy is not receptive to thinking they might have missed something, that they might have left us out, [but] you can't really talk about diversity without talking about Native Americans. [P5]

P5 considered the possibility of UIC sponsoring "an initiative, campaign to encourage faculty and grad students to work on a Native American topic ... trying to get people interested. That's really the hurdle, in terms of data collection and research, and building those bridges with the community, so that they do contact us in terms of working on projects."

P2, P3 and P5 all spoke about the importance of gathering research data with, from, in, and about Native communities, in order to represent Native issues and needs:

I try to keep up with all the research data, and mention where people have left our data out, because it's constant. We see the same groups' data, but ours are never there. ... We need to be really aware of that, and push it, and to ask, "Where is our data?" They cannot continue to leave our data out, because then we don't have the foundation to move forward to what we need to do and to prove that we have needs. ... If people are collecting data and making research projects and they are leaving us out, then what are we going to do? We don't have the scientists, usually the people doing the local quantitative research at the PhD level. [P5]

Where funding is not there, P5 spoke about working on projects "when I get nothing and no money at all, except that I always help because I want to see the project and I want to see the data produced." Much better, of course, would be funded research opportunities for Native people to participate in, both on campus and in community.

P2 shared experiences of working on research projects that involve Native people not after the fact, but from the conceptualization of the project. She spoke of situations where:

our communities are engaged through the design of the research proposal, then we can attack it from the get-go. Because it is possible, I worked for 10 years on it where ... the Native community partner organization got money that they managed, and got it [funded as an] indirect, and that was great for them because it can support their general operations.

This is crucial, because, as P5 explains, most often

most of the money is going to the university number one, probably like ... 58% indirect costs, and then cut that at the top. Then the faculty person, and then the support person, then the library person. You know, we are down to almost nothing. ... when you look at the budget you can see where the money is going to go. [P5]

This leads to the kind of situation described by P3, where researchers:

took this opportunity to work on Native initiatives and wrote a grant and sort of provided seed money for something to be produced, without major planning and communications with what the [American Indian] Center was. It was like, "We got this money, now go do something." And so, sometimes we think, how would that have been different if we would have had the opportunity to plan it the way that we wanted to, versus them going after money and then giving us the money and forcing us in this little box? And so, that might be important to remind that this needs to come from community collaboration and planning and not having to really put the cart before the horse. [P3]

### **3.5.1 Bring results of research back to Community**

Similarly, P2 pointed out that the research that is conducted on issues of concern to Native communities often does not produce benefits that make their way back to the community:

Where all the dollars were coming from in philanthropy in Chicago, Illinois, Northwestern, UIC, there were a lot of ... grants that were health care, specifically to look at inequalities, or health disparities with African

American, Latinx, and Native American. Except, personally, not hearing anything about what the studies found, or seeing any engagement with ... that research project ... Who's getting this money? If they are getting money on the backs of the Native community, how are they engaging with the community, at a level of the design, with the analysis, with the reporting back the data?

P8 described one counter example, showing how things can be done well, which was the recent report produced by UIC's Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy (IRRPP), entitled *Adversity and Resiliency for Chicago's First: The state of racial justice for American Indian Chicagoans* (IRRPP, 2019):

The report that [IRRPP] provided, and [how they] pulled the Native American community together in order to provide our insight in helping put that report together, I think it was a wonderful project ... I think us coming together and providing some of that direction on where to locate some of that information was a great partnership that I think we should continue doing. [P8]

One result of this collaboration is that, as a result of engaging over a period of time to conduct the research and create the report, there is now a group of people at UIC who are, in P2's words, "potential champions for Native issues in Chicago," for whom Native issues are "now going to be more on their radar. Now they are going to understand more the nuances with data, and they are a pretty powerful, respected body that's putting out research" [P2].

### **3.5.2 Partnering with Native communities on research**

P2 pointed out that the Native community includes "a lot of folks that are highly capable in all avenues, including research, knowing how to design the research method and analyze data, quantitative and qualitative, having been engaged with that for a while now. So, we have a lot of highly capable, highly trained [people with] various levels of formal and informal education. We have a lot to offer!"

## **3.6 Theme 5: Student recruitment**

One of the most important connections between UIC and Native Chicago is the recruitment of Native students to campus – an area that all interviewees saw as in need of improvement. P5 remembered the kinds of personal outreach efforts that helped bring her and others to UIC decades ago:

I remember when they were recruiting us for NASP, they had a bus that picked up people at the center and brought us there as a group. They recruited us one by one... So, then we all met and met each other, sometimes for the first time. [P5]

But also, participants noted that buses are not enough. Building relationships with students, their families, and Native organizations is essential to recruitment. There is also a need to focus on recruitment efforts with community and tribal Nations, such as ensuring ongoing efforts on participation and visibility at Native focused events, conferences and recruitment fairs.

### **3.6.1 In-state tuition initiative**

The new UIC initiative offering in-state tuition to Native people who are members of tribal nations outside Illinois (also discussed in Section 5 of this report) was seen as a positive step, but people emphasized the need for more work to build recruitment that way. P6 suggested

definitely going out to reservations, going out to Native communities. But taking people who are going to show what they can offer and what's of interest. ... So, finding out what's the interest in different areas.

P7 emphasized the importance of hiring more Native people to do this work:

They could be students or not. So actually, go and have more time to dedicate to reach out to the Nations, and come meet and visit them, and really reach out to students who are out of state who might be interested in UIC. ... let them know that UIC has an option, like "Hey, you can get in-state tuition," and ... all the things that make them want to come here. [P7]

### **3.6.2 Scholarships for local students**

In addition to the in-state tuition initiative, people mentioned the need for a solid investment in scholarships, fellowships, and tuition waivers, to make UIC affordable for more Native students locally as well. P5 pointed out that this is likely to have a bigger impact than recruiting out-of-state, both in terms of the number of students, and in terms of the impact on the local Native community:

Well, I'm all about recruiting locally. So, I would rather see some scholarships for Native students ... I think that will have much [more] impact long-term than in-state tuition. ... [The in-state tuition initiative] will influence some people, specifically in the STEM fields and things like that. I think we need ... local people to sustain our community, to build our community, and so we need to help them. And, so, scholarships are the best avenue ... we really need a scholarship program which targets scholarships for our local Native American Indian students. [P5]

### **3.6.3 Welcoming environment: the chicken and the egg**

P3 pointed out that recruitment efforts, whether in-state or out-of-state, will not be effective if UIC does not develop a more welcoming environment for students when they get here:

If we are thinking about bringing in people outside the state, what kinds of dorms do they live in? What kinds of extra support can we provide to make the students experience more welcoming at UIC? ... It's like, which comes first: the chicken or the egg? You bring the students; you create the environment they want. There is always that fight in administration, for putting resources into a welcoming environment before the students come. But we all know that if it's not a safe and welcoming space for cultural practice then those students are going to feel alienated and want to go back home.

### **3.6.4 Showcasing the Chicago Native community**

Effective recruitment to UIC will need to showcase to all applicants, "including folks that are not in Chicago but are in the region, that if they came to UIC there is a very vibrant, active Chicago Native community that we have relationships with, that you can tap into and be accepted and be [part of] a community, and not just isolated to campus" [P2]. This requires having Native people involved on campus and in recruitment, and highlighting their presence:

That was some of the feedback that I got when I had my admissions role. When I visited communities, [people were] like, "I want to see your face on this brochure." Because I want to connect students to a person and that looks like them, that shares experiences ... To see that it is possible, to role-model: "There are people that look like me, that can go to this school, and graduate from the school, and be successful." [P2]

P5 also emphasized the importance of showing the "faces of [Native] students, faces of alumni, faces of faculty. These are all ... an image that is really important." It emphasizes personal connections, even with the possibility that "maybe a person will see that poster ... and say, 'Oh, I know that person!'" [P5]. This is an area where UIC has made great effort: in highlighting the existing diversity on campus.

Above all, "people's word of mouth often is still a very strong recruiter, and so if you can get people talking about their positive experiences, whether it's just for activities or classes that you have, you have a great path to getting future students here as well." [P5]

### **3.7 Theme 6: Hiring Native faculty and staff**

The lack of Native faculty at UIC was mentioned by almost every interviewee as something that urgently needs to change. P1 pointed out, "I was one of the first students when they first made the American Indian Studies program that accompanied the support program [NASP], so I know what it was. ... And over the years it deteriorated, to the point where ... there are no full-time [Native] faculty now." P9 pointed out that, as far as Native representation on campus,

right now it's [the two NASP staffers] for the most part. So, it would be really great to have many faculty across the university. I think that's one of the bigger challenges of being an institution, it's they think they have one or a couple of voices here, in this part of the campus, that's enough to meet those needs. [P9]

P2 explained the key part faculty recruitment can play in all other aspects of Native presence on UIC campus:

Recruiting faculty, especially of research institutions, will get more graduate students, which will get more undergraduate students. So, we really, really have to work at the faculty level. That's a huge missing chunk in the ecosystem of the university, but it would help contribute to the rest of the community that you are building there. [P2]

As discussed above, new faculty might be hired into a Native Studies program, into other existing departments across the campus, or both.

### **3.7.1 Need to hire Native faculty for adjunct and part-time positions**

In addition to hiring tenure-line and clinical faculty members, P5 also pointed out the fact that UIC needs to hire more Native scholars even for part-time and adjunct positions teaching courses. Historically, these kinds of experiences have been crucial for Native faculty launching their careers:

[T]hat's one thing that all the universities can do: really to make an effort to hire us. In my twenty years at these colleges, we hired one adjunct faculty to teach a course. ... And so, there was never any way for us to get Native people into that. [P5]

Even Native graduates of the institution are often overlooked for teaching positions:

I know from working at colleges and universities that departments, they are silos, and people don't usually know what [each other] are doing – but there really wasn't, and has never been, an effort ... to do much ... recruitment [of Native graduates] by other areas. [P5]

### **3.7.2 Hiring Native staff**

In addition to hiring faculty members, there is a need to hire more Native people in administrative and staff positions. P2 suggests:

It would be really awesome to see a position that's like an Advisor for Tribal Affairs ... in the Provost's office. I've seen these positions are being created all over the place, where they are more central administration, and they can help do that community liaisoning, they can help serve on diversity and inclusion committees to make sure that there is representation, and they can help advance more systemic policy changes. That's beyond students, beyond faculty, it kind of encompasses everything, so it would be great to see that as well. Especially for such a large institution like UIC.

We noted above the need for more Native staff people to do work in recruitment, admissions and support. P5 points out that sometimes a Native staff person working in admissions can be problematic for the role of supporting Native students, because "there were so many thousands of [non-Native] students, more than the Native students, so she did not have the time to help the Native students." But it is also important to have Native staff members in visible positions where students who are not already connected to support systems might encounter them.

## **3.8 Theme 7: Building and maintaining connections with community**

At the center of all of these concerns – support programs, cultural events, academic programs, student recruitment, research initiatives, and hiring – is the fundamental need to build and maintain strong connections between UIC and the Native community. These relationships should be built with local Chicagoland Native community as well as the many Tribal Nations in the Great Lakes.

P9 pointed out, fifty years after the establishment of NASP, that, "one of the best reasons of having a Native program at UIC was to be responsible for the Native community in Chicago." This is a "powerful responsibility of the university ... so we make sure that our students know about our Native community." P3 emphasized the need for this relationship to include "regular engagement with community ... to get feedback, input, thoughts," This feedback should help shape the agenda of the university:

If you are doing research: What are some areas that you should be researching, versus coming up with a project and then coming to community to get their buy-in. How are you going to be more grounded, like collective designing of research projects? ... How are you building the community? ... How are you staying on top of what the needs are? Because it can change. [P3]

UIC does not currently have institutionalized relationships with Tribal Nations or with upholding Tribal sovereignty. UIC should work towards developing these relationships and commitments given its history as a land grant institution.

### **3.8.1 Establish a permanent council**

P2 suggested the establishment of a permanent UIC council, task force, or other entity charged with maintaining communications with the Native community: “Having folks like that being engaged in a system level, I feel like will be very helpful to us, to support community.” Learning takes place over time for people in such a council, which might include “Student Affairs folks, faculty, trustees, all serve in the task forces,” and it is

important to take the time to do that [learn how to engage with Native communities], because they are the ones that are going to be lasting longer than students are. Students are going to graduate, and so we need those folks to be on the ground, at those decision-making tables, having a better understanding of Native communities’ experiences. [P2]

P3 also noted that Task Force reports (like this one) should not be one-time snapshots, but rather can be living documents that adapt with changing realities:

I know [my institution’s] Task Force’s recommendations came out six years ago and a lot have changed, and I’m still having to work with this document. I would love to get community together to update them, see what new ideas emerged since then, what new needs have come up. Our community has changed, and in really good ways, in the last six years, but now how do we adjust what our priorities are, or what our goals are? [P3]

### **3.8.2 Hold institutions accountable**

A key feature of UIC-community relations is to have mechanisms for holding the institution accountable to deliver on commitments. P5 notes that many affirmative action policies, like many statements of good faith, have failed to yield concrete benefits to Native communities. There is a need for timelines, benchmarks, and systems in place to ensure that goals and stated purposes produce documented improvements. As P2 noted, especially in times of crisis like the current pandemic, it will be crucial to set priorities and establish a timetable for concrete actions, without which “it’s really easy to check off the low-hanging fruit, and not go at the deep, high-priority areas.”

One such mechanism is to establish regular, scheduled reporting for accountability purposes. P2 points out, “if you know that you have to be accountable, to at least report the progress on it, it’s going to stay on the radar about what was decided, and you are going to have to say whether you did something or not. Sometimes that’s a little bit of a motivator” [P2].

### **3.8.3 When engaging with Native communities – Listen!**

One essential ground rule for engaging with Native communities, articulated by P2 and P3, is:

When you are engaging with our community to ask your questions and then just listen. Hear the feedback, have a listening ear, be open minded, and not use that time to be defensive, have an answer for every comment, or suck up all the time presenting on all the “wonderful” things you are doing. … Please, please, please, just give us our time to just say whatever it is. Because [even if it were] not truthful, if that’s the perception folks are having then you need to know that’s a perception that folks are having. … It will only help you become stronger and be more informed about the community. [P2]

Or, in the words of P3, “Check your white fragility at the door!”



# **4 Data Visibility and Data Erasure: Documenting Native presence at UIC**

One of the sources of invisibility of Native students, faculty, and staff at UIC has been a lack of adequate data infrastructure. The ways data are collected, organized, and reported create a confusing and misleading picture of the Native presence at UIC. Without solid data, it becomes difficult to know who is here, who is absent, how things are changing, and how effective our efforts are to build community. In this section we provide several examples of how this happens; show how different assumptions about Native people and communities shape UIC's data practices; propose changes that can reverse Native erasure and misrepresentation in data; and call for an end to all practices that contribute to the erasure and invisibility of Native students, faculty and staff.

## **4.1 Student data on ethnic and racial identity**

The primary source of data on UIC students is the Office of Institutional Research (OIR: <https://oir.uic.edu/>). The race and ethnicity categories used by OIR come from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, or IPEDS (<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/about-ipeds>), and these categories are used widely in data reporting. All institutions contributing to the National Center for Education Statistics, or NCES (<https://nces.ed.gov/>), use IPEDS data categories.

When a prospective student applies to UIC, they fill out the Common Application (<https://www.commonapp.org/>) for undergraduates, or a Slate application for graduate programs. These applications ask a series of questions that are used to categorize applicants in terms of ethnicity and race (Figure 5). Like the U.S. Census, the first question is, “Are you Hispanic or Latino?” (Yes/No), followed by, “Regardless of your answer to the prior question, please indicate how you identify yourself. (Select one or more)”:

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

**Figure 5. Detail from the Common Application.**

Are you Hispanic or Latino?

Yes

No

Regardless of your answer to the prior question, please indicate how you identify yourself. (Select one or more)

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

White

These questions are based on the assumption that people will identify with one or more of these labels, and that people who identify as Hispanic, Latino, or Latinx will also identify with one of the five other categories. Another assumption is that all students who identify as Native, Indigenous, or with a particular tribal affiliation or Nation identity will select “American Indian or Alaskan Native” (AIAN). These assumptions contribute to “blind spots” in the data that erase the identities of many students in UIC’s data, including many Native people.

The IPEDS definition of AIAN is: “A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community attachment.” This definition may cause some Native people to wonder what counts as “maintaining cultural identification,” “tribal affiliation” or “community attachment.” These are complex aspects of Native identities, which may be hard to reduce to checking off a box on a form.

#### **4.1.1 Problems with the ways data are aggregated**

The tallies of students’ answers are aggregated into larger groups when they are used for reporting purposes, in the following ways:

- Anyone who selected *Hispanic/Latino* is categorized only as *Hispanic/Latino*, regardless of which of the other categories they may have selected.
- Anyone who selected more than one race category is categorized only as *Multi-race*.
- Only those who selected AIAN and did *not* select Hispanic/Latino or any other race category, are categorized as AIAN.
- The ethnicity and race questions are optional, and 1 to 2% of students choose not to answer. Those who do not answer either question are categorized as *Unknown race and ethnicity*.

What happens when we use these data reports to find out how many Native students are at UIC? It might seem easy: just count the number of people categorized as “AIAN.” This number is reported each year by the OIR in campus data reports, and in the OIR “data dashboard” (<http://oir.uic.edu/data/>). Over the last five years, this count of AIAN students has averaged between 24 and 28 totals for undergraduate, graduate and professional programs – in Fall 2019 it was 24. So you might think there are only 24 Native students at UIC.

But this number is an undercount, for several reasons:

- Students who selected more than one “race” category are reported as “Multi-race.” This means that if they selected AIAN plus another category, they are not counted as AIAN. But many Native students identify with more than one “race” category, and also consider themselves Native. In Fall 2019, of the 637 undergraduates coded as Multi-race, 106 of them (17%) included AIAN as one of their race categories, but the *Multi-race* category erased their Native identities in aggregated data reports.
- Students who selected “Hispanic/Latino” are counted in that category, even if they also selected AIAN. In Fall 2019, of the 7,485 undergraduates coded as Hispanic/Latino, 562 of them (8%) selected AIAN as a race category, but the *Hispanic/Latino* category erased their Native identities in aggregated data reports.
- Students who selected “International” are counted in that category, even if they also selected AIAN. In Fall 2019, there were 15 undergraduates coded as International who also checked off the AIAN box, but the *International* category erased their Native identities in aggregated data reports.
- Many Native people find these race categories problematic, and some find them insulting or essentializing, by asking us to over-simplify our complex identities. Some Native people choose not to answer these questions, and thus are counted only as “Unknown race or ethnicity.”
- Some people find that their racial and ethnic self-identification changes over time. For example, some Native people may come to embrace their Native identity at one point in time – quite possibly while they are in college. This kind of change in racial/ethnic identification is rarely captured by UIC’s current data practices: students could re-enter the student portal application to make such a change, but few if any students do this.

*UIC should provide opportunities for students to describe their identities in ways that better reflect the complex realities of people’s lives. But just asking the same IPEDS questions over and over again is not the best way to do this.*

Data gathered using the IPEDS categories can be disaggregated and supplemented by other tools that may provide a more nuanced picture of our student population. For example, survey data can reveal different ways people answer questions when asked in different ways, and when given different options for how they report their identities.

In 2018, UIC conducted an Entering Student Survey (ESS)<sup>6</sup> of first-time UIC students, which included two different ways to ask a question about race and ethnicity, with very different results. One was a question about *racial identity*, the other a question about *racial background*. Tables 1 and 2 show the different results. When asked “how you primarily identify” and asked to choose one, 0.2% of students chose AIAN (Table 1). But when asked which “best describes your racial background” and allowed to choose multiple, 1.6% of students chose AIAN (Table 2) – eight times as many! Most of us might not even notice the difference between these questions, but they produce very different data.

**Table 1** (from ESS Report, p. 8, Table 5)

**Which of the following best describes  
how you primarily identify?**

Racial Identity (Choose one)	%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2%
Asian American	21.8%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.6%
Black or African American	8.9%
Hispanic or Latinx	35.5%
White	17.8%
Middle Eastern or North African	5.1%
Multiracial (Two or more races)	3.3%
I do not identify with any of these categories	3.5%
I prefer not to respond	3.3%

**Table 2** (from ESS Report, p. 8, Table 5a)

**Which of the following best describes  
your racial background?**

Racial Background (Choose all that apply)	%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.6%
Asian American	20.9%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.6%
Black or African American	9.2%
Hispanic or Latinx	30.3%
White	20.2%
Middle Eastern or North African	5.7%
Multiracial (Two or more races)	3.1%
I prefer not to respond	4.0%

<sup>6</sup> The ESS was a collaboration of the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic and Enrollment Services, and the Office of Institutional Research. Data reported here are from a December 2018 report. The ESS was discontinued in 2019.

This example shows that we need to:

- Use multiple tools to document students' identities,
- Do research to better understand how students interpret questions about racial, ethnic, and Indigenous identities, and
- Apply those findings to gathering more nuanced data for understanding our Native population, in terms of its size, diversity, and the multiple identities it contains.

#### **4.1.2 Disaggregating IPEDS race and ethnicity data**

We can begin to address some of these problems by disaggregating the IPEDS data and reporting it in different ways. For example, instead of reporting the number of Native people as those who *only* selected AIAN, we can regularly report the number of people who selected AIAN along with any of the other race categories, and/or Hispanic/Latino. Doing this, for Fall 2019 we find in the data 705 Native students at UIC – much more than the 24 that was reported for AIAN alone!

We noted that of these 705 students who selected AIAN in any combination, 562 of them (80%) selected Hispanic/Latino. While these numbers may have some distortions related to the race category question, it is more likely reflective of the number of Hispanic/Latino students that recognize their indigenous roots, regardless of their particular family histories. In addition, many Native people who are of mixed tribal heritage also have Latino identities (including some of the authors of this report).

While we think it is a mistake to count those who select AIAN and Hispanic/Latino solely as Latino, we also think the order of the questions may account for part of this large number. It is possible that students who identify primarily as Latino or Latinx and are then asked to choose from the five “race” choices offered, may feel that none of the other choices matches their identity. Some Latinos may prefer to claim their Indigenous roots rather than characterize themselves as Asian, African American or White, but might not state that they are Native if asked directly. At the same time, Latinx people may also be of mixed racial heritage, e.g., Afro-Latino, Afro-Indigenous, or mixed white. Tracking racial categories for Hispanics/Latinos is compounded by the fact that for decades – and even today in most COVID and other statistics – Hispanics/Latinos are frequently and automatically placed in the racial category of white, ignoring both Indigenous and African roots and in doing so. These practices do not adequately and accurately capture the number of Latinos, and also can misrepresent Native identities.

In addition to gathering new data, we need to make better use of the Common App and Slate applications, to get a more accurate count of Native students at UIC, which is clearly greater than 24, possibly less than 705, and should be represented by more nuanced categories.

#### **4.1.3 A snapshot of nine years of disaggregated AIAN data**

As a first effort toward a more detailed picture documenting UIC's track record with Native students, OIR ran a report for this Task Force of all students who had selected AIAN, in any combination with other categories, who filled out an application for UIC between Fall of 2011 and Spring of 2020. This time span enabled us to see characteristics of this population with larger numbers than the small sample in any one year. Appendix 1 includes a table of these results. Keeping in mind that this data set has some systematic distortions as described above, in this section we provide an overview of the population of students who selected AIAN (in any combination), and how they compare with the overall UIC student population.

The data table shows the following:

- **APPLICANTS:** 5,553 people who identified as AIAN applied to UIC as undergraduates during this time, 71% of them as first-time freshmen (3,918) and 29% as transfer students (1,635). This was about 2.5% of all UIC applicants over this time (n=222,474), of whom the percent of first-time applicants (versus transfer) was also about 70%.
- **YIELD:** Of the first-time freshmen AIAN applicants (n=3,918), two-thirds were admitted (2,611), and one-third of those admitted students (893) ended up enrolling at UIC – a 34% “yield” of first-time AIAN freshmen over these nine years. This compares to 28% yield for all UIC first-time freshman applicants

during this time. So AIAN applicants were *more* likely to come to UIC after being admitted, compared to all applicants. For the AIAN transfer student applicants ( $n=1,635$ ), 46% were admitted (759), and 520 of them enrolled – a 69% “yield,” similar to the 67% yield for all accepted transfer applicants.

- **ETHNICITY AND RACIAL CATEGORIES:** Altogether there were 1,413 AIAN students who enrolled at UIC during this time (first-time freshmen plus transfers). Consistent with the discussion above, 76% of those AIAN students (1,078) also identified as “Hispanic/Latino.” This is more than double the percentage of Latinx students in the overall UIC student body during this time (31%). Pending further research, it is hard to know how many of these students would self-identify as Native outside of the two IPEDS application questions (see *Tribal Identity and Affiliation* section below). The next highest “ethnicity/race” category for AIAN students was “Two or more races,” as 20% of them (277) were coded (compared to 3 % “Two or more races” for all students).
- **A.I.A.N. ALONE:** Only 46 of the 1,413 enrolled AIAN undergraduates, or 3% of them, selected *only* AIAN and *not* Hispanic/Latino. So, 97% of students who checked the AIAN box are made invisible in the data that are generally reported, while at the same time there may be a large number of students who are *not* actually Native in this group of 1,413 students. In other words, our data systems are doing a poor job of making Native students visible in multiple ways.
- **HIGH SCHOOL OF ORIGIN:** AIAN non-transfer students were much more likely to come from Chicago public high schools, with 55% graduating from CPS (compared to 34% for all non-transfer students). AIAN non-transfer students were less likely to graduate from suburban and collar-county schools (30%, as opposed to 47% for all non-transfer students).
- **OTHER INDICATORS:** The AIAN non-transfer students were 47% first-generation college students (compared to 29% for all freshmen), and 64% Pell-grant-eligible (compared to 52% for all freshmen). These students enrolled mostly in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (69%), and 10% in the College of Business Administration. 26% had an undeclared Liberal Arts major during this time (also the most common major among all, with no other major over 8%. The mean ACT score for AIAN students was 23 (compared to 24 for all freshmen); the mean SAT was 1106 (compared to 1138 for all freshmen).

While flawed, these disaggregated data give us a sense of what we might want to find out from data with a more effective method for identifying Native students at UIC.

## 4.2 Tribal identity and affiliation data

Beginning in Fall 2018, UIC’s Academic Enrollment Services (AES) added follow-up race and ethnicity questions for UIC’s Common App applicants, and OIR has begun to report on these disaggregated data. For UIC applicants who select AIAN on the Common App, the application now asks them, “Please tell us about your tribal identity or affiliation,” and “Are you enrolled in a federally recognized tribe?” (Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Common App follow-up question for UIC applicants who select AIAN.**

<p>Regardless of your answer to the prior question, please indicate how you identify yourself. (You may select one or more)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaska Native  <input type="checkbox"/> Asian  <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American  <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  <input type="checkbox"/> White</p> <p>Please tell us about your tribal identity or affiliation</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>	<p>Are you enrolled in a federally recognized tribe?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes  <input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><a href="#" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 2px 10px; text-decoration: none; color: inherit;">Clear Answer</a></p> <p>The questions in this section, while helpful to colleges, are entirely optional, and you’re welcome to move on without answering them. Before you do, please confirm for us that you’ve completed this section to your satisfaction.*</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I have completed this section to my satisfaction.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><a href="#" style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; border-radius: 10px; padding: 2px 10px; background-color: #0056b3; color: white; text-decoration: none;">Continue</a></p>
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Seven choices are provided for “tribal identity or affiliation”: Alaska Native, Cherokee, Chippewa, Choctaw, Navajo, Sioux or Other. Table 3 shows the number of responses in each category of applicants from Fall 2018 to Spring 2020.

**Table 3. Data on tribal identity categories from the new UIC Common App follow-up question**

Tribal Identity or Affiliation	Number	Percent of total
Alaska Native	4	2%
Cherokee	28	17%
Chippewa	7	4%
Choctaw	5	3%
Navajo	3	2%
Sioux	4	2%
Other	116	69%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>100%</b>

This breakdown shows that more than two thirds of the Native students who responded did not find their identity in this list and selected “Other.” This could be because:

- Their Native identity may not be included on the list (e.g., Menominee), especially true since the list may align more with national-level Native populations than with Midwestern Native populations.
- Their identity may not correspond to the tribal label used (e.g., they might identify as *Lakota* rather than “Sioux,” or *Ojibwe* rather than “Chippewa”).
- They may have multiple Native identities and preferred not to choose only one.

Whatever the reason, the majority of the Native students who did answer this follow-up question were still invisible in the data.

We wanted to understand more about these students who selected “Other” on this question. The Common App form did provide a space to write in details for “Other,” and although most students left it blank, there were 30 written responses, which provide valuable ideas for how we might improve our data representation of Indigenous students at UIC. More than half of these 30 students’ answers described Native identities from Mexico or Central American indigenous roots, reflected in answers including:

- “Guatemalan”
- “Mexican”
- “Mother is Native Mexican”
- “Indigenous Chihuahua Mexico”
- “Mexicans come from indigenous people”
- “Extinct native tribes of central Mexico slain by Spanish Conquistadors. Most tradition is lost.”
- “Aztec descent,” “Aztec,” “Azteca”
- “Mixtec/Mixteca”
- “Tarahumara”
- “Totonac”

There were numerous other Native peoples written in, including Apache, Chickasaw, Comanche, Nottaway, Ojibwe, Pima, Potawatomi, Pueblo, Saponi, Seminole, Tonkawa, Yaqui, Yoeme – often in combination, sometimes combined with categories that were on the list of options (e.g., “Cherokee and Seminole”).

These data suggest several that UIC can enhance the visibility of Native students in these data:

- Provide the write-in option in the Slate application that now exists in the Common App and ensure consistency of what is asked in both applications.
- Provide more choices of categories that are represented in regional Native populations, and in the UIC student population.
- Improve the documentation and reporting of students’ Native Mexican, Central American and South American identity categories.
- Improve our reporting of the data that we do gather, such as these write-in responses, so that these identities become more visible in our institutional representations.

### 4.3 NASP program data

UIC's Native American Support Program (NASP) provides a source of support and networking for the Native community, as described in section above. In addition to OIR data, data gathered by the NASP program helps to provide more detail to the representation of the Native community at UIC, based on sustained relationships with students rather than a one-time questionnaire. There are many reasons individual students find their way to NASP, representing different relationships to Native identities. In Fall 2019, NASP had 107 students who participated in one or more of their services. Twenty-five of them were regular, active program participants, 16 of whom self-identified as Indigenous, 14 of whom participated in the Native American and Indigenous Student Organization (NAISO), and seven of whom were officially tribally enrolled – including one participant in the program providing in-state tuition for out-of-state, tribally enrolled students. The data in Table 4 show that students in every racial category (according to IPEDS data) participate in NASP activities, and only a small number of them identify *only* as AIAN by IPEDS definitions. If we only use the IPEDS data, we would be totally unaware how many of these students are misclassified or otherwise invisible in the data. NASP data collection is very important for this reason.

**Table 4. Demographics of students participating in NASP over four years.**

IPEDS category	FY2016 NASP participants	FY2017 NASP participants	FY2018 NASP participants	FY2019 NASP participants
American Indian / Alaskan Native (only)	2	4	2	2
Asian	2	10	3	11
Black / African American	15	14	9	16
Hispanic	17	18	21	45
International	6	5	1	5
Multi-Race	6	5	7	5
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	0	1	0	0
White	5	10	10	12
Unknown / Not Available	2	4	9	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>107</b>

### 4.4 Data on UIC faculty, staff and employees

There are fewer data sources to use for documenting Native faculty, staff, and other employees of UIC. Aggregate data reported by OIR show that from Academic Years 2011 through 2018 there were between 17 and 31 employees identified as AIAN in each year, with 24 in AY 2018. This includes faculty (tenure and non-tenure tracks), academic professionals, civil service, and graduate assistants. Table 5 shows a breakdown of these AIAN employees.

Similar to the IPEDS student data, it is likely that more Native employees are hidden in other race categories like “Hispanic or Latino,” “Two or more races,” “Unknown,” or other categories. Nonetheless, these data suggest that those Native community members who are full time employees are much more likely to be staff members rather than faculty or graduate assistants, and that the number of tenure-track Native faculty members has not risen above two over this entire span of years. This fact alone is indicative of the need to develop a vibrant environment at UIC for Native students, faculty, and employees.

All efforts to recruit and retain Native faculty and staff members need to be accompanied by efforts to improve the data resources needed for tracking the effectiveness of these efforts. The OIR data resources referenced here might be augmented with data from Human Relations, academic departments, and other sources to develop a coherent approach to improving the visibility and accurate representation of Native employees.

**Table 5. UIC employees coded as “American Indian / Alaskan Native” in IPEDS data.**

	AY 2011	AY 2012	AY 2013	AY 2014	AY 2015	AY 2016	AY 2017	AY 2018
Total AIAN employees	18	17	18	22	23	28	31	24
% of all UIC employees	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%
Full-time	16	14	14	17	19	20	26	19
Part-time	2	3	4	5	4	8	5	5
Female	12	10	12	16	17	21	23	19
Male	6	7	6	6	6	7	8	5
Academic Professional	7	6	5	4	5	6	5	4
Civil Service	8	8	8	11	11	12	21	15
Graduate Assistant	0	0	2	3	3	4	2	2
Non-Tenure	1	1	1	2	2	4	2	2
Tenure System	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1

## **4.5 Summary of recommendations for data systems**

This section points to a number of recommendations for undoing erasure and improving the visibility of Native students in data practices at UIC:

### **4.5.1 In regular data reporting, disaggregate AIAN from other race and ethnicity categories**

We recognize the difficulties of reporting small numbers in disaggregated data, particularly for generating misleading percentages and statistics, but a more accurate picture of the AIAN presence cannot be achieved with incomplete or misleading numbers. Native students cannot be hidden in other categories such as Hispanic/Latino, Mixed-race, two or more races, or Unknown.

### **4.5.2 Find ways to change or work around problematic race categories and assumptions**

Research is needed on how the configuration of the ethnicity and race questions in the Common App and Slate affect the responses students give, particularly for Latinx students who may select AIAN on the race question. Also, UIC should use any follow-up questions available in Common App and SLATE to improve the detail of the information about categories of identity.

### **4.5.3 Create a system for students to revisit earlier answers to race and ethnicity categories**

College is often a time when people experience awakenings of self-knowledge, new insights into the nature of race and ethnicity, and other changes in their expressed identities. OIR and other UIC entities should make easily available options for changing categories throughout students’ time on campus and should publicize this option.

### **4.5.4 Improve the documentation of Tribal Identities and Affiliations**

UIC should use the written-in data on tribal identities and affiliations to document Native identities in much more detail and use those data to create more efficient and effective ways to gather those data, both in the application process and subsequently.

### **4.5.5 Create systems for keeping track of Native students and providing access to resources**

No data should be gathered or kept without students’ knowledge, but all data gathered through applications, use of programs like NASP, and other sources should be used to ensure that all Native students are aware of resources available to them. This includes students who may only identify as Native after already being enrolled at UIC.

#### **4.5.6 Improve systems for documenting the presence of Native faculty, staff, and other employees**

Current data systems make it hard to “see” Native presence among university employees. This also masks the fact of their absence, and the extreme need for more effective recruitment and retention at all levels. Improving these data systems should include ensuring that the data are regularly published and publicized, so that our efforts to improve hiring and retaining Native faculty can be held accountable through accurate, shared data. OIR, Human Resources, Colleges and Departments can all be part of a more coherent and effective effort.

#### **4.5.7 Create systems to document regular progress in improvement of data systems**

Standardized reports need to be generated on a regular basis (e.g., annually) to document efforts along the lines laid out in this report, and to show progress toward enhanced visibility of Native people, and more nuanced and accurate tools for documenting racial and ethnic identities that better align with the realities of the UIC community.

#### **4.5.8 Improve the ways data are shared and used**

As data systems improve, there must be a corresponding effort to educate all members of the community in what we have, what it means, what assumptions are built into the data, and how the data resources we have can be useful. The more data are reported, shared, and used, the more accurate and useful they become.



# **5 Recruitment, Retention and Relationship-building**

Strengthening and deepening UIC's relationship with Native peoples and communities requires simultaneous efforts in multiple directions, with significant dedication of resources to make it happen. Otherwise, isolated efforts toward recruitment, retention, climate improvement or relationship-building will fall short, due to the "chicken-or-the-egg" problem described in Section 3.6 above. In this section we review current efforts in these directions, with suggestions for how to build upon each of them.

## **5.1 Recruiting Native faculty and the production of indigenous knowledge**

As noted in Section 4.4 above, UIC has two closely related institutional challenges: we have very few Native faculty, and we do not have the data to identify and support those who are here. It is clear that UIC needs to hire more Native American faculty members and ensure that they are not isolated or over-taxed, but instead find support, community, and resources to thrive professionally and personally. This will help create a critical mass of Native faculty across disciplines and construct an institutional climate that is supportive of the success of these professors.

### **5.1.1 A diversity of Indigenous scholars and scholarship**

It is crucial that any efforts to recruit Native American faculty focus both on Native faculty who do Native American Studies scholarship and teaching, those who do Indigenous focused scholarship *across* and within various disciplines, and those whose disciplinary focus may not include indigenous populations or issues. With an effective and well-resourced program of faculty recruitment and retention, UIC can become a central site of current and emerging trends in Indigenous scholarship globally, including the physical and natural sciences, humanities, computer science and engineering, as well as research methodologies, pedagogies, and other areas of scholarship.

The ultimate goal should be to increase Native American faculty across UIC, which is a critical component for student success. UIC should have a coherent and well thought out policy for recruitment, retention, and healthy support for scholars. And while the presence of Native American faculty might include those whose research focus is not Native Americans, if UIC wishes to be a center of activity and production of Indigenous knowledge, then it will indeed be important to recruit and retain Native American faculty whose focus is Native American Studies or (inter) disciplinary research on Native population and issues.

### **5.1.2 Cluster Hire proposal**

One recommendation of this task force is to create a cluster hire, "a key component of what should be a comprehensive approach to both diversity and inclusion" (Chilton 2020). Cluster hires have the power to increase institutional diversity, shift the climate to one that is more inclusive, and provide important supports for faculty retention (Urban Universities for Health 2015). Over the last decade, UIC has successfully embarked on cluster hires to promote intellectual diversity.

### **5.1.3 Bridge to the Faculty proposal**

Recently, UIC has had success recruiting underrepresented postdoctoral fellows for its Bridge to Faculty program (<https://emails.uofi.uic.edu/newsletter/231603.html>). We recommend that UIC create a sub-program within the Bridge to Faculty program designed specifically to recruit Native American scholars to complete postdoctoral fellowships and transition to faculty positions within departments across the institution.

### **5.1.4 Resources and climate needed to retain Native faculty**

Once at UIC, the University must provide to each faculty member the resources and the climate that ensures success. Similar to other groups that are underrepresented in universities, Native faculty face additional challenges. Typically, given how few of them there are, they are asked to serve on too many department and university committees. This is especially difficult for junior faculty, for whom this is a distraction for producing

the necessary publications. In addition, it is important for departments and the university to acknowledge and support the faculty member who is doing indigenous scholarship – e.g., hydrologists studying water issues in tribal communities, who is held accountable to both Native community standards and traditional disciplinary community's standards. This requires twice the work and sometimes-added challenges to attaining tenure. It should be acknowledged that Native scholars make valuable contributions to all areas of academia and need not be tied to doing any particular kind of work or focus.

## **5.2 Recruiting students**

Through its enrollment management approach (the term colleges and universities use to describe their systems for recruitment and retention), UIC seeks to build a student population that mirrors the diversity of the Chicagoland region, and the state of Illinois more broadly. This is not simply an administrative process, as true enrollment management involves the entire campus in building new systems and relationships. Outreach and recruitment initiatives include the Guaranteed Professional Program Admission (GPPA), the President's Award Program (PAP), the Honors College and the Urban Health Program, to name a few. These initiatives are intended to promote access to the university, particularly for under-represented populations including Native potential students. Rather than a set of unconnected initiatives, the goal of enrollment management is to develop and support a sustainable, integrated system that maximizes student access and success, creates fiscal stability, and allows the university to anticipate scheduling needs.

### **5.2.1 Outreach efforts to Native communities**

As noted above, although our data systems currently do not do an adequate job of identifying and representing our Native student population, it is clear that there is a need for better recruitment and retention efforts to enroll more local, national, and international Native students and build a strong community of Native scholars at UIC. This involves making sure that all potential students have access to information through recruitment activities, institutional relationships, publications, media announcements, and outreach workshops. Interactive communication through social media, usage of our website, and the user friendliness of our online presence serves as major points of connection to Native communities nationally.

A set of unique recruitment efforts has been established in keeping with UIC's diversity and enrollment goals. To that end, the UIC Admissions Office has recently designated admissions staff to work with out of state Native communities. The efforts of UIC Admissions recently have included outreach with Blackfoot, Lakota and Menomonee communities, including visits to tribal colleges, and exploring possibilities for transfer agreements. These current efforts lay the groundwork, with sustainable relationship-building as the goal.

These efforts will increase in future years, as we work to expand the UIC message to tribal communities throughout the US. We note that these efforts have been hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, as numerous community recruitment events that our team members were scheduled to participate in (e.g., Black Hills 7<sup>th</sup> Generation College Fair, Gun Lake Tribe UIC campus visit) have been cancelled or postponed. However, we have persisted in our mission of continuing to build relationships one step at a time, to develop and sustain robust relationships rather than just isolated events and continue outreach efforts to the Chicago Native American community and urban and tribal land-based Native communities around the United States.

### **5.2.2 In-state tuition program**

Beginning in November 2018, UIC created a unique opportunity for Native American students who are enrolled in a federally recognized tribe to enroll at UIC and be charged in-state tuition rates. For those who are able to take advantage of it, this will "save" Native American students enrolling at UIC from outside Illinois nearly \$10,000 per year, or \$40,000 over the 4-year degree timeline. The program is designed for non-Illinois students who are a member of any federally recognized tribe or Nation. Included are Native Hawaiian and Native Alaskan. The program began in Fall 2019, and three students have enrolled under this arrangement so far. We view this as an important first of many necessary steps toward building an inclusive campus that attracts Native students. At the same time, we recognize that a focus on increasing equity and support within the campus climate is necessary for successful retention and matriculation of Native American students at UIC.

### **5.2.3 Looking ahead**

Through ongoing efforts both externally and from within, UIC strives to more effectively serve its growing diverse student populations and infuse equity-mindedness throughout instruction and support programs. Student equity is at the forefront of the UIC's mission and all of the Universities' recruitment activities and strategies should focus on helping students achieve equal outcomes, providing the best possible access and success for students. Serving Native American students, therefore, is consistent with the larger mission and efforts being made at UIC to craft diverse freshman, transfer and graduate level classes.

This is a living outreach process intended to provide strategies for efficiency, quality, access, inclusiveness, and completion for students from connection with, entry into, progress through, and ultimately completion of a UIC degree. Efforts focused on outreach to Native communities will help to guide the enrollment management process and will also provide flexibility for creativity within each respective area to encourage enrollment. The goals within these efforts can be utilized by each of the UIC Undergraduate Colleges to create sustainable models and practices that encourage the enrollment and retention of Native American students.

Aiming for sustainable and systematic efforts requires that we are willing to take the necessary time to truly listen to and partner with Native communities and organizations. We must continue to allow our understanding of the needs of Native students to evolve, drive outreach and recruitment efforts, and shape how our campus community responds to these needs.

## **5.3 Retention: Establishing a supportive climate for students**

Recruiting students isn't sufficient for retaining them. We clearly learn from previous efforts that successful degree attainment is tied to whether Natives feel comfortable at the University (see Section 2.1). Whether Native students "see themselves in the fabrics of the institution" (as stated in the UIC Native American Program demands from 1978) has many facets, as described throughout this report. In this section, we suggest steps toward establishing a climate conducive to Native presence on campus. It begins with the suggestion that a climate study be conducted.

### **5.3.1 Need for a climate study**

While UIC regularly administers surveys to the campus community, the last climate survey was conducted in Fall 2011. The campus was preparing to administer two surveys in April 2020 as part of a national study conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California, Los Angeles—HERI Faculty Survey and HERI Staff Climate Survey. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, administration of these surveys has been put on hold indefinitely. As of this writing, there are no plans currently to administer an institutional climate survey for students. The Office of Diversity's Equity Dashboard project administered an inclusion and engagement survey, including some measures of campus climate, for undergraduate students in 2019 and graduate and professional students in 2020. This survey, however, is part of a larger effort not solely focused on climate and, as such, does not yet fully capture the campus climate issues at UIC.

*We recommend seeking out existing climate tools that can be used as a starting point, particularly ones developed for use with Native communities such as the one developed by Dr. Karina Walters, University of Washington.* The dearth of climate data means we do not have systematic data on the experiences of students on campus, particularly those who are significantly underrepresented such as our Native students. Anecdotal information suggests that while UIC has a tremendously diverse student body, not all students experience campus as a welcoming and inclusive place. As a result, we recommend that the campus survey our Native student population about their experiences at UIC including, but not limited to, their perceptions of the climate. In the *Mosaic for UIC Transformation* (UIC Office of the Chancellor 2012), we commit to having a "climate of diversity and equity in which individual students, faculty, and staff feel welcomed in their identities, valued for their contributions, and feel their identities can be openly expressed wherever they live, work, and study."

Without data from a climate study, we cannot adequately assess whether we are meeting the needs of our Native student population and fulfilling our promise as outlined in the *Mosaic*. *In addition to a survey of Native students,*

*we recommend conducting in-depth individual interviews and focus groups. A multi-modal approach to data collection will make it more likely that we can capture a fuller picture of the experiences of Native students at UIC, and utilize the data to make meaningful improvements to our current structures.*

### **5.3.2 Micro-aggressions as experienced by Native Americans on campus**

Among the things we will be able to identify in a climate study, we expect to learn about microaggressions experienced in campus life, sources of support and identification, and students' perception of how Natives are represented and perceived in campus life. Racial micro aggressions are defined as "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual), directed toward racial minorities, often automatically or unconsciously" (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Sue and colleagues (2007) categorize micro aggressions into three forms: 1) Micro assault, "explicit racial derogation characterized primarily by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions;" 2) Micro insult, "communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity" (e.g., subtle snubs); and 3) Micro invalidation, "characterized by communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color". Micro aggressions are part of the everyday experiences of marginalized groups and have been linked to negative psychosocial health outcomes.

Clark and colleagues (2011) have begun to explore the specific ways microaggressions are experienced by Native Americans, and that work can inform our study. *As we move forward with climate surveys, focus groups and interviews, we should be sure to build upon this literature on microaggressions to document the extent to which students, faculty and staff experience these, and ways that we can work to eliminate them.*

## **5.4 Developing deeper relationships between UIC and Native communities**

### **5.4.1 Build on work of NASP over the years**

As UIC deepens its relationships with Native communities, Native American Support Services provides a continuous and enduring legacy whose roots are embedded in a consciousness that reflects an understanding of Native American history as well as contemporary conditions. A physical space to provide a sense of community, cultural activities and students support services are essential to the effectiveness of NASP and service to the Native American community at UIC and beyond. The importance of building on the work of NASP is an essential finding of this task force report.

### **5.4.2 Land Acknowledgements**

It has become increasingly common practice for institutions, such as universities, to publicly acknowledge the Indigenous peoples (both past and current) and treaties connected to the lands and regions that these institutions now occupy. Indeed, the practice of land acknowledgment and the widespread implementation of these efforts stems directly from the work of Native American activists (e.g., Idle No More). As an institution, UIC benefits from U.S. government policies and actions that continue to the present day and serve to erode tribal sovereignty and facilitate the disenfranchisement of Native American peoples and communities nationwide. UIC has an obligation to take steps to resist these efforts.

Acknowledgment, according to Wilkes and colleagues (2017), "refers to a recognition and appreciation of another's right to self-determining autonomy and existence." Land acknowledgements represent an important initial step toward recognizing and addressing colonization and must be approached with care and in collaboration with Indigenous peoples. According to a recent report from the American Indian College Fund, *Creating Visibility and Healthy Learning Environments for Native Americans in Higher Education*, land acknowledgements, which may take numerous forms (e.g., written, spoken, visual depiction), depending on the venue of presentation, are a necessary component of a larger comprehensive plan of action that universities must take in order to support the well-being of Native American students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors.

The cover of this report contains a land acknowledgement that is adapted from UIC's Native American Support Program (NASP). *We recommend that UIC engage in the following activities to develop and integrate land acknowledgments into all university activities:*

- Given their close relationships with Native organizations in Chicago and the region, work closely with the Native American Support Program in following their lead on the language and policies related to land acknowledgement.
- With the support and guidance of NASP, work to develop and maintain relationships with Chicago Native American community members and organizations and Native American communities that were forcibly removed from Chicago (Potawatomi, Odawa, Ojibwe, Oneida, Sac and Fox, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Miami, Peoria) with the goal of listening to their concerns and suggestions for land acknowledgement development and delivery.
- UIC leadership communicates and affirms the land acknowledgment and ensures that it is implemented in all university activities. For example, land acknowledgments should appear on the UIC website (including department and unit home pages), delivered during UIC in-person events, be included in course syllabi, and appear on campus plaques, signs, and internal and public facing communications (e.g., emails, press releases, etc.).
- All visitors to campus are provided with land acknowledgements and information about Native Americans in Chicago, both historical and current, and policies and treaties that contributed to the removal and disenfranchisement of Native American people from the land and city that UIC occupies.
- Recognizing land acknowledgements are only one step in honoring the Native people of the land. There are additional steps required so it is not viewed as only words spoken or seen on campus, actual policies and actions must be included with the statements.

#### **5.4.3 Representation, Symbols and Naming**

American Indian mascots are harmful and represent a form of “(neo) colonialism” (Springwood, 2004) that allows members of a majority or mainstream culture, rather than Native Americans themselves, to exert control over the expression of Native American cultures in mainstream society. “Playing Indian,” or perceiving a connection between one’s self and Native American culture, is an attempt to exonerate members of the majority from blame for the historical atrocities committed against Native Americans, replacing this image instead with the myth of the Indian as a noble warrior (Staurowsky, 2007).

Such a narrow presentation of Native people can influence how both Native and non-Native people form views of Native American cultures. This is detrimental to all people, as the depiction of Native Americans in the form of American Indian mascots supports the misconception that Native people are a monolithic cultural group, and that “there are only a few ways to be an Indian” (Fryberg and Markus, 2003). These mascots also perpetuate the view that Native Americans do not exist in modern society. For example, research findings by Chaney et al., (2011), which indicated that Non-Native study participants perceived American Indian-based mascots and Native American people as *interchangeable*, provide documented evidence of this view. Further, individuals primed with Native American stereotypes have been shown to be more likely to endorse negative stereotypes of other ethnic/racial minority groups (Kim-Prieto et al., 2010).

*We recommend that UIC become a vocal leader against the use of race-based mascots and symbols and help raise awareness of the harm that they create.* Further, in alignment with recommendations made by the American Indian College Fund<sup>7</sup>, and with similar initiatives by the City of Chicago, we recommend that UIC examine and change the names of campus buildings, offices, landmarks, walkways, and other spaces named for colonizers, organizations, or institutions that bear any responsibility for historical Native American genocide and/or current or historical policies that are harmful for Native American people or tribal communities. *We recommend renaming existing and naming newly created campus spaces in collaboration with Chicago Native American community members as a way of incorporating Indigenous knowledge and teaching into the campus community.*

<sup>7</sup> <https://collegefund.org/blog/inside-the-college-fund/re-name-mascots-to-end-harmful-stereotypes/>



# **6 Highlights: Policy Recommendations and Possibilities**

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Recommendations for improving UIC's commitment to Native communities at UIC and Chicago exist throughout this report. Below are a few highlights on campus-level structures, student recruitment and support, data gathering and reporting, hiring faculty and staff, academic programming, research initiatives, build and maintain relations with Native communities, and climate and representation:

## **6.1 Campus-level Structures**

- The single most important recommendation of this report is that the Native American Support Services Program receive increased resources, support and visibility (see Section 3). Important to the success of NASP is 1) an administrative culture that allows flexibility for Native programming and 2) a dedicated physical space for Native community use, 3) additional staff to provide culturally appropriate counseling and academic coaching, and 4) an institutionalized budget for programming on an annual and repeating basis, including professional development for staff and students.
- We recommend establishing a Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Native Americans comparable other such committees (e.g., Status on Asians, Blacks, Latinos, Lesbian, Gay and Transgender, and Persons with Disabilities). Such a Committee can communicate across the university to 1) further assess current policies and committees, 2) guide the implementation of recommendations made in this report and 3) ensure the visibility and viability of Native American Support Services. It should be apparent that this Committee (and other comparable committees) has the ear of the Chancellor and that requests for action will receive more than lip service.
- Create an administrative position like Advisor for Tribal Affairs in the Provost's office

## **6.2 Build and maintain connections with Native communities**

- Systematize regular engagement with the Native community, starting with a series of community conversations.
- Build and maintain relationships with tribal Nations
- Make documents coming from community engagement and/or Task Force reports living documents that are regularly updated.
- Create accountability mechanisms for tracking progress on recommendations, including regular reporting.
- When engaging with Native community – Listen!

## **6.3 Hire Native faculty and staff**

- Hire Native faculty members, preferably in clusters, in tenure-track and clinical positions, balancing two distinct priorities;
- Hire Native Studies scholars to provide courses in a Native American Studies minor or major, and of interest across other majors;
- Hire Native scholars to provide diversity and equity across the various degree programs. Diverse representation is lacking across various degree programs to assist with retention of Native students in various fields of study;
- Promote the hiring of Native scholars not only for tenure-track and clinical positions, but also for part-time and temporary positions that provide teaching experience (including Native graduates and current students in UIC programs);
- Hire more Native staff members at all levels.

## **6.4 Student Recruitment**

- Recruit students at both graduate and undergraduate levels in critical mass.
- Allocate resources to relationship-based, personal recruitment efforts in Native communities, such as luncheons, providing transportation, and inviting families.

- Allocate resources to scholarships, fellowships, and tuition waivers for Native students, especially local students who are most likely to enroll at UIC.
- Enhance the in-state tuition initiative with more recruitment efforts in Native communities, including reservations.
- Identify which UIC programs align with Native interests and needs.
- Develop a more welcoming and supportive campus environment.
- Develop marketing materials that highlight Native people and presence on campus.

## **6.5 Student Support**

- As noted above, provide additional resources to support the work done by NASP, including hiring additional NASP staff for recruitment and community engagement.
- Create mechanisms for directing Native students to NASP.
- Hire one or more Native support staff in Admissions, without reducing the staffing at NASP.
- Get other campus entities involved in Native recruitment and support.
- Provide space for Native cultural events, including the Pavilion for the annual powwow.

## **6.6 Data gathering and reporting**

- In regular data reporting, disaggregate AIAN from other race and ethnicity categories.
- Find ways to change or work around problematic race categories and assumptions.
- Create a system for students to revisit earlier answers to race and ethnicity categories.
- Improve the documentation of Tribal Identities and Affiliations
  - Provide the write-in option in the Slate application that now exists in the Common App and ensure consistency of what is asked in both applications.
  - Provide opportunities for students to describe their identities in ways that better reflect the complex realities of people's lives. For example, provide more choices of categories that are represented in regional Native populations, and in the UIC student population.
  - Improve the documentation and reporting of students' Native Mexican, Central American and South American identity categories.
- Create systems for keeping track of Native students and providing access to resources.
- Improve systems for documenting the presence of Native faculty, staff, and other employees.
- Create systems to document regular progress in improvement of data systems.
- Improve the ways data are shared and used
  - Improve the regular reporting of data to eliminate erasure of Native students.
  - Disaggregate the IPEDS data in reports where appropriate and improve our reporting of additional data that we gather, such as write-in responses, so that these identities become more visible in our institutional representations.

## **6.7 Academic Programming**

- Provide incentives and conditions for faculty to produce and disseminate knowledge of Native Americans, e.g., history, cosmology and science, culture, etc.
- Provide workshops, mini-courses, and other programs on Native issues that lead to credit or certifications.
- Create systems to more consistently advertise UIC's offerings in the Native community.
- Revive the Native Studies minor.
- Initiate a process to explore possibilities of a Native Studies major – framing, and impact.
- Initiate a process to explore ways to integrate Native issues into multiple departments and programs.
- Make sure current courses offered at UIC related to Indigenous peoples better reflect our histories, current events and futurities.

## **6.8 Research Initiatives**

- Create research experiences for Native researchers and students, including STEM as well as other fields.
- Encourage research initiatives focused on the needs of Native communities.

- Create systems for disseminating research findings in Native communities.
- Support research efforts that involve Native communities and researchers in the process of seeking funding, generating research questions, creating budgets, allocating indirect-costs resources, and all aspects of designing and carrying out the research.
- Follow the example of the IRRPP report in collaborative research and building human and cultural capital for future research.

## **6.9 Climate and Representation**

- Given their close relationships with Native organizations in Chicago and the region, work closely with the Native American Support Program in following their lead on the language and policies related to land acknowledgement.
- With the support and guidance of NASP, work to develop and maintain relationships with Chicago Native American community members and organizations and Native American communities that were forcibly removed from Chicago (Potawatomi, Odawa, Ojibwe, Oneida, Sac and Fox, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Miami, Peoria) with the goal of listening to their concerns and suggestions for land acknowledgement development and delivery.
- UIC leadership communicates and affirms the land acknowledgment and ensures that it is implemented in all university activities. For example, land acknowledgments should appear on the UIC website (including department and unit home pages), delivered during UIC in-person events, be included in course syllabi, and appear on campus plaques, signs, and internal and public facing communications (e.g., emails, press releases, etc.).
- All visitors to campus are provided with land acknowledgements and information about Native Americans in Chicago, both historical and current, and policies and treaties that contributed to the removal and disenfranchisement of Native American people from the land and city that UIC occupies.
- Recognizing land acknowledgements is only one step in honoring the Native people of the land. There are additional steps required so it is not viewed as only words spoken or seen on campus; actual policies and actions must be included with the statements.



# Appendix

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Applicants to UIC between 2011 and 2020 who selected AIAN as an identity category

AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKAN NATIVE STUDENT DATA BOOK					
FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN			FIRST-TIME TRANSFERS		
ADMISSIONS		ADMISSIONS			
Applied	4,432	Applied	1,925		
Admitted	2,663	Admitted	801		
Enrolled	885	Enrolled	373		
Admit Rate (Admitted/Applied)	60%	Admit Rate (Admitted/Applied)	42%		
Yield Rate (Enrolled/Admitted)	33%	Yield Rate (Enrolled/Admitted)	47%		
STUDENT PROFILE			STUDENT PROFILE		
Full-Time	875	99%	Full-Time	315	84%
Part-Time	10	1%	Part-Time	58	16%
Men	508	57%	Men	186	50%
Women	377	43%	Women	187	50%
Black or African American	0	0%	Black or African American	-	0%
Hispanic	715	81%	Hispanic	258	69%
Asian	0	0%	Asian	-	0%
White	0	0%	White	-	0%
Am. Indian or Alaska Nat.	18	2%	Am. Indian or Alaska Nat.	20	5%
Native HI or Pac. Islander	0	0%	Native HI or Pac. Islander	-	0%
Two or More Races	147	17%	Two or More Races	87	23%
International	4	0%	International	2	1%
Unknown	1	0%	Unknown	6	2%
Chicago	534	60%	Chicago	168	45%
Cook County	174	20%	Cook County	110	29%
Illinois	141	16%	Illinois	87	23%
Out of State	32	4%	Out of State	6	2%
International	4	0%	International	2	1%
First Generation (NCES definition)	410	46%	First Generation (NCES definition)	51	14%
Pell Eligible	571	65%	Pell Eligible	177	47%
Not Pell Eligible	314	35%	Not Pell Eligible	196	53%

Continued...

ENROLLMENT BY COLLEGE			ENROLLMENT BY COLLEGE		
Applied Health Sciences	27	3%	Applied Health Sciences	22	6%
Architecture, Design, & Art	62	7%	Architecture, Design, & Art	29	8%
Business Administration	85	10%	Business Administration	64	17%
Education	28	3%	Education	3	1%
Engineering	72	8%	Engineering	59	16%
LAS	604	68%	LAS	167	45%
Nursing	0	0%	Nursing	19	5%
Public Health	1	0%	Public Health	3	1%
CUPPA	6	1%	CUPPA	7	2%
POPULAR MAJORS			POPULAR MAJORS		
Liberal Arts - Undeclared	320	36%	Liberal Arts - Undeclared	29	8%
Biological Sciences	68	8%	Biological Sciences	27	7%
Psychology	41	5%	Psychology	27	7%
Criminology, Law and Justice	34	4%	Accounting	16	4%
Architecture	30	3%	Marketing	13	3%
Accounting	22	2%	Computer Science	12	3%
Chemistry	22	2%	Graphic/Industrial Design Foundation	12	3%
Business Administration - Undeclared	19	2%	Business Administration	11	3%
Political Science	18	2%	Kinesiology	11	3%
Computer Science	17	2%	Mechanical Engineering	11	3%
ACADEMIC CHARACTERISTICS			ACADEMIC CHARACTERISTICS		
Mean ACT	23		Mean Transfer GPA	3.2	
Mean SAT	1,106				
Mean HS GPA	3.25				
4.0 High School GPA Students			4.0 Transfer GPA Students		
New Freshmen	9		New Transfers	5	
First Semester GPA			First Semester GPA		
Mean	2.57		Mean	2.77	
Honors College			Honors College		
New Freshmen	42		New Transfer	20	

Continued...

HIGH SCHOOL TYPE			TRANSFER COLLEGE TYPE		
Chicago Public	489	55%	Illinois Two Year Colleges	255	68%
Cook Co. Public (non-Chicago)	149	17%	Illinois Four Year Colleges	56	15%
Out of State	36	4%	Out-of-State Four Year Colleges	24	6%
DuPage County	30	3%	College Unknown	24	6%
Lake County	30	3%	Out-of-State Two Year Colleges	12	3%
Kane County	28	3%	Foreign Colleges	2	1%
Other Illinois	27	3%			
Chicago Private	27	3%			
Unknown	27	3%			
Will County	23	3%			
Cook Co. Private (non-Chicago)	13	1%			
McHenry County	5	1%			
Home Schooled	1	0%			
TOP 10 HIGH SCHOOLS			TOP 10 TRANSFER INSTITUTIONS		
Lane Tech High School	43	5%	Harold Washington College	46	12%
Curie Metropolitan HS	24	3%	Triton College	25	7%
Golder College Prep Noble HS	22	2%	College of DuPage	22	6%
JS Morton East HS	20	2%	Morton College	18	5%
Hubbard HS	18	2%	Moraine Valley Community College	18	5%
Thomas Kelly HS	16	2%	Richard J Daley College	16	4%
Whitney M Young Magnet HS	16	2%	William Rainey Harper College	15	4%
JS Morton West HS	16	2%	Wilbur Wright College	12	3%
Lake View HS	15	2%	University of IL Urbana-Champaign	12	3%
Pritzker Noble Charter HS	15	2%	College of Lake County	12	3%



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