



Docket Item:

University Program Approval: Portland State University, Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)/Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Indigenous Nations and Native American Studies.

Summary:

Portland State University proposes a new degree program leading to a B.A./B.S. in Indigenous Nations and Native American Studies. Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) staff completed a review of the proposed program. After analysis, HECC staff recommends approval of the program as proposed.

Staff Recommendation:

The HECC recommends the adoption of the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the Higher Education Coordinating Commission approve the following program: B.A./B.S. in Indigenous Nations and Native American Studies at Portland State University.

Portland State University seeks the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission's approval to offer an instructional program leading to a BA/BS in Indigenous Nations and Native American Studies.

1. *Describe the purpose and relationship of the proposed program to the institution's mission and strategic plan.*

As has been the case with the Indigenous Nations Studies minor, the INNAS major will directly support and ultimately fulfill the aforementioned PSU mission and goals. The major promotes collaborative learning, as well as cutting-edge decolonizing pedagogy and research. Several courses explicitly address issues of sustainability from American Indian/Alaska Native perspectives, as does work with community and governmental partners. This work speaks to a tradition of community engagement in INNAS. Additionally, the INNAS major will directly contribute to goals focusing on student access, equity, and diversity. The major provides opportunities for a range of students: self-identified Native students, a significant number of whom are also multiracial and/or multicultural students, will seek out the program as a course of study deeply connected to their lived experiences. Non-Native students will enroll in the major to expand their understandings of American Indian/Alaska Native sovereignty, epistemologies and experiences. Additionally, international students are identifying with the core values of Indigenous history, culture and contemporary decolonizing methodologies. All INNAS majors, irrespective of their backgrounds, will be able to co-create and maintain a more sustainable world, interrogate contemporary social issues with integrity, and understand the ways in which community engagement is connected to fundamental principles of self-determination for Indigenous peoples. The proposed major will also provide a pool of students ready to move forward into graduate programs, including PSU's new Gender, Race, and Nations graduate certificate and the American Indian Teacher Program (GSE).

Indigenous Nations Studies situates its academic, scholarly, and community engagement work within the broader traditions of multidisciplinary fields, as well as the strategic priorities and signature areas of focus laid out in PSU's mission statement and its Strategic Plan, *Let Knowledge Serve the City*. As will be demonstrated below, it is important to underscore that scholars and students in Indigenous Nations Studies and Native American Studies nationally have been engaged in the work articulated in the PSU Strategic Plan for decades. For example, INST has consistently brought Elders and others from Indigenous communities into the classroom to teach and share knowledge. In doing so, INST minors participate in activities using an Indigenous lens developed by Native scholars, Elders and other Native community members as a part of our immersive community program. Such work is directly connected to larger concerns with American Indian/Alaska Native self-determination and sovereignty. That is why it is very important to note that its work is also aligned with the historic World Indigenous

Peoples' Conference on Education, which took place in Hilo, Hawai'i in 1999, and the "Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Education." Where applicable, the Coolangatta Statement is also cited. [See Appendix E in the full proposal for the Coolangatta Statement.]

PSU mission: Sustainability [Coolangatta Statement: 1.4.3; 1.5; 1.7.1]

Portland State's mission statement helps frame its Strategic Plan, and a core component of it is *sustainability*:

- We serve and sustain a vibrant urban region through our creativity, collective knowledge and expertise.
- We are dedicated to collaborative learning, innovative research, sustainability, and community engagement.
- We educate a diverse community of lifelong learners.
- Our research and teaching have global impact.

Sustainability is a central aspect of Indigenous Nations Studies internationally, and a core theme of INST at PSU. Sustainability--particularly its interrelated cultural and environmental components--is inextricably connected to Native worldviews around the need to protect and cherish the ecological systems of the Earth, as well as the need to embrace self-determination and sovereignty. Therefore, sustainability is not only critical to the survival of the planet in environmental terms; it is critical to the survival of Indigenous peoples in cultural, political and literal terms. The INNAS major, with several courses that deal with sustainability issues explicitly, partnerships such as the one with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, and faculty with expertise in this area, will be well positioned to help PSU realize its institutional mission.

PSU goal: Elevate student Success [Coolangatta Statement: 2.1; 2.2.4; 2.5]

The INNAS major will establish a pathway for students to challenge colonized epistemologies, a key to retention and cultural resiliency for Native students, and enhanced critical thinking for all students. It will provide opportunities for student participation through community-based experiential learning that draw upon and expand students' understandings of critical issues that American Indian/Alaska Native communities face on a daily basis. It will support transfer students who have begun their coursework in INNAS at other institutions and provide critical core courses for all INST students.

PSU goal: Expand Commitment to Equity [Coolangatta Statement: 1.3.1]

PSU's stated commitment to equity is explicit in the Strategic Plan. "We define equity as ensuring everyone has access to opportunities necessary to satisfy essential needs, advance their well-being, and achieve their potential. Our aim is to address the roots of inequities, including but not limited to racism, homophobia, sexism, ableism, classism, and the intersections of these inequities," the plan asserts. "We commit to inclusion of historically marginalized communities and those underrepresented in higher

education.” Arguably, no groups have been more marginalized both historically and contemporarily than have American Indians/Alaska Natives. This marginalization has been incredibly profound within the context of formal education, where for centuries a fundamental goal of Western educators has been to either suppress or thoroughly obliterate Indigenous cultural forms in the name of “civilization.” As has been noted in the Coolangatta Statement: “Historically, Indigenous peoples have insisted upon the right of access to education. Invariably, the nature, and consequently the outcome, of this education has been constructed through and measured by non-Indigenous standards, values, and philosophies.” The INNAS proposed major embraces the intentionality with which Indigenous peoples and perspectives move from the margins to the center of curricular and co-curricular focus. The process of centering Indigenous ways of knowledge is central to the decolonizing work of INST faculty, and goes hand in hand with the work done by the staff of the Native American Student and Community Center (NASCC). Such work not only takes Native students from invisibility to prominence, but also, serves to strengthen much needed retention and graduation efforts for Indigenous students and others served by the program.

PSU goal: Extend Leadership in Community Engagement [Coolangatta Statement: 2.4.4]

Many INST courses feature significant community-based learning (CBL) with tribal and urban Native communities and organizations, and governmental agencies, which students, both Native and non-Native, have consistently and overwhelmingly evaluated as “transformative,” “empowering” and a highlight of their educational experience. The INNAS major builds on these partnerships, research, and community-based learning experiences. The proposed major would require 8 credits in Community-Based Learning and Engagement, a feature of *engaged pedagogy*. Essential to such community engagement is the cultivation of equitable relationships, including Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with Tribal governments and Native organizations. The federally recognized Tribes of Oregon include: the Burns Paiute Tribe; the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw; the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde; the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians; the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs; the Coquille Indian Tribe; the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians; and the Klamath Tribes. As the Coolangatta Statement notes: “The involvement of community in all pedagogical processes is valued.”

Students will work with each other in cohorts and with specific Native-centered programs, such as the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA), to develop a mentoring program. There have been several collaborative relationships established with state, regional and federal governmental structures. Section 6.a. lists current funding sources, collaborators and projects that meet the goals of both Indigenous Nations Studies and College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, projecting the number of partnerships/grants to secure and the number of students to receive paid internships/research assistantships involved in activities for the 2017-18, 2018-19, and

2019-20 academic years. The number of students that are engaged through our INST courses, PSU student groups and cross disciplinary fieldwork averages 50 to 70 students per event; outreach to students and diverse community members is a featured aspect of these projects.

These projects provide a context for this emerging confluence of education, culture, community and collaboration. With a focus on Re-Indigenization and reclaiming the urban landscape for food, medicine and ceremony/healthy lifeways, courses and related fieldwork have a timely synergy with numerous agencies and community partners working in culturally responsible restoration and education, reclamation and protection practices, as well as holistic/adaptive land management and policy.

Development of collaborative partnerships and reciprocal relationships to create paid student research assistantships and internships in dynamic career paths strongly supports PSU's Strategic Plan goals. It also serves to increase awareness of culturally significant opportunities in higher education at PSU and attract underrepresented and historically marginalized students. Through collaborations with the Indigenous Nations Studies Program, we will facilitate a new generation of emerging Indigenous leaders and advocates.

Building on past grant and research funding partnerships, INST will further the development of related projects within the field of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK), including "First Foods," and Indigenous land practices. These key areas of emphasis are part of the larger Indigenous Resurgence movement occurring nationally and internationally.

2. *What evidence of need does the institution have for the program?*

In an effort to get a fuller sense of the demand for INNAS at Portland State, we distributed both a petition and a six-question survey. Hundreds of PSU community members signed the petition, affirming in the most grassroots way the level of support for the major. However, the survey, with 116 responses to date, is significant in that it provides a substantive and more nuanced sense of the demand for the major. It is also significant that two-thirds of those who responded were either current or past INST minors, individuals who possess a great deal of familiarity with the program. When asked "how interested would you have been (or are you) in pursuing" the major, over 80 percent of potential INNAS majors said that they were either extremely likely (60.3 percent) or very likely (20.7 percent) to do so. At least 75 percent of respondents indicated interest in the following four topics: Tribal sovereignty, decolonizing methodologies, traditional ecological practices, and contemporary issues and experiences. Furthermore, when asked about how they were currently utilizing the knowledge gained from completing the INST minor, 70 percent of respondents mentioned that it had a direct bearing on their professional lives/careers. Approximately 65 percent mentioned advocacy activities/volunteering,

and over 50 percent mentioned personal/family life. In an intriguing testament to the importance of intellectual life, over 40 percent mentioned that they utilized their minor in preparation for graduate/post-baccalaureate studies.

We want to stress that the issue of need cannot be viewed exclusively in terms of markets. There is an overwhelming need for understanding the cultures, geography, and philosophy of Indigenous Nations in a meaningful way. As PSU's international footprint grows, we should also ensure that our Native and Non-Native students have a degree program that is specifically attuned to Indigenous perspectives. Native communities, as well as those Indigenous persons outside of these communities, can progress in the healing process of past and current traumas as well as understand the effects of genocide against numerous populations throughout Indigenous and Native American Diasporas. It is a way for Native people to have significance and hold value as visible beings who exist within their own right as defined by themselves and their cultural ways. The need for INNAS is crucial in helping develop a deeper and more meaningful common space in the Pacific Northwest. As our city borders meld into our Tribal spaces, we all need to have a mutual method of understanding each other. The global issues of colonization, oppression and social injustice touch all of us, Native and Non-Native. As a university, we must uphold our motto of bringing knowledge to the city and beyond. Our program can ensure that the difficult conversations can be had, and more importantly, that problems can be solved if we can communicate with open minds.

3. *Are there similar programs in the state? If so, how does the proposed program supplement, complement, or collaborate with those programs?*

There is no other public university in the city or state that offers this particular course of study as an undergraduate major. There are two universities in northern Washington State: a tribal college and a public research university, that offer a similar undergraduate major. However, the Northwest Indian College, established by the Lummi Nation, is located in Bellingham and primarily serves reservation communities from Idaho, Washington and Oregon. With the passage of SB13, Oregon will require that American Indian/Alaska Native curriculum featuring Native perspectives on tribal history and sovereignty will be taught in public schools, K-12 grades. [See Appendix H in full proposal for SB13]

Portland has the ninth largest Native American population in the U.S. and the PSU campus is uniquely positioned to partner with the many governmental agencies, tribal and Native organizations, and NGO's that are headquartered in Portland, several of which already have inter-governmental and cooperative agreements and grants with the PSU Indigenous Nations Studies Program. The request from community partners for an established major is reflected in the letters of support provided in this proposal. Furthermore, data from a survey administered to over one hundred individuals affiliated with INST reveals that over 70 percent of respondents utilize their

academic work in service of their professional work, while over 65 percent do so in a volunteer or advocacy context.

All appropriate University committees and the Statewide Provosts Council have approved the proposed program. The PSU Board of Trustees approved the program on May 31, 2018.

Recommendation to the Commission

The Statewide Provosts Council recommends that the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission authorize Portland State University to establish an instructional program leading to a BA/BS in Indigenous Nations and Native American Studies, effective Fall 2018.

Institution: Portland State University

Program: B.A./B.S. in Indigenous Nations and Native American Studies

Action: At the June 5, 2018 meeting, the Statewide Provosts Council approved a new program for Portland State University, B.A./B.S. in Indigenous Nations and Native American Studies, to move forward to the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission for its review and approval. The PSU Board of Trustees approved the program at its May 31, 2018 meeting.

Eastern Oregon University

Sarah Witte, provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained



Oregon Health & Science University

Elena Andresen, interim provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained



Oregon State University

Ed Feser, provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained



Oregon Tech

Gary Kuleck, provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained



Portland State University

Margaret Everett, interim provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained



Southern Oregon University

Susan Walsh, provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained



University of Oregon

Jayanth Banavar, provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained



Western Oregon University

Steve Scheck, provost

Approved

Opposed

Abstained

