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September 12, 2006

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Legislative Education Study Committee

**FR:** Sharon S. Caballero

**RE: STAFF BRIEF: INDIAN EDUCATION: THE KEY TO SAN JUAN COLLEGE'S  
SUCCESS IN GRADUATING NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS**

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As part of the Indian Education presentation which the Legislative Education Study Committee included in its 2006 interim workplan, San Juan College will present on the programs and systems the college has in place to support Native American students. San Juan College has been successfully recruiting and retaining Native American students and was nationally recognized for the number of Native American student graduates.

**Issues:**

- In December 2005, the Higher Education Department (HED) reported on the performance measures and target for recruitment, enrollment, retention and graduation rates for Native American and Hispanic students. According to the report from HED, Native American students participate less often and less successfully in the higher education system than do other groups. The report cited poverty, inadequate academic and financial preparation for college, and other issues of "first generation" students, and a lack of alignment of high school curriculum and college placement as causes for the lack of participation.

- Statistics from HED on statewide Native American participation in postsecondary education indicate that:
  - 83 percent of Native American first-time freshmen in New Mexico enter higher education through community colleges;
  - of those Native American students who are enrolled at a New Mexico university, 69 percent have previously attended a community college;
  - Native American participation in undergraduate education has held consistently at 7.5 percent of undergraduate enrollments since 1999; and
  - less than half of Native American first-time freshmen persist to the following fall semester.
  
- San Juan College was ranked as one of the top associate degree producers for Native American students by the national *Community College Week* in its June 19, 2006 issue.
  
- Nationally, San Juan College ranks fourth in the number of Native American students who graduated from two-year institutions in 2004-2005. Numbers are based on an analysis of data from the US Department of Education. The ranking is based on degrees conferred in 2004-2005, when San Juan College graduated 117 Native American students (40 male and 77 female). The college has been ranked either fourth or fifth nationally for five years in a row.
  
- San Juan College has focused on recruitment and retention strategies to assure Native American student success. Some of the programs include the Talent Search program for middle schools, dual enrollment for high school students with an emphasis in technology education, and free, pre-college Accuplacer tests. The college has also systematically integrated the Native American programs throughout the college.
  
- The Native American population at San Juan College is 27 percent of the total student body. Of the Native American population that is graduated from San Juan College, 22.6 percent complete in two years, 51 percent in three years, and 88 percent in six years.
  
- According to San Juan College administrators, some barriers faced by Native American's during the matriculation process and which may also impede them from successfully completing a degree include:
  - 82 percent of Native American students must take developmental courses in math and 73 percent in English; Native American students oftentimes do not advance at a reasonable pace and lose enthusiasm and dropout;
  - 57 percent of Native American students are on financial aid compared to 46 percent of all other San Juan College students;
  - approximately 30 percent of Native American students at San Juan College are single mothers;
  - commuting distances for Native American students range from 50 to 70 miles one way; and
  - Native American students come from communities with unemployment at approximately 40 percent, with 80 percent to 90 percent of jobs with the government.

**Presenter:**

Dr. Carol J. Spencer, Superintendent/President, San Juan College, will discuss recruitment, support systems, and special programs that have been implemented for San Juan college Native American students which ensure their success.

**Questions the committee may wish to consider:**

1. Which programs/support systems at San Juan College can be replicated and offered at other higher education institutions?
2. Which collaborative efforts with local K-12 districts that San Juan College has instituted can be replicated at other school districts and higher education institutions?
3. What impact has the *Indian Education Act* had on San Juan College's programs directed toward Native Americans?
4. How did San Juan develop the support programs that assist with the success of Native Americans?