



The U.S. Department of Education's

**HIGHER
EDUCATION
CENTER**

for Alcohol,
Drug Abuse, and
Violence Prevention

PREVENTION UPDATE

AOD Issues at Tribal Colleges and Universities

Overview

According to the [White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities](#) (TCUs) “there are 36 federally recognized TCUs in the United States. Located mainly in the Midwest and Southwest, TCUs enroll approximately 30,000 full- and part-time students. They offer two-year associate degrees in more than 200 disciplines, with some providing a bachelor’s and master’s degree. They also offer 200 vocational certificate programs. TCUs are both integral and essential to their communities. They are often the only postsecondary institutions within some of our Nation’s poorest rural areas. TCUs serve a variety of people, from young adults to senior citizens, American Indians to non-American Indians. They also provide crucial services and add hope to communities that suffer high rates of poverty and unemployment.”

According to [Tribal Colleges: An Introduction](#), a 1999 publication of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, TCUs were created to meet the higher education needs of American Indians and generally serve geographically isolated populations that have no other means of accessing education beyond the high school level. The first tribal college was established in 1968 by the Navajo Nation. It reports: “They have become increasingly essential to educational opportunity for American Indian students, a status they have achieved in a relatively brief period of time. Tribal Colleges are unique institutions that combine personal attention with cultural relevance, in such a way as to encourage American Indians—especially those living on reservations—to overcome the barriers in higher education.”

What Science Tells Us

According to Bonnie Duran, director of the Indigenous Wellness Research Institute (IRWI) [Center for Indigenous Health Research at the University of Washington](#), her preliminary search found “no published or gray literature describing the epidemiology of alcohol-related problems at TCUs, though two studies by the [American Indian Higher Education Consortium](#) (AIHEC) provide retention statistics that describe a population with unmet social and behavioral health needs. For example, the first-year dropout rate for TCU students is 54 percent. In a key informant survey of tribal college administrators, the most often cited barriers to retention were family obligations, maintaining off-campus jobs, financial problems, lack of preparation, transportation, personal and family problems, and lack of day care services.”

Although there are no data for TCU students specifically related to alcohol and drug abuse, there are data regarding alcohol consumption patterns and related behavioral problems for young American Indians or Alaska Natives (AIAN) who comprise 80 percent of TCU students. According to the [National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) for AIAN young adults aged 18 to 25 the rate of any alcohol use at 52.0 percent was lower than the national rate of 61.1 percent. Binge drinking (drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion on at least one day in the past 30 days) rates at 41.2 percent were essentially the same as the national rate of 41.6 percent. However, the illicit drug use rate at 25.4 percent exceeded the 19.7 percent national rate.

What Campuses Are Doing

Northwest Indian College Center for Health

In response to the persistent disparities in tribal representation in health research, education, and professionals, the Northwest Indian College (NWIC) has established the [Northwest Indian College Center](#)



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[for Health](#) (NWICCH). It successfully applied for funding through the U.S. Indian Health Services Native American Research Center for Health (NARCH). The [NARCH Initiative](#), currently in its seventh year, supports partnerships between tribes and tribally based organizations and institutions to develop opportunities for conducting research, research training, and faculty development to meet the needs of tribal communities.

Among others, NWICCH facilitates the following research projects:

- Tribal Colleges & Universities: Alcohol & Drug Problems and Solutions. This research project aims to conduct the first study of alcohol- and drug-related problems at TCUs. Results will help develop culturally appropriate and sustainable alcohol interventions at NWIC and other TCUs, using a community-based participatory research approach.
- Two related NWICCH research projects concerning resiliencies supporting sobriety: Pathways to Sobriety (about people's life stories) and Caring for Our Generations (about women's strengths when facing problems). Both are partnerships with Northwest Washington Indian Health Board tribes and the University of Washington.

NWIC's main campus is located within the Lummi Nation in Washington state. Its annual student enrollment is 1,320.

United Tribes Technical College Chemical Health Center

United Tribes Technical College (UTTC), located in Bismarck, N.D., has established its [Chemical Health Center](#) to provide alcohol and drug education, prevention, referral, and outpatient services for students, staff, and the surrounding community.

Among other things, the center promotes the cultural value of all students and staff members who take part in the program and provides a culturally sensitive approach for education, prevention, outpatient treatment, and aftercare services. It also incorporates the values and traditions of each individual student to develop a healthy lifestyle.

UTTC's enrollment is approximately 600. UTTC is the first tribal college in the nation authorized to offer full online degree programs.

Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College's Alcohol Policy

The goal of [Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College's comprehensive alcohol policy](#) is "to create an environment which is free of alcohol and other drugs. The college supports those who choose a lifestyle free of chemicals and offers support groups on campus to those in recovery." Located in Cloquet, Minn., the college enrolls 2,000 students.

American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC)

[AIHEC](#) is the collective spirit and unifying voice of our nation's TCUs. AIHEC provides leadership and influences public policy on American Indian higher education issues through advocacy, research, and program initiatives; promotes and strengthens indigenous languages, cultures, communities, and tribal nations; and through its unique position, serves member institutions and emerging TCUs.

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