

## EASING THE TRANSITION TO COLLEGE LIFE

### SENSE OF COMMUNITY

One of the most challenging changes you will face when you leave home to attend college is that you feel like you're losing your support system, the sense of community that is usually part of living on the reservation. The emphasis will change from your family and tribe as first in your life with you second to the other way around. You now come first and, at initially, you may feel as though you are alone. That support system that has always been there for you is missing.

Key to your success in college is finding a "substitute" for that support. It may be a group on campus like the Indian Club or the Native American Engineering and Technical Society or "Big Brother/Big Sister" or a sorority or fraternity. It may be an individual who acts as a kind of mentor and friend, someone you can go to when you're lonely or have a problem to work through. That person could be your dorm or resident advisor, a professor or graduate assistant or other students who have become your friends. The important thing is to be proactive, to realize that this may well happen to you and to address the issue when you arrive on campus, not wait until you're lonely and feeling down.

A good approach is to think about (and possibly write down) a list of specific things you get from your support system at home. Some examples might be a friend with whom to study or talk over a problem. It may simply be someone to go out with or know that you can call if you're lonely. Finding that person or persons is going to be up to you- Here are some ideas:

- Join groups or organizations or sports activities that interest you
- Make friends (to study with) in your classes; if you are attending a university, chances are that your classes will be large so get to know your professor and/or the "teaching assistant". Look for others who are interested in forming study groups outside of class. Find out if tutoring is available; chances are you may need it (remember that college is going to be tougher than high school; getting help is nothing to be ashamed of.)
- Get a part time job (after you've been in school for a while) if you think you can spare the time. Often the college will offer opportunities to work on campus (like the dorm cafeteria) which may be easier to work into your schedule.

The important thing is to be aware that you are going to need support and to find ways to provide it for yourself.

One last thought: if you have not yet made a final choice regarding the school you will attend, consider going to a community college for the first few years. It should ease the transition from high school to college and allow you to establish good study habits while you're still in familiar surroundings.

## IMPROVED STUDY HABITS

College classes will be different and more difficult than those you had in high school. We asked some of our Foundation scholarship students for their suggestions to meet this challenge. They are listed below:

- Get to know your professors and their teaching assistants  
Read your textbook on a daily basis, as much as is necessary to keep up.
- Set aside ample time to study as a part of a daily routine. Re-read class notes then re-write them in a different format: paraphrase, shorten, condense or diagram your notes. Every time you work this way with facts and ideas, your brain absorbs it the more. Work to understand. Spend your time making sense of material you're studying; you'll better remember information you understand. Write up flash cards with the main points covered and then go over them with your study partner. The more time you devote to "keeping current" with class materials during the semester/quarter, the better prepared you'll be for exams.
- Figure out what "style" of exams your professor gives (also what material he/she is likely to cover; i.e.. combination of class notes and text book content, mostly class notes, etc.) Use "old" exams, if they are available, to determine typical style and content the instructor uses
- When you study, use a method or combination of methods that work best for you:
  - alone
  - with friends
  - without friends (if you find them distracting you); sometimes it works out better to find a study partner from your class that you don't know as well
  - in study groups from your classes
- Don't ever be afraid to ask for a tutor (ie. don't let your pride get in your way)
- To get yourself motivated to study, think about why you're at college ( i.e.. to make something of yourself)
- Learn to use self-discipline; that's not easy to do but the more control you have over yourself and your time, the better chance you have for success in whatever you do

"One of the toughest things is waking up in the morning and deciding whether to go to class or play basketball." Learn from the experience of one who has been there. If your expectation is that there will be many distractions but you are determined to stay focused then you will make the right choices.

Transition to college