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DEI Programs Succeed Through Partnerships & Collaboration

By **INSIGHT Staff** - November 6, 2023

In building successful DEI-focused initiatives, HEED Award-winning colleges and universities often build partnerships and seek collaboration among campus divisions as well as with outside institutions, organizations, and communities.

While schools generally compete for students, employees, and funding, the value of engaging with other higher education institutions is in the potential opportunities to scale research projects, academic programming, and professional development for faculty, staff, and students along with other initiatives designed to improve access, bridge equity gaps, and address societal disparities.

One partnership that brings regional institutions together is spearheaded by **San Diego State University**. The school serves as the leading institution of the Southern California Higher Education Recruitment Consortium, a nonprofit group of over 30 member institutions dedicated to enhancing the recruitment and retention of diverse and talented employees by sharing information and resources through an online job platform.

Another arrangement, between the **University of Florida** (UF) and Santa Fe College (SF) in Gainesville, Florida, focuses on student success. The SF2UF Bridge to Baccalaureate Program seeks to increase the number of historically underrepresented students in biomedical and behavioral sciences at UF and encourage them to earn a bachelor's degree in science-related disciplines by transferring from SF to UF. While SF has increased its academic programs from primarily associate degrees to include various bachelor's degree programs, this partnership connects students to expanded offerings.

Collaborations also involve building relationships with communities and organizations: K-12 schools may partner to offer expanded academic opportunities, local populations may work with university researchers to complete a public service project, and businesses may sponsor a college internship program.

An example of a successful collaboration between local schools and a neighboring university is the Multicultural High School Scholars Award at the **University at Albany** (UAlbany). High school counselors and community leaders nominate racially and ethnically underrepresented high school students with distinguished academic records for the distinction. Awardees are invited to visit the UAlbany campus and attend a ceremony and reception that features college planning sessions.

Another effective community partnership involves teamwork between the California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center and the American Indian Studies department at **California State University, San Marcos**. The toolkit “Land Acknowledgement: You’re on California Indian Land, Now What?” provides guidance for faculty, students, administrators, and individuals throughout the state to properly acknowledge Indigenous people as original land stewards.●

This article was published in our November/December 2023 issue.

Top photo: American Indian students at California State University, San Marcos (CSUSM) perform a Bird Dance during the opening of “Our Existence is Our Resistance,” an art exhibit by American Indian professor Eric Tippeconnic at the CSUSM library.