

Statement of Dr. Linda Moon Stumpff
Director of the Graduate Program in Public Administration
The Evergreen State College
Olympia, Washington 98505
Stumpffl@evergreen.edu

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**REAFFIRMING SOVEREIGNTY THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION: Creating
a Master of Public Administration Degree Program in Collaborative Administration
and Tribal Governance**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee: It is a privilege to appear before you this morning to testify regarding exemplary Native American Program Initiatives undertaken by Colleges and Universities in the US. My Colleague, Alan Parker, will present testimony regarding The Evergreen State College's overall approach to serving Native American students and the tribal communities in Washington State. He serves as faculty for Native American law and policy as well as director of the Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute, one of five Public Service Centers at the College.

The establishment of a Master of Public Administration degree in Collaborative Administration and Tribal Governance (MPA/CAT) is the most recent Native American Initiative at the Evergreen State College. Three factors have shaped the development of this unique degree proposal at Evergreen. First, the innovative educational approach taken by the college provides an ideal context for this graduate program. The establishment of this constellation of connected programs, including the Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute, the Longhouse Economic Development Initiative, tribal community-based degree programs, and partnerships with Northwest Indian College all combine to create a context that is supportive of MPA/CAT. In addition, they generate a strong applicant pool of tribal members and tribal government employees. The Institute provides a focal point for research directly connected to the creation of relevant curriculum. Further expansion into governance studies supports student research in the graduate program. These institutions connect research and theory to practice. Second, the educational philosophy of the college stresses interdisciplinary work and community participation and relevance. Following this philosophy, the design for MPA/CAT developed out of two years of work with tribes including conferences, interviews and a survey to assure that the new curriculum had cultural and political relevance for tribal governments. Third, the delivery structure of the program was designed to provide access to tribes in and out of state and to benefit tribal nations through community-based participatory research.

WHY AN MPA DEGREE?

Federally recognized American Indian tribal nations present unique models of governance to the field of public administration. The scope of the MPA/CAT program encompasses both the history and the substance of the operational governance systems of tribal nations—the basics of how to run a government. The MPA degree is the degree of choice for professional practitioners in federal and state government agencies and other public sector leaders. However, no other MPA degree program in a US College or university has been designed and implemented specifically to speak to the concerns of tribal governments in the core of its curriculum.

Today, tribal governments face ever-increasing demands arising from the complexity of intergovernmental relations, the need to develop strategies for sustainable communities, and pressures from population growth. They need to develop a variety of administrative capacities ranging from the development of codes and legislation to grant-writing and the implementation of a large body of public laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act, that directly affect tribal nations.

The history of higher education in the United States demonstrates an ongoing failure to engage with the needs of tribal nations and their communities up until the time that tribal education leaders took control of education systems. This failure continues to be true in the area of professional education in public administration and governance. The early years of US education policy resulted in the imposition of non-Indian ideas and requirements and, too many cases, the forced separation of children (students) from their families. The historic goals of this educational policy were forced assimilation through the removal of traditions and cultures and, eventually, the removal of whole communities away from their homes and surroundings. Even today, degree programs in higher education still leave the development of capacities and competencies for tribal government in a complete vacuum. Much of what is provided in professional education and training ignores tribal governments or portrays them in inaccurate and inappropriate ways. Such a misinformation is damaging to the proper conduct of government to government relations and to the collaboration so vitally a part of carrying out the business of government in the contemporary world of public affairs. What educational has broken it is now time for education to fix.

Tribal governance takes place in the context of federal, state and local government. The concept of governance extends the curriculum to community-managed political and economic structures such as non-profit organizations and tribally managed enterprises. Such an MPA track reaches out to the community to create educational access for underserved populations. It adds diversity and new learning communities with the potential to collaborate in successful policy-making processes and operations and in government to government relations. Such an educational forum for degree-bound tribal members, officials and agency liaisons has never existed before.

In addition to major responsibilities for carrying out a full range of governmental functions, tribal governments provide overall management and oversight of a wide spectrum of tribally owned businesses as well as permitting and regulating a range of private businesses. Tribal enterprises employed 14,375 Washington citizens full time, including non-tribal employees by 1997 and contributed one billion dollars to the State's economy. (See: Economic Contributions of Indian Tribes to the Economy of Washington State, Tiller and Chase, 1997). In addition, state and federal agencies employ tribal liaisons and consultants in various operations. At least five federal agencies spend significant amounts on transactions with tribes. This volume and complexity of activity requires a high degree of administrative education and accountability. In addition, tribes carry primary land management responsibility for millions of acres. Natural resource activities are important to tribal economies and cultural preservation. Again, high levels of competence and strategic planning ability under a number of federal laws is needed in order to work collaboratively within the complex arena of state and federal regulations. Four key areas important to the administrative apparatus necessary to sustain tribal communities in this context are noted in the Tiller and Chase report to the Governor of Washington in 1997:

- Roles and responsibilities of public and private sectors
- Fiscal transactions including access to capital financing
- Legal/administrative systems to protect the interest of all parties
- Adequate social and physical infrastructure to support activities

The MPA degree is the credential for professional work in all of these areas. All four areas are central to contemporary studies in Public Administration. A lack of adequate human resource capacity in these areas can lead to poor administration, lessened economic opportunity and reduced ability to work collaboratively with other governments and business interests.

ENGAGING THE CONCERNS AND ISSUES OF TRIBAL NATIONS

The MPA/CAT program grew out of the ideas of tribal leaders, officials, employees and tribal liaisons. Joe de la Cruz of the Quinault Nation and Billy Frank Jr. of the Nisqually Tribe were instrumental in the planning stages for this degree program. Tribal officials, administrators, liaisons and lobbyists in Washington State demonstrated clear preferences for an MPA degree program. The survey respondents selected twelve components from a list of possible topics. The survey results showed a strong preference for the study of sovereignty, the history of policy in Indian country, intergovernmental relations and natural resources. Integral to the conceptual, legal and operational foundations of sovereignty, these components drive the engines of tribal government. They are the frameworks for external and consultative relations. The strong preference for study and research of applied sovereignty affirms the most essential step in nation building—legitimization of the structures of government. The preference suggests a commitment to the study of sovereignty that implies resistance to historical events that eroded self-governance and an interest in developing administrative capacity around the concept of sovereignty. Combined with an understanding of the processes of policy making,

intergovernmental relations and natural resource policy and land use issues, sovereignty provides a curricular basis for exploring bilateral and multilateral negotiations with other tribes and level of government in the theatre of government to government relations. Considered together, they represent a kind of unwritten American Indian Articles of Confederation. This particular combination of the attributes of applied sovereignty creates a basis for including innovative studies of intergovernmental collaboration in the curriculum.

The first choices of survey respondents also demonstrate a concern for context that emphasizes the need to tailor research within the program to the legal, policy and cultural histories of specific tribal nations. Such research responds to the tribal perspective in policy-making. In the study of governance, what is important to tribal members and their leadership, what is perceived as a threat or a gift by them, is the stuff of a new educational program that honors specific tribal adaptations to policy-making. Tribal-based responses to federal Indian policy thus constitute a meaningful awareness of past and present impacts. This broadens the scope of the degree program to a dialogue that maintains political and cultural relevance to the study of tribal governments.

The second category of components preferred by survey respondents related to the institution-building components of governance. These included basic operations of government such as social services, fiscal policy, management of pollution, salmon and cultural resources, and the creation of consensus-based processes. The third grouping was made up of two competency areas: collaboration and grants writing. The final set of preferred variables related to key competencies generally connected to self-determination such as economic development, exploring models of governance to adapt tribal constitutions and writing legislation and policy development.

The priority rankings of the survey suggest tribal opinion leaders and employees value educational programs based on concepts that lead to the establishment of good administrative and governance institutions. These components are key to the exercise of sovereign powers and rights. The activities typically associated with self-determination flow as logical outcomes out of the first priority conceptual components of the higher ranking conceptual, operational and competency components of a degree focusing on tribal administration.

Interviews with tribal leaders and employees and the survey results suggest that applications from the theoretical base of the field of public administration further the understanding of tribal governance. Community-based knowledge is critical to the curriculum tailored to tribal governments. Only through such applications can approaches to policy analysis be suggested for a large tribal nation, while a smaller tribe with a concentrated population might choose to design a more centralized administrative apparatus for delivering services. History suggests that it is necessary for tribes to increase administrative capacity for the implementation of broad self-governing authority as components of federal control mechanisms recede and federal responsibility “devolves” to the local level. In this way, tribal nations achieve adaptive connections between their self-governing regimes and their administrative structures.

A graduate program tailored to the needs of tribal employees, officials and agency liaisons creates a base for tribal-centered research applications. This kind of academic research focuses on developing alternatives to complex political problems and working with tribes to strengthen the architecture of tribal self/governance. By providing a vehicle for gathering knowledge to make informed choices, it begs the question of how federal policy interacts with tribal responses. Patterns of internally driven adaptations in tribal governments become evident. The interweaving of the federal thread with the unique histories, cultures, politics and geographic settings of tribal nations creates a tapestry of policy that is colored by federal policy, but brocaded with tribal uniqueness. Models that emerge from these programs may teach lessons about approaches for indigenous peoples in other countries who struggle to build the institutional architecture for self-governance.

A PEDAGOGICAL DESIGN FOR TRIBAL NATIONS.

The cornerstones of an Evergreen education are collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching and learning, narrative evaluations, internships and applied projects that bridge theory and practice, small group discussion classes called seminars and an educational environment that celebrates diversity and incorporates multicultural perspectives. Through the MPA/CAT degree program, the multicultural perspective is integrated into the study of collaborative mechanisms. The inclusion of both case analysis and policy analysis methodology produces alternative solutions to issues and problems. Students are encouraged to find multiple solutions to problem and assess the implications of proposed actions. Significant issues of concern to tribal government are thus approached in a cross-disciplinary fashion so that they can be answered in their broadest historical, cultural, political, economic, social and scientific contexts. The addition of multiple tribal perspectives deepens and enhances the range of possible solutions that ultimately find their resolution in the arena of intergovernmental and community collaboration. The MPA/CAT program is constructed around four principles

- Foster an educational experience that results in critical thinking and the ability to conceptualize problems within whole systems through oral and written dialogues and consensus-based processes
- Implement a participatory approach to learning that integrates professional education with critical thinking
- Achieve integration of the curriculum—a core series of courses that engages a cohort team of students with a faculty team—through the development of multicultural learning communities
- Support high quality, community-responsive applied research that makes fundamental contributions to solutions that focus on supporting sustainable, equitable, economic, political and ecological systems

Tremendous population growth in some areas adjacent to tribal nations, combined with regional concerns for the quality of life, opens up possibilities for collaboration between

all levels of governance. This is consistent with the educational value of seeking democratic, equitable and practical solutions to the problems facing governments, organizations and communities today. The study of mechanisms for agreement and positive administrative actions create a program that is integrative rather than exclusionary. It is the first MPA program to positively emphasize collaboration and include the study of tribal governments. As such, it carries regional and national significance.

Programs such as MPA/CAT contribute to the intellectual and cultural growth of the nation. Such programs in higher education enhance skills and knowledge by engaging multiculturalism in governance. Inspired by the work of leaders like Joe de la Cruz and Billie Frank Jr., Governor Dan Evans and Governor Booth Gardner and others. It outlines a path for understanding governance and politics with an emphasis on the nature and context of indigenous nations. This leads to reflection on the implications of cultural, political and economic effects of policy with special consideration for specific populations characterized by gender, culture or race.

Government policy-makers and tribal leaders benefit from understanding the application of traditional and adaptive ways. These are important techniques for implementing contemporary governance structures that are informed by a rich regional historic context. Classes focus on collaborative, facilitative ways of governing and specifically, on policies and administration that foster traditions, widely shared creativity and social and economic accountability in administration. The theme of collaborative governance is purposeful rather than bureaucratic: it looks to organizational design with flatter, open-ended structures supported by an understanding of interconnected systems. Applied in this way, the educational model enriches intellectual dialogue by linking economic and administrative systems with local participation and experiential, action-oriented learning approaches. The emphasis on collaboration is especially important in bridging the gap between the opposing arguments for regulatory and incentive-based initiatives. Collaboration as defined by current research is an institutional response to working together that moves resources on an as-needed basis. This approach is especially unique in its adaptiveness and in its honoring of the bioregional knowledge of place.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The program will be delivered in Intensive Format to make it more accessible to tribal members, officials and agency liaisons at a distance while preserving the power of face-to-face interactive learning environments, group work and the goal of creating learning communities. Intensive format courses are delivered in five-day segments. This allows working professionals at a distance to reduce travel and incorporate coursework into a format than can be substituted for a weeklong training course. A second characteristic of this program is the recruitment of a special class or cohort with a specific interest in tribal government. The cohort passes through a series of core courses together. Class members form long term relationships and gain sophistication in collaboration and group work. This system honors traditional values of group support and non-abandonment. Cohort programs have demonstrated high success rates in MPA programs.

The overall goal of the degree program is aligned with the professional and intellectual competencies reflected in the field of public administration. An interdisciplinary and collaborative approach weaves together four applied learning goals:

1. Application of critical thinking and writing through a systems approach to learning. This degree program takes a problem-solving stance to research and investigation of current problems. The understanding of complex systems through critical approaches is key as a basis for accountable and effective decision-making in the context of rapid change.
2. Participatory approaches to learning. This component integrates professional competencies with a liberal arts education. This encourages analytical exploration of alternatives through interdisciplinary methods. The approach weaves analysis into participatory research that responds to community needs.
3. Integrated curriculum through the development of a multicultural learning community. This represents a commitment to diversity that sustains cultural differences rather than merging or marginalizing them. It seeks to integrate rather than separate while discovering shared goals.
4. High quality, community-based applied research that contributes to solutions. The ability to conceptualize whole systems that support sustainable communities emerges from research that is accountable to community needs.

Projects and assignments for the program emphasize participatory learning and research. Significant portions of the curriculum include field applications projects where students respond to research needs outlined by tribal officials. Coordination for internships and cooperative education programs are important delivery components of the program to assure its connection to the operations of tribal nations.

EXPLORING NEW CURRICULUM

A graduate program tailored to the needs of tribal employees, officials and agency liaisons creates a base for tribal-centered research applications. This kind of academic research focuses on developing alternatives to complex political problems and working with tribes to strengthen the architecture of tribal self/governance. The MPA/CAT program at Evergreen is working in close collaboration with Portland State University to enhance the program in the future with the advanced interactive distance technology that they are providing to reservation sites. The Tribal Administration program at PSU has a partnership with the Evergreen program to share innovative curriculum and provide a wider range of elective choices for the many administrative areas that draw on public administration from environmental planning to health to courts, from law enforcement to

social services. By providing a vehicle for gathering knowledge to make informed choices, this curriculum begs the question of how federal policy interacts with tribal responses. Patterns of internally driven adaptations in tribal governments become evident. The interweaving of the federal thread with the unique histories, cultures, politics and geographic settings of tribal nations creates a tapestry of policy that is colored by federal policy, but brocaded with tribal uniqueness. Models that emerge from these programs may teach lessons about approaches for indigenous peoples in other countries who struggle to build the institutional architecture for self-governance.