

Native American Initiatives

Student Equity Committee Report and Recommendations

In Fall Semester 2019, the Student Equity Committee was given an article titled “Native American Enrollment In Community College Has Plummeted 60% In 20 Years. Here’s Why,” and was directed by the Student Preparation, Equity, and Achievement Council (SPEAC) with follow up at Mt. SAC.

Mt. Sac recently celebrated its Diamond Jubilee. The “Passport to the Community” program that was handed out at the celebration mentions that in 1946 “there were 99 temporary Navy barracks/buildings spread over the campus.” What was not mentioned, however, is that Mt. San Antonio College is situated on land that is the traditional homeland of the Tongva Peoples, and that the land was actually a Tongva women’s village.

While the college has begun giving land acknowledgements at the beginning of some meetings and events, more needs to be done to make Native Americans feel fully embraced by Mt. SAC.

Native Students at Mt. SAC feel invisible and unimportant. They often feel alone and have difficulty connecting with other Native Students on campus. If student equity is to become a reality, some things need to be done.

The following report and recommendations are the result of almost three years of meetings and discussions with Native American campus leaders, including students (both former and present), faculty, allies, leaders, as well as community members.

1. Continue on the work that has already begun on a Native American Studies Degree. Coursework should include, among other subjects, Native American religious traditions, as well as socio-cultural traditions in which non-binary gender identification are celebrated. Courses already exist on campus in Anthropology, Art History and History that could be appropriately included in this degree. A Native American Studies Degree could transfer to local universities and would indicate that Mt. SAC finds this a valued degree choice attracting future Native American Students.
2. A dedicated Native American Center, with staffing, no later than Summer Session 2022. This center should eventually be housed in the Student Service building that is under construction. This center is necessary to ensure that Native Americans are visible, respected and have a safe place to gather and collaborate. The center could include a museum dedicated to the Tongva and other Native American Peoples and leaders, both past and present. The center should not be combined with another group’s center—it should be dedicated solely to the Native American population.
3. Greater intentionality in counting Native American students at Mt. SAC.
4. A mascot change from Joe Mountie, seen as offensive by Native People, to one that might represent symbols or traditions sacred to the Tongva Peoples.
5. Native American artwork displayed on campus. This would include murals, sculptures, fountains, among other work, representing Native American traditions. This is another way Native people can gain visibility.
6. A dedicated outdoor area should be available for ceremonial purposes, such as song circles and Native American Graduation rituals, planted with native vegetation. This space might also

include a replica of the Tongva home site like that which was originally situated on the land currently utilized by Mt. SAC.

7. A dedicated botanical garden planted with plants that were/are utilized by Native Americans. There would be plaques educating the public as to the use of the plants.
8. Kinesiology courses for sports traditionally played by Native Americans, including lacrosse and archery.
9. An increase in material in the Mt. SAC library written by Indigenous authors, and about Indigenous Peoples.
10. The addition of Native American languages to course offerings in the World Languages Department.
11. Other ways visibility could be increased include having posters and other media placed in public areas, such as the Mountie Café, recognizing (and educating people of) Tongva and other Native American leaders, both past and present.