

Aaron Lee elected student congress president of AIHEC

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Diné College claims first, second

place honors

BISMARCK, N.D. — Diné College had three teams come away with first and second place honors at the annual conference of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, participants said.

Additionally, Aaron Lee, a junior from Low Mountain, Ariz., majoring in psychology, was elected student congress president of the organization. A group of 21 students from Diné College traveled to Bismarck, N.D., to participate in everything from meetings to academic contests to networking opportunities with fellow tribal colleges and universities.

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“I think it was a both a fun trip and a learning trip,” Lee said. Lee is an eight-year veteran (sergeant) of the United States Marine Corps. “We won some contests and I think we were well-represented.”

Lee said he beat out a candidate from the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe for the presidency. The final vote tally was 13 to 11, he said, noting not every school cast a vote.

Lee said one of the main things he’ll do once officially sworn in come June at a Bellingham, Wash., AIHEC meeting is to foster better communication links among AIHEC’s 36-member schools — communication between AIHEC regional reps and such, Lee said.

“Sometimes emails don’t go through fast enough and there’s a communication breakdown,” Lee said. “I’d like to see everyone talking and understanding each other with respect to everything.”

Lee said the transition to president would not be too difficult, since he previously served as AIHEC’s student congress vice president.

Terence Tso, a data architect specialist at Diné College and a team competition coach, said the College won a first place award in critical inquiry — and second place awards in web design and one act play.

Besides Tso, who is a 2016 computer information systems and business administration graduate of Diné College, the other team coaches (administrators and instructors) from Diné College were Dwayne Bahe, Rosalind Smith and Emily Greene.

“We were prepared,” Tso said. “It wasn’t that much of a surprise that we won.”

Established in 1972, AIHEC represents the interests of tribal colleges and universities. In 1989, AIHEC created the American Indian College Fund to raise scholarship funds for qualified American Indian students.

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Among the Diné College students who participated at the 2018 AIHEC conference were Mayra Bedonie, Donovan Bia, Brandon Dinae, Daniel Joe, among others.