

Diné College's Fall 2020 student enrollment exceeds expectations

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 04 September 2020 05:37

TSAILE, Ariz. — Diné College reported a Fall 2020 student enrollment of more than 1,300 and returning students were met with some big changes. The number of enrolled students is high considering the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, college officials said.

“At first I thought we weren’t going to get high enrollment mainly due to limitations with Internet broadband and connectivity,” Diné College Provost Geraldine Garrity, Ed.D. said. “But I think students found a way and prepared for the fall semester and it’s good news for the students and the college.”

The college reported that 1,348 students were enrolled as of Aug. 24 — just 50 students short of the same time frame last year. The Fall 2019 enrollment was just above 1,400.

The high enrollment comes at a time when the college was forced to transfer classes and registration online due to COVID-19. The overall enrollment figure will end up being larger when dual credit numbers become final.

“It’s an unusual and unfortunate situation that we are in with this pandemic,” Diné College Director of Enrollment Priscilla Leonard said. “But we’re getting good numbers in spite of everything. We were expecting about 1,000 students. We’ve had a lot of people calling for information on how to proceed with registration and online classes. We’re also getting a lot of transfer students and there are more full-time than part-time students this year.

“I thought we weren’t going to get many students because of the lack of Internet broadband in some communities,” Leonard commented. “But we did. Another reason is that parents wanted their child to stay home during this unprecedented time. They didn’t want them returning to the cities.”

Leonard noted that a lot of returning students who previously graduated from Diné College with associate’s degrees, chose to enroll again for a bachelor’s degree program. Notably, there are a number of returning students from 2012 and 2015 who want to continue their academic path, she said.

Noticeable Changes

There are 26 students residing on campus. The general public is not allowed to come onto campus during the pandemic. The Tsaile campus is closed, as a means of protection for students and employees.

Students will also notice a number of changes for the Fall 2020 semester. Aside from safety measures in place and a reopening guide, each of the libraries at Diné College now has a specialized ultraviolet machine that disinfects books, Garrity said.

"Students who check out books will have them safely cleaned," Garrity said. "We will also be providing curbside checkout service for books."

Garrity said that 31 face-to-face classes will transition to online instruction after the Thanksgiving break. And, members of the Diné College faculty are enrolling in an 11-week Quality Matters teaching program, whereby they can obtain online teaching certification, she said.

Student internships will resume, Garrity said, "They will be doing virtual internships."

Degree programs in nursing, microbiology and pre-med are being talked about at the administrative level, along with a master's degree program in interdisciplinary science and a fully online fine arts program, Garrity said.

While some faculty members have retired, some new faculty will be joining the ranks. Among the new instructors at Diné College this year are: Marilyn Begay, an assistant professor with the

Diné College's Fall 2020 student enrollment exceeds expectations

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 04 September 2020 05:37

School of Social Science and Business; Gabriela Cruz, an instructor with the School of Arts, Humanities and English; Christopher Dickerson, an instructor with the School of Science, Technology Engineering and Math (STEM); Rajneesh Verma, an instructor with STEM; Suzanne Ross, an associate professor with the School of Social Science and Business; and Kevin Webster, an instructor with STEM. Long-time professors Wilson Aronilth, Martha Austin Garrison, Margaret Meyer and Karen Willeto retired.

The college attributes the Fall 2020 student enrollment to a number of factors: A 50 percent reduction in tuition, a student loaner laptop program and more than 350 online course offerings, George Joe, Diné College marketing and communications director, said. The marketing department is also attributing the enrollment surge to TV advertisements placed in the Phoenix and Albuquerque markets, plus some strategic print advertisements, and social media.

Diné College Athletic Director Shawn Frank said that the school's cross-country team will field a squad of six male and female runners this year. There are three races set for the 2020 season. The first is scheduled for Sept. 20 against Fort Lewis College of Durango, Colo. Francis Noble enters his second year as Diné College's head cross-country coach.

The college participates in the United States Collegiate Athletic Association.

Diné College is a four-year tribal college located on the Navajo reservation with six campuses around Arizona and New Mexico, and primarily serves Navajo students. The school offers 12 bachelor's degrees, 20 associate's degrees, and nine certificate programs. The school is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. The college, established in 1968, is the first tribally-controlled institution and was formerly named Navajo Community College.