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For a campus comprised of mostly Native American students, there are only but a few choices of classes that delve into North American Indian history and heritage. And now those classes have been scrubbed from the University of New Mexico-Gallup's fall line up.

"Native American History & Culture of North America" and "The Pueblo People" were both canceled in July.

These upper division classes were substituted with other classes to meet the necessary criteria towards a Bachelor's Degree.

Ken Van Brott, operations manager for UNM-G's Bachelor and Graduate Programs, said it wasn't the Gallup branch's choice to cancel the classes.

"The Native American classes were canceled directly from the main campus in Albuquerque, as

they are pulling back resources in order to create a ‘Native American Bachelors Degree’ program,” he said.

This program change will take effect in about a year, Van Brott said, and would be streamed from the main campus in Albuquerque.

“This is a big improvement, we haven’t seen many Native American classes for awhile,” Van Brott said. “It’s going from really a few scattered courses to a full Native American program.”

The cut was bad news for UNM-G adjunct instructor Martin Link, who was slated to teach, “The Pueblo People.”

“I felt very sad, and very frustrated, it was done without any appeal or alternative suggestions,” he said. “Saddest thing was, no attempt was made to contact myself from the UNM administration.”

He pointed out that 90 percent of the students at UNM-Gallup branch are Native Americans.

“We were very aware and concerned that they were so many Native American students, getting there western knowledge here,” he said. “Students need to be in a position, to have a face-to-face relationship, question to question, have more contact, besides the classroom. My classes in Navajo are gone, its not offered at the main campus.”

With online classes, students can sit at home and gather information, but Link feels it’s not a step in the right direction.

“It”s too impersonal, its devoted to technology, there is no chance for special projects, no incentive to learn more,” he said. “Its becoming a mechanized program. It’s a shame when education becomes what do you get for your dollar.”

Link said he's not in teaching for the money, but for the love of education.

"The real losers are the students," he said. "I lost that part to pass the information onto the students."

UNM student, Geneva Wilson, who is pursuing her Human Services degree, said, "Online classes are too impersonal, a lot of people say its convenient with busy lives, but you have no communication with the teacher. You miss out on the whole classroom atmosphere, the teaching-student interaction."

Has online courses helped other area schools?

Navajo Technical University E Learning Director Jennifer Stanley said online classes take discipline versus face to face.

"I provide orientation for students to learn about online as well as teachers; how to teach online, how to interact with teachers and peers, how to get assignments," she said. "I tell students they have to log on twice a day to keep up with the class."

With online classes, she explained, students find it easier to attend college – especially those who do not have the means to travel far from home due to transportation challenges or other issues.

"We find most students aren't able to travel to class, some don't have gas, nor the transportation," Stanley said. "So, online classes are beneficial, since we have more students traveling from afar, this is more cost effective."

UNM-G Executive Director Dr. Christopher Dyer's office deferred comment to the UNM main

campus in Albuquerque. Calls to the main campus were not returned.