Native American Center of Excellence

Annual Impact Report

July, 1 2025 to June 30, 2026

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary 3
2. About NACOE 5
3. Year in Review: Recruitment 6
4. Year in Review: Student Support 7
5. Educational Programming 8
6. Student Success Outcomes 10
7. Workforce Development Impact 11
8. Community and Tribal Engagement 12
9. Alumni Spotlight 14
10. Partnership Impact 15
11. Strategic Priorities for Next Year 17
12. Impact Dashboard 18
13. Program Impact and Influence 19
14. Acknowledgements 19
15. Contact Us 19
16. Appendix A. NACOE Educational and Professional Development Presentations 20

NACOE Annual Impact Report

Reporting Year: July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026
Report preparation and compilation: Brittney Hunter, Project Director
Data contributions: Cherith Smith, Paige Johnson, Katie Holick, and Willow Kipp.
Leadership review and editorial input: Lori Morin and Mark Pershouse, Co-Principal Investigators

1. Executive Summary

Mission overview:

The mission of NACOE is to promote University of Montana as a recognized leader in the training and development of a multicultural health care workforce that serves to reduce health disparities in underserved and diverse communities through research, culturally responsive education, community interaction and engagements utilizing Grizzly values.

Major accomplishments:

Growing the Healthcare Workforce: Supported 24 Native American students during the 2025-2026 Academic Year who are pursuing a pharmacy career through mentoring, career development, and academic support programs. Graduated four Pharm.D. students; two additional students received Masters of Science degrees in Pharmaceutical Sciences.

Expanded Student Support Services: Provided 579 mentoring hours to Native American pharmacy students, representing a 5.7% increase from the previous year.

Career Pathway Development: Facilitated professional development workshops, trainings, and pipeline recruitment events serving high school, and undergraduate students.

Increased Student Retention: Achieved a 91.6% retention rate among program participants, exceeding the institutional average of 77.2%, reflecting the effectiveness of Indigenous student support services.

Strengthening Tribal and Community Partnerships: NACOE hired a new Student Recruitment and Outreach Assistant to help connect and guide students to our services and UM campus resources.

Impactful Events: Hosted Chef Sean Sherman with a record number of attendees. Organized the NACOE Lecture Series, American Indian Student Services (AISS) Wellness Wednesdays, Cultural Humility Training, alumni mentorship opportunities and professional

networking opportunities for current students. Organized the Academic "Pivot" structured program that improved outcomes for Native American Pre-Pharmacy students enrolled in Freshman Chemistry (CHMY 141-143) and Organic Chemistry (CHMY 221-223), two difficult prerequisites courses for pre-pharmacy students in general. Following a defined curriculum matching the subjects taught in the actual courses, students received extra guidance and mentoring in these courses.

Students served:

13 Pre-pharmacy students

2 Master's students

9 Pharmacy students

7 P1 Pharmacy students at the University of Montana, University of Arizona, and University of New Mexico as part of the Pathways to Pharm.D. summer program

2. About NACOE

Program goals:

- To recruit underrepresented or disadvantaged students and faculty in the health professions who will promote health and fair access in health outcomes to a diverse population
- To provide and promote retention activities for cultural safety in healthcare and healthcare education for underrepresented students and faculty
- To promote, expand and cultivate cultural awareness to campus and community
- To address health disparities through teaching, research, and community advocacy.
- To seek funding opportunities for innovative, integrative and coordinated approaches for the continued and expanded training of diverse health care professionals

Key Personnel updates:

This 25-26 Year, NACOE hired two positions to fill the Student Outreach and Recruitment, and Administrative Associate positions.

3. Year in Review: Recruitment

Number of recruitment events: 20

1. Griz Preview Day February 13, 2026
2. Popular Middle School Pharmacy student Panel - February 26,2026
3. Crumbl cookies and Hot Coco 1-3 pm - February 24, 2026
4. Admitted Student Day Resource Fair - March 7, 2026
5. Biochemistry class visit - February 6, 2026
6. Native Griz Preview Day - April 17, 2026
7. SKC Upward Bound presentation - June 24, 2026
8. SKC Spill the beans presentation – April 30, 2026
9. Kyiyo Club Bingo Night – April 31, 2026
10. University of Texas – Austin presentation (Virtual) - April 22, 2026
11. University of Hawai'i at Hilo (Virtual) - May 24, 2025
12. Tribal College Relationship Building Tour - March 23-25, 2026.

13-20. MPSEOC Montana Spring Tribal College & Career Fairs April 6-9, 2026, and April 13-16, 2026.

4. Year in Review: Student Support

Students receiving mentoring: 17 students

Academic Mentoring sessions: 579 hours

Cultural Competency Trainings: 114 hours

Tutoring Sessions: 322 hours

Wellness activities: 13 Wellness Wednesday activities and 2 Stress Less Study Breaks in the University of Montana Payne Native American Family Center. These events ranged from 10 to 50 participants each week, with an average of 25 participants.

Supplemental resources distributed: Distributed informational resources, flyers and brochures about the University of Montana, Native American Center of Excellence, College of Health, Pharmacy school, and American Indian Student Services. Distributed Medicinal Plant packages including:

> Yarrow Salve, Soapweed Yucca Shampoo/Soap, Wild Rose/Raspberry Leaf/Hibiscus Tea Blend, Three Sisters Soup Mix, Winter Bison Tallow Salve, Chokecherry Tea Blend, Arnica Bison Tallow Salve, Sumacade, Cedar, Pan Bread, Berry Soup, Kinnikinnick, Four Sisters Soup, Sweet Pine, Build Your Own Tea Blend Packets, Osha/Lomatium/Reishii Mushroom Tea Blend, Cottonwood Bud Bison Tallow Salve, Bison Tallow Deodorant, Respiratory Infection Tea Blend.

These resources supported student wellness, cultural engagement, experiential learning, and education surrounding Indigenous foods and traditional medicines integrating health and behavioral health concepts through ethnopharmacology, nutrition education, shared-decision making, and lifestyle change.

Retention outcomes: 91.6% retention rate.

5. Educational Programming

Lecture series activities: 6 Guest Speakers

NACOE hosted lecture series aimed at promoting cultural awareness, professional development, and collaboration within the field of pharmacy and Indigenous Health and Wellness. There were 6 invited speakers: Terry Maresca, M.D., Amber Walks Over Ice, Pharm.D., Chef Sean Sherman, Claymore Kills First, Pharm.D., Cinnamon Kills First, MFA, and Chris Chong, Pharm.D.

Professional Development Workshops:

- Missoula County Public Schools IPR teacher training
- Pharmacy Application and Interviewing Workshop
- Indian Health Service Scholarship Workshop

Training Programs:

- Cultural Humility training within the UM College of Health department
- Chemistry Support Program for General Chemistry and Organic Chemistry
- Pathways to PharmD (P2PD) Summer Program

Attendance and Participation

Lecture Series

An Overview of Indigenous Plant Medicine Use in Western Healthcare Settings, by Terry Maresca, M.D.: 65 attendees. An additional 30 participants attended the *Tea Tasting Case Story Session*.

Pharmacy Career Journey, by Amber Walks Over Ice, Pharm.D.: 20 attendees includes virtual participants.

An Indigenous Food Masterclass presented by Sean Sherman (The Sioux Chef): 640 attendees (500 in person and 140 via livestream). An additional 26 students participated in the *Indigenous Food Masterclass*.

Indigenous Perspectives on Cancer Treatment and Caregiving, presented by Claymore Kills First, Pharm.D.: 45 attendees, including virtual participants.

A Breath After Cancer Treatment and Caregiving, presented by Cinnamon Kills First, MFA: 45 attendees, including virtual participants.

Pharmacy Career Journey: USPHS Officer Serving the Alaska Tribal Health System presented by Chris Chong, Pharm.D.: 40 attendees, including virtual participants.

Pathways to Pharm.D. Program

The four-week Pathways to Pharm.D. (P2PD) Summer Program served seven incoming Native American pharmacy student representing the University of Montana, University of Arizona, and University of New Mexico. Program content included Indigenous Health Policy, traditional medicines, food sovereignty, cultural humility, trauma informed education, professional identity development, diabetes prevention, public health, and pharmacy career exploration.

Educational Programming Summary

- 6 Lecture Series guest speakers
- 3 professional Development Workshops
- 3 Academic Support and Training Programs
- 7 P2PD Participants
- 65 Course Development and Enhancement Activities
- 860+ Lecture Series attendees
- 900+ participants reached through educational programming

Through NACOE educational programming, NACOE engaged more than 900 participants, including students, faculty health professionals, K-12 educators, and community members, in activities focused on Indigenous health, cultural humility, pharmacy career pathways, and traditional knowledge systems. NACOE supported 65 course development and enhancement activities, including classroom-based instruction, cultural programming, guest lectures workshops, and experiential learning opportunities that advanced Indigenous perspectives within health professions education and strengthened pathways into the healthcare workforce.

Participant feedback:

“Being surrounded by incredible teachers and having a small class size allowed each of us to connect on another level and build our own mini pharmily. I love that this program also allowed me to understand the two-eyed vision that Native American students have and how to navigate that in the world of healthcare. I am grateful for this experience and would love to give a thousand more thank you’s to everyone in the program.” - NACOE Pathways to Pharm.D. Program Participant.

“This program came at such a great time. The month felt way too short and the memories I created there will always have a special place in my heart. I also really appreciated the fact that the age differences in the program were not met with judgement, there have been times where people have negatively judged age differences. This program was so accepting and welcoming in the best possible way.” - NACOE Pathways to Pharm.D. Program Participant.

6. Student Success Outcomes

Student demographics: Blackfeet, Kainai Nation Blood Tribe, Pomo, Chippewa Cree, Standing Rock Lakota, Samoan, Salish, Kootenai, Navajo, Muscogee Creek, Little Shell Chippewa, Yavapai Prescott Indian Tribe, California Tribe, Alaska Native Tribe.

Retention rate: 91.6%

American Indian Student Graduates this year:

4 Doctor of Pharmacy

2 Master of Science in Pharmaceutical Sciences and Drug Design

1 Bachelor of Science in Pharmaceutical Sciences

1 Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, Minor in Neuroscience

Academic outcomes:

3 pre-pharmacy undergraduate students accepted into the Skaggs School of Pharmacy program and are starting Fall 2026.

Students served: 26 Native American pharmacy students.

7. Workforce Development Impact

Employment outcomes:

Licensure outcomes: 9 Native American student graduates are employed throughout the U.S. serving Underserved Populations and rural areas.

Residency placements:

2 Native American pharmacy graduates earned PGY1 Residency Placements.

Tribal health placements:

1 Tribal Health Pharmacy

8. Community and Tribal Engagement

Tribal consultations:

Dr. Katie Holick's Community Advisory Board through Blackfeet Tribe. 30 Indigenous Individuals were interviewed as part of the research about their Indigenous healthcare experience.

Dr. Cherith Smith, serves on the Montana American Indian Women's Health Coalition, comprised of tribal representatives across Montana, and on the Board of Directors for Calling Our Spirit Forward, an indigenous-led public health non-profit organization serving the Northern Cheyenne tribal community.

Community outreach events:

Provided two vaccine clinics in collaboration with Care Van – Caring Foundation of Montana and SIHI for the Native American community.

Hosted a spring wellness fair during Native Griz Preview Day and Kyiyo Powwow.

Health education activities:

During the Pathways to Pharm.D. summer program, students tabled at the Indigenous Made Market and provided the Native American community with information on Overdose Prevention.

P1 Pharmacy students paired with one of six Native American health professionals in the areas of health or behavioral health, working in small groups on one of six health issues impacting Native American communities in Montana over the course of spring semester culminating in a final health education table for participants at the KyiYo Powwow.

P2 Pharmacy students participated in eight Wellness Wednesdays over spring semester providing nutrition education incorporating indigenous foods and lifestyle change goal setting to Native American students, staff, and faculty.

P3 students participated in Native Griz Preview Day in partnership with SIHI's ImProving Health Among Rural Montanans (IPHARM) offering HbA1c, lipids, and blood pressure health education and point of care testing to Native American participants.

Cultural Programming:

NACOE integrates all activities and services with Indigenous cultural programming.

Weekly student meetings incorporate culturally responsive mentoring, connection, and support.

Weekly Wellness Wednesday programming includes traditional teaching, cultural activities and discussions related to Indigenous perspectives, cultural knowledge and Native professional role models.

Monthly lecture series feature culturally centered content and Indigenous perspectives.

Two-Eyed Seeing, a framework highlighting both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing, are incorporated into pharmacy curriculum throughout the P1 to P4 years

Guided by the Two-Eyed Seeing framework, NACOE ensures that Indigenous ways of knowing are woven into academic, professional, and personal development opportunities for students and health professionals.

9. Alumni Spotlight

Graduate profile:

Ispitaki Chelle Brown

Current position:

Pharmacist at Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribal Health

Community served:

Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation in Montana

Reflection on NACOE impact:

The Native American Center of Excellence supported Brown, finding a tutor and helping her reorganize her schedule with fewer classes. As she began visiting the center regularly, Brown gradually felt more grounded and confident. “They make space for me and remind me to make space for myself,” she says. “Whether I forget a pencil or need a braid of sweetgrass to put in my pocket before an exam, I am so thankful for that cultural connection.”

10. Partnership Impact

Key partnerships:

L.S. Skaggs Institute for Health Innovation

American Indian Student Services

Harlow Ranch Bison Co.

Heritage Timber

UM Tribal Outreach

Montana Area Health Education Center

Family Medicine Residency of Western Montana

University of Montana Campus Dining

University of Montana Curry Health Center

University of Montana Health Service Pharmacy

University of Montana School of Public and Community Health

American Indian Governance and Policy Institute

Montana Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies, Native American Initiatives Program (now known as Berry Medicine)

Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program, Fort Belknap Tribal Health Department

National Native Children's Trauma Center

University of Montana Department of Psychology

YWCA of Missoula

UM KyiYo Club

Care Van - Caring Foundation of Montana

Davidson Honors College

Indian Health Services

Missoula County Public Schools Native American Student Services

American Indian Support & Development Council

Montana Tribal Colleges: Blackfeet Community College, Little Big Horn College, Fort Peck Community College, Aaniiih Nakoda College, Chief Dull Knife College, Salish Kootenai College, Stone Child College.

Collaborative activities:

An Evening with Sean Sherman, The Sioux Chef and Indigenous Food Masterclass

NACOE Lecture Series: Claymore Kills First, Pharm.D. and Cinnamon Kills First, MFA

Wellness Wednesday's

Stress Less Study Break

N7 Native Griz Event

University of Montana Bear Fair Tabling Event, Moving Camp, Griz Preview Day, Native Griz Preview Day

Tribal College Tour: The University of Montana portion of the Tribal College Tour reached an estimated **50 college-age students** across participating tribal colleges who were interested in the pharmacy pathway. Additionally, the MPSEOC Tribal College Tour engaged an estimated **1,000+ students** over the two-week tour period, with the majority of participants being high school-aged students exploring higher education opportunities. The Tribal College Tour increased awareness of NACOE programming strengthened relationships with tribal communities and educational institutions and generated new student inquiries from prospective undergraduate and pre-professional students interested in health careers.

11. Strategic Priorities for Next Year

Priority 1:

Support student retention, graduation, and transition into pharmacy school through completion of the grant period.

Priority 2:

Institutionalize effective practices of the Two-Eyed Seeing framework, including culturally responsive mentoring, wellness programming and Indigenous student engagement activities.

Priority 3:

Strengthen partnerships with Tribal Community Colleges and communities, Indigenous health professionals, and academic units.

Priority 4:

Sustain successful cultural programming and student support activities beyond the grant period.

Priority 5:

Reapply for the HRSA Center of Excellence grant and explore additional funding opportunities to continue successful NACOE initiatives.

12. Impact Dashboard

Students served: 26 students served

Prospective students reached: 1,000+

Community Members/Partners Engaged: 1,152

Retention rate: 91.6%

Graduation rate: 100%

Recruitment events: 20 events participated in recruitment

Communities reached: Tribal nations and communities served, urban native communities, k-12 schools, colleges, and universities engaged, students reached (pre health, pharmacy, undergraduate, graduate, etc.), Health care organizations, clinics, and hospitals partnered with, Community organizations and tribals departments participating, rural communities and urban areas.

Partnerships: with Tribal nations, Indian Health Service (IHS), Tribal Health Departments and Clinics, Area Health Education Centers (AHEC), Montana Office of Public Instruction Indian Education Program, Tribal Colleges and Universities, University departments and student support programs, Native American student organizations, State pharmacy and health professional associations, Health systems, hospitals, and community health centers, Native nonprofit organizations, Alumni serving as mentors and speakers.

Graduates: 6 Native American Graduates.

Workforce placements: 9 Native American student graduates are employed throughout the U.S. serving Underserved Populations and rural areas. 2 Native American pharmacy graduates earned PGY1 Residency Placements. 1 Tribal Health Pharmacy.

13. Program Impact and Influence

Program staff have been informed that NACOE educational content and program generated data are being referenced and incorporated in Indigenous research projects aimed at strengthening healthcare services for Indigenous populations. This use of NACOE resources reflects the program's growing influence and highlights its contributions to advancing culturally informed research, healthcare education, and community centered approaches to improving Indigenous health outcomes.

14. Acknowledgements

The Native American Center of Excellence at the University of Montana would like to say, “Thank you” to all our partners and supporters. We appreciate our students, faculty, alumni, and tribal collaborators.

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) under the Native American Center of Excellence program.

15. Contact Us

Website: www.umt.edu/nacoe

Email: nacoeadmin@mso.umt.edu

Address: 32 Campus Drive, Skaggs Building Room 482, Missoula, MT 59812

Appendix A.

NACOE Educational and Professional Development Presentations

1. *Blackfeet Traditional Medicines Presentation and Tea Making.* Presented by Darnell Rides at The Door.
2. *Native American Historical Trauma in Education.* Presented by Maegan Rides At The Door, LCPC.
3. *Native Pharmacists Panel.* Featuring Nathaniel Stiffarm, Pharm.D. and Marilee Chapman, Pharm.D.
4. *Cultural as Protection & Indigenous Health Systems.* Presented by Damian Chase-Begay, PhD.
5. *Emotion and Nervous System Regulation.* Presented by Ann Douglas, PhD.
6. *Native Pharmacist Panel.* Featuring Sammie Bia III, Pharm.D. and Shenell Weis, Pharm.D.
7. *Finding Your Place: Building Relationships, Navigating Pharmacy School, and Preparing for a Future of Service and Leadership.* Presented by Iris Pretty Paint-Heavy Runner, PhD.
8. *Blackfeet Traditional Medicines Presentation and Harvesting Workshop.* Presented by Leo Bird.
9. *IHS Team Integration through Native Perspectives.* Presented by Ciara Hansen, PhD.
10. *Indigenous Food Sovereignty and Indigenous-led Public Health Framework.* Featuring Taina Diaz-Reyes, MDiv, M.A. and Lauren Small Rodriguez, MPH
11. *Salish Biomedical Scientist Career Journey.* Presented by Joshua Marceau, PhD.
12. *Diabetes Prevention and Indigenous Food Sovereignty.* Presented by Ruby Flores.
13. *Indigenous Health Policy.* Presented by Kristina Lucero, JD.
14. *Self-Esteem, Self-Identity, and Resilience to Combat Imposter Phenomenon.* Presented by David Fuentes
15. *ACEs, Other side of ACEs, Understanding Trauma: Survival Brain vs Learning Brain.* Presentation by Maegan Rides At The Door, LCPC.
16. *Question, Persuade, Response* Presentation and Training by Ann Douglas, Ph.D.
17. *Cultural Prospective Factors & Social Behavioral Health Outcomes.* Presentation by Damian Chase-Begay, Ph.D.
18. *American Indian Population/Race/Cultural Diversity, Trauma Informed Care & Universal Behavioral Health Screenings.* Presentation by Kathy Little Leave, MSW, LAC.
19. *Perspectives on Illness and Healthcare: Opioid Abuse/Recovery.* Presentation by Ben Horn, LAC.
20. *Pharmacists Role in an Integrated Health Model.* Presentation by Chris Chong, Pharm.D.
21. *Social and Behavioral Perspectives: HIV/AIDS.* Presentation by Dr. Niki Grahm.