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U.S. Department of Education

## OPE Fall 2021 Grantee Voices From the Field Newsletter

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**U.S. Department of Education**  
Office of Postsecondary Education

### Grantee Voices From the Field

Fall 2021 Newsletter

# U.S. Department of Education Secretary Miguel Cardona Visits Native American Institutions



*Chairman of the Tohono O'odham Nation, Ned Norris Jr. (left), and Secretary Dr. Miguel Cardona (right)*

*Submission by Amy Loyd, senior advisor in the Office of the Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education*

Secretary Cardona provided opening remarks honoring the Tohono O'odham ancestral lands, and the past, present, and future generations of the Tohono O'odham Nation on his November 2021 trip to the Tohono O'odham Nation in southwestern Arizona. The Nation invited Cardona to visit their Tribal college, [Tohono O'odham Community College \(TOCC\)](#), to learn about the essential role it plays in the community and to get feedback on the Biden administration's Build Back Better agenda. He recognized the federal government's unique responsibility to invest in Nation-to-Nation relationship-building and to respect Tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

Across the country, Tribal colleges and universities are integral to Native American communities. They fulfill a vital role in strengthening and preserving irreplaceable Native languages and cultural traditions; promoting excellence in Native education from early childhood through grades K-12 and into postsecondary education; offering a high-quality college education to Native students; providing job training and other career-building programs to Native people seeking to launch a career or develop new job skills; and supporting Tribal economic development efforts by building a talent pipeline of skilled Native workers. Often, they are the only postsecondary institutions within some of the nation's most economically disadvantaged and remote and rural areas. As a result, Tribal colleges provide crucial services in communities that continue to suffer high rates of unemployment and the resulting social and economic distress- effects which more heightened now, due to COVID-19 and its disproportionate effect on Tribal communities. The Secretary prioritized his first visit to a Tribal Nation: as essential in order for the U.S. Department of Education (Department) to learn directly from Tribal colleges about their vision, hopes, and needs as the country contends with and emerges from the pandemic.

Learn more about OPE's Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities

[HEERF III: Tribally Controlled Colleges <br> and Universities \(a\)\(2\)](#)

# International Foreign Language Education: Howard University's Inaugural African Language Summer Institute Produces Language Proficiency



*Center for African Studies at Howard University's African Language Summer Institute*

*Submissions by Carolyn Collins, program specialist in the Office of International and Foreign Language Education*

The Center for African Studies (CFAS) at Howard University organized its first African Language Summer Institute this year, featuring instruction in seven languages (Amharic, Arabic, Somali, Swahili, Yoruba, Wolof, and Zulu). Nearly 60 participants at different language learning levels attended from different universities. The intensive summer session covered the equivalent of one year's worth of instruction.

The main goal of the institute was to increase the language proficiency of each participant by matching students with native speakers as conversation partners, including people based in Kenya and South Africa. This increased language immersion led to participants increasing in proficiency in their target languages without traveling to Africa.

At the end of the institute, students showcased their skills with presentations, skits, singing, and recitals in their target languages. In the future, CFAS hopes to invite representatives from African embassies in Washington, D.C., and diaspora communities to take advantage of local resources and develop relationships within the community.

Several student participants credit the institute with giving them the confidence and tools to use their target language beyond the classroom. University of Wisconsin-Madison doctoral student Sarah Tolbert, who travelled to Congo after the institute, shared the following: "You would be proud to know that when I was in Congo, I was interviewed on the local radio in Swahili and was able to respond to about 70% of the questions! It was great getting to use my new language skills from the course and people loved that my Swahili was Kenyan-safi-Swahili."

*The Center for African Studies at Howard University is a Title VI National Resource Center and the recipient of an allocation of Title VI Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowships for the fiscal year 2018–21 grant cycle.*

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## **Seminars Abroad Alumni Continue Connections: From the U.S. With Love**

## FROM THE US WITH LOVE



*International and Foreign Language Education Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad participants and scholars.*

Five participants in the 2018 Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad Program in Poland have created an online book, [\*From the US with Love\*](#), to reflect on their seminar abroad “Exploring Contemporary U.S.-Poland Relations.” The online book echoes a message from the Polish people to U.S. citizens, “From Poland with Love,” that expressed gratitude to the American people for their support at the end of World War I after which Poland emerged as an independent nation. “From Poland with Love” consisted of 111 volumes of poster-size sheets containing 5.5 million signatures with photographs. During recent years, the large poster-sized sheets were digitized to preserve them.

*From the US with Love* is the work of Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad participants Gregory Choy, Maria Lawrence, Eileen MacAvery Kane, Laurel A. Panser, Mary Schafer, and Juanita (Babet) Villena-Alvarez. The authors are grateful to have been given the opportunity to gain knowledge abroad, which they have since incorporated into new, cross-cultural curricula for their classrooms and schools back home.

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# Hispanic-Serving Institutions and University of Arizona's Project Outreach FAMILIA Host Family Summit



*Grupo Folklórico Miztontli performs at University of Arizona's Project Outreach FAMILIA.*

*Submissions by Jymece Seward, education program specialist for Hispanic Serving Institutions*

The University of Arizona's [Project Outreach FAMILIA](#) held its first family summit on the college-going process on Saturday, Sept. 25, 2021. Project Outreach FAMILIA is a collaboration between the University of Arizona College of Education and the Department's [Hispanic-Serving Institution Division](#) that aims to strengthen high schools' college-going resources. The summit facilitated three tracks for high school students and their families:

- Mathematics in a socio-cultural context: Tucson and its People
- College — What's in it for me, my family, and my community?
- Engaging with your financial wellness

Attendees enjoyed a University of Arizona performance from Grupo Folklórico Miztontli, during which scholar-dancers presented their academic interests and elaborated on the importance of connecting to a social group within the college experience. The performers also shared how dance helped with their social, physical, and academic development. Families participated in a campus tour that highlighted the cultural centers, scholarship office, administration, and other vital buildings that first-generation college-going students may need to access. Various collaborating partners made it possible to offer this experience for the entire family, which leveraged resources and functioned collaboratively with a shared mission to provide a vibrant event for 157 participants. Shared planning leadership was provided by partnering high schools, specifically Mexican American

Student Services at Tucson Unified School District, and the University of Arizona's Guerrero Student Center and Office of Early Academic Outreach.

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## University of New Mexico-Valencia Campus Launches new PASOS Resource Center



*University of New Mexico-Valencia Campus students study in the new ED-grant funded resource center, PASOS.*

*Submission by Jymece Seward, education program specialist for Hispanic-Serving Institutions Division*

The University of New Mexico-Valencia (UNM-Valencia) Campus' Title V grant project, PASOS — Pathways to Articulation and Sustainable Opportunities for Students (or “steps” in Spanish) — is excited for the opening of its newly renovated PASOS Resource Center (PRC). The PRC is centrally located on campus to help support students with non-academic needs like housing, food, health care, mental health, career planning and goal-setting mentorship. As a component of the grant, the center offers wraparound support services to current UNM-Valencia students to promote retention, graduation, and transfer to four-year universities.

The PRC has a designated area with student workstations, a kitchen, food pantry, conference room, and a gathering space for workshops. The staff, which consists of a graduate assistant, peer educators, a counselor, and a career services manager, will all have space to meet with students.

The PRC works in collaboration with other UNM-Valencia departments and nearby community-based organizations. This is the first resource center of its kind on the UNM-Valencia Campus in Los Lunas, N.M.



Lorrey Romero, senior peer educator/graduate assistant and UNM-Valencia alum, articulates what the PRC can provide to students, “As an undergraduate at UNM-Valencia, I was a first-time mother, low-income student, who came from a background of child abuse, neglect. I lost my father when I was 3 years old, few people knew what I was up against or what I was dealing with at home as a college student,” Romero said. “I am proud UNM-Valencia has transformed this space to support students with their life struggles, and non-academic needs — this is priceless.”

## OPE Employee Spotlight: Margarita Melendez

Margarita Melendez is an education program specialist in the Department’s Hispanic-Serving Institutions Division, where she provides leadership for the Emergency Assistance to Institutions of Higher Education Program and for the Promoting Postbaccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans Program.

Melendez believes it is important to listen to what grantees have to share, understanding that as their education specialist she is, “their most important connection to our agency.” She continues, “I also learn so much from my grantees through their stories and the experiences they share with me.”



Melendez truly values her relationship with her grantees because they are in the field working directly with students and educators. She has a unique perspective on customer service and grantee engagement, “In Spanish we use the term “su servidora” (your servant or in your service) when referring to yourself (such as in the English phrase “yours truly”), and I love it because it puts our service to others front and center of what we do — it is part of our identity.”

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# Calendar of Events

## OPE Peer Review Opportunities

The U.S. Department of Education announces opportunities for individuals to participate in its peer review process by reviewing applications for competitive grant funding. Learn how to become a peer reviewer by clicking here: [US Department of Education Peer Review Opportunities.](#)

## New Go Global ED Podcast

The International and Foreign Language Education (IFLE) office brings you the Go Global ED Podcast. On the Go Global ED Podcast, we speak with IFLE grant and fellowship recipients to highlight their experiences, discuss issues in international and foreign language education, share advice on the application process, and explore the long-term value and impact of IFLE programs.

Listen to all IFLE podcasts at [Go Global ED Podcast](#)

## Share Your Good News With the Grantee Community

Email photos, stories, updates, and other news to the OPE Management and Support Unit at [Sariane.leigh@ed.gov](mailto:Sariane.leigh@ed.gov) or call 202-453-7768



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