A Web-Based Special Education Doctoral Program for Native American and Hispanic Students
Panel Presentation Goals

• To present an overview of the FIRST (Faculty for Inclusive Rural/multicultural Special-educator Training) doctoral program at Northern Arizona University.
To show the importance of cohort learning, distance and on-site combined education, utilization of technology, and other aspects of the program for Native American and Hispanic doctoral students.
• To discuss challenges and solutions encountered in recruitment, program development and program implementation.
Faculty Shortage
Bob Gilmore, Program Officer, OSEP

• Need for Special Education University Faculty with a Focus on Rural Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Students
• Recent studies show an insufficient supply of special education leadership personnel available to meet the demands of preparing special education teachers, implementing research which leads to improved practice, and developing 21st century policymakers & administrators.
• The demand for faculty in special education in the U.S. is greater than the current supply of doctoral level persons available.
• 30% of the university faculty position vacancies in special education go unfilled.
In special education, 255 doctorates are conferred annually, but over 50% (130) of these doctoral graduates do not become employed as faculty members or are only in faculty positions for a short time.
• While special education faculty vacancies are increasing due to enlarging programs and faculty retirements, the annual number of new special education doctorates is decreasing.
The severe lack of special education faculty has a direct impact on the ability of teachers to provide high quality services to students with disabilities.
• **Diversity Issues:** Out of 1,015 students enrolled in special education doctoral programs, only 46 were of Hispanic background. As of 2003, less than 20 Native Americans held doctorates in special education.
• It is important to increase the numbers of Hispanic and Native American faculty in special education so that they can effectively address diversity issues.
Culturally diverse faculty also will provide mentorship to Hispanic and Native American future teachers who will in turn teach students with disabilities from Hispanic and Native American backgrounds.
• Rural Issues. The recruitment and retention of rural educators, especially special educators prepared to serve CLD students, is particularly difficult.
• Izzo (1999) reported that 1/5 of all rural special education teachers will leave their jobs annually to pursue employment in larger districts and communities.
• Few teacher education programs focus on the preparation of teachers for rural and remote areas.
FIRST is designed to assist doctoral students, especially those from Hispanic and Native American backgrounds, in overcoming some of the barriers students face in obtaining the doctoral degree.
• **Barriers:** Many potential Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) doctoral students in the Southwest live in rural and remote areas where there is no university doctoral program available.
A barrier to doctoral study is the difficulty in giving up jobs and relocating into a full-time doctoral program at a reduced student stipend.
• Most students have family responsibilities which preclude their participation because of the relocation necessary to attend full-time programs combined with their ongoing financial obligations.
• **Solutions**: NAU has over a decade of history of providing undergraduate & graduate rural multicultural special education degree programs to rural Native American and Hispanic students.
• FIRST provides a unique combination of academic year distance education courses and summer on-site courses to overcome the traditional barriers to doctoral program participation & completion.
FIRST Program Goals
Colby Holland

• Increase capacity to conduct and integrate Research to Practice skills to improve academic, linguistic, and social outcomes for Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Exceptional (CLDE) students.
• Prepare faculty to offer strategies to future teachers of CLDE students focusing on collaborative methods in inclusive settings.
• Prepare highly qualified culturally diverse Special Education faculty.
• Prepare faculty who will be able to effectively utilize technology, distance education, and web-based instruction.
• **Benefits:** FIRST is a grant from the U.S. Department of Education – Office of Special Education Programs.
• FIRST funds: tuition, books, travel to Flagstaff, summer stipend, summer family campus housing, travel for conference presentations, and research stipends.
• The FIRST grant also funds faculty research mentors, doctoral student mentors, and enrichment seminars with nationally known researchers in bilingual multicultural special education.
FIRST allows the doctoral students to keep their positions in local school districts or universities during the school year while taking courses via distance education.
• During the summers, the students come to the Flagstaff NAU campus for intensive doctoral studies which include CLDE seminars.
Challenges: One of the main difficulties for recruitment is the extremely rural nature of the Southwest area of the United States.
• Simply identifying regions and schools to target recruitment efforts is difficult. Many of the schools do not have special education secretaries, so it is difficult to establish an ongoing contact person.
• **Solutions: Recruitment started in fall 2003.**
• 250 schools contacted by email and fax.
• Application/recruitment information was placed on national listserves.
• Print and e-mailed information included the nau.edu/ci-doc website with FIRST recruitment and application materials.
Nine in person recruitment meetings were held throughout the Four Corners area states of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah.
Meetings were held in: Flagstaff, Tuba City, Kykostmovi, Yuma, Phoenix, and Nogales in Arizona; Monument Valley in Utah; Albuquerque in New Mexico; and Durango in Colorado.
• 103 inquiry calls were received.
• 28 persons submitted complete application portfolios which were reviewed by the Curriculum and Instruction Doctoral Committee.
• 12 students were selected for admission to FIRST program.
• 11 students entered FIRST.
First Students’ Demographics

• Geographic Location:
  1 student from Texas.
  1 student from Utah.
  2 students from Colorado
  7 students from Arizona
• Ethnic Background:
  7 students are of Hispanic background.
  4 students are of Native American background.
Retention Activities

• Many supports are provided for the students to facilitate retention in the doctoral program.
• FIRST program staff do all the registration, schedule the courses, and mail the textbooks to the students at their homes.
• In some semesters one course at a time is scheduled for 8 weeks allowing students to focus on just one content area.
• FIRST program staff are available to answer student questions, brainstorm solutions to problems, and provide encouragement throughout the program.
In the Summer Session on campus in Flagstaff, program staff arrange all the housing, secure study carrels at the university library, and arrange for computer use in College of Education.
Initially, FIRST brought the students together in Yuma, Arizona for a three day orientation and CLDE conference.
• FIRST activities to help students develop community/networking:
  • opening picnic
  • informal dinners
  • summer orientation
  • research seminar
  • farewell social
Technology and Distance Education
Patricia Santistevan Matthews

• **Challenges**: Many potential doctoral students cannot afford to give up their full time jobs and relocate to a distant university.
• In addition, many students are not comfortable and proficient in taking Web-based courses even if they were made available to them.
Solutions:

• FIRST students can continue in their full time jobs while taking Web-based courses during the academic year.
• A WebCT tutorial was developed for the students and delivered the first day of web classes during the Yuma orientation meeting.
• A Technology Handbook was developed and given to each student to provide easy reference and support as additional questions arise.
• Students met with the head of distance learning for the NAU Library to discuss web-based research procedures, interlibrary loans, electronic data, and other subjects pertinent to their coursework and research topics.
• Students received the Endnotes computer software program as well as training on its use to facilitate their scholarship and research.
• After library research, technology, and WebCT training, FIRST coursework began in Spring of 2004 with two courses on the web.
The Technology Facilitator is available via email to assist students with any distance education and technology issues.
During the summer, the Technology Facilitator delivers in-person seminars on topics such as Constructivism and Technology, Utilizing Web-based Resources, and Teaching Web-based Courses.
The outcome of the focus on technology training for FIRST students is that as future faculty members they will be able to train teachers to utilize technology in their classrooms to empower CLDE student learning.
• Teachers are facilitators when students utilize technology in constructivist learning.
• K – 12 students produce a product which reflects their research.
Scholarship and Research

Irene Begaye-Jones

• Challenges: It is often difficult to provide on-going opportunities for professional development, scholarship, and research throughout the doctoral program.
• The focus in many doctoral programs is simply on completion of coursework until the students reach the dissertation stage when they are expected to conduct and write about their original research.
• During many doctoral programs, students may not have the advantage of:
• participating in research projects with faculty mentors
• writing grant proposals and manuscripts for publication

• presenting papers at national professional conferences.
• **Solutions**: FIRST was designed to include all of these scholarly activities within the courses and enhanced professional development components of the doctoral program.
• FIRST students have support and practice in these areas before they even reach the dissertation stage of their doctoral program.
• Each of the students has been assigned a Faculty Research Mentor and a Doctoral Student Mentor.
Interactive Instructional Television times are used for students to meet their research mentors as well as in person meetings in the summer in Flagstaff.
• Students are provided Faculty Research Mentors so that each participant is involved in a directed research project from inception to dissemination/presentation/publication.
• Doctoral Student Mentors (doctoral students near the end of their doctoral program) are also provided to monitor the progress of the FIRST doctoral students and assist them with any difficulties or questions.
• Conferences: Students attended the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) conference in New Orleans in April 2004.
At the 2004 CEC Conference, the FIRST doctoral students presented a Poster Session on Rural Field-based Multicultural Special Education Teacher Training Programs.
During the second course in the program, the students had an assignment to develop a group proposals to submit to the 2005 CEC Conference.
• Three of these proposals were accepted for presentation at the 2005 CEC Conference in Baltimore, Maryland.
• The students also wrote group proposals for the 2005 Hawaii International Conference on Education (HICE).

• Four of these proposals were accepted.
• In addition to preparing presentations for the HICE conference, the students also wrote Conference Proceedings Papers for publication in the HICE Proceedings.
Additional Coursework
Embedded Research
and Scholarly Products

Patricia Peterson, PI, FIRST Grant

• In future courses, there will be assignments to:
• submit a conference proposal on their Faculty Mentor collaborative research projects to the American Educational Research Association Conference
• develop a grant proposal for external funding
• write a manuscript to submit to a peer-reviewed journal
CLDE Research Scholars:

- FIRST provides summer enrichment seminars conducted by internationally known scholars in the CLDE field: Patricia Medeiros Landurand, Jozi De Leon, and Maria Amelia Almeida.
• Training in Research
• Training in Statistics
• Journey from Practitioner to Scholar:

Integrating
What We Do