



INTERNATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

# Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions

Higher Education Case Studies  
from the United States and China

Weiyan Xiong

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*To my lovely wife, Junyi, who keeps inspiring me to explore the beauty of  
this world.*

## PREFACE

I grew up in the Yunnan Province of China, where 26 ethnic groups are living together. This experience has provided me with a strong sense of the value of diverse ethnic cultures and customs. I enjoyed the harmonious co-existence of different cultures, and treasuring diversity has been an important principle in my mind without even noticing it. After starting my graduate study in the area of higher education, my previous multicultural experiences impacted my study, research, and long-term plans in academia. Finally, I chose the ethnic minority-serving higher education institutions in the United States and China as the topic of my doctoral dissertation.

This book is based on the dissertation, a qualitative comparative study of ethnic minority-serving higher education institutions—Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) in the United States and Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions (EMSI) in China. To examine how TCUs and EMSIs address challenges in serving American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIANs) and Chinese Ethnic Minorities (CEMs), I conducted a series of in-depth, semi-structured oral interviews with 29 TCU and EMSI administrators and content area experts of AIAN and CEM higher education in the United States and China.

Findings from this study confirm that TCUs and EMSIs play significant roles in providing higher education opportunities to AIAN and CEM students, as well as in preserving indigenous and ethnic cultures and languages. Both TCUs and EMSIs enjoy some similar facilitating factors, including favorable external environments and internal characteristics and efforts. They also face similar challenges, some of which are opposites to the listed facilitating factors. In response to the challenges, TCUs and



EMSI present some exemplary strategies and good practices, which demonstrate the enormous potential of the education and services they provide to their students and communities. From a comparative perspective, the efforts of TCUs and EMSIs in addressing these challenges sometimes differ because of their respective political and higher education contexts. TCUs tend to have more of a pragmatic and institutional-level focus to solve current problems and continue their successful strategies and practices. In comparison, the efforts of EMSIs are primarily influenced by Chinese national policies, which are not only on higher education but also in other areas like the economy, development, and foreign affairs. Therefore, EMSIs focus on efforts to better take advantage of resources brought by national policies.

This book combines the external and internal voices regarding the development of indigenous and ethnic higher education in the United States and China. The external voices come from the scholars and content area experts in the area of indigenous and ethnic education, while this book also covers the internal voices from the TCU and EMSI senior administrators and faculty members, as well as AIAN tribal leaders and activists. Various voices have enriched the realistic images of these two types of higher education institutions. Meanwhile, this comparative study focuses on the long-lasting ethnic issues within the United States and Chinese higher education to explore the possible ways of changing the disadvantageous situations of AIAN and CEM students, as well as of better preserving their cultures and languages through higher education. Through the comparative study of TCUs and EMSIs on their contexts, roles, challenges, and efforts, this book helps verify and update what we have already known and, more importantly, to explore what we do not yet know, from both internal and external perspectives. In summary, this book provides exemplary strategies and good practices of TCUs and EMSIs in addressing challenges, which can be applied to each other to serve AIAN and CEM students and communities better, as well as to preserve their cultures and languages better.

In the research journey, besides the stories of each selected TCU and EMSI and those told by content area experts, the attitudes and determination for a bright future of each interviewee much impressed me. Given the challenges derived from the underrepresented status of AIAN and CEM students and institutions in higher education and the mainstream societies, TCU and EMSI administrators and faculty members, as well as scholars, are fully committed to fighting for high-quality education for their



students and preserving their cultures, languages, and identities. They are the heroes fighting for the beauty of diversity in this world.

In the interview, one TCU president shared that challenges are not terrifying because they mean the institution and tribal group are still alive and fighting against challenges. “Because we have those challenges, it means we are still around, and we are still here. If we are not faced with them, it means we are done, and we are not around anymore. Because we have them, and they are difficult, we can take confidence in addressing them.” Keeping faith and a positive attitude to all challenges is the best lesson I learned in conducting this research and writing this book. I hope every human being and every group of people can enjoy the braveness of pursuing beautiful things and truth.

Tuen Mun, New Territories, Hong Kong

Weiyan Xiong

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It was a fantastic journey in my life to complete this study. However, I clearly understand it would not be possible and achieved without the tremendous support I received along the way. The gratitude first goes to my doctoral advisor, Dr. James Jacob, for his guidance, encouragement, and friendship. He will always be my role model in academia. The other members of my dissertation committee, Prof. Richard Donato, Prof. Stewart Sutin, Prof. Jean Ferketish, and Prof. Bateer Chen, have inspired me by their fruitful academic achievements and rigorous reviews on my dissertation. Meanwhile, I want to thank Prof. Martín Sánchez-Jankowski and Dr. Christine Trost for hosting me as a Visiting Student Researcher at the Joseph A. Myers Center for Research on Native American Issues of UC Berkeley, where I successfully completed the data collection of this study with their generous support.

In particular, I cannot express my appreciation ever enough to all participants in this study. As scholars and practitioners, they are the heroes in the frontline fighting for educational equality and defending the beauty of diversity. Every conversation with them inspired me and helped me grow, not only academically but also personally.

Finally, the love from my family supports me in conquering all obstacles of life, and they encourage me to be a better person. A special thanks to my wife for her accompanying and inspiring. It is she who reminds me to notice and enjoy the beauty of this world.

## Praise for *Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions*

“Ethnic issues are long-lasting problems confronting China and the USA not only socially and economically but also politically. The book offers comparative and international perspectives in examining the role of higher education in changing the disadvantageous situations of AIAN and CEM students. Based upon strong empirical studies in China and the USA, this book provides fresh insights and critical analysis for understanding the cases of TCUs and EMSIs on their contexts, roles, challenges, and efforts, especially highlighting the strategic importance of better preserving their cultures and languages through higher education. This book should be read by researchers, academics, policymakers, and postgraduate students in the field of development studies and comparative education.”

—Ka Ho Mok, *Vice-President and Lam Man Tsan  
Chair Professor of Comparative Policy, Lingnan University, Hong Kong*

“Xiong’s work presents the realistic situations of ethnic minority-serving institutions in the US and China. It helps make TCU and EMSI stakeholders’ voices heard, not only by academia, but also by policymakers for the development of indigenous and ethnic higher education and the preservation of native cultures, languages, and traditions.”

—Wanhua Ma, Professor, *Graduate School of Education,  
Peking University, China*

“The succinct comparative analysis by Weiyan Xiong of higher education in select American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Chinese Ethnic Minority regions will position the reader to better understand how institutions serving them evolved, the challenges they encountered and suggestions for the future. Xiong’s meticulous research and thoughtful analysis renders a valuable contribution to our scholarship in this important field of study. It is a must read!”

—Stewart E. Sutin, *Clinical Professor of Administrative and  
Policy Studies (retired), University of Pittsburgh, USA*

“There are two biggest higher education countries in the world, the US and China. The former has a well-developed higher education system while the latter has the largest number of college students. How to treat minority students in the respective higher education system is an exciting and valuable topic for comparative study. In Xiong’s work, the historical development, challenges, and strategies

of minority higher education in these two countries are deeply explored. This is a vitally important book not only for academic research but also for the dialogue among civilizations.”

—Bateer Chen, Professor, *Zhou Enlai School of Governance, Nankai University, China*

“I highly recommend this book at a time when attention has turned toward preserving and drawing upon culture, language, and local knowledge as a core mission of tribal colleges and universities and ethnic minority-serving institutions. Xiong’s comparative study of institutions serving American Indians, Alaska Natives, and ethnic minorities in China serves as a lens through which to view the successes and challenges of these institutions and provides a pathway to their sustainability and improvement. By representing the voices of scholars in the field, administrators and faculty, and students participating in these institutions, Xiong has provided external and internal perspectives on the cross-cultural experiences of institutions. Through his study, he creates a realistic picture of what it means to valorize indigenous knowledge as a powerful source of learning and development. Xiong concludes his comparative analysis by highlighting best practices for the improvement of tribal colleges and universities and of ethnic-minority institutions and provides a blueprint for a promising future.”

—Richard Donato, Professor and Chair, *Department of Instruction and Learning, University of Pittsburgh, USA*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AAIA	Association on American Indian Affairs
AANAPISIs	Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions
AIAN	American Indian and Alaska Native
AICF	American Indian College Fund
AIHEC	American Indian Higher Education Consortium
ANNHSIs	Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
BIE	Bureau of Indian Education
CAE	Content Area Expert
CEM	Chinese Ethnic Minority
CMOE	China's Ministry of Education
CPC	Communist Party of China
DOI	Department of the Interior
EM	Ethnic Minority
EMCUs	Ethnic Minority Colleges and Universities
EMSI	Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions
FPCC	Fort Peck Community College
GACCPGC	Governmental Administration Council of the Central People's Government of China
HBCUs	Historically Black Colleges and Universities
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEAA	Institution in Ethnic Autonomous Area
LBHC	Little Big Horn College
NASIs	Native American-Serving Non-Tribal Institutions

NIEA	National Indian Education Association
NBSC	National Bureau of Statistics of China
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NHEEE	National Higher Education Entrance Examination
OIE	Office of Indian Education
PBIs	Predominantly Black Institutions
PRC	People's Republic of China
SCC	State Council of China
SEACC	State Ethnic Affairs Commission of China
TCUs	Tribal Colleges and Universities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States
USC	United States Code

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## Introduction

American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIANs) in the United States and Ethnic Minorities (EMs)<sup>1</sup> in China are both underrepresented groups in their higher education (HE) systems regarding access and attainment. Also, their cultures and languages confront challenges in contemporary societies dominated by mainstream cultures and languages, as well as the trend of globalization. Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) in the United States and Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions (EMSI) in China increasingly play a significant role in changing the disadvantageous situations of AIAN and Chinese Ethnic Minority (CEM) students in both HE systems. Also, they are critical in AIAN tribal nation building and CEM policy implementation, as well as in the preservation of indigenous and ethnic minority languages, cultures, and identities. TCUs and EMSIs face some common challenges such as financial constraints and student readiness for HE and preparation for the job market, as well as unique challenges caused by the specific political and HE contexts in the United States and China.

This book is based on a qualitative comparative study of ethnic minority-serving higher education institutions—TCUs and EMSIs. To answer the central research question—how TCUs and EMSIs address challenges in serving AIANs and CEMs—the author conducted a series of in-depth semi-structured oral interviews with 29 TCU and EMSI administrators and content area experts (CAEs) of AIAN and EM HE in the United States and China.

## 1.1 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

In this book, the author explored the roles, challenges, and responses of TCUs and EMSIs in the United States and China. The author also conducted a comparative analysis between these two types of ethnic minority-serving higher education institutions (HEIs) to highlight the successful experiences which can be applied in specific contexts. Finally, based on the findings of this book, the author hoped to help TCU and EMSI administrators, policymakers, and government planners better serve AIANs and CEMs to increase their HE access and success, as well as better preserve their cultures, languages, and identities.

The central research question of this study was, “How do TCUs and EMSIs address challenges in serving AIANs and CEMs?” This central research question was further examined by the following three additional questions.

- What roles do TCUs and EMSIs play in serving AIANs and CEMs?
- What challenges hinder TCUs and EMSIs from accomplishing their roles?
- How do/should TCUs and EMSIs address these challenges?

Afterward, this study answered the comparative question: “What can TCUs and EMSIs learn from each other to address their respective challenges?” This question was addressed by data collected from the previously listed research questions.

To achieve the research purpose and answer each of the guiding research questions, the author conducted in-depth semi-structured oral interviews with institutional administrators from TCUs in the United States and EMSIs in China, as well as with CAEs in the fields of AIAN and CEM HE. The author also conducted a content analysis of the mission and vision statements of TCUs and the charters of EMSIs. Afterward, the author carried out a comparative analysis of TCUs and EMSIs on their respective practices and strategies to address their common and unique challenges and, finally, to provide suggestions for TCUs and EMSIs. This study obtained the official approval from the University of Pittsburgh Internal Review Board to conduct interviews.

## 1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS BOOK

As Jackson (2014) noted, “among the axes of educational inequality, race, class, and gender are three of the most important, impacting on individual access and achievement across diverse societies. As such, these three factors arguably deserve more focus in comparative education research than they commonly receive” (p. 195). This comparative study focused on the long-lasting ethnic issues within the United States and Chinese HE to explore the possible ways of changing the disadvantageous situations of AIAN and CEM students, as well as of better preserving their cultures, languages, and identities through HE.

Also, it is significant to have a deeper understanding of HE issues that are central and unique to AIANs and CEMs (Brayboy et al. 2012; Meng 2016). Through conducting the comparative study of TCUs and EMSIs on their contexts, roles, challenges, and efforts, this study aimed to verify and update what we have already known and, more importantly, to explore what we do not yet know. In summary, the author hoped to provide exemplary strategies and good practices of TCUs and EMSIs in addressing challenges, which can be applied to each other to serve AIAN and CEM students and communities better, as well as to preserve their cultures and languages better. Findings from this study also helped fill the existing literature gap as it is the first comparative study between TCUs in the United States and EMSIs in China.

## 1.3 BOOK STRUCTURE

This book includes 11 chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research background of this study. Chapter 2 gives an overview of AIANs and CEMs and the current HE contexts and policies for both groups. Chapter 3 examines the evolution and characteristics of AIAN and CEM HE. It also discusses the current challenges faced by TCUs and EMSIs. Chapter 4 is the research design, where an analysis framework is presented and the research methods—including sampling, data collection, and analysis techniques—are addressed. Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 cover the major themes about TCUs and EMSIs emerging from the qualitative data analysis process. These themes include roles, facilitating factors, challenges, strategies and practices, and suggestions for improvement. Chapter 10 includes a comparative analysis of the five themes. Finally, Chap. 11 presents a brief



conclusion and recommendations for the better development of TCUs and EMSIs, as well as outlining suggestions for future research on this topic.

## NOTE

1. The phrase “Ethnic Minority” is capitalized intentionally to specifically refer to the 55 ethnic groups officially recognized by the Government of the People’s Republic of China.

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# American Indians and Alaska Natives and Chinese Ethnic Minorities: Demographics and Higher Education

## 2.1 A DEMOGRAPHIC REVIEW OF AMERICAN INDIANS AND ALASKA NATIVES, AND CHINESE ETHNIC MINORITIES

Even though the overall populations of AIANs in the United States and EMs in China have increased in past decades, they are still much smaller than the majority groups—Whites in many places in the United States and the Han People in the vast majority of China. However, they are significant components of the two populations, while being essential for the cultural diversity in each country. AIANs and CEMs present similar but different demographic characters in the respective countries. This chapter presents the current demographic status of both groups.

### 2.1.1 *American Indians and Alaska Natives*

In the United States, the terminology of the indigenous peoples has been an ongoing discussion. While “American Indian” or “Indian” has been used for an extended period, “Native American” was proposed by the federal government as a term of political correctness to respond to the American Indian Movement since the 1960s. Even though these three terms are often used interchangeably, “Native American” is often criticized by its connotation of excluding indigenous groups outside the continental United States, such as the indigenous peoples from Alaska, Hawaii, and other Pacific Islands. Because of the vast diversity among

indigenous peoples and communities, it is not easy to reach a consensus on which name to use, and most prefer to be referred by their specific nations or tribes. This study will adopt the term “American Indian and Alaska Native” because Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) mainly cover these two overall groups of indigenous peoples. However, “Native American” and “American Indian” will also be used in some instances.

AIANs include peoples who originate from North America and maintain tribal affiliation and attachment (US Census Bureau 2002). AIANs are composed of various tribes, bands, and ethnic groups, and many of these groups exist as sovereign nations. As of January 2018, there are 573 federally recognized AIAN tribes (Bureau of Indian Affairs 2018). They have the right to receive funding and services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in the US Department of the Interior (DOI), which is the primary bureau administrating programs for federally recognized tribes, and promoting American Indian self-determination (National Conference of State Legislatures 2016). Also, there are 79 AIAN tribes recognized by 17 states which have established agency programs and a formal process for evaluation and recognition, as well as have organizations to provide Indian tribes with aid or assistance. Among the state-recognized tribes, six are also federally recognized.<sup>1</sup>

According to the latest US Census in 2010, there were 5.2 million AIANs, either alone or in combination with one or more other races, comprising approximately 1.7 percent of the total US population. The overall AIAN population increased by 26.7 percent since 2000 (US Census Bureau 2012). According to the 2016 estimate (US Census Bureau 2016a), the AIAN population would grow to 5.3 million, while the percentage of the total national population remained constant at 1.7 percent (see Table 2.1).

In 2010, there were five American Indian tribes with a population of more than 100,000—Cherokee, Chippewa, Choctaw, Navajo, and Sioux. Among them, the Cherokee was the largest tribal group with a population of 330,463. These five tribes comprised around one-third of the total AIAN population.

Most federally recognized AIAN tribes have reservations, which were established by the federal government. Currently, approximately 326 federal reserved land areas are held in trust by the federal government for AIAN tribes and individuals as reservations, pueblos, rancherias, missions, villages, or communities. The Navajo Nation is comprised of the largest

**Table 2.1** The US total and AIAN populations, and selected tribal groupings, 2000–2016<sup>a</sup>

<i>AIANs</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2016</i> <i>Estimated</i>
Total US population	281,421,906	285,691,501	308,745,538	318,558,162
AIAN along or in combination	4,119,301	4,006,160	5,220,579	5,399,769
• AIAN along	2,475,956	2,151,322	2,932,248	2,597,817
• AIAN in combination with one or more other races	1,643,345	1,854,838	2,288,331	2,801,952
Percentage of total	1.50%	1.40%	1.70%	1.70%
<i>American Indian tribes (along)<sup>b</sup></i>				
Apache	64,977	66,048	69,694	314,169
Cherokee	299,862	331,491	300,463	115,320
Chippewa	108,637	92,041	115,402	57,000
Choctaw	96,901	55,107	110,308	124,980
Iroquois	47,530	50,982	42,461	70,314
Lumbee	52,555	59,433	62,957	69,805
Navajo	275,991	230,401	295,016	94,691
Pueblo	63,060	69,203	52,026	44,025
Sioux	113,066	67,666	116,477	22,034
<i>Alaska Native tribes (along)<sup>b</sup></i>				
Eskimo <sup>c</sup>	47,337	35,951	NA	NA
Iñupiat <sup>c</sup>	NA	NA	25,736	29,227
Yup'ik <sup>c</sup>	NA	NA	29,618	36,137

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau (2002, 2007, 2012, 2016a, b).

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Because of the significant changes in data collection methods of AIAN demographic information since the Census 2000, which made the data were not directly comparable with data from previous censuses (U.S. Census Bureau 2002), this study looks at the population data since 2000. <sup>b</sup> The populations for selected tribal groupings include people who reported one specified AIAN tribe and who reported two or more specified AIAN tribes. <sup>c</sup> In Census 2000, “Yup'ik” was included within the Eskimo groupings, and became an individual one in Census 2010. The Eskimo tribal groups without the Yup'ik tribe have been classified under the tribal grouping of Iñupiat since 2010.

geographic reservation located in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah (BIA 2018).

AIANs bear a dual citizenship status in US society. On the one hand, AIANs were exempt from federal taxation and most laws through the *Civilization Act of 1802 and 1819*. Also, the treaties signed between some

AIAN tribes and the US government provided them with some benefits. In the following century and even after the treaty era ended in 1871, the unique position of AIANs in US society has largely been maintained. This particular status was later affirmed in federal court in 1884. On the other hand, AIANs also enjoy the benefits of US citizenship. In 1919, all AIANs serving in the military during World War I had been granted US citizenship by Congress. Later the *Indian Citizenship Act of 1924* conferred the title upon all AIANs.

### 2.1.2 *Chinese Ethnic Minorities*

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is a “unitary multi-national State created jointly by the people of all its nationalities”<sup>2</sup> (National People's Congress of China 2004, Preamble). With the consideration of national social and economic development, national unity, and political stability, promoting the prosperity and development of EM groups has been a sustainable agenda and domestic policy of the central government of China. Regarding the preservation of EM cultures and languages, the Chinese central government has made and implemented a series of top-down laws and policies to legitimize the freedom for every EM group to use, develop, and promote their languages, culture, and customs (Jacob 2015).

Since 1949 when the PRC was founded, there has been a total of 56 ethnic groups recognized by the central government, among which 55 are EM groups, and Han is the majority group.<sup>3</sup> With the considerable increase of the total Chinese population, the EM population has also grown dramatically. According to China's six censuses from 1953 to 2010, the EM percentage of the total population rose from 6.1 to 8.4 percent, with the total EM population reaching 112 million in 2010. The EM groups with a population of more than one million include the Mongol, Hui, Zang, Uyghur, Miao, Yi, Zhuang, Bouyei, Korean, and Manchu (see Table 2.2).

A majority of the EM population resides in the less-developed western areas of the country. In the form of concentrated communities, five EM groups have established provincial-level autonomous regions—Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, and Tibet Autonomous Region. Below the provincial-level administrative regions, there are 30 autonomous prefectures, and 120 autonomous counties, which are located outside of the 5 Autonomous

**Table 2.2** China's EM group population, 1953–2010

	1953	1964	1982	1990	2000	2010
Total population <sup>a</sup>	578,874,444	691,259,931	1,004,718,569	1,131,266,483	1,242,612,226	1,332,810,869
EM population	35,032,085	39,923,736	67,238,983	91,323,090	105,226,114	111,966,349
Percentage of total	6.1%	5.8%	6.7%	8.1%	8.5%	8.4%
Mongol	1,451,035	1,965,766	3,411,367	4,802,407	5,813,947	5,981,840
Hui	3,530,498	4,473,147	7,228,398	8,612,001	9,816,805	10,586,087
Zang	2,753,081	2,501,174	3,847,875	4,593,072	5,416,021	6,282,187
Uyгур	3,610,462	3,996,311	5,963,491	7,207,024	8,399,393	10,069,346
Miao	2,490,874	2,782,088	5,021,175	7,383,622	8,940,116	9,426,007
Yi	3,227,750	3,380,960	5,453,564	6,578,524	7,762,272	8,714,393
Zhuang	6,864,585	8,386,140	13,383,086	15,555,820	16,178,811	16,926,381
Bouyei	1,237,714	1,348,055	2,119,345	2,548,294	2,971,460	2,870,034
Korean	1,111,275	1,339,569	1,765,204	1,923,361	1,923,842	1,830,929
Manchu	2,399,228	2,695,675	4,304,981	9,846,776	10,682,262	10,387,958

*Sources:* Calculated from the data of National Bureau of Statistics of China and State Ethnic Affairs Commission of China (NBSC and SEACC 1990), and NBSC (2000; 2010).

*Note:* <sup>a</sup>The total population of each census does not include the population of military personnel in active service.

Regions. In 2015, 41 percent of the population in all EM autonomous areas were of EM decent. EM group members also reside dispersedly throughout China's many provinces and cities. Among the 34 provincial-level administrative regions, there are only 10 without any level of EM autonomous administrative areas (Guo et al. 2015, p. xviii). This demographic pattern is summarized as "big dispersion and small concentration," which historically encouraged the integration of EM groups with Han people and other EM groups (Wang 2015). Fifty-three of the 55 EM groups have their own native languages, of which 21 groups have written languages (Myers Jr. et al. 2013).

## 2.2 AN OVERVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR AMERICAN INDIANS AND ALASKA NATIVES, AND CHINESE ETHNIC MINORITIES

Promoting education for AIANs and CEMs has been promised for many years by the United States and Chinese governments. However, both groups are underrepresented in their educational systems, especially at the postsecondary level. Higher education (HE) has been an essential venue for AIANs and CEMs to build their tribal nations and groups, as well as in preserving their respective cultures and languages. This section examines HE access and attainment of AIANs and CEMs.

### *2.2.1 American Indian and Alaska Native Higher Education*

HE for American Indians used to be a central purpose of the early higher education institutions (HEIs), including Harvard College, William and Mary College, and Dartmouth College. However, the early colonial HEIs did not fully realize their institutional purpose toward American Indians (Carney 1999). Even though the enrollment of AIANs almost doubled from 1976 to 2016 (see Table 2.3), they were still one of the most underrepresented groups regarding HE access. Other than a surge in the 1990s and early 2000s, AIANs have comprised on average well below 1 percent of all US HE students. In 2016, 18.6 percent of 18- to 24-year-old AIANs were enrolled at HEIs, which was lower than all other race/ethnic groups in the United States: African American (36.2 percent), Hispanic (39.2 percent), Asian (57.6 percent), and Pacific Islander (20.7 percent) (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] 2017, Table 302.60).



**Table 2.3** Total fall enrollment of AIANs in degree-granting HEIs, 1976–2016 (in thousands)

	1976	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total	76.1	83.9	102.8	151.2	176.3	196.2	186.2	173.0	162.2	152.9	146.2	142.3
Percentage of the US total	0.71%	0.71%	0.77%	1.02%	1.04%	0.97%	0.92%	0.87%	0.83%	0.79%	0.77%	0.76%
4-Year HEIs	35.0	36.9	47.9	76.5	95.6	109.0	105.1	98.1	91.4	87.0	83.3	83.6
2-Year HEIs	41.2	47.0	54.9	74.7	80.7	87.2	81.1	74.9	70.8	65.9	62.9	5.7
Undergraduate	69.7	77.9	95.5	138.5	160.4	179.1	170.2	157.6	147.4	138.6	132.3	128.6
Graduate	6.4	6.0	7.3	12.6	15.9	17.1	16.1	15.4	14.8	14.3	13.9	13.7

*Sources:* NCES (2017, Tables 306.10 and 306.20)

**Table 2.4** Graduation rates for AIAN and total students, 1996–2010

<i>Starting Cohort</i>	<i>Graduating within four years (%)</i>		<i>Graduating within five years (%)</i>		<i>Graduating within six years (%)</i>	
	<i>AIAN</i>	<i>National</i>	<i>AIAN</i>	<i>National</i>	<i>AIAN</i>	<i>National</i>
1996	18.8	33.7	33.3	50.2	38.0	55.4
2000	21.0	36.1	35.1	52.6	40.2	57.5
2002	20.5	36.4	33.8	52.3	38.3	57.2
2003	20.6	37.0	33.7	53.2	38.7	57.8
2004	21.8	38.0	34.7	54.1	39.4	58.4
2005	21.8	38.3	34.7	54.2	39.3	58.6
2006	21.9	39.1	35.6	54.9	40.2	59.2
2007	23.0	39.4	36.3	55.1	40.6	59.4
2008	23.0	39.8	36.3	55.3	41.0	59.6
2009	24.0	39.8	36.9	55.3	41.2	59.4
2010	22.8	40.6	34.8	55.8	n/a	n/a

Source: NCES (2017, Table 326.10).

Regarding educational attainment, shown in Table 2.4, from 1996 to 2010, around one-fifth of AIAN students graduated within four years from their first-time attending four-year HEIs for a bachelor's degree, which was much lower than the national average (and just higher than their African American counterparts). Also, the graduation rates within five and six years were lower than the national average level.

Figure 2.1 presents that from 1976–77 to 2015–16, among every 100 students who received their associate's degree, only 1 was AIAN. This number decreased to less than 1 AIAN per 100 HE students nationwide for students graduating with bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees.

The United States has a highly decentralized education system, in which state governments take the primary responsibility for education. However, the federal government has an indirect but important impact on HE through its federal grant and student loan programs (e.g., the Federal Pell Grant Program). In addition, the federal government plays a significant role in AIAN HE because of the government-to-government relationship between tribal nations and the federal government. At the federal government level, there are various policies in the form of federal laws and presidential executive orders to facilitate the development of AIAN HE. Table 2.5 presents the current federal policies in effect regarding AIAN HE.

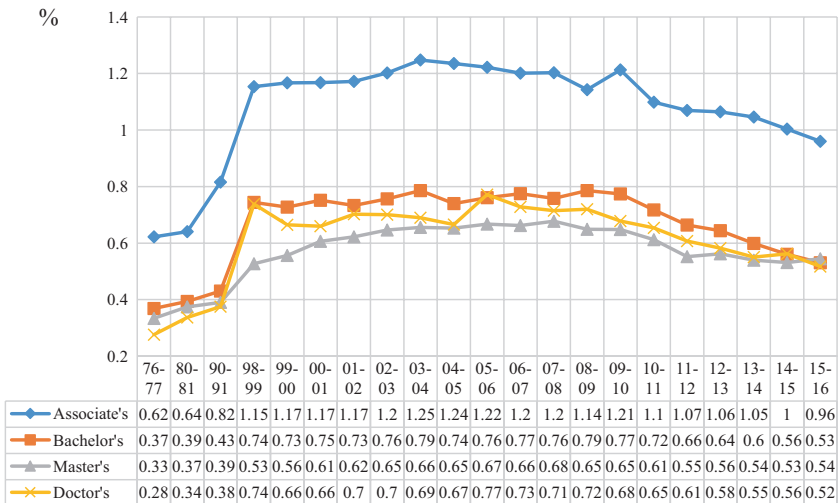


Fig. 2.1 Percent of degrees conferred to AIANs, compared to the US total, 1976–2016. *Source:* NCES (2017, Table 321.20, Table 322.20, Table 323.20, and Table 324.20)

Besides federal-level policies, there are also offices in the federal government overseeing AIAN HE affairs, as well as national organizations operating for improving AIAN HE through establishing HE networks, influencing governmental policies, and offering scholarships to AIAN students. The following list presents the major organizations relevant to AIAN HE.

- **American Indian College Fund (AICF)**, established in 1989, provides scholarships to Native American students, and funds and creates awareness about the community-based TCUs that offer students access to knowledge and skills about Native American culture, language, and values (AICF 2017).
- **American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC)**, established in 1973, serves as a support network to influence federal policies on AIAN HE (AIHEC 2017a).
- **Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA)**, established in 1922, is a national Native American organization. Regarding HE, AAIA provides scholarships to Native American college and graduate

**Table 2.5** Current federal-level policies of AIAN HE

<i>Policy</i>		<i>Contents</i>
20 United States Code (USC), Chapter 28—HE Resources and Student Assistance	American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities	Department of the Interior (DOI) provides eligible TCUs with one-year grants of not less than \$1,000,000 and related assistance plan, and develops, undertakes, and carries out activities to improve and expand their capacity to serve AIAN students.
	Native American-Serving, Non-Tribal Institutions (NASIs)	DOI provides a grant of at least \$200,000 to NASIs, which are non-TCUs with an enrollment of AIAN students taking up at least ten percent of undergraduate students. Grants awarded shall be used to improve and expand NASIs' capacity to serve AIAN and low-income students.
25 USC, Chapter 20—Tribally Controlled College and Universities Assistance	Tribally Controlled Colleges or Universities Grant Program	DOI provides grants of \$8000 per AIAN student at TCUs to ensure continued and expanded educational opportunities for AIAN students, and to allow for the improvement and expansion of the physical resources of such institutions.
	Tribally Controlled Colleges or Universities Endowment Program	DOI provides grants for the encouragement of endowment funds for the operation and improvement of TCUs.
	Tribal Economic Development	DOI provides grants to TCUs for the establishment and support of tribal economic development and education institutes.
	Tribally Controlled Postsecondary Career and Technical Institutions	DOI selects two tribally controlled postsecondary career and technical institutions to provide funding to pay the costs (including institutional support costs) of operating postsecondary career and technical education programs for AIAN students.

*(continued)*

**Table 2.5** (continued)

<i>Policy</i>		<i>Contents</i>
25 USC, Chapter 35—Indian HE Programs	HE Tribal Grant Authorization	DOI provides grants to AIAN tribes to provide financial assistance to individual AIAN students for the cost of attendance at HEIs.
	Critical Needs for Tribal Development	An eligible Indian tribe or tribal organization may require any federally funded HE assistance in designated vocational areas as critical for the economic or human development needs of the tribe or its members.
Executive Order 13592	Improving AIAN Educational Opportunities and Strengthening TCUs	<i>White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education</i> is proposed under this Order.

*Sources:* 20 USC §§ 1059c, 1059f; 25 USC §§ 1801–1864, 3301–3325; The White House Office of the Press Secretary (2011).

students from both federally recognized and non-federally recognized tribes (AAIA 2017).

- **Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)**, established in 2006, is in the US Department of the Interior. In HE, BIE serves Native American students through scholarships and support funding for TCUs. BIE directly oversees two federally chartered TCUs—Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (BIE 2017).
- **College Horizons**, established in 1998, is a non-profit organization that supports Native American HE by providing college and graduate admissions workshops to Native American students from across the nation (College Horizons 2017).
- **National Indian Education Association (NIEA)**, established in 1970, aims to convene educators to explore ways of improving schools and the educational systems serving Native children, to promote the maintenance and continued development of language and cultural programs, and to develop and implement strategies for influencing local, state, and federal policy and decision-makers (NIEA 2017).

- **Office of Indian Education (OIE)**, established in 1980, is in the US Department of Education. One of OIE missions is to support the efforts of postsecondary institutions to meet the unique cultural, language, and educational needs of Native American students (OIE 2017).

In conclusion, AIAN has been one of the most underrepresented groups in US HE in relation to both access and attainment. Also, based on trends data in recent years, even though the situation is gradually improving, the development pace of AIAN HE remains slow.

### 2.2.2 *Chinese Ethnic Minority Higher Education*

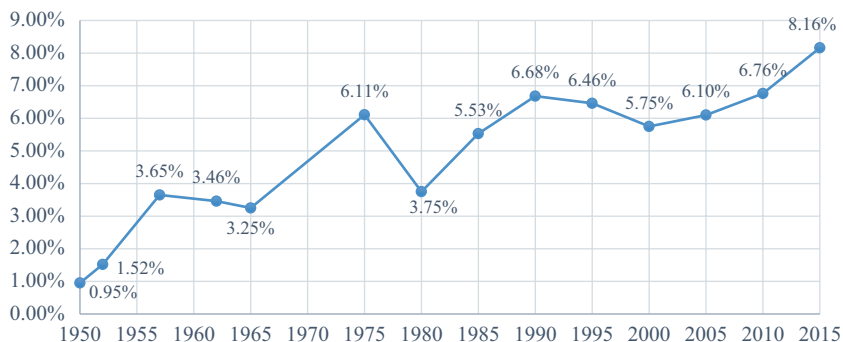
It has been a significant focus of Chinese affirmative action policies to facilitate the educational development of EMs. Education is closely related to the EM groups' social and economic development, as well as their language and culture preservation. With the preferential policies to increase EM students' access to HE, the number and percentage of EM students enrolled at HEIs have grown since 1949, especially after entering the twenty-first century. As Table 2.6 shows, from 2004 to 2016, the total enrollment of EM students at all levels in HEIs has almost doubled. Moreover, the percentage of EM students of total HE enrollments during this time period increased from 5.69 percent to 7.69 percent but decreased in 2016. In 1950, there was less than one EM student among 100 undergraduate students at Chinese HEIs. In 2015, the number increased to 8.16 (see Fig. 2.2). However, comparing the percentage of EMs to China's total population, EM students are underrepresented in HE. Also, the

**Table 2.6** CEM students enrolled in HEIs, 2004–2016 (in thousands)

	2004	2008	2012	2016
Total	1189.6	1758.9	2656.1	2824.7
Percentage of total	5.69%	5.69%	7.05%	6.76%
Graduate	33.0	58.9	99.4	115.3
Undergrad.	774.3	1279.9	1779.6	2318.2
Adult HEIs	292.6	278.7	454.4	506.5
Online HE Programs	89.7	141.4	322.7	455.8

*Source:* China's Ministry of Education (CMOE 2017a).

*Note:* Before 2004, the HE enrollment data of CEM students was only in undergraduate programs.



**Fig. 2.2** The percent of EM undergraduate students at 2- and 4-year HEIs, 1950–2015. *Source:* Author’s calculation based on data from CMOE (2017a)

**Table 2.7** HE population of China, Han people, and selected EM groups, 1990–2010

	1990		2000		2010	
	Population	Percentage	Population	Percentage	Population	Percentage
National	15,757,443	1.39	44,020,145	3.54	118,374,897	8.88
Han	14,917,741	1.43	41,421,568	3.64	111,132,052	9.10
Mongol	88,770	1.85	278,229	4.79	782,492	13.08
Hui	131,350	1.53	364,259	3.71	906,437	8.56
Zang	20,392	0.44	64,850	1.20	309,313	4.92
Uygur	64,503	0.90	206,048	2.45	565,630	5.62
Miao	29,339	0.40	114,476	1.28	374,844	3.98
Yi	17,152	0.26	73,085	0.94	294,852	3.38
Zhuang	88,287	0.57	307,299	1.90	872,818	5.16
Bouyei	9844	0.39	35,559	1.20	118,122	4.12
Korean	83,015	4.32	158,937	8.26	281,656	15.38
Manchu	162,280	1.65	477,119	4.47	1,096,559	10.56

*Sources:* NBSC and SEACC (1990) and NBSC (2000; 2010).

Note: The 1990 data does not include people with graduate degrees.

growth rate of EM students at HEIs is lower than that of the national EM population growth rate (Tan and Xie 2009; Wang 2016).

With the increased HE enrollment, the EM HE population also raised drastically. Table 2.7 presents the status of the HE population of China, the Han people, and selected EM groups from 1990 to 2010.<sup>4</sup> Among the

ten selected EM groups, in 2010, the HE population percentages of the Mongol, Korean, and Manchu groups surpassed 10 percent and were higher than the Han people and the national average. The increase in EM student enrollments in HEIs, as well as the growth of the HE population of each group, benefited from the policies aimed at facilitating the development of EM HE.

In China, the national constitution and a series of regulations formulated by the central and local governments help guarantee the rights of EM groups and their cultures and languages, which have created a favorable policy environment for the development of EM HE. CEM HE policies can be divided into four groups corresponding with four HE stages that EM students will go through. Orderly, EM students prepare for HE (Pre-HE Stage), take the National Higher Education Entrance Examination (NHEEE Stage), are admitted into programs at HEIs (HEI Stage), and seek for a job following graduation (Employment Stage).

*Policies at the Pre-HE Stage.* At the Pre-HE Stage, bilingual education is implemented for EM students to master both their native languages and Mandarin. Bilingual education has been the primary channel to promote EM education, as well as preserve EM culture and languages. When planning and developing bilingual education policies, policymakers mainly consider the local language environment, social and economic development needs, pedagogical benefits, and preferences of residents (Hannum and Wang 2012).

After graduating from high school, EM students can attend the pre-college program to prepare for HE, which is in the form of inland classes and boarding schools. It has played a significant role in preparing EM students to attend regular HEIs and reducing the gap between EM and Han students regarding language proficiency of Mandarin, educational attainment, and employment after graduation.

*NHEEE Stage Policies.* In order to provide EM students with equal access to high-quality HE, the Chinese central government has implemented several preferential policies for EM students to compete with the majority of Han students in the NHEEE. Based on their ethnic identity, EM students can receive different bonus scores in the NHEEE. Also, the HEI admission threshold score for EM students is lower than that for Han students. With these policies, CEM HE has a dramatic development regarding the enrollments of EM students (Lei 2010; Wang 2016). In addition to the point allowance and priority admission policies, students from a given EM can choose to use either Mandarin or their mother



tongue as the text language (if applicable). However, point allowances are different for these students when using non-Mandarin languages.

***Policies at the HEI Stage.*** If they obtain a certain score threshold in the NHEEE, EM students are then free to choose to attend either a regular or ethnic HEI. As an integrated part of the Chinese HE system, EM-serving HEIs play a significant role in facilitating the development of EM HE. There are three principal types of EM-serving HEIs, namely Ethnic Minority Colleges and Universities (EMCUs), Institutions in Ethnic Autonomous Areas (IEAAs), and other Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions (EMSI).

After entering an HEI, EM students can enjoy the waiver of tuition and fees if they choose EM majors and programs like EM languages. Also, a select of EM students can choose programs in which the medium of instruction is EM languages.<sup>5</sup> If EM students decide to pursue a postgraduate degree following their graduation, they can also enjoy the preferential policies in the postgraduate entrance examination.

The support and aid from the economically developed areas are treated as an essential means of facilitating the development of EM HE. Currently, there are three forms of partnership assistance categorized by source. The first is the assistance from the CMOE. The second is the assistance from the coastal provinces and cities to the western provinces and cities. The last is the assistance from the major cities in the western provinces to the remote areas (Sun and Wang 2015). HEIs in the eastern and coastal regions will establish a partnership with EM HEIs in the western provinces to provide financial and staff support.

***Employment Stage Policies.*** EM graduates—especially those from programs with EM languages as the medium of instruction—face great employment challenges (Ha 2016; Jacob and Park 2011). However, at the national level, there does not exist a policy or regulation regarding the employment of EM HE graduates. This issue has attracted much attention because it is significant to facilitate the development of EM HE, as well as the central governmental goal of social stability (Ha 2016; Xiong et al. 2016; Xu 2013).

At the local level, especially in the EM regions, the local governments have put forward a series of policies regarding the employment of EM HE graduates. Also, particular attention is given to those graduates from the program with ethnic languages as the medium of instruction. For example, the government of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region has implemented a regulation in December 2015 with a series of specific and

operable items to help Mongol Chinese students find employment who graduate from HE programs with Mongol as the medium of instruction (Ha 2016).

While the preferential policies toward EM students in HE admission are continually strengthened, several new trends are emerging during the development of CEM HE. First, the methods of EM talent training become varied, and the vocational, normal, and adult HE within EM regions are rapidly developing (Sun and Wang 2015). Second, with the introduction of English into the secondary curriculum since the 1980s, as well as becoming a compulsory testing subject in the NHEEE later on, some EM groups students are facing a trilingual situation instead of simply a bilingual one (Adamson and Feng 2015; Park and Jacob 2011). Finally, the research on the ethnic culture in EM HE is strengthening (Gan and Peng 2012).

There are also challenges in the new development of CEM HE. The first and the most significant one is the educational gap between EM and Han students, as well as among EM groups located in the eastern, coastal region and those in the less-developed western region. This gap is widening, especially after the late 1990s when the free higher education and government-guaranteed employment of university undergraduates ceased (Wang 2015). In addition, the absence of a specific law regarding EM HE only exacerbates this situation (Sun and Wang 2015). The second challenge is how to better integrate ethnic languages and culture into the HE curriculum (Gan and Peng 2012). Currently, bilingual education is provided at the primary level, and after entering secondary and tertiary schools, most formal learning about EM languages ceases, which has frustrated EM students in their native language learning (Hu 2007). Third, a policy supporting the employment of EM students after graduation is also necessary (Xiong et al. 2016). Finally, financial support for EM regions needs to be fully implemented, particularly at the local levels (Sun and Wang 2015).

### 2.2.3 *Ethnic Minority-Serving Higher Education Institutions*

The ethnic minority-serving HEIs in the United States and China have been treated as vital venues to increase HE opportunities for AIANs and CEMs, facilitate local economic development, and assist nation and group building (for the United States, see Brayboy et al. 2012; Crazybull 2009; Stull et al. 2015; Stein 2009; for China, see Clothey 2005; Qiu 2012;

Yang and Wu 2009). Ethnic minority-serving HEIs in the United States and China have dual primary purposes. One is to educate students, and the other is to address tribal and ethnic priorities.

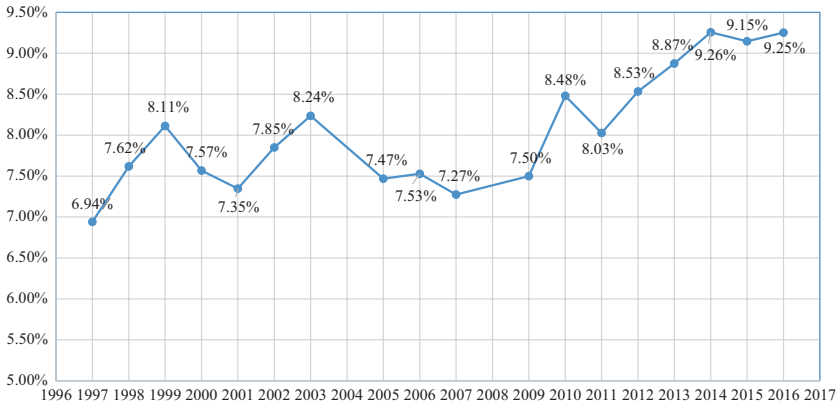
### 2.2.3.1 *Tribal Colleges and Universities in the United States*

In the United States, minority-serving institutions refer to seven types of HEIs federally designated to serve minority groups, which are eligible for federal assistance and funding based on different criteria (Nguyen et al. 2015). The seven types of minority-serving HEIs include Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Native American-Serving Non-Tribal Institutions (NASIs),<sup>6</sup> Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs), and Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions (ANNHSIs). Among these minority-serving institutions, TCUs, NASIs, and AANAPISIs serve AIANs and are relevant to this study. This study is further narrowed to primarily focus on TCUs and their institutional efforts of serving AIAN students and communities.

The establishment of TCUs was an essential component of the Native American Self-Determination Movement in the 1960s, and in 1986, the first TCU—Navajo Community College (currently the Diné College)—was established. TCUs were defined as “institutions that are chartered by their respective Indian tribes through the sovereign authority of the tribes or by the Federal Government” (The White House Office of the Press Secretary 2011).

In 1973, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) was founded to serve as a national organization to facilitate the development of TCUs (Stein 2009). In 1994, through the efforts of AIHEC, 34 TCUs were awarded land-grant institution status, which guarantees them with federal funding for institutional capacity building and research. Currently, there are 38 TCUs, of which 35 were chartered by AIAN tribes and 3 by the federal government. Twenty-six TCUs award associate’s degrees and 12 offer bachelor’s programs, among which 5 also provide master’s programs (AIHEC 2017b).

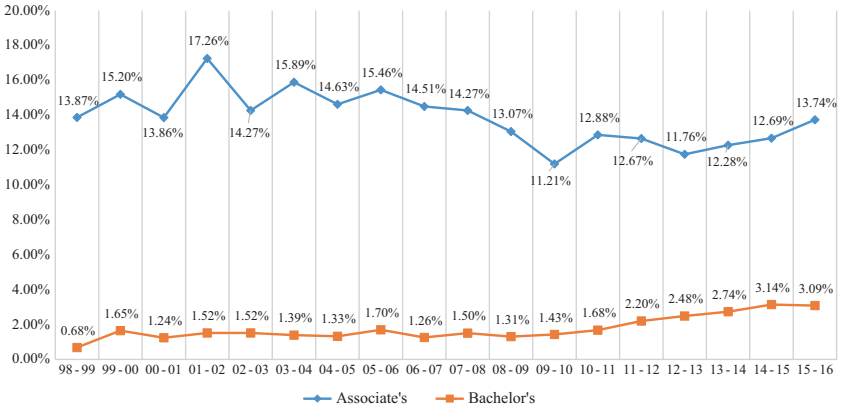
TCUs play a significant role in providing AIANs with HE opportunities. In the past two decades, the AIAN enrollment at TCUs has grown dramatically. In the fall of 2016, TCUs enrolled 9.25 percent of AIAN HE students (see Fig. 2.3).



**Fig. 2.3** Percent of AIANs enrolled in TCUs of the total degree-granting HEIs enrollment, 1997–2016. *Sources:* Author’s calculation based on the data from NCES (2000, Tables 211 and 222; 2001, Table 221; 2002, Table 220; 2003, Tables 207 and 219; 2004, Table 222; 2005, Table 219; 2006, Tables 205 and 218; 2008, Table 229; 2009, Table 239; 2010, Table 239; 2011, Tables 236 and 249; 2012, Table 253; 2013, Table 280; 2014, Table 312.50; 2015, Table 312.50; 2016, Table 312.50; 2017, Tables 306.10 and 312.50). *Note:* Data for 2004 and 2008 is not available on the NCES website

Around 13 percent of all associate’s degrees received by AIANs were awarded by TCUs from 1998 to 2016, but the trend is decreasing in recent years. However, bachelor’s degrees conferred to AIAN graduates through TCUs increased considerably during this same time period even though the number of degrees awarded is small. In 2016, more than 3 of 100 AIAN graduates with a bachelor’s degree were from TCUs, while the number in 1999 was less than 1 person (see Fig. 2.4).

In addition to providing postsecondary education for AIANs, TCUs also provide educational services for their local communities (such as library and consultation services). Also, the majority of TCUs are vocational institutions, and their students are considered non-traditional by most HE standards. For example, the average-age TCU student is older than most traditional age-eligible students. Also, because they are located on tribal reservations, TCUs are essential for the local economic development, and culture and language preservation. For these purposes, many TCUs hire elders to teach native cultures and languages at TCUs.



**Fig. 2.4** Percent of associate’s and bachelor’s degrees awarded to AIANs by TCUs, 1999–2016. *Sources:* Author’s calculations based on data from NCES (2003, Table 219; 2004, Table 222; 2005, Table 219; 2006, Table 218; 2007, Table 223; 2008, Table 229; 2009, Table 239; 2010, Table 239; 2011, Table 249; 2012, Table 253; 2013, Table 280; 2014, Table 312.50; 2015, Table 312.50; 2016, Table 312.50; 2017, Table 312.50)

2.2.3.2 *Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions in China*

EMSIs in China aim to serve EM students and areas. Referring to the Chinese official reports on EM HE (e.g., CMOE 2015), EMSIs have two main categories: Ethnic Minority Colleges and Universities (EMCUs) and Institutions in Ethnic Autonomous Areas (IEAAs). Also, outside of autonomous ethnic areas, there is a relatively small number of HEIs with an institutional mission to serve EM students. In June 2017, there are 255 EMSIs in China (CMOE 2017b).

EMCUs are categorized as “ethnic institutions” or “institutions for nationalities,” which is one official classification of Chinese colleges and universities.<sup>7</sup> EMCUs were established shortly following the establishment of the PRC. Their initial missions were to primarily cultivate EM political leaders to administrate ethnic areas and ultimately to help achieve national unity and political stability (Zhang and Qu 2009). Currently, there are 17 EMCUs, all of which offer undergraduate and graduate programs. Six EMCUs are directly administrated by the ministry-level State Ethnic Affairs Commission of China (SEACC). Nine EMCUs are co-administrated by SEACC and local governments, and the remaining two

are administrated by local governments. Among the 17 EMCUs, 8 are located within EM autonomous areas.

IEAAs have a natural relationship with EM groups because of their geographic locations. They usually have an institutional mission of facilitating local economic and social development, and local EM students are their target students. Currently, there are 233 IEAAs, among which 195 are located in the 5 EM autonomous regions; the remaining 38 are located in EM Autonomous Prefectures in non-ethnic provinces (CMOE 2017b). IEAAs cover almost all HEIs types, which provide local EM students with broad HE choices. Of the 233 IEAAs, 66 offer ethnic-related programs<sup>8</sup> and/or have ethnic research centers, among which 43 HEIs offer undergraduate and graduate programs, and the remaining 23 are vocational institutions (CMOE 2017b). IEAAs play a significant role in providing HE opportunities and preserving ethnic languages and cultures for EM areas in non-ethnic provinces, such as Yanbian University for the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in Jilin Province, and Jishou University for the Xiangxi Tu and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Hunan Province.

Besides EMCUs and IEAAs, there are also colleges and universities located outside autonomous ethnic areas with an institutional mission of serving EM students. These institutions often include the word “ethnic” in their names. Currently, five HEIs belong to this category (CMOE 2017b). For a broader definition, they are also treated as EMSIs (e.g., Meng 2016).

Due to the lack of an operational definition of “ethnic institutions,” it is controversial in the calculation of the number of EMSIs. The number of EMCUs is different in various governmental reports and in the academic literature. Due to this limitation, enrollment and completion data of EM students in EMSIs are not readily available. Therefore, more work is urgently needed to standardize the definition and classification of Chinese EMSIs.

## NOTES

1. Data on state-recognized Native American tribes were retrieved from the state government websites. Six tribes recognized by both federal and state governments are Poarch Band of Creek Indians in Alabama; Mashantucket Pequot, and Mohegan in Connecticut; Tonawanda Band of Seneca, and Tuscarora Nation in New York; and Pamunkey in Virginia.

2. In China, “nationality” and “ethnicity” are both used when referring to ethnic minority groups. “Ethnic” is usually used in the phrases, such as “ethnic minority” and “ethnic affairs,” while the “nationality” is used in official documents and names of ethnic institutions. However, there is a trend of using the Pinyin of “ethnicity/nationality”—Minzu in the names of ethnic institutions, such as the Minzu University of China.
3. In the 1953 Census, there were 41 recognized Ethnic Minority groups, among which the Nùng and the Sha were later integrated into Zhuang, and the Yakuts were integrated into the Evenks. In the 1964 Census, there were 53 recognized ethnic groups.
4. This table mainly focuses on the Ethnic Minority groups with large population because some small Ethnic Minority groups with very high percentage of HE population lack representation. For example, the Russ people’s population was 15,393 in 2010, and their HE population reached 4257, taking up 27.66 percent of the total Russ population (NBSC 2010).
5. These programs are not for all EM languages; currently there are programs in the following EM languages: Kazak, Korean, Mongol, Uygur, and Zang.
6. The acronym of Native American-Serving Non-Tribal Institutions as “NASNTIs” is viewed as offensive to many Native Americans and the institutions themselves. This study refers to Rochat’s (2015) policy brief and uses “NASIs” as the acronym.
7. Institution type based on discipline is used as one criterion to classify Chinese HEIs, which includes comprehensive university; institution of science and engineering; agricultural institution; forestry institution; institution of medicine and pharmacy; normal institution; institution of languages and literatures; institution of finance and economics; institution of political science and law; institution for sports, physical education, and health sciences; art institution; and ethnic institution.
8. Ethnic-related programs include degree programs of ethnic languages and studies, HE preparatory programs for ethnic students, and programs instructed by ethnic languages. Data are retrieved from IEAAs’ official websites.

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 25 USC §§ 1801-1864, 3301-3325, 5301-5423.  
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# American Indian and Alaska Native and Chinese Ethnic Minority Higher Education: Evolution, Characteristics, and Challenges

To better understand AIAN and CEM HE, it is necessary to go through their histories and policies because they are relevant to the formation and development of TCUs in the United States and EMSIs in China. This chapter reviews the literature in three primary sections, first by examining the history of AIAN HE since the colonial era and the policies of CEM HE from 1949. Next is an overview of the characteristics of AIAN and CEM HE to provide the foundational contexts in which TCUs and EMSIs currently operate. Finally, this chapter summarizes the common challenges faced by TCUs and EMSIs.

## 3.1 EVOLUTION OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE AND CHINESE ETHNIC MINORITY HIGHER EDUCATION

### 3.1.1 *Evolution of American Indian and Alaska Native Higher Education*

The evolution of American Indian HE can be divided into three eras: the colonial era, the federal era, and the self-determination era<sup>1</sup> (Carney 1999; McClellan et al. 2005). The colonial era starting from the discovery of the

new world by Columbus in 1492 to the foundation of the United States in 1776, featuring the colonial college missions but failed efforts for American Indians. In the federal era from 1776 to the 1960s, AIAN HE was widely ignored by federal and state governments except for some tribal, private, and religious efforts. At last, the self-determination era, beginning in 1968 and was characterized by the foundation of tribally controlled colleges and universities (Carney 1999).

### 3.1.1.1 *The Colonial Era, 1492–1776*

After Jamestown colony citizens planned to establish Henrico College—a higher learning institution for American Indians that failed in 1622 because of a tribal uprising—many European colonists formed a belief that American Indians could be indoctrinated into white Christianity and culture through education (Patterson 2015). However, this notion of providing HE opportunities to American Indians also had other, sometimes unintended consequences, including deculturalization and assimilation (Chambers 2016). This belief has remained consistent for many US colonists and essentially served as the central strategy of federal government policies on Native American education until the 1930s.

Among the nine US colleges<sup>2</sup> founded during the colonial period, Harvard College, the College of William and Mary, and Dartmouth College incorporated the education for American Indians into their missions (College of William and Mary 2017; Dartmouth College 1769; Harvard University 1650). For example, Dartmouth College (1769) stated its purpose was “for the education and instruction of youth of the Indian tribes in this land in reading, writing, and all parts of learning which shall appear necessary and expedient for civilizing and Christianizing children of pagans, as well as in all liberal arts and sciences, and also of English youth and any others.” These institutions also established the Indian colleges, as well as buildings to house American Indian students. Also, the later founded College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) enrolled a few American Indian students during the colonial era (Carney 1999). In 1775, the Continental Congress provided \$500 to support American Indian students at Dartmouth College to gain support from American Indian peoples for the Revolution (Reyhner and Eder 2015).

However, it is commonly recognized that the colonial colleges largely failed in accomplishing their missions by providing HE to American Indian students (Carney 1999; McClellan et al. 2005; Patterson 2015). During this era, very few American Indian students attended and graduated from these early colleges. By 1776, there were 47 American Indian students

enrolled in all 9 colonial colleges, in which only 4 earned a baccalaureate degree (Carney 1999). Even at Dartmouth College, which has a strong American Indian tradition, only 25 American Indian students studied there before 1800, ultimately producing only 3 graduates (Carney 1999). By 1973, the total American Indian student enrollment at Dartmouth College remained under 200, with only 25 graduates (Chamber 2016).

There are several reasons for the failure of these nine colonial colleges, where they had more of a fundraising focus instead of placing real attention to American Indian HE needs (Carney 1999). After the creation of some grants from the “Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England” and the “Boyle Fund,” which required an American Indian education mission, Harvard changed its mission statement to meet these funding requirements (Patterson 2015). Second, from the perspective of American Indians, the Eurocentric and elitist education remained unattractive to them (McClellan et al. 2005). American Indians generally held a negative attitude to what they could gain from this college education, while at the same time they felt that the college experiences would cause American Indian students to lose their traditional skills and values.

Besides focusing on a foreign religion, offering preparation for no available application or occupation, and making oneself a stranger to one culture while still not being welcomed in another, the white education did not address the practical skills and knowledge known to be important and useful to the Indians. Such a perceived lack of relevance to or concern for Native American culture would easily conflict with any universal sense that education should serve to preserve and transmit culture. (Carney 1999, p. 40)

Conclusively, throughout the colonial era, HE was applied largely as a tool to assimilate American Indians into mainstream society. Additionally, the American Indian-focused mission in early college charters had not been realized because of the disproportionate focus placed on receiving funding.

### *3.1.1.2 The Federal Era, 1776–1968*

This federal era of AIAN HE started with the formation of treaty relationships between the federal government and American Indian tribes since the foundation of the United States in 1776. Since then, most American Indian affairs including education were passed to the federal government because the US government created a trustee responsibility for AIAN education as a matter of these treaty obligations and subsequent legislation

(McClellan et al. 2005). Between 1804 and 1868, more than 100 treaties including education provisions were signed; however, education obligations served as one exchange for AIAN tribes to cede their lands, and the federal authorities often abolished their responsibilities after the lands were delivered (Chambers 2016).

*The 1820 Doak's Stand Treaty* with the Choctaw included higher educational provisions to provide institutional funding support and individual student scholarship (Chambers 2016). The next signed treaty including provisions on AIAN HE was the *Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek* signed in September 1830 with the Choctaw (Olivas 1996), through which 40 Choctaw students per year would be supported to attend state colleges and universities for 20 years (Chambers 2016). *The 1835 Treaty of New Echota* with the Cherokee promised a \$150,000 financial aid package for the government to both common and higher learning institutions (Chambers 2016). After 1840, AIAN HE relied more on funds from land sales than those from direct federal support. However, under the *Indian Appropriation Act of 1871*, AIAN tribes could no longer sign contracts or treaties with the federal government. Also, tribal influences on AIAN HE continued decreasing through the *Five Tribes Act of 1906* and the *Indian Civilization Fund Act of 1918* (Chambers 2016).

During the 1800s, when the United States experienced a significant expansion of HEI establishment, several colleges were founded from lower-level Indian schools. However, to ensure enough student enrollment and funding, these colleges were open to both Indian and White students which led these colleges to eventually transition into mainstream HEIs (Carney 1999). Around 1900, only two small colleges exclusively provided HE to American Indians: Sheldon Jackson College, established in 1878 for Alaskan Natives, and Croatan Normal School, which was a four-year institution supported by the State of North Carolina (McClellan et al. 2005). Meanwhile, despite some occasional funds for scholarships or loans to help American Indian students in the Eastern colleges, there were very few HE support opportunities—as well as counseling and recruitment programs—for American Indian students (Carney 1999).

Due to the general failure of the assimilation movement in American Indian education, the *Meriam Report* in 1928 highlighted the severe underfunding of American Indian HEIs and suggested that American Indians should have more freedom to manage their own education systems (Reyhner and Eder 2015). Inspired by the *Merriam Report*, the

*Indian Reorganization Act of 1934* was passed, which with the Progressive Movement in education has been recognized as a significant turning point for American Indian HE in the United States. First, a series of reforms were undertaken to cancel the government's almost 150-year-old attempt at elimination and assimilation of Indian cultures and languages. On the contrary, the federal government began to recognize and preserve American Indian cultures and languages. Second, the tribal governments were re-established under this Act, which was a significant move in the development of Indian self-government. Third, regarding HE, this act established a loan of \$250,000 to support Indian college students (Chambers 2016). However, the passage of the *Indian Reorganization Act of 1934* did not immediately change the disadvantageous situation of American Indians in HE. It was because of the hostile relationship that existed between the federal government and American Indians during the intervening decades caused by the federal government's termination policy to cease the trust relationship, relocate native tribes from reservations, and shift much of the locus of responsibility to the states (McClellan et al. 2005).

In 1932, there were only 385 American Indian students enrolled in US HEIs (Patterson 2015), and the number grew to around 3,500 by the late 1960s (McClellan et al. 2005). Several reasons led to the enrollment growth including support provided by the *Indian Reorganization Act of 1934*, the G.I. Bill by which the American Indian veterans of World War II could attend colleges, a scholarship program implemented by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and the increased tribal support for college scholarships (McClellan et al. 2005).

In conclusion, the federal era of American Indian HE was characterized by many of the same objectives as existed during the colonial era, including Christianization, forced acculturation, and assimilation (Belgarde 1996). During this period, the federal government focused on vocational training and religious instruction for American Indians (Carney 1999). The efforts of American Indian tribes and the federal government to establish Native American HEIs did not work well while almost all of these HEIs eventually evolved to primarily serve mainstream society. Also, for some tribes, American Indian attendance in HE during this period gradually relied on funds received from land sales through the treaties signed with the federal government.



### 3.1.1.3 *The Self-determination Era, 1968–Present*

The establishment of 30 tribally controlled colleges in 1968 was the beginning mark of the self-determination era. Navajo Community College (currently the Diné College) was the first tribally controlled college in the United States. These colleges serve the purpose of preserving and promoting AIAN tribal cultures, histories, and languages, which is very different from the assimilation purpose of American HE in the colonial and federal eras (Patterson 2015).

Even though HE is the responsibility of each state in the United States, the federal government plays a leading role in the administration of AIAN HE. A series of acts and presidential executive orders have been passed since the 1960s and continue to facilitate the development of AIAN HE. On 15 December 1971, the *Navajo Community College Act* was passed to assist the Navajo Tribe of Indians through the establishment of the Navajo Community College. The Secretary of the Interior was authorized to appropriate no more than an initial \$5,500,000 to support the construction, maintenance, and operation of the College.

On 23 June 1972, the *Indian Education Act* was put into force by the US Congress to promise to provide all AIAN students with equal education opportunities. Based on this Act, the Office of Indian Education and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education were established to help the federal government administrate AIAN educational affairs. Regarding AIAN HE, the 1974 amendments to the *Indian Education Act* provided funding toward teacher education programs and issued fellowships to AIAN students in graduate and professional programs. Most significantly, the Act required the active participation of AIANs in the management of their own education system.

On 4 January 1975, the US Congress approved the *Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act*, which emphasized the significance of Indian self-determination. “The Congress hereby recognizes the obligation of the United States to respond to the strong expression of the Indian people for self-determination by assuring maximum Indian participation in the direction of educational as well as other Federal services to Indian communities so as to render such services more responsive to the needs and desires of those communities” (p. 2204).

On 17 October 1978, the *Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act* was passed to provide grants and technical assistance by the Secretary of the Interior for the operation and improvement of tribally controlled community colleges to ensure continued and expanded

educational opportunities for AIAN students. In specific, an amount equal to \$4,000 for each full-time equivalent AIAN student in attendance at tribally controlled community colleges would be granted each academic year. From 1979 to 1981, three appropriations of \$25 million, \$25 million, and \$30 million—as well as \$3.2 million each year for technical assistance—were granted to tribally controlled community colleges. With the subsequent re-authorization of this Act, the amounts of appropriations were increased continuously. In 2008, the headcount appropriation for each Indian student became \$8,000.

On 30 October 1990, Congress' passage of the *Native American Language Act* approved the policy of the United States to “preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages.” Regarding HE, the Act declares that the United States will “encourage all institutions of elementary, secondary and higher education, where appropriate, to include Native American languages in the curriculum in the same manner as foreign languages and to grant proficiency in Native American languages the same full academic credit as proficiency in foreign languages.”

On 23 July 1972, the *Higher Education Tribal Grant Authorization Act* was passed by the Congress, which emphasized the increasing demands for postsecondary education for AIAN students, as well as the limited HE sources for them. In this sense, the Act reclaims the HE grants for AIAN students under the *Snyder Act of 1921*, and the *Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act*. On the same day, the *Critical Needs for Tribal Development Act* was passed, which provided financial support to the critical areas for the economic or human development needs of the AIAN tribes and their members.

Meanwhile, the *Tribal Development Student Assistance Act* was passed to establish a revolving loan program to be administrated by a tribe or tribal organization for increasing the number of college graduates available to work in tribal business, tribal government, and tribal services. Also, Congress established the American Indian Postsecondary Economic Development Scholarship, as well as the American Indian Teacher Training Program. However, these three parts of the *Tribal Development Student Assistance Act* were repealed on 31 October 1998.

On 20 October 1994, the passage of the *Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act* awarded 34 TCUs (called “1994 Institutions”) with land-grant status, by which TCUs receive annual appropriations, institutional capacity building grants, and research grants from the US Secretary

of the Treasury. In the 2014 amendment to this Act, the number of “1994 Institutions” increased to 35.

On 14 August 2008, the *Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008*, as the re-authorization of the *Higher Education Act of 1965*, proposed the criteria of the Native American Serving, Non-Tribal Institutions (NASIs). Eligible institutions must have an undergraduate enrollment of at least 10 percent Native American students and qualify for Title III status under the US Department of Education (2015). The funding for NASIs is appropriated from the *College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007* (Rochat 2015).

Besides these significant acts relating to Native American HE, US Presidents implemented several executive orders during this period to promote the development of AIAN HE. On 19 October 1996, President Clinton’s *Executive Order 13021 on Tribal Colleges and Universities* (1996) established the President’s Board of Advisors on Tribal Colleges and Universities and the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities to provide advice regarding the progress on the five-year federal plan of the development of TCUs.

On 6 August 1998, President Bush’s *Executive Order 13096 on American Indian and Alaska Native Education* (1998) established an Interagency Task Force on AIAN Education to establish a comprehensive federal AIAN education policy.

On 3 July 2002, President Bush’s *Executive Order 13270 on Tribal Colleges and Universities* (2002) built on President Clinton’s efforts and renewed the President’s Board of Advisors on Tribal Colleges and Universities and the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities. This Order provides a clear purpose for TCUs which includes “maintaining and preserving irreplaceable languages and cultural traditions; in offering a high-quality college education to younger students; and in providing job training and other career-building programs to adults and senior citizens. Tribal colleges provide crucial services in communities that continue to suffer high rates of unemployment and the resulting social and economic distress” (p. 45288).

On 30 April 2004, President Bush’s *Executive Order 13336 on American Indian and Alaska Native Education* (2004) replacing the previous Order 13096 established an “Interagency Working Group on American Indian and Alaska Native Education” to develop a federal interagency plan that recommends initiatives, strategies, and ideas for the development of AIAN education. Regarding HE, the Working Group focuses on enhancing the

research capabilities of TCUs, as well as developing related partnerships and collaborations with non-tribal HEIs and research organizations.

On 2 December 2011, President Obama's *Executive Order on Improving American Indian and Alaska Native Educational Opportunities and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities* (2011) established the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education. This Initiative is co-chaired by the Secretary of Education and the Secretary of the Interior to "expand educational opportunities and improve educational outcomes for all AIAN students, including opportunities to learn their Native languages, cultures, and histories and receive complete and competitive educations that prepare them for college, careers, and productive and satisfying lives" (p. 76605). Funding and administrative support, as well as an Interagency Working Group on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, was established to realize this goal.

### 3.1.2 *Evolution of Chinese Ethnic Minority Higher Education Policies*

Referring to the existing literature on CEM HE policies from a chronological perspective (e.g., Liao 2012; Ma 2006; Zhang 2010, 2011; Zhang and Qu 2009), the time segment standard in this study is based on the significant political events from 1949 to the present, which have exerted considerable influences on CEM HE. These critical political events include the ten-year Cultural Revolution starting from 1966, the implementation of the *Reform and Opening-Up Policy* in 1978, and the implementation of the *Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy* in 1984. Accordingly, the four periods noted are 1949 to 1965, 1966 to 1977, 1978 to 1983, and 1984 to present.

The first phase (1949 to 1965) put much emphasis on the cultivation of EM leaders. In the second phase (1966 to 1977), the development of Chinese ethnic HE stagnated because of the adverse influences caused by the Cultural Revolution. The third phase (1978 to 1983) was largely a recovery period for CEM HE, while the Chinese government implemented various new ethnic-related programs. In the last phase (1984 to present), a series of laws were proposed and implemented, which have further facilitated the development of EM HE. Also, partnership assistance has been an important topic in this phase.

### 3.1.2.1 *Ethnic Minority Leadership and HEIs, 1949–1965*

The period of 1949 to 1965 was a starting stage for CEM HE. First, policies related to EM HE began to be set up. Second, cultivating EM political leaders and establishing EM HEIs were the foci of this phase. Third, the government began to implement assistance policies to help EM students to access HE. Finally, the Chinese government realized that the main issue for EM HE was the shortage of competent teachers.

Shortly before the central government of the PRC was founded on 1 October 1949, on 29 September, the *Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference* was adopted by the "First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference" (1949). In this conference, affirmative action policies were proposed and implemented to serve as the fundamental guidelines for EM groups in China. This policy granted all ethnic groups equal legal status and confirmed the government should promote the development of EM cultures and education.

On 24 November 1950, the first EM HE policy—*Trial Training Program of Ethnic Minority Leadership*—was issued by the Governmental Administration Council of the Central People's Government of China (GACCPGC)<sup>3</sup> (1950a). This program aimed to prepare EMs to serve as political leaders in EM areas. According to the *Trial Program of Establishing the Central College for Nationalities*, which was proposed at the same time, the Central College for Nationalities (currently the Minzu University of China) was founded in Beijing in 1951,<sup>4</sup> and three branch campuses had been set up in Northwest, Southwest, and Central East China (GACCPGC 1950b). These three branch campuses later became independent EM universities. Also, this Program proposed for the first time to provide preferential policies to help EM students access HE. In the early 1950s, EM colleges only provided a small group of upper-class EM members and leaders with training classes rather than regular programs. The contents of instruction focused on political and ethnic education, as well as Mandarin and EM languages (Zhao 1998).

China's Ministry of Education (CMOE) held the "First National Conference on Ethnic Minority Education" in September 1951. In this conference, the basic guidelines for developing EM education were further reiterated as that EM education should be in an ethnic and scientific format, suitable for each group's situation, and benefiting their cultural, economic, and social development. Moreover, the primary task of EM education was confirmed as training EM leaders to serve the leading roles

in developing EM politics, economy, culture, and education. Based on the consensus reached in this Conference, the *Trial Training Program of Ethnic Minority Teachers* was adopted in 1951 by GACCPGC (1951) to prepare teachers for EM education. In 1952, the Department of Minority Education was set up within the CMOE, and other organizations were also established in local governments to oversee EM education.

In June 1955, the CMOE and State Ethnic Affairs Commission of China (SEACC) co-hosted the “First National Ethnic Minority College Presidents Conference” to discuss the development of EM colleges. Through providing formal three- and four-year programs to age-eligible EM students, EM colleges began to transform to regular degree-granting HEIs (Zhao 1998).

An EM education development plan of 1956 to 1967 was proposed at the “Second National Conference on Ethnic Minority Education” in 1956. Also, in this Conference, the mission of EM HEIs was confirmed as cultivating political and professional leaders. The State Council of China (SCC 1956) issued *Guidance on Operating Expenses of Ethnic Minority Education* to provide financial support to facilitate the development of EM education.

From 1956 to 1966, the development of EM HEIs was the principal task of the CMOE and SEACC. Accordingly, the second to fourth “National Ethnic Minority College Presidents Conference” were held during this period to discuss how to further improve the development of EM HEIs through strengthening political education and institutional governance, as well as adjusting degree programs and developing HE preparatory programs. In the fourth Conference, the primary mission of EM HEIs was reaffirmed as training in-service and prospective EM political leaders.

In 1957, the CMOE (1957) proposed the *Opinions on Solving the Teacher Problem of Ethnic Minority Colleges* and indicated that the teacher shortage was the most severe issue for EM HEIs, and they should solve this problem through attracting Han talents and cultivating EM students to serve as teachers. In the same year, the CMOE also put forward the policy that some EM students (from the Uyghur, Kazak, Mongol, Korean, and Zang groups) who were able to take a literature class in their mother tongues could also take the NHEEE in their native languages.

In August 1962, the CMOE and SEACC (1962) co-issued the *Notice on Higher Education Priority Admission for Ethnic Minority Students* to officially provide EM students with preferential policies in HE admission. EM students would be first considered when they reached the same test score

standard as Han students. Moreover, they could receive additional assistance when they chose to enter the HEIs located within their autonomous areas.

### 3.1.2.2 *National Chaos, Economic Disarray, and Stagnation, 1966–1977*

The Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 had comprehensively exerted negative influences on China's politics, economy, culture, and education. Despite a good start in the previous phase, CEM HE faced unprecedented difficulties during this period (Zhang 2011). First, all EM HE policies were abandoned by the government. Second, eight of ten EM HEIs were shut down. Third, the same as with regular HEIs, from 1966 to 1971, EM HEIs ceased their admissions. Finally, all preferential policies to EM students were canceled, and related organizations at national and local levels were closed.

Until the end of the Cultural Revolution, some HEIs in EM regions resumed admissions. However, admissions were based on recommendations instead of performance in the standardized examination. The central government also began the recovery work of EM education.

### 3.1.2.3 *Recovery and Ethnic Minority Programs, 1978–1983*

From 1978 to 1983, CEM HE experienced a recovery time from the widespread destruction that occurred during the Cultural Revolution. The different levels of each EM group in their educational development began to attract policymakers' attention. Also, EM Programs were proposed to take full advantage of HE resources outside EM areas.

On 9 October 1978, the CMOE and SEACC (1978) jointly promulgated the *Opinions on Strengthening Ethnic Minority Education*, which emphasized the significance of the preferential policies to EM students, and indicated to establish and develop EM education systems based on the unique situations of each EM group.

The "Fifth National Ethnic Minority College Presidents Conference" was co-held by CMOE and SAECC in August 1979. The Conference report identified the unique aspects of ethnic HEIs compared with regular HEIs, including the form of institutional management, disciplinary structure, instructional contents and formats, political and ideological education, and living management. Meanwhile, in this Conference, the mission of EM HEIs was adjusted from primarily cultivating political



leaders to training EM professionals whose talents could then contribute to the modernization of EM areas (Zhang 2011).

In June 1980, the CMOE (1980) issued the *Notice on the Trial Running of Ethnic Minority Programs at Key Full-Time Higher Education Institutions*, which created a new way to develop EM HE through applying HE sources in non-ethnic areas. Additionally, in 1984, the CMOE and SEACC (1984) passed the *Opinions on Further Strengthening the Leadership and Management of Ethnic Minority Programs at Higher Education Institutions*, which stipulated general policies regarding admission, instruction, and governmental funding of EM programs. In specific, EM programs were divided into three levels—the college preparatory program, the higher vocational program, and the bachelor’s degree program.

In February 1981, the “Third National Conference on Ethnic Minority Education” was jointly held by the CMOE and SEACC in Beijing. This Conference concluded the development experiences of EM education in the past three decades and emphasized that the principal task was to clear the negative influences of the Cultural Revolution. In specific, the CMOE and SEACC proposed several preferential policies to EM students. First, EM students could receive HE privilege admission while considering their test scores in the NHEEE. Second, the HE admission rate of EM students in EM regions must be higher than the local EM population rate. And finally, the government would fund EM students to study abroad.

#### 3.1.2.4 *Promulgation of Laws and Partnership Assistance, 1984–Present*

In this phase, a series of legislation related to CEM HE was promulgated, and the partnership assistance between regular and EM HEIs was promoted. The foci of this period started to cover the quality of education through optimizing the HE system. Also, EM language and culture preservation became a significant topic.

In May 1984, *the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy* was passed by the National People’s Congress of China, which provided legal support to the development of EM HE.

In accordance with the guidelines of the state on education and with the relevant stipulations of the law, the organs of self-government of national autonomous areas shall decide on the plans for the development of education in these areas, on the establishment of various kinds of schools at different levels, on their educational system, forms, curricula, the language used



in instruction and enrollment procedures. (National People's Congress of China 1984, Article 36)

In August 1987, the CMOE and SEACC co-held a conference in Urumqi, Xinjiang, which determined the regular HEIs in economically developed and coastal areas should provide institutional support to HEIs in EM areas. Also, in October 1989, the CMOE and SEACC implemented a three-year HE partnership assistance program in Xinjiang, in which 20 central government ministries and commissions, as well as 55 HEIs, participated.

In March 1992, in the “Fourth National Conference on Ethnic Minority Education” in Beijing, the report *Opinions on Several Issues of Strengthening Ethnic Minority Education* affirmed the significant role HEIs play within EM regions in relation to local economic and social development (CMOE and SEACC 1992).

In October 1992, the CMOE (1992) issued the *Guidance Outline of Ethnic Minority Education Development and Reform (Trial)* that emphasized the equality and quality of education and proposed to reduce the quality gap of education between EM and developed areas in China. The primary task of EM HE in the 1990s was to enhance education quality by optimizing institutional structures and improving teaching and learning conditions. Also, the HE enrollment of EM students should cover all 55 groups, and the total enrollment numbers should increase.

In February 1993, the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and SCC (1993) issued the *Outlines for China's Education Reform and Development*. It proposed to facilitate EM education through providing financial support and preferential policies to EM students and graduates who were willing to work in EM areas. This policy also stressed the partnership assistance between developed and EM regions, and the development of EM education should suit local conditions.

In 1995, the National People's Congress Standing Committee (1995) passed the *Education Law of the People's Republic of China*, which reiterated the development of EM education should consider local conditions. Moreover, it put much emphasis on the development and promotion of bilingual education within EM areas.

In 1998, the National People's Congress Standing Committee (1998) passed the *Higher Education Law of the People's Republic of China*. It stipulated “the State, in light of the characteristics and needs of the EM groups, assists and supports the development of higher education in regions

inhabited by ethnic peoples for the purpose of training senior specialists among them” (Article 8).

In 2002, the SCC (2002) issued the *Decision on Deepening Reform and Accelerating Development of Ethnic Minority Education* that underscored the partnership assistance between the economically developed and EM areas. It also stressed the importance of preferential policies for EM students to access HE through financially promoting EM programs, especially increasing the enrollment of the college preparatory program. Also, this policy proposed to implement the *Cultivation Plan of High-Level Ethnic Minority Talents* to cultivate master’s and doctoral graduates through special enrollment and placement methods. Meanwhile, some EM HEIs in the western part of China and the Minzu University of China received special support to serve as key HEIs to lead the development of EM HE. To further implement this policy, the CMOE and SEACC hosted the “National Conference of Ethnic Minority Higher Education Institutions” in 2005.

In 2010, the CMOE (2010) put forward the *Outline of the National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)* and stressed the importance of preferential policies, bilingual education, and partnership assistance. Regarding EM HE, the CMOE indicated that central and local governments should focus on the cultivation of bilingual teachers and encourage HE graduates to work in EM areas through providing preferential policies.

On 11 August 2015, the SCC issued the *Decision on Accelerating Development of Ethnic Minority Education*, which serves as the latest governmental document on EM education. The “Sixth National Conference on Ethnic Minority Education” was held with the promulgation of this document on 18 August 2015. Regarding EM HE, the SCC emphasized an increase of EM students and the enhancement of talent training of EM HEIs through optimizing the EM HE system. In specific, some undergraduate-level EM HEIs given guidance to transform into vocational institutions. The SCC (2015, Article 7) also stressed suggested ways of preserving EM cultures and languages:

To encourage cooperation between regular and vocational higher education institutions and cultural enterprises and organizations. To enlist excellent Ethnic Minority culture as disciplines and to conduct relevant instruction and research activities. To study, preserve, and inherit excellent intangible

cultural heritage. And to scientifically preserve Ethnic Minority languages and characters.

In conclusion, from 1984 to the present, the implementation of a series of laws and policies has led toward significant progress of CEM HE. While building on many of the foundational foci from previous phases, including preferential policies and bilingual education, some new topics were also introduced such as partnership assistance and the application of information and communications technology (ICT) in EM HE (SCC 2015).

### 3.1.3 *Conclusive Remarks*

Both AIANs and CEMs met significant challenges in their histories regarding education, such as the assimilation policies in the United States and the Cultural Revolution in China. However, in more recent decades, they have gained notable achievements in HE, including growth in enrollments, as well as an added focus on quality. Ethnic minority-serving HEIs—including TCUs and EMSIs—continue to play a critical role in both countries.

## 3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE AND CHINESE ETHNIC MINORITY HIGHER EDUCATION

Due to their different histories and contexts, AIANs and CEMs have different characteristics in developing their HE experiences and opportunities. This section examines the characteristics of AIAN and CEM HE to provide the contexts which are relevant to the development of TCUs and EMSIs.

### 3.2.1 *Characteristics of American Indian and Alaska Native Higher Education*

In this study, AIAN HE refers to AIAN members receiving HE and pursuing a degree in the mainstream colleges and universities and tribally controlled HEIs. The dominant characteristic of AIAN HE is manifested in tribal nation building, which is originated from the history between American Indians and the early colonists and the US government, as well

as from the current unique and dual ethnic and political status of AIANs. At the same time, unlike other ethnic/racial minorities in the United States, AIANs keep pursuing their independence rather than merging into the mainstream White society (Alfred 1999; Cornell and Kalt 2003; Grande 2004). Moreover, the government-to-government relationship between AIAN tribes and the federal government has created a platform for AIANs to pursue the independence on their tribal political, economic, cultural, and educational affairs. In this process, the unique knowledge system is required to realize the nation building purpose. In this sense, the characteristics of AIAN HE in the United States can be concluded as tribal nation building and indigenous knowledge systems.

### 3.2.1.1 *Tribal Nation Building*

For the AIANs in the United States, a nation covers a tribe's kinship, government, shared territory, worldview, and spiritual community (Champagne 2008). Akoto (1992) defines the nation building as "the conscious and focused application of [native] people's collective resources, energies, and knowledge to the task of liberating and developing the psychic and physical space that is identified as own" (p. 3). Moreover, the process of nation building covers all aspects of AIANs' tribal life, including legal and political affairs, culture, economy, health, and so on, while prosperity, sovereignty, and self-determination are the driving forces of nation building (Brayboy et al. 2012). There are two popular models of nation building. One relies heavily on the economic development of the AIAN tribes (Cornell and Kalt 2003; Frickey 1997; Helton 2003/2004). Moreover, economic development aims to eliminate their dependence on external resources, and other aspects of nation building—such as political, cultural, and educational development—help serve to achieve this goal. The second model of nation building also emphasizes the importance of economic development, but it is not the most significant focus. The process of nation building also emphasizes other aspects, such as politics, culture, and education (Brayboy et al. 2012).

As mentioned above, the driving forces of nation building come from the pursuit of AIAN tribes for well-being, sovereignty, and self-determination (Brayboy et al. 2012). The Self-Determination Movement in the 1960s started the new age for AIANs in controlling their own affairs. The *Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975* passed by the US federal government provided substantial legal support for the autonomy of the AIAN tribes, with the support of which

there have been many policies implemented to guarantee and assist AIAN tribes to achieve greater political, economic, cultural, and educational autonomy (Cornell and Kalt 2010). In the second half of the 1980s, AIAN tribes launched the Nation Building Movement to rebuild their political institutions and to redefine their relationship with the federal government. The policy of Self-Determination contains two significant implications. First, each AIAN tribe has control over its affairs. Second, AIAN tribes keep the government-to-government trust relationship with the federal government (Cornell and Kalt 2010). The Self-Determination policy provides protection for the independent development of AIAN HE.

Although the Self-Determination policy provides essential guarantees for AIANs to fight for their sovereignty, this policy is only a sufficient condition. The necessary condition is that the individual members of AIAN tribes need to realize the importance of sovereignty in their minds (Brayboy et al. 2012; Coffey and Tsosie 2001; Helton 2003/2004). In this sense, one of the critical functions of AIAN HE is to realize the mind independence and autonomy of native peoples.

Specifically, HE is relevant for the nation building of AIANs. First, HE helps AIAN tribes strive for “cultural sovereignty” (Coffey and Tsosie 2001). Cultural sovereignty is an essential and integrated part of nation building because it determines the direction of nation building. “Individuals who sacrifice and commit to earning degrees from [an] institution of higher education, on behalf of others who are part of their community, engage in the process of exercising cultural sovereignty” (Brayboy et al. 2012, p. 21). Second, HE is also used to reshape the rules of dialogue between AIAN tribes and the federal government. The federal government often determines this rule, so the voice of the Indians should be heard (Lyons 2000). “Indigenous peoples often seek degrees from institutions of higher education with the want of altering or changing the terms of engagement and debate” (Brayboy et al. 2012, p. 21). Finally, HE is vital for and the realization of tribal economic, cultural, and social well-being (Blain 2010).

### *3.2.1.2 Indigenous Knowledge Systems*

The establishment of an independent indigenous knowledge system is critical for each AIAN tribe in the realization of self-determination. However, it is diverse within the AIAN tribes. Each of the 573 federally recognized tribes has its own culture, custom, and situation. Also, indigenous knowledge systems are deeply rooted in the living experiences of

each AIAN tribe and its members. Therefore, there is not a universal indigenous knowledge system applicable to all AIAN tribes, and each tribe must bear the responsibility to preserve and develop its own knowledge system.

However, “Indigenous peoples share a common bond. This common bond rests on a commitment to a profoundly respectful way of governing based on a worldview that balances respect for autonomy with recognition of a universal interdependency and promotes peaceful coexistence among all elements of creation” (Brayboy et al. 2012, p. 15). There is an important commonality regarding knowledge systems of all AIANs that is they stress the survival of communities, and the personal growth and development must take tribal development as a prerequisite. The reciprocal relationship between the individual and the tribe also penetrates the education system. The sharing of knowledge is a manifestation of reciprocity (Whitt 2004). In this sense, HE is an essential platform for sharing knowledge and preserving the knowledge system. Also, the reciprocity orientation is influencing the practices of ethnic minority-serving HEIs, especially TCUs, and American Indian programs based in mainstream colleges and universities.

Culturally responsive education is an essential means of developing indigenous knowledge systems and achieving the success of AIAN education (Brayboy et al. 2012). Culturally responsive education values students’ backgrounds, treats their cultures as strengths, and reflects on and utilizes their learning styles (Gollnick and Chinn 2009). Even though culturally responsive education is more used and discussed at the primary and secondary education levels than in HE, the emergence and development of TCUs have provided a new research platform for this topic. TCUs are naturally applying the culturally responsive way to educate their students. Also, the issue of balancing the culturally responsive and mainstream Western way is worth being studied further.

In general, HE is a significant way for AIANs to realize nation building and to achieve tribal prosperity. Education in general, and HE attainment in particular, is a key guarantee of AIAN tribes being able to achieve political, economic, and cultural success. At the same time, under the influence of indigenous knowledge systems, AIAN HE has a robust community-serving characteristic. In addition to the mission of community engagement and service at TCUs, AIAN students at mainstream HEIs also present the same characteristic.

### 3.2.2 *Characteristics of Chinese Ethnic Minority Higher Education*

CEM HE refers to the postsecondary education aiming to serve EM students and areas. CEM HE has a strong political meaning, which is reflected in its importance to national unity and stability. Also, because of the social transformation of Chinese society, the rapid economic development in recent decades has exerted influences on education, which is manifested in the domination of the human capital in students' choices in HE. Finally, the centralized educational system has led to several notable drawbacks of CEM HE.

#### 3.2.2.1 *Pluralist-Unity Framework*

The Pluralist-Unity Framework is the guiding philosophy adopted by the Chinese government to deal with ethnic affairs. It was suggested by China's famous historian Xiaotong Fei (1989) to describe the basic pattern of ethnic relations in Chinese history. This framework originated from the ethnic situation in the long history of China, as well as from the strong political beliefs on EM cultures and languages and national unity. This framework contains two levels. One is the national level of Chinese ethnic affairs, which emphasizes political unity; the other is the level of EM groups, which emphasizes cultural diversity in language, religion, custom, and so on (Ma 2006). Within this theoretical framework, CEM HE has two functions. One is to facilitate the educational development, and the other is to promote the unity of all EM groups (Gan and Peng 2012). In this sense, EMSIs serve dual purposes of promoting EM culture as well as supporting governmental policies on ethnic affairs (Clothey 2005).

The Pluralist-Unity Framework has shown the central government's respect for EM cultures, which has been valuable for creating a favorable environment for EM students to invest and apply the cultural capital gained from their cultural backgrounds (Yan et al. 2015). Also, according to the Pluralist-Unity Framework, some CEM groups are trying to highlight their unique characteristics in the Chinese HE system; however, it is difficult to be realized within China's centralized educational system but provides a significant insight that diversity should be respected in CEM HE (Chen 2004).

In the practices of CEM HE, the Pluralist-Unity Framework focuses more on unity than the pluralist. This unbalanced emphasis is reflected in the impact of the Communist Party of China on the EM HE. In the

management of EMSIs, the dual leadership system of the president and party secretary is applied to ensure the influence of the Communist Party. Moreover, usually, the president is served by EM members to guarantee ethnic characteristics.

### 3.2.2.2 *Human Capital Orientation*

In China, human capital theory (Becker 1964, 2008) plays a major role for EM students in receiving HE through influencing them and their parents regarding choices about HE. Since the implementation of the *Reform and Opening-Up Policy*, Chinese HE was greatly influenced by neoliberal trends (Jacob 2004), which also influenced EM HE in China. Following the neoliberal trend, the Chinese government and public policymakers treat education as an economic activity, and receiving education has become one part of the process for individuals' life investment, as well as a part of the economic development of the country. "Operationalized as educational achievement, human capital has been measured as levels of schooling, rates of school completion or graduation, test scores, and the like" (Tittenbrun 2013, p. 187). Therefore, education begins to be provided by some profit-seeking ventures or organized on private property. From the perspective of governmental policies and practices, the policies focusing on human capital are part of the overall HE policy in China, which aim to increase the enrollment and graduation rates of EM students. Also, these policies are focusing on training and the local economic development of EM areas.

From the perspective of human capital, even though CEM HE has been enjoying a favorable policy environment, the mainstream social environment is an obstacle for EM HE students to promote their languages and cultures. The domination of Han culture and Mandarin (*Putonghua*) in educational and employment settings makes it hard for EM students to use their native languages in daily life and promote their cultures. This situation is worsening along with China's economic achievements and reforms in different areas, especially in education and healthcare, which have exerted different impacts on the diverse population, and "exacerbated the negative impact of economic reforms, widening the gap between China's eastern, coastal region and the less-developed western region, between the urban and rural population, and between the Han majority and those living in China's minority areas" (Hill and Zhou 2009, p. 3). The fundamental role of CEM HE policies to preserve EM cultures and



languages has constantly been interrupted by social reforms and development.

Particularly, at the tertiary level, since the late 1990s, the Chinese central government has gradually abolished free HE and government-guaranteed employment of university and college undergraduates, which brought a stricter screening of graduates in the competitive labor market. For EM students, they are often placed in a more disadvantaged position because they have to master not only generic skills but also Mandarin and English. In this sense, their EM backgrounds, especially their languages and cultures, are not a capital gain, but a barrier for them (Wang 2016). It has been a dilemma to utilize HE to preserve CEM languages and cultures because this goal is difficult to be realized in such a context where Han culture dominates nearly all aspects of life. When looking at the individual EM student and EMSI, they are struggling in the center of the storm.

The primary issue here is that EM culture is just playing a superficial role in CEM HE policies, which merely focuses on EM identity instead of the rich connotation of EM culture. For example, the points allowance policy in the NHEEE is based on students' EM identities and has led to many identity fraud cases. Han students change to EM status, or even EM students change their identities to other specific groups, to receive more bonus scores. From the perspective of capital, in a neoliberal context with the human capital orientation, Chinese HE policies aim to cultivate competent HE graduates to meet the challenges of urbanization, globalization, and modernization (Wang 2015). In such an environment, stakeholders will decide what kinds of capital will be valued in HE. EM students and their parents do not put much attention to their cultural background and customs because they cannot bring them direct perceived benefits through HE. Only their EM identity seems to be a beneficial factor to them.

Also, CEM HE policies do not necessarily keep pace with social and political developments. Just as Feng and Cheung (2010) note, "The reform from a planned economy to a market economy has fundamentally affected the enforcement of these particular policies (preferential policies)" (p. 257). The national economic system continues changing in China but the EM preferential policies are still the same as they were proposed.

In conclusion, CEM HE policies do not realize its significant role in EM cultures and languages.

If the ultimate goal of preferential policies is to achieve *Duoyuan Yiti* [Pluralist-Unity] in a real sense, preferential policies should not only provide easier access to public educational institutions, but they should also promote cultural diversity. Unfortunately, the nationally unified mainstream curriculum portrays ethnic cultures as colorful and exotic. To some extent, these are well-intentioned but culturally exclusive policies that benefit some ethnic groups but exclude others. The policies ignore the cultural heritage of ethnic groups with small populations. (Wang 2016, pp. 169–170)

Therefore, it is necessary to reform CEM HE policies to solve the issue that it fails to preserve EM cultures and languages through cultivating EM leaders and talents. One particular task is to redefine the role of EM cultures in CEM HE policy-making and implementation. For example, the criteria of points allowance in the NHEEE should be EM students' cultural contributions instead of only their identities. They need to prove their EM language skills and knowledge of their traditional cultures (Bai 2015).

### 3.2.2.3 *Multicultural Education in a Centralized Education System*

Since its foundation, the Chinese government has stated the significance of EM cultures and languages. Among the 55-recognized EM groups, 53 have their distinct languages, of which 21 have written forms (Myers Jr. et al. 2013). As the Chinese EM policies state, each group is free to use their languages, both written and spoken, in life and educational settings. However, the realization of this policy objective is very different among EM groups.

Regarding specific policies, the Chinese government has implemented a bilingual education policy for EM students, which involves Mandarin plus an EM language. This policy promotes the use of native languages as the medium of instruction for EM groups primarily at the basic education level. However, the implementation of this policy is different among EMs or even in the same group (Dong et al. 2015). For some groups, their native languages are used as the medium of instruction before HE, and Mandarin is taught as a second language. For other groups, their native languages are taught, but very soon afterward, they begin to take classes in Mandarin, and their mother tongues are taught as a subject (Jacob 2016; UNESCO Bangkok 2015; Xiong et al. 2016). With the introduction of English as a compulsory subject in all-level curriculum, trilingual education has become a universal phenomenon.

From the perspective of cultural capital theory, the promotion of government-led multilingual education policies is a significant way to help EM students to gain cultural capital.

It is believed that the bilingual learning experience of EMLs [Ethnic Minority learners] will help them not only develop their early literacy by mother-tongue education but also acquire Putonghua [aka. Mandarin]—linguistic capital for equal educational opportunities at advanced levels—as Putonghua has become the dominant medium of communication in many domains of social life such as education and employment. As for the youngest Ethnic Minority people, Chinese is a pathway to social mobility and personal development, and English a passport to the globalized world. (Wang 2015, p. 38)

Multilingual education in China is facing many challenges and obstacles, one of which is that ethnic languages, as well as talented bilingual students, do not receive enough recognition from society. From the perspective of cultural capital, this problem is generated by the issue of transferring ethnic languages into capital that can bring money and social status benefits for EM students.

EM education in China is multicultural or cross-cultural education. However, there are many problems in multicultural education under a centralized education system, which hinder the realization of cultural preservation through multicultural education. The NHEEE system is the embodiment of the centralized education system. Although the Chinese government put forward the *Min Kao Min* policy in 1981, that is, if EM students choose to attend ethnic programs at HEIs, they can use their mother tongue languages in the NHEEE. In this case, the Ethnic Literature text will be designed by the Department of Education of the Autonomous Regions. However, only a few EM groups with large populations can benefit from this policy, such as the Mongol and Korean Chinese. Second, in the NHEEE, except for the Ethnic Literature test, the contents of other subjects are the same as the national standardized exam, and only the test language is translated into ethnic languages. More importantly, very few EM students can enter prestigious universities through the *Min Kao Min* policy. Therefore, many EM students turn to Mandarin learning at an early age, thus giving up on their multicultural education altogether.

### 3.2.3 *Conclusive Remarks*

Because HE for AIANs and CEMs has strong political considerations, the study of its development cannot ignore the relationships that exist and have evolved over time with the two respective governments and the political environments for EM in both countries. The relationships between government and political climate in many ways determine the characteristics of AIAN and CEM HE. Therefore, it is significant for EM-serving HEIs to acknowledge the unique political characteristics of EM to better serve them (Austin 2005; Brayboy et al. 2012).

AIANs cherish today's self-determination because of the federal government's brutal assimilation and acculturation policies of the past. At the same time, the government-to-government relationship with the federal government creates a platform for AIAN tribes to better realize the goals of nation building and indigenous knowledge systems. The establishment and development of TCUs has served a leading role in the development of AIAN HE in the United States.

In China, the constitution protects the rights of EMs to develop their education. Also, the Pluralist-Unity Framework provides general support for EMs' culture and language preservation. However, in practice, the Pluralistic-Unity Framework focuses on national stability and unity, which is reflected in the first task of EM HEIs in cultivating political leadership. At the same time, although EMs can develop their education, such as designing their curriculum and instruction methods, the national standardized college entrance examination system and the human capital-oriented social environment lead many EM students to choose to learn Mandarin and mainstream Han culture. In HE, the pressure of employment in the mainstream culture-dominated society renders them to pay considerable attention to merge into the mainstream society.

## 3.3 COMMON CHALLENGES FOR TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, AND CHINESE ETHNIC MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS

Since the establishment of TCUs in the United States in the 1960s and the HE expansion in China in the late 1990s, the HE enrollment of EMs has dramatically increased (Stull et al. 2015; Lei 2010). However, both TCUs and EMSIs are encountering more urgent and critical challenges, which can be associated with institutional identity struggle, financial constraints,

and student preparation for the mainstream culture-dominated job market. First, TCUs and EMSIs struggle with institutional identity when they are compared with mainstream HEIs in the United States and China (for the United States, see Stull et al. 2015; for China, see Choi 2010; Lei 2010; Meng 2016). TCUs and EMSIs often deal with explicit and implicit narrow definitions of institutional success, which is evident in HE accreditation processes and the general trend of institutional development. In the United States, the causes of institutional identity struggle are explicit. TCUs define their success in nation building, language revitalization, personal student growth, and increasing sovereignty (Brayboy et al. 2012), which are quite different from general criteria of HE institutional success such as enrollment and graduation rates and institutional rankings (Stull et al. 2015). Also, non-Native accreditation agencies most often ignore the unique characteristics of TCUs (Crazybull 2009; Randall 2014; Willeto 2014).

EMSIs in China face relatively implicit reasons for institutional identity struggle. EMSIs do not explicitly differ from most Chinese mainstream HEIs. On the one hand, there does not exist an operational definition of EMSI. On the other hand, economic development and educational reform have significantly altered student demographics within EMSIs such as the decreasing number of EM students, which has generated mission and identity challenges (Choi 2010). Also, there is a homogenous trend in China that most HEIs are striving to become comprehensive universities. The Chinese Higher Education Evaluation System established in 2003 emphasized this trend, which has become a threat to EMSIs' distinctive ethnic features (Bai 2015; Lei 2010; Meng 2016; Ou 2011).

Second, TCUs and EMSIs tend to be underfunded in both countries (for the United States, see Stein 2009; Stull et al. 2015; for China, see Wei 2012; Xu 2012; Xu and Wang 2013). TCUs have been one group of the most underfunded HEIs in the United States because they often do not receive state tax financial support and instead depend heavily on federal funding (Clement 2009; Stull et al. 2015). However, promised federal funding per Indian student is sometimes unmet and even decreases when taking inflation into consideration. Also, the growth in enrollments of AIAN students and non-Indian students who cannot be counted for the federal funding worsens the underfunding situation for TCUs (Clement 2009). Finally, TCUs are at a disadvantage in securing competitive grants because of a lack of competent grant-writing staff (Stull et al. 2015).

In the highly centralized Chinese HE system, EMSIs rely heavily on public funding from both the national and local governments. However, most EMSIs are low in rankings, which automatically limit their access to government funding. Among all 255 EMSIs, only 6 are directly administered by the SEACC; 10 are co-administrated by local (provincial and municipal) governments and the SEACC, with local governments bearing the principal responsibility (CMOE 2017). The remaining EMSIs rely solely on public funding from local governments, while most EMSIs serve remote areas where local governments have insufficient funding abilities (Xu and Wang 2013).

Third, it has been a common problem for AIANs and CEMs to secure job positions after graduation in the mainstream culture-dominated societal environment. One primary mission of contemporary TCUs and EMSIs is to prepare students to succeed in the workforce and ensure their ability to achieve a good life. The economies in both countries have created an environment that places greater value on mainstream cultures and languages, which in turn lessens the value of indigenous languages, cultures, and identities in the job market. Therefore, many ethnic students choose to pursue HE degrees in mainstream languages, which can bring them real benefits in school and the job market. From this perspective, the economy and mainstream culture and languages in many ways combine to contribute to the endangerment of ethnic languages and cultures (Xiong et al. 2016).

Either entirely rejecting or emerging into the mainstream culture are not wise choices for AIANs and CEMs. Their success through the mainstream venue is significant for the development of both groups (Brayboy et al. 2012). “TCU founders recognized that they could not just prepare tribal students to be proficient in their cultures but must also prepare them to be proficient in the non-Indian world that surrounds the tribal communities. They had to prepare their students to live productively in two very different worlds” (Stein 2009, p. 18). In this sense, it is challenging but significant for TCUs and EMSIs to balance the relationship between ethnic and mainstream culture in student career preparation.

The concluding section of this chapter summarizes some common but dominant challenges faced by TCUs and EMSIs. However, it is important to note that these challenges are only derived from the existing literature, and the political, social, and cultural environments of TCUs and EMSIs are constantly changing. For example, the United States has a new president and his administration’s policies to AIAN HE may show different

characteristics. Meanwhile, in China, the government is attempting to cancel the English test in the NHEEE. These changes and trends provide greater significance in relation to this study. Also, this study explores the unique problems encountered by individual TCUs and EMSIs in their developmental processes and responses to challenges.

## NOTES

1. There is a debate regarding the starting time of the self-determination era among scholars (McClellan et al. 2005). This study will apply Carney's (1999) segment standard that the self-determination era started from the late 1960s.
2. The nine colonial US colleges were Harvard College (now Harvard University), College of William and Mary, Collegiate School (now Yale University), College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), King's College (now Columbia University), College of Philadelphia (now the University of Pennsylvania), College of Rhode Island (now Brown University), Queen's College (now Rutgers University), and Dartmouth College.
3. The Governmental Administration Council of the Central People's Government of China served as the highest administrative organization from 21 October 1949 to 27 September 1954. Then it was replaced by the State Council of the PRC.
4. The first Ethnic Minority HEI established in the PRC was Northwestern College for Nationalities, which was set up in August 1950 (Zhang 2011).

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## Research Design

Based on the comprehensive review of the evolution of AIAN and CEM HE outlined in Chap. 3, TCUs and EMSIs play a significant role in serving AIANs and CEMs and in preserving their languages, cultures, and identities. They also face many common challenges in the contemporary era, such as with institutional identity, financial constraints, preparing students for the mainstream culture-dominated job market, and so on. Also, TCUs and EMSIs have their unique issues because of the different HE contexts in the United States and China. Because of the diversity between AIAN tribes and CEM groups, the practices and strategies of TCUs and EMSIs to address these challenges take on some different emphases. In this study, the author explored the roles, challenges, and responses of TCUs and EMSIs to these challenges, and ultimately compared successful strategies and good practices that can be applied in specific contexts. Finally, findings from this book aim to help TCUs and EMSIs better serve AIANs and CEMs to increase their HE access and success, as well as better preserve native and ethnic cultures, languages, and identities.

Given the research focus, a comparative and content analysis approach was used to answer the central research question—How do TCUs and EMSIs address challenges in serving AIANs and CEMs? This chapter first introduces the analysis framework of this study and then presents a detailed overview of the sampling, data collection, and data analysis approaches.

## 4.1 ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

In a comparative study, the primary principle is “to establish the parameters for initial comparability of the chosen units of analysis” (Bray 2004, p. 248). A valid comparative study requires establishing a specific dimension of commonality among units to compare (Steiner-Khamsi 2009). Commonality, as the basis for comparability, makes the comparative analysis and interpretation meaningful.

Rather than a mechanical identification of similarities and differences between two or more places, attention should be paid to the underlying context of these commonalities and differences and to their causal relevance to the educational phenomenon being examined. In other words, any meaningful comparative study should be able to identify the extent and the reasons for commonalities and differences between the units of comparison, examining the causes at work and the relationships between those causes. (Manzon 2014, p. 100)

In this sense, this comparative education research paid much attention to the contexts in which educational phenomena happen. Also, the establishment of the basis of comparability based on the close review of the context of each type of institutions makes the analysis results relevant and applicable to the different situations. In specific, the comparative study should do a good job beforehand “in determining which of the inherent macro-contextual factors in each place are causally significant to school level processes” (Manzon 2014, p. 121).

Context is of particular importance when the comparative education study is related to ethnicity because it is about “the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextual” (Hall 1995, p. 226). In the United States and China, ethnicity is highly contextual because of the political, social, cultural, and demographic factors, which makes it difficult to compare racial or ethnic groups across countries (Jackson 2014). However, it is believed that there exist some universal strategies and practices which can benefit both groups despite their different political and social contexts. Therefore, this study focused on the institution-level strategies and practices of TCUs and EMSIs to address the challenges each faces in serving AIAN and CEM students and communities and preserving native and ethnic cultures, languages, and identities.



### 4.1.1 *Comparability of Tribal Colleges and Universities and Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions*

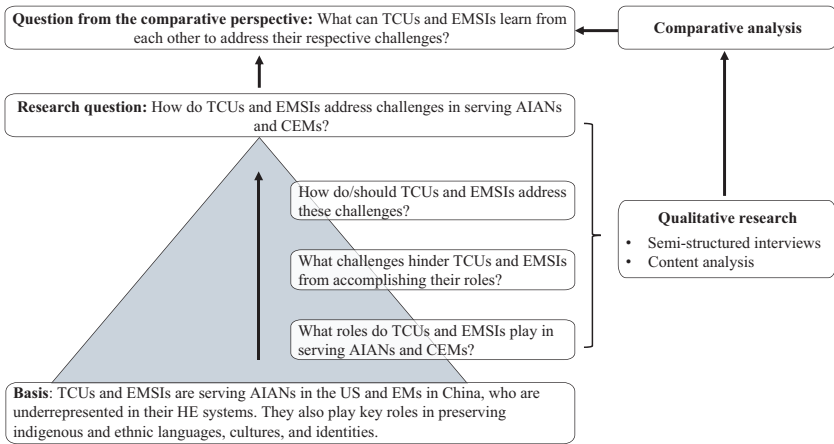
Based on the literature, at the institutional level, the rationales of comparability of TCUs and EMSIs include:

- 1) Both TCUs and EMSIs serve ethnic minority groups who are underrepresented in their respective HE systems;
- 2) Both TCUs and EMSIs serve ethnic minority areas—AIAN reservations in the United States and EM areas (regions, prefectures, and counties) in China;
- 3) Both TCUs and EMSIs depend on national (federal and central governmental) HE policies;
- 4) Both TCUs and EMSIs are organized in the modern form of HEIs;
- 5) Both TCUs and EMSIs bear the responsibility to preserve indigenous languages, cultures, and identities; and
- 6) Both TCUs and EMSIs face similar challenges, including institutional identity and evaluation, financial constraints, and preparing students for the workforce, etcetera.

The last commonality, namely facing the similar challenges, makes this comparative study relevant and meaningful because it can demonstrate some potential solutions of foreign counterparts in addressing similar issues in serving their students and communities (Xiong and Jacob 2020).

### 4.1.2 *Analysis Framework*

This comparative study showcased the commonalities and challenges TCUs and EMSIs have at the institutional level. The author examined strategies and good practices in addressing their challenges to best serve AIAN and CEM students and communities, as well as preserving indigenous and ethnic cultures, languages, and identities. The central research question was divided into three separate questions (or sub-questions) regarding the institutional roles, challenges, and efforts to address these challenges. Guided by the three sub-questions, the author conducted semi-structured interviews with TCU and EMSI administrators and content area experts (CAEs) to collect data. Meanwhile, through a content analysis approach, the author examined the TCU mission and vision



**Fig. 4.1** Analysis framework. *Note:* This framework is adopted from Xiong and Jacob (2020)

statements and the EMSI charters and profiles regarding the espoused and actual institutional roles of TCUs and EMSIs (see Fig. 4.1).

## 4.2 STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Guided by an institution-level focus, this study defined the first group of study participants as TCU and EMSI administrators who were relevant to the institutional development strategies. These individuals included Presidents, Vice-Presidents for Institutional Development, Provosts, School Deans, and Department Chairpersons. Most of their contact information was obtained in the public domain through their respective institutional websites, and some interview participants also provided personal contact information for other potential interviewees. The second group of study participants included content area experts (CAEs) with expertise in AIAN and CEM HE, but who were also not employed by the institutions. CAEs were important informants in this study because they provided perspectives outside of the TCUs and EMSIs.

The first group of participants was invited from 38 TCUs in the United States and 83 EMSIs in China. The 83 EMSIs included 17 Ethnic Minority Colleges and Universities (EMCUs) and 66 Institutions in Ethnic Autonomous Areas (IEAAs) that offered ethnic-related programs. The

lists of selected TCUs and EMSIs are in Appendices A and B. The reason for choosing the 66 IEAAs offering ethnic-related programs was because these institutions presented emphasis on ethnic HE. Ethnic-related programs include degree programs in ethnic languages and studies, HE preparatory programs for ethnic students, and programs instructed by ethnic languages. Please note that this sampling method did not mean to underestimate the significance of other IEAAs for EM areas.

A total of 29 interviewees participated in this study, inclusive of 7 TCU administrators, 6 EMSI administrators, 10 CAEs for TCUs, and 6 CAEs for EMSIs. The author reached out to 68 potential interview participants and received 29 positive responses (42.6 percent response rate); the others either rejected the opportunity to participate or did not respond to the invitation.

The seven TCUs participating in this study were from five states and affiliated with seven different AIAN tribal groupings. They included institutions established from the 1960s to the early 2000s, including the first tribal college established in the United States (Diné College) and the recently established College of the Muscogee Nation. All seven TCUs were community colleges that offered associate's degrees, and most of them had small enrollment numbers comprised of hundreds of students (see Table 4.1). The seven TCU interviewees included four presidents, and the other three were senior administrators of institutional development, planning, and accreditation.

Six EMSIs participated in this study, including four EMCUs and two IEAAs. Different from the EMSIs locating within the EM areas and primarily serving a specific EM group like Yanbian University for Korean Chinese, the EMSIs outside the EM areas served all the EM groups in China. All six EMSIs offer EM-related doctoral programs. Different from the TCUs, the selected EMSIs had much larger enrollment numbers, five of which had more than 20,000 students (see Table 4.2). Among the six EMSI interviewees, four were school deans or associate deans, and two were senior professors from the Schools of Education.

For the sampling of CAEs, the first group was identified through the literature review. Researchers and scholars of ethnic minority HE in the United States and China were invited to participate in this study. Afterward, a snowball sampling method was used to identify additional CAEs. Table 4.3 presents the areas of expertise of the CAEs who participated in this study. Among the US CAEs, three were retired presidents of TCUs; therefore, in addition to the data about the general TCUs, they also provided information about the specific institutions where they used to work.

**Table 4.1** Selected TCUs

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>AIAN Affiliation</i>	<i>Chartered Time</i>	<i>Highest Degree</i>	<i>Enrollment (Fall 2016)<sup>a</sup></i>
College of the Muscogee Nation	OK	Muscogee (Creek) Nation	2004	Associate	213
Diné College	AZ	Navajo Nation	1968	Associate	1,396
Fort Peck Community College	MT	Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes	1978	Associate	385
Iḷisagvik College	AK	Iñupiat	1996	Associate	188
Leech Lake Tribal College	MN	Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe	1990	Associate	286
Little Big Horn College	MT	Crow Tribe	1980	Associate	223
Tohono O'odham Community College	AZ	Tohono O'odham Nation	1998	Associate	267

*Note:* <sup>a</sup>Data is retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2017)

### 4.3 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.3.1 *Data Collection*

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted as the primary data collection method in this study. In general, the interview questions explored interview participants' perspectives on the roles, facilitating factors, challenges, responses to challenges, and suggestions regarding TCUs and EMSIs (see Appendix C). The TCU and EMSI administrator participants were asked to share the strategies and practices of their institutions in serving their students and communities. Finally, all interviewees were invited to share some suggestions for the better development of TCUs and EMSIs.

In addition to the interviews, the author conducted a content analysis of the mission and vision statements of TCUs and charters and institutional profiles of EMSIs to examine their institutional roles, as well as to triangulate findings with the interviewees' responses.

**Table 4.2** Selected EMSIs

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Administrative Level</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Highest Degree</i>	<i>Enrollment<sup>a</sup></i>
Inner Mongolia University for Nationalities	Tongliao, Inner Mongolia	State Ethnic Affairs Commission of China (SEACC) and Inner Mongolia Government	EMCU	Doctoral	22,635 <sup>b</sup>
Minzu University of China	Beijing	SEACC	EMCU	Doctoral	16,858 <sup>b</sup>
South-Central University for Nationalities	Wuhan, Hubei	SEACC	EMCU	Doctoral	~27,000 <sup>c</sup>
Xinjiang Normal University	Urumqi, Xinjiang	Xinjiang Government	IEAA	Doctoral	~28,000 <sup>c</sup>
Yanbian University	Yanji, Jilin	Jilin Government	IEAA	Doctoral	23,019 <sup>c</sup>
Yunnan Minzu University	Kunming, Yunnan	SEACC and Yunnan Government	EMCU	Doctoral	25,594 <sup>c</sup>

*Notes:* <sup>a</sup>Enrollment data is retrieved from the institutional websites (Inner Mongolia University for Nationalities 2017; Minzu University of China 2017; South-Central University for Nationalities 2018; Xinjiang Normal University 2018; Yanbian University 2018; Yunnan Minzu University 2018). <sup>b</sup>2017 data. <sup>c</sup>2018 data

The author has also conducted a series of fieldwork studies to gain additional insights and immersion experiences about AIAN and CEM HE while collecting data. In September 2017, the author visited Yunnan Minzu University and Yanbian University where the author had the chance to experience the campus life of EMSI students, as well as to talk with university administrators and faculty members. In 2018, from January to April, the author served as a Visiting Student Researcher at the Joseph A. Myers Center for Research on Native American Issues of the University of California, Berkeley. During this visit, the author attended several symposia and lectures given by Native American scholars, artists, and activists. The fieldwork experiences provided the author with vivid experiences and diverse perspectives on AIAN and CEM histories and cultures, which are important components of the HE contexts for each group.

**Table 4.3** CAEs and their areas of expertise

<i>CAEs</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Area of Expertise</i>
TCU	1 Associate Professor; former TCU President	AIAN HE
	2 Professor	Minority-serving institutions in the United States
	3 Doctor	TCU history
	4 Doctor; former AIHEC President	AIAN HE
	5 Professor	AIAN students' persistence in HE
	6 Doctor; former TCU President	Indigenous education and TCU
	7 Doctor	TCU funding
	8 Doctor; former TCU President	TCU in general
	9 Professor	AIAN HE
	10 Professor	AIAN and indigenous education
EMSI	1 Professor	CEM HE policies
	2 Associate Professor	Education for Uyghur people; Minzu University of China
	3 Doctor	EM language issues in Chinese HE
	4 Associate Professor	CEM HE policies; Minzu University of China
	5 Professor	CEM HE policies; HE for Mongol Chinese
	6 PhD Candidate	Organizational structure of EMSIs

### 4.3.2 *Data Analysis*

In this study, all qualitative data collected from interviews and context analysis was stored, cleaned, organized, and coded using the NVivo qualitative research software. After finalizing the data coding and forming themes, the author conducted a comparative analysis between TCUs and EMSIs to explore the commonalities and differences regarding their roles, facilitating factors, challenges, strategies, good practices, and suggestions for policy change and further research.

The author assigned a unique code to each interviewee to maintain anonymity. The unique code consists of two parts. The first is a three-letter label referring to the interviewee group (e.g., “TCU” refers to TCU administrator, “EMI” refers to EMSI administrator, and “CAE” refers to the content area experts). The second part of the unique code is a two-digit number referring to the order of interviewees participating in this

study. For example, “TCU02” means the second TCU administrator who participated in this study, and “CAE11” means the 11th content area expert who participated in this study.

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## Roles in Support of Indigenous/Ethnic Minority Peoples

Based on the analysis framework to address the research question about how TCUs and EMSIs address their various challenges, the author examined what these institutional roles were, what facilitating factors and challenges they had, how they dealt with these challenges, and how they should develop/evolve in the future. Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 present all themes summarized from the responses to the interview questions about the abovementioned five aspects of this study.

This chapter discusses the important roles TCUs and EMSIs play in AIAN and CEM HE. In this study, the author asked the interviewees to discuss the roles of their respective institutions for specific AIAN tribes or CEM groups. Meanwhile, the author also conducted a content analysis of TCU mission and vision statements and EMSI charters to triangulate the interviewees' responses.

### 5.1 ROLES OF TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

TCUs were founded as a direct demonstration of the Tribal College Movement under the background of the Native American Self-Determination Movement. TCUs serve as a vital tool to facilitate tribal nation building through completing their dual missions that are providing tribal members with access to culturally relevant HE and preserving their cultures, languages, and identities. Also, as place-based institutions, TCUs also play an important role in serving tribal communities. Through the

combined analysis of interviews and TCU mission statements, the themes about the roles of TCUs include promoting tribal nation building, providing culturally relevant HE, preserving native cultures and languages, and serving the needs of tribal communities.

### 5.1.1 *Promoting Tribal Nation Building*

Promoting tribal nation building is the fundamental role of TCUs, which either directly or indirectly appear in TCU mission and vision statements. For example, the College of Menominee Nation (2018) envisions its role as “an American Indian center for lifelong learning, integrating exemplary academic preparation and research to enhance nation building.” In addition, the recently established California Tribal College (2018) “is committed to empowering resilient, self-sustaining learners who serve their communities as leaders by strengthening Tribal Sovereignty and Tribal Nations.” Resonating with the missions and visions, US interviewees—both content area experts (CAEs) and administrators treat tribal nation building as a critical reason why TCUs were established.

Maybe the most important single reason why tribal colleges were started was by people who believed they should work to strengthen their tribal nations, to ensure the survival and growth of their tribal nations as separate and distinct nations, including culturally distinct and politically distinct, with their own governments. And they needed an educational system that would strengthen their nations politically, economically, socially, and culturally. They would remain as separate nations. So, while you can give a variety of practical educational arguments for why students should go to a tribal college, in my research in many years taking part in the movement, I think it’s very clear that people who started the colleges were mostly looking to assure the survival of their own communities, not just educational opportunities for individual students. (CAE12)

TCUs have served as the medium to integrate the desire of tribal nation building into the educational programs and social and economic development.

We call it nation building, which is all those characteristics of our tribal nations that make them. Tribal colleges emerged under that desire [of nation building] for our education that was culturally-relevant; and also, in [the building of] our communities’ and somebody’s socio-economic powers,

there is a part of that [desire]. So, they respond to try to train people for jobs and create jobs. (CAE07)

TCUs promote tribal nation building in the three primary ways. First, TCUs cultivate Indian self-awareness. As the mission of Fort Peck Community College (FPCC 2018) notes, “FPCC serves the people of the Fort Peck Reservation and northeastern Montana as a medium of Indian awareness enabling increased self-awareness.” The premise of nation building is the self-determination of tribal nations, or to “take the Native Americans out of the hand of the federal government” (CAE02). In this sense, before providing HE opportunities, TCUs cultivate their tribal members with Indian self-awareness; and because of the dedication to their Indian identity, after receiving education or professional training, tribal members are giving back to the building of their tribes. “We serve our reservation and surrounding communities as a medium of Indian awareness, which enables Indian self-awareness” (TCU01). This interdependent connection between TCUs and tribes highlights the role that TCUs play in tribal nation building.

Second, TCUs realize the belief that AIANs can become self-reliant on themselves by providing HE that is relevant to their cultures, traditions, and needs.

The reason why tribal colleges were organized was that there is a belief that they can depend on themselves and they can educate themselves to do a good job of preparing to develop their foundation and to prepare Indian students not just on the academic side, but also to help them develop some of the motivation and purposes of going to school. (CAE11)

Third, TCUs cultivate human resources and leaders who will contribute their talents and skills to the building of their respective tribal nations. For example, one of the strategic goals of the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (2018) is to “expand its role in tribal nation-building by better understanding and responding to the educational and workforce needs of tribes, and to better support the sustainability of tribes’ fundamental needs.” Interviewees also highlighted the connection between TCU students and their tribes.

Somehow, in the end, [Indian students will] understand and realize there is a connection between what [direction] their life will go and what their life

as an educator or profession is to be and help them tie that back to the development of their tribal nations. Some belong to this way, and they can be seen as a change agent to fill some gap that exists within their tribes. Someday, we would like them to come back and serve as a leader. (CAE11)

In conclusion, tribal nation building is the most crucial role TCUs play because they are cultivating Indian self-awareness of tribal members, realizing the pursuit of educational self-determination, and preparing human resources for the tribal social and economic development.

### *5.1.2 Providing Culturally Relevant Higher Education*

As one of the dual missions of TCUs, providing access to HE is included in all TCUs' mission statements. Because to some extent, the mainstream higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United States fail in ensuring access and attainment success for AIANs. Therefore, TCUs have been an important alternative for AIANs in their HE pursuits. Also, most TCUs are community colleges with relatively low tuition rates, which guarantees an openness to tribal communities, non-traditional students, as well as non-native students on or near their reservations. "It is also the intent [of TCUs] to provide easy access to affordable college programs, and in most colleges, to provide educational leadership to their tribes, communities, and elementary and secondary schools on or near their respective reservations" (CAE13).

For all 38 TCUs in the United States, even though most are community colleges, some of them have been accredited with qualifications to grant bachelor's and even master's degrees. Regarding the forms of education offerings, TCUs cover academic, vocational, and technical education. In addition, they also serve as a bridge for AIAN students to enter mainstream four-year institutions. Many TCUs also emphasize that they promote and provide resources for lifelong learning for their students and communities. "Students try to be trained in certain things in order to be employed by the tribe or other organizations in the tribal community. These opportunities are available to them. They can take these programs through not only vocational training but also through academic training in the first two years [at a TCU] and then they can go on to [complete their undergraduate/graduate schooling at] a mainstream institution" (CAE09).

In the mission and vision statements of TCUs, the words “quality” and “excellent” have appeared the most times to describe the HE provided by them. However, in the interviews, many participants used the phrase “culturally relevant” to describe what type of HE TCUs offer. Culturally relevant HE emphasizes the creation of “a learning environment that perpetuates and strengthens [tribal] culture, language, values, and traditions” (TCU04), as well as the application of cultural ways of knowing and research in education. Also, culturally relevant HE considers the tribal traditions in the delivery of educational programs, which makes TCUs different from mainstream HEIs in the United States.

[M]any academic policies did fail. Some of the things would be at odds with the culture I tell. For example, academic probation and suspension. In regular colleges, you go to school per semester and if you do not do good, you can get put on probation. You can be really bad in the next semester, and you can be suspended, and you have this type of set up. I do not think it is a tribal philosophy. I do not think they would kick people to the curb like that. (CAE06)

In conclusion, TCUs have played a significant role in providing easily accessed, affordable, and perhaps most importantly, culturally relevant postsecondary education, including academic, vocational, and lifelong learning programs to AIANs living on or near the reservations.

### 5.1.3 *Preserving Native Cultures and Languages*

The preservation of tribal cultures, languages, traditions, and values is the second part of the dual missions of TCUs. “The other mission is to maintain the tribal cultures, languages, heritages, and the variety of education” (CAE02). It is also reflected in the mission and vision statements of TCUs. For instance, Little Big Horn College (2018) is “committed to the preservation, perpetuation and protection of Crow culture and language, and respects the distinct bilingual and bi-cultural aspects of the Crow Indian Community.”

Some interviewees sensed the dangers that their tribal culture and heritage are facing because the education provided by mainstream HEIs does not consider cultural aspects of indigenous peoples. Interviewees also believed that TCUs should take the responsibility to maintain their cultures, heritages, languages, and values.

Another reason is that the education that tribal members were exposed to did not take into consideration the unique cultural aspects of the tribal members. Therefore, Turtle Mountain Community College was established to help preserve and teach the tribal language, cultural history, and appropriate ceremonies. We want to engage what we expect to revitalize in the educational round. (CAE15)

To fulfill the role of preserving tribal cultures and languages, in addition to setting up programs and majors in tribal cultures and languages, TCUs “incorporate all the culture, languages, and ceremonies into ... the program structures. [They] just reinforce the culture and keep the language alive” (TCU07). Moreover, some TCUs are putting more effort to save a particular heritage in their cultures.

We are losing a lot of our medicine people—the traditional healers. We are losing a lot of them. There is a lot of Indian leaders that believe we can help sustain that if we do something at the tribal college level to bring some traditional medicine healers to our classes. They still exist today. We can bring some of those people to our college and have them talk to some students who would become their apprentices. Several colleges have this program, and they considered part of the Traditional Medicine Men Association. (CAE11)

In the interviews, when participants were talking about tribal cultures and languages, most of them used the verbs “preserve,” “maintain,” “revitalize,” “emphasize,” and “strengthen.” Only one interviewee used the word “promote” (TCU06) with the meaning as to “advertise” or “spread.” This phenomenon, to some extent, reflects that the main task of TCUs in culture preservation emphasizes the need to sustain and vitalize indigenous languages and cultures instead of promoting them to mainstream society and international contexts. It is also reflected in the mission statements of 38 TCUs, of which 4 include the word “promote” or “promotion.”

#### 5.1.4 *Serving Tribal Communities*

Compared to the role of tribal nation building, which is at more of a political and philosophical level, serving tribal communities is the down-to-earth role TCUs play. TCUs often realize their missions in community service through implementing their place-based and needs-based strategies.

First, TCUs take advantage of their strategic locations on reservations to serve their respective tribal communities and nearby populations who are not able to afford to attend mainstream four-year HEIs or who do not want to leave their hometown and travel far to other cities. “I think the role tribal colleges play is that they create very unique institutions that are mostly place-based institutions serving the very disfranchised population that have strong cultures and identities but who suffer a lot of socioeconomic ills” (CAE02). In addition to students, TCUs serve the whole community. “As part of our mission, we provide part of the community services. We not only work with elders, but we also work with the children, the youth, and our local government. We provide services to [the entire] community” (TCU05).

Second, most TCUs are characterized as needs-based institutions that serve their tribes in meeting their most urgent needs. In general, TCUs are treated as institutional resources to best meet the needs of tribal development. “In any area that is identified, tribal colleges should play the role of being a resource to development of whatever in education, economic development, natural resources, and health. In all these areas, TCUs should fulfill some roles of being a resource” (CAE11). Also, TCUs offer programs and studies that will lead to employment opportunities based on local needs. In specific, TCUs offer degree programs to develop “a well-educated and trained workforce who meet the human resource needs” (TCU04). For instance, “tribal colleges offered degree programs that were relevant to the needs of the communities they served. For example, a college in Montana started a program in Forestry. Why? Because there was a need for tribal members with knowledge about forestry to the jobs available for them” (CAE12). TCUs also help create employment opportunities based on tribal needs and prepare leaders for the improvement of the tribal management level.

## 5.2 ROLES OF ETHNIC MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS

Within the centralized HE system in China, the establishment and operation of EMSIs are closely related to the national educational policies, as well as political, economic, and development policies. In the 1950s, the first group of Ethnic Minority Colleges and Universities (EMCUs) were established as specialized training schools to cultivate EM political leaders in ethnic areas. After the late 1970s, EMCUs transformed to regular HEIs but kept their special missions of serving EM students and geographic

areas. Meanwhile, HEIs in EM areas joined in the EMSIs family to serve the same purpose. In this sense, EMSIs play both roles as regular HEIs and ethnic institutions.

Regarding the missions of EMSIs, the Chinese government proposed “Three Centers, One Window,” which means “EMSIs should serve as the center of cultivating high-quality ethnic talents, the center of conducting research on ethnic theories and policies, and the center of preserving and promoting excellent ethnic cultures, as well as serve as the window of displaying Chinese ethnic policies and strengthening international cooperation” (EMI05). Resonated to this national initiative, interviewees of EMSIs stated their roles as a promoter in the following aspects: ethnic talent training, ethnic research, ethnic culture preservation, and internationalization. Moreover, interviewees also emphasized the role of EMSIs in community service. In 2012, China’s Ministry of Education regulated that all HEIs must standardize and publish their charters, which provides the chance to go through the missions of most of the EMSIs in China. The text analysis of the charters has been applied as a means of triangulating the interview data.

### 5.2.1 *Ethnic Talent Training*

Ethnic talent training has been the principal mission of EMSI since its foundation in the early 1950s. However, the objectives of talent training have shifted away from cultivating EM political leaders in ethnic areas in recent years to training professionals for the economic development of ethnic areas, as well as the whole country.

Soon after its foundation, the People’s Republic of China established the Ethnic Minority colleges to serve the ethnic autonomous regions and to address ethnic issues. Therefore, these institutions have attached great importance to the study of ethnic issues and are dedicated to the training of ethnic talents, exceptionally high-quality ethnic political officials and leaders. After the Reform and Opening-Up Policy in the late 1970s, economic development has become the central task in the ethnic areas. Ethnic institutions have further developed into multi-disciplinary and regular higher education institutions with ethnic characteristics. They focus on serving the implementation of the Develop-the-West Strategy by cultivating ethnic talents in economic, trade, law, and technology. (EMI03)



EMSIs have been treated as a particular type of HEI in China because of the unique role they play in serving EM populations and areas. “The positioning of Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions was derived from the perception of national education authorities on the principle and task of ethnic institutions, which is to serve Ethnic Minority population and communities” (EMI05). However, with the expansion and massification of HE in China, EMSIs have transitioned to become regular HEIs but with the ethnic characteristics. Therefore, the role of EMSIs in promoting ethnic talent training is to serve as a venue for providing equal HE opportunities to EM students instead of focusing exclusively on the training of ethnic elites.

Influenced by national policies that emphasize ethnic areas will benefit from ethnic talent training, most interviewees talked about the roles EMSIs play in ethnic talent training from the perspective of the ethnic areas instead of ethnic students. Only two interviewees provided information from the point of ethnic students, who view EMSIs as institutions which “help them adapt to mainstream society and enjoy equal benefits of social and economic development” (CAE05). One interviewee added that through EMSIs, ethnic students can have the equal opportunities to compete with the majority Han students in the education context and the workforce: “I think the mission of ethnic institutions for serving Ethnic Minorities in China is to allow ethnic students to have the opportunity to compete with Han students on the same level” (CAE03).

### 5.2.2 *Ethnic Research*

EMSIs play a role in ethnic research in two main aspects. One is research on ethnic theories, including ethnic histories, languages, literature, anthropology, and so on; the other is research on Chinese ethnic policies. “Regarding scientific research, ... [students and faculty at] Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions study Chinese Ethnic Minority issues, [conduct research] on ethnic oral and written languages, histories and cultures, and societies and economics, and organize and lead the editing and translation work of ethnic literature and folklore” (EMI03).

To play a role in promoting ethnic research, EMSIs have established programs and majors in ethnic studies. These programs have been valued as important venues of ethnic research generation. “Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions are conducting ethnic research through programs on ethnic society, culture, economy, etcetera, which greatly contribute to the

political stability and economic development of Chinese Ethnic Minority areas” (CAE04). Meanwhile, ethnic study programs as an important component of ethnic characteristics have been an advantage of EMSIs to distinguish them from China’s regular HEIs. “In my university, disciplines in Ethnic Minority education, culture, religion, and related ethnic studies have advantages [compared to the regular HEIs]. Therefore, many other institutions in Xinjiang focus on developing their programs in ethnic studies” (EMI06).

In addition to academic programs in ethnic studies, EMSIs have also established research centers covering various ethnic topics. These centers continue to serve as another important venue for ethnic research. “In addition to ethnic talent training, we have also done a lot in ethnic research, which has greatly contributed to the theoretical development of ethnic studies. We have many research centers, such as the Center for Ethnic Progress and the Center for Ethnic Studies, and research projects focusing on studies of ethnic theories and policies, as well as on the research of application” (EMI01).

### 5.2.3 *Cultural Preservation*

Ethnic culture preservation, as a special mission for EMSIs, is a unique characteristic differentiating them from the regular HEIs. “Not only ethnic institutions but also regular higher education institutions contribute to ethnic talent training. Therefore, ethnic talent training cannot totally present the uniqueness of ethnic institutions. It is the cultural preservation and innovation that can present their unique characteristic compared to regular HEIs” (CAE16). In the ethnic culture preservation, EMSIs benefit from the multi-ethnic situation in China, which promotes ethnic and cultural diversity and harmony. “Because [Yunnan] is an area where several Ethnic Minority groups live together, we always hold the idea of promoting multi-cultural education and cultivating trans-cultural talents. This idea is the basic principle of talent training in my university” (EMI02).

One ultimate goal of culture preservation at EMSIs is to “cultivate Ethnic Minority students to be participants and agents of inheritance and change of their ethnic cultures” (EMI01). To realize this goal, EMSIs should create an enabling environment that “treasures ethnic culture, as well as promotes the harmonious co-existence of ethnic and mainstream cultures.... Meanwhile, ethnic institutions should learn from ethnic ways

of education, and moreover, integrate these ways into the current educational system” (EMI01).

EMSIs serve the role of cultural preservation through setting up ethnic study programs for ethnic and non-ethnic students, including on the topics of ethnic culture, language, art, philosophy, and so on. Many interviewees recognized the importance of ethnic study programs at EMSIs because of the negative influences of the Chinese market-driven economy in the preservation of ethnic cultures, and especially on ethnic languages.

Ethnic study programs like ethnic language are marginalized in higher education disciplines, and their development mainly relies on Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions. Without these institutions, majors in ethnic languages and cultures—such as Turkic, Miao-Yao, and Kazakh languages—will be wiped out by the market-driven economy. [Unfortunately,] only a few students want to enter these programs. (CAE04)

At last, in addition to merely preserving ethnic cultures, some interviewees proposed that cultural innovation is an important aspect to help ethnic cultures survive and flourish. “Ethnic culture preservation does not mean to preserve everything from a specific ethnic culture but to selectively preserve the excellent parts based on the needs and trends of the current times. Because some of the cultures cannot follow the trends of the current times, ethnic institutions need to change and improve them innovatively” (CAE05).

#### 5.2.4 *Internationalization*

The internationalization of HE remains a prevailing trend in China, and Chinese educational authorities have expressed that internationalization should be the fourth function of HEIs besides talent training, scientific research, and social service. This trend has dramatically influenced EMSIs. Moreover, the geographic locations of many EMSIs along the border provinces position them with strategic geographic proximity and geopolitical value in international contexts.

EMSIs play an important role in the promotion of internationalization in two aspects—institutions and students. From the institutional perspective, EMSIs are “a window to display Chinese ethnic policies and strengthen international cooperation” (EMI05), especially in the context of the current Chinese foreign policy of the Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>1</sup>

“With the development of globalization, as well as the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions have to strengthen their roles in internationalization, especially when it comes to international exchange and cooperation with our neighboring countries” (EMI03).

For students, EMSIs play an important role to help ethnic and non-ethnic students become global citizens with a global vision and a comprehensive understanding of global issues. “After the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, EMSIs in China are faced with a much more globalized world than existed before; therefore, they need to complete the mission of internationalization to [cultivate their students] with the quality of multicultural and international understanding” (CEA05).

## NOTE

1. The Belt and Road Initiative is short for the Chinese government initiative of The Silk Road Economic Belt and the Twenty First Century Maritime Silk Road, which is a development strategy focusing on connectivity and cooperation between Eurasian countries, including China, the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt and the ocean-going Maritime Silk Road.

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## CHAPTER 6

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# Facilitating Factors in Serving Indigenous/ Ethnic Minority Peoples

TCUs and EMSIs enjoy some facilitating factors in serving AIANs and CEMs. Emerging as themes from the data analysis, these facilitating factors are divided into external and internal sub-themes. Supportive external factors create favorable circumstances for TCUs and EMSIs to exist and thrive. Meanwhile, TCUs and EMSIs have some internal strengths that play vital roles in their growth. Due to the different political, cultural, and social contexts, the facilitating factors for TCUs and EMSIs to realize their missions have demonstrated different emphases. This chapter presents an examination of the themes regarding facilitating factors to TCUs and EMSIs.

## 6.1 FACILITATING FACTORS FOR TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The external facilitating factors for TCUs in the realization of their missions include the tribally controlled status and the available funding sources. Regarding the internal factors, five aspects stood out in the responses of TCU interviewees. These five aspects include the location of TCUs, partnerships between mainstream HEIs and other TCUs, tribal culture, and institutional leadership.

### 6.1.1 *External Factors*

#### 6.1.1.1 *Tribally Controlled Status*

Benefited from the passage of the *Self-Determination and Assistance Act in 1968*, several AIAN tribes gained control of their HE and afterward established colleges, which are owned and operated by them. Many interviewees treated the tribally controlled status as a fundamental external factor for TCUs to exist. “Because under self-determination, tribes have the authority to run their own colleges. Without a legal framework, I really do not think it would be possible” (CAE06). In specific, the tribally controlled status of TCUs implies a favorable political context based on the treaty relationship between the tribal governments and the federal government.

Tribal colleges could not exist if the United States had policies opposing the maintenance of the indigenous people as separate people with their own identities and their own rights, and their own land within the United States. Therefore, the first is the political context that tribal colleges exist because they are allowed to exist.... The United States has had a horrible and shameful history in dealing with American Indians, but in the past 50 years or so, it has policies that are more supportive of Indians pursuing their own directions in the future. So, I would say the first factor that tribal colleges exist is because they are allowed to exist, at least they are not being opposed. (CAE12)

In addition, the tribally controlled status of TCUs also guarantees support from their own tribes, which creates another favorable circumstance for them.

[Tribal Colleges and Universities] need to have the support of the attendants from their communities. They need to have people who believe that tribal colleges are worth attending. They would pick a tribal college to enroll.... [In order to be] a part of the tribal communities and tribal governments in the mission, there needs to exist a context where the community accepts them, respects them, believes they have a positive role to play. (CAE12)

Finally, because of the tribally controlled status, TCUs can enjoy the freedom to realize their mission of providing culturally relevant HE to their people through creating a teaching and learning environment based on the tribal culture, traditions, and values, and especially the philosophy

of learning. Many TCUs apply their indigenous knowledge system in the curriculum and program designs.

[I]t allowed us to create the curricula, to extend as much as possible, to reflect the mission of this institution. It allowed us to create a teaching and learning environment that is congruent with life on the reservation. Students are not entering a strange-looking facility, building, or classroom, but entering a facility, building, and classroom that they are familiar with. They can see their own culture in their learning environment. I think those are the factors that facilitate tribal colleges to realize their mission. (CAE15)

In conclusion, the tribally controlled status of TCUs ensures them a favorable political and community environment to exist and grow. Meanwhile, this status also grants them with the autonomy to integrate their tribal cultures and philosophies into the delivery of the education programs.

#### 6.1.1.2 Available Funding Sources

Many interviewees considered available funding as one of the critical factors that made the establishment of TCUs initially possible. Funding remains a significant resource for them to keep growing and realize missions in serving students and communities. Available funding sources include federal appropriations, tribal government funding, research grants, and other private contributions.

The tribal colleges need the money and need to have financial support from outside of their own communities. The communities they serve are poor, and most of the students are poor. So, they have to be able to get support from public and private sectors, from the federal government, as well as from private sources. And while they do not get a lot of money, many of the colleges do get financial support that is necessary. (CAE12)

The basis of the federal appropriations is the passage of the *Navajo Community College Assistance Act in 1968* and the later *Tribal Controlled College or University Assistance Act in 1978* that began to cover all TCUs. Moreover, since 1994, TCUs have gained land-grant status, which has provided them with financial support to build programs and better meet the needs of their tribes in realizing their missions. One TCU administrator highlighted the importance of the land-grant status in the interview.

[Land-grant status] gives us the ability to work with our community outreach. Our agriculture program, science program, and natural resource program have benefited greatly from our land-grant status. We also have an extension service, which is used to develop programs that focus on water and land resources. Therefore, our mission to serve our community and the Crow Nation is greatly supported by our land-grant status. Every year, we have five to ten specifically-designated projects just as the [normal] land-grant institutions would have. (TCU02)

Tribal governments play another vital role in providing financial support to TCUs. Some tribal governments can cover more than half of the expenditure budget of their TCUs. “And we are very fortunate that ... [our tribe] has a significant gaming enterprise and they choose to use that money to support various social aspects including the College. In the last year, 53 percent of our operating expenditures came from the allocation of the [tribal] nation” (TCU06).

In addition, TCUs have some soft money sources including grants and funding from the private sector, but these sources often vary in frequency and amount because of the different conditions of each TCU. All these available funding sources help ensure TCUs the realization of their missions in serving their students and communities.

## 6.1.2 *Internal Factors*

### 6.1.2.1 *Location*

As “place-based institutions,” (CAE07) almost all TCUs are located on reservations. Many interviewees thought that the geographic location of TCUs close to the tribal communities is a facilitating factor for them to realize their missions. “The location to tribal communities and populations makes tribal colleges appealing” (CAE09).

Taking advantage of their location on the reservation, first, TCUs can really work in and with local communities, draw from the many strengths of the community, and respond in a timely manner to community needs. For instance, when TCUs offer academic programs in native studies, “their location is key to accessing the local native knowledge base of elders, parents, and tribal leaders” (CAE13). Second, TCUs can better serve their students who do not want to leave their reservations to attend mainstream colleges or universities or feel alienated in mainstream HEIs.



[This facilitating factor has] a lot to do with the locale—the place or location. Because a lot of native people that are on the reservations have the refusal, fear, or the basic reluctance to leave their reservation and go off to a four-year university... What the tribal college is doing is to provide a place where their epistemology gets appreciated and embraced. It is celebrated and used. It is practical. Again, your persistence of it is basically place-bound. Its location is next to home, close to home, and actually at their home. They do not have to go anywhere. ...the family and home community are just right here, so they do not need to leave and [they] feel convenient and comfortable. They do not feel marginalized and alienated. It is the sense of being home. (CAE14)

Being rooted in their tribal communities, TCUs enjoy many benefits from their tribes. Reciprocally, TCUs can also better serve the needs of their students and communities in a timely manner.

#### *6.1.2.2 Partnerships*

Two types of partnerships facilitate TCUs to realize their missions. The first is the external connections they maintain with mainstream HEIs and the state HE systems. In the early days when TCUs had not yet received accreditation, their partnerships with mainstream universities and colleges guaranteed them qualification to receive federal appropriations. TCUs continue these partnerships till today. Some TCUs are affiliated with mainstream HEIs in grant programs, distance learning delivery, and joint research projects. Meanwhile, these connections also facilitate TCUs to serve as an institutional bridge for their students to eventually transfer to four-year partner institutions.

[A]ll tribal colleges have at least some relationships with other mainstream universities in their regions. For example, tribal colleges in Montana have relationships with the state university systems in Montana. And that is true for other colleges in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Arizona. They have affiliations with mainstream universities, and the mainstream universities accept their students. This is important because student credits can be transferred [through long-established articulation agreements]. Cooperative research can be done through these institutions. In order to succeed and grow, you need to be accepted by your peers and the educational establishment. By and large, after 50 years of effort, tribal colleges are [accepted by the general educational establishment]. (CAE12)

The second type of partnership is the cooperation among TCUs, which is largely through the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC). Since the very early years of TCUs, the Consortium has served as a platform for tribal colleges as a brand-new type of HEI to share their experiences in getting accredited and developing programs.

In the early days, they realized that they would be better off if they were working together. And so, they can be a stronger force and a stronger voice when they get out to the country to get support. That approach worked. If they competed against each other, they would not have succeeded. Maybe a few colleges would have succeeded like the Navajo's might succeed because they are big and have money and political clout. But most of the smaller colleges have no clout and influence, and they probably would not survive. But by working together, where the larger colleges help the small colleges, all the colleges agree that "we are going to exist together and not exist to the disadvantage of other colleges." That has been the key to success. (CAE12)

Now AIHEC is an organization of TCUs to give one united voice in the conversations with the state and federal governments.

The most important thing that tribal colleges have done is that, with their help, some tribal leaders formed the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC). ... When these guys get together, they call themselves AIHEC. They as a body have done a very good job, including lobbying for state education governance—the governors, the state legislatures, and the Department of Education. (CAE11)

TCUs are "very open in terms of partnerships and making relationships that benefit their communities" (CAE07). Through connecting with mainstream HEIs and working with other TCUs as a solid body, TCUs have created a sustainable network for them to develop and grow.

### 6.1.2.3 *Tribal Culture*

While TCUs traditionally bear a significant responsibility in the preservation of indigenous cultures, languages, traditions, and values, tribal cultures, in turn, help facilitate TCUs in the realization of their missions in providing culturally relevant HE to their students.

First, TCUs integrate tribal culture into the curriculum and programs, which create a culturally friendly environment for their students. In

reference to curricular and program design, TCUs “embrace and reflect the epistemology of the way Native American people think” (CAE14), especially the tribal ways of thinking, knowing, and learning. For example, one TCU president stated their continued efforts of incorporating the tribal culture into the realization of their institutional mission.

Based on our vision to be recognized as a center of academic excellence that advances the Anishinaabe worldview and empowers life-long learners who are fully-engaged citizens, stewards, and leaders, we incorporate many cultural aspects to meet our mission, as well as other aspects of education with the Western worldviews. We have been looking at the current workforce, technologies, education programs, and we incorporate those into our institution and match those with our Anishinaabe ways. (TCU07)

Second, at TCUs, “the cultural traditions that are important for students are available there” (CAE09). Through ceremonies and other cultural events, students can practice and promote their own culture and traditions. In addition to the integration of tribal culture into the curriculum and degree programs, these cultural activities also contribute to the culturally friendly campus for students. “We are automatically a tribal college when you come on our campus. We want to let you know that you are stepping onto a tribal campus. So, we try to give every student that experience in instruction, personal development, and entertainment” (TCU05).

#### *6.1.2.4 Leadership*

Leadership is another facilitating factor mentioned by several interviewees for the realization of TCU mission statements. In the early years of the Tribal College Movement, the vision and dedication of TCU founders had been a strong driving force behind the establishment of the early tribal colleges. Many of the founding leaders served as TCU presidents for long tenures, and some of them are still in these administrative positions. Therefore, their visions are still important in the development of TCU strategies and practices.

One is that tribal colleges came out of the very visionary experience, with special attention given by the founders of the Tribal College Movement that they would create an institution that can serve their needs of communities and cultural preservation, health and living, and economic wellbeing. I think it is the vision that is really one of the critical things. I think they

created a very innovative way that tribal colleges deliver programs and provide support to students. (CAE07)

In addition, many interviewees emphasized the significance of influential leaders in the development of TCUs. “Leadership facilitates the accomplishment of goals/outcomes as per the strategic plan. Faculty and staff, under the direction of the President and executive-level leadership, implement the goals as per the strategic plan” (TCU04). Meanwhile, almost all TCUs have presidents who are from their tribes and have a good understanding of the tribal cultures, and more importantly, of the needs of their students and tribal communities.

## 6.2 FACILITATING FACTORS FOR ETHNIC MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS

In a similar comparative analysis as the TCUs, the author examined the external and internal facilitating factors for EMSIs in their efforts to operationalize their institutional missions. Regarding the external facilitating factors, because the Chinese HE system is highly centralized, government support has been and remains the most influential factor. Meanwhile, interviewees also highlighted the significant favorable social environment that exists for the development of EMSIs. Internal facilitating factors include the personal dedication of EMSI leaders and EM students and faculty, the right self-positioning, and the strategic geographic location.

### 6.2.1 *External Factors*

#### 6.2.1.1 *Government Support*

As argued by many interviewees, within the highly centralized Chinese HE system, government support is the most significant factor that finances and facilitates the development of EMSIs. The government support is demonstrated explicitly as both policy support and financial support.

The Chinese government has implemented a series of national policies to promote the development of EMSIs. First, since its foundation, the Chinese government has supported the establishment and development of EM HEIs.

The establishment of ethnic colleges and universities was a particular reflection of the fact that the Chinese government put particular emphasis on ethnic minority issues. Apparently, government support is a vital factor to realize the rapid development of ethnic minority higher education institutions. In 1950 when Minzu University of China was established, the newly-formed Chinese government was struggling with various tough development issues. But the government still provided the University with excellent support. For example, many famous scholars transferred from Peking University and Tsinghua University to Minzu University of China. Moreover, Chinese government leaders also attended the University opening ceremony. (CAE03)

Second, while the preferential policies for EMs in HE access and success have helped provide greater HE opportunities for ethnic students, they have also created a favorable circumstance and a dependable student source for EMSIs to realize their missions in ethnic talent training. “In China, there are special policies regarding enrollment, financial support, and even formal funding to help students get into school and be successful” (CAE03).

The second demonstration of government support is financial. “The Chinese government aims to cultivate more ethnic minority talents to facilitate the development of the remote and poor ethnic areas. Therefore, the government is active in providing various support including financial assistance” (CAE16). However, because some EMSIs are directly administrated by the central government while others are under the administration of the provincial or municipal governments, the conditions of financial support are different for each EMSI. “Ethnic institutions administrated by the State Commission of Ethnic Affairs receive a stable and annual increase in funding from the central government. However, for ethnic institutions administrated by local governments, their funding depends largely on the [circumstances of the] local economy” (EMI05).

#### 6.2.1.2 *Favorable Social Environment*

A favorable social environment is also critical for the development of EMSIs. In such an environment, EMs can take full advantage of their visibility to advance and promote their cultures and values. “As minority group members, ethnic minority peoples have an innate element of visibility due to their language, way of life, or the particular external demonstration of their ethnic identities. These are very important attributes for

ethnic minority groups to be recognized” (CAE03). The recognition of 55 EM groups is the basis of recognition of EMSIs by society.

As argued by the interviewees, this favorable social environment is derived from the long history of ethnic relationships among all ethnic groups in China.

In the long and interactive history of ethnic groups in China, they keep exchanging with and learning from each other, which has formed a symbiotic ethnic relationship. This harmonious relationship highlights the multi-culture nature of society and the fact that all ethnic groups can live together in harmony but preserve their own characters. Therefore, within this social context, ethnic colleges and universities with individual missions focused on ethnic minorities can gain social support and assistance. (EMI03)

Moreover, this favorable social environment is strengthened by the Chinese Constitution and laws to promote ethnic equality and unity, as well as national policies to promote quality education for EMs.

## 6.2.2 *Internal Factors*

### 6.2.2.1 *Personal Dedication*

The dedication to advance ethnic HE and culture of EMSI leaders, faculty and staff members, as well as EM students was discussed by interviewees as a significant internal factor for EMSIs to realize their missions.

From the perspective of the individual ethnic minority within ethnic colleges and universities, they have their rationale and value. For example, ethnic minorities greatly accept and support their own culture and are dedicated to promoting the preservation of it within Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions. Therefore, compared to the national policies, personal dedication is another independent factor to facilitate ethnic higher education institutions to realize their missions. (CAE16)

At EMSIs, the personal dedication of EMs to promote their ethnic cultures and identities reflects the advancement of cultural confidence and self-awareness among EM groups. Meanwhile, many EMs also embrace the mainstream culture in China. “For the ethnic groups in the border areas, their cultural confidence and self-awareness are strengthening, and they are focusing on exploring and developing their own ethnic culture.

Meanwhile, they are also learning from modern civilization to actively integrate them into the Chinese development plan that promotes ‘Unity in Diversity’” (EMI03).

Also, the personal dedication of ethnic students to their ethnic cultures and their institutions contributes to promoting the uniqueness of EMSIs. “For example, when I visit Minzu University of China, I always hear many students say they are proud to be a member of Minzu University of China. This proudness constantly reminds them that they are different from Peking University and Tsinghua University, and they are unique” (CAE05).

In summary, EM students are the primary beneficiaries of EMSIs. They also serve as agents in the development of EMSIs and in the preservation of their ethnic cultures and languages. Their dedication—along with the dedication of EMSI leaders and faculty members—to develop EM HE and to preserve ethnic cultures has been an important facilitating factor for EMSIs to realize their missions.

#### 6.2.2.2 *Proper Self-Positioning*

As shared by many interviewees, both CAEs and administrators, even though EMSIs have the specialized task of serving primarily EM students and areas, they are essentially regular HEIs. EMSIs are not an entirely separate type of HEIs in China. Therefore, like regular Chinese HEIs, EMSIs help in the general talent training of non-ethnic students, scientific research, and social service, while they focus on providing HE to EM students and on preserving ethnic cultures and languages.

Facing this situation, the right self-positioning of EMSIs determines whether they can have better development impact and opportunities; many EMSIs have developed the right balance between these two roles of maintaining “their ethnic characteristics while emphasizing the regular higher education development pattern. This positioning will strongly help EMSIs to realize their missions” (EMI03). On the one hand, EMSIs maintain their ethnic characteristics, which are closely related to their missions and distinct from regular Chinese HEIs. “One internal factor is how ethnic institutions position themselves. For Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions, generally, their position is serving ethnic minority people and areas, which determines the development strategies

of the ethnic minority institutions” (CAE05). On the other hand, EMSIs focus on realizing their mission on the regular HEI side, by which they can receive more financial and policy resources from the government, especially in the current HE system that is intangibly promoting the trend of comprehensive HEIs.

### 6.2.2.3 *Strategic Geographic Location*

From the perspective of resources for institutional development, strategic geographic location is another facilitating factor mentioned by some interviewees. However, this factor highly relies on the situation of each EMSI. For some EMSIs, which are located within border provinces and next to the foreign countries with the same ethnic origins, they can take advantage of their strategic location to serve their students in job placement and preservation of languages and cultures. Also, the current Chinese foreign policy promotes international cooperation with neighboring countries, which highlights the leverage of the geographic location. For example,

Yanbian University is located in Northeastern China, which is the geographic easternmost end of the Belt and Road Initiative, near Japan, North Korea, South Korea, and Russia. When it comes to talent training, we have a distinct advantage in foreign language programs, including English, Russian, Japanese, and Korean, which have been included in the list of National Top-Ranking Disciplines... Therefore, if Yanbian University can make full use of its geographic and policy conditions, it can have excellent development. (EMI02)

Additionally, for those EMSIs located in the major cities outside of EM areas, they can also enjoy increased access to HE resources and developed economic conditions. For instance, South-Central University for Nationalities is located in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei Province. “Hubei is a higher-education-resource-intensive province ... Therefore, in the operation of South-Central University for Nationalities, it can receive additional higher education resources like the introduction of [highly-qualified and renowned] faculty members. Also, in such a context where there are also many other higher education institutions, there are a lot of academic exchanges among them” (EMI05).



In conclusion, the geographic location has been a facilitating factor for some EMSIs to leverage their advantages and to help realize their missions in serving EM students and areas. However, the effect of this factor is limited, especially because only a relatively few EMSIs can enjoy this strategic geographic positioning. As to the general EMSIs, their locations in the remote and rural areas are a hindering instead of a facilitating factor for their development.



## Challenges in Serving Indigenous/Ethnic Minority Peoples

This chapter covers the themes regarding the current challenges faced by TCUs and EMSIs in their development and realization of their missions. Some facilitating factors for TCUs and EMSIs are also considered challenges for them when examined from a different perspective. Given the same analysis technique of the facilitating factors, the author examined both internal and external challenges facing each type of institution. The external challenges in many ways create a hindering environment for TCUs and EMSIs to develop and realize their missions, while the internal challenges are the aspects that TCUs and EMSIs need to improve in their institutional operation, program delivery, and culture and language preservation.

### 7.1 CHALLENGES FACED BY TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The external challenges faced by TCUs include unstable funding sources, tribal politics, and the remoteness of the tribal communities. The internal challenges hindering TCUs to develop are varied because of the specific situations of each institution. However, there are still some common challenges faced by TCUs emerging from the conversations in the interviews. They are the student readiness and enrollment, the lack of qualified

faculty, the lack of sufficient facilities and infrastructure, and other barriers to cultural preservation.

### 7.1.1 *External Challenges*

#### 7.1.1.1 *Unstable Funding Sources*

Almost all interviewees argued that the unstable funding situation is the biggest challenge currently facing TCUs. While the available funding sources were vital for the establishment of TCUs in the early days and their current development, the unstable status of funding has been a big challenge for them, especially in the creation of new programs needed by their students and communities. “The funding is a big issue. [TCUs] are poorly funded, which means they cannot pay a lot to their faculty. That creates problems. Some buildings are less than ideal. So, funding is a major issue” (CAE10). In specific, the uncertain status of funding stems from the unguaranteed federal funding, the lack of tax-based funding, and the increased number of non-native students.

Based on the *Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act*, TCUs can receive \$8000 per AIAN student headcount each year; however, “the preferential funding from the federal government cannot always be guaranteed” (CAE02). Moreover, in some tribes, there is no tax base, which means the tribal government cannot use tax money to fund TCUs. Therefore, TCUs have to depend almost exclusively on federal appropriations. This situation worsens when federal funding becomes unpredictable.

Our institutions are almost entirely dependent upon federal appropriations or federal money. These reservations have no tax base, so as a result, they do not have any way of generating local revenues to support the function of government and education. Therefore, there are no local funds for tribal governments to allocate to tribal colleges. In some cases, there is some money but not much money. The bottom line is that tribal colleges are almost totally dependent on federal funding, which is never adequate to totally support the mission of the institution. Funding is always a problem. (CAE15)

In addition, increased student enrollment, especially of non-native students, makes the financial burden heavier for TCUs. “There are increasing numbers of White students studying at TCUs, but they cannot receive the

Federal preferential funding, which has brought more financial burden for TCUs” (CAE02). When TCUs turn to other financial sources for help, their small-scale contributions become a limitation. “Most TCUs are two-year community colleges, which are on a small scale, so it is hard for TCUs to convey their values to funding providers” (CAE02).

#### *7.1.1.2 Tribal Politics*

Even though TCUs are owned and operated by AIAN tribes, not all of them can have equal support from their respective governments and communities. First, the unstable tribal leadership and the limited administrative ability of the tribal government can hinder the development of TCUs.

Another challenge is the administrative ability. This depends on the college and not all colleges face this challenge. However, the political environment within the tribal nation can be a little unstable. Tribal chairmen come and go very quickly. There are many politics [that exist] in tribes. Sometimes, presidents are hired, and they get fired. That can lessen the stability and growth of the tribal colleges. (CAE12)

Tribal members’ general negative perceptions of HE is another challenge for TCUs, which is often influenced by tribal politics. The struggle for community support used to be a major challenge for the early TCUs, and now the general situation has gradually become better. However, some interviewees still treated it as an external challenge for some TCUs.

I think nobody is publicly saying that tribal colleges are not legitimate institutions of higher learning. But I also think there are always, even now, to a small degree, people who think tribal colleges are not quite as good as mainstream colleges. That would be a small challenge. That is not as big of a challenge now, but it was certainly [a big challenge] in the early days. (CAE12)

Not all TCUs can enjoy the privilege of being fully supported by their tribal government. The unstable leadership or the limited administrative ability of some tribal governments hinders the development of their tribal colleges. Moreover, some TCUs still need to struggle for the support of their tribal members.

### *7.1.1.3 Remote Location*

As indicated by several interviewees, the remoteness of the AIAN reservations and communities is another external challenge for TCUs. Some TCUs are located in very rural and remote areas of the United States. “For the severe extreme rurality, which is what the USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture] uses, about half of our students live under the condition of the extreme rurality. They are living in the country. These are the conditions we worked with from the very beginning of our institution” (TCU02). The remoteness or isolation makes transportation to and from TCU campuses a problem for students, faculty, and staff members. “One of the challenges is the nature of the land space. The Tohono O’odham Nation has 2.8 million acres. People are living in 56 different communities in 11 different districts. Each district is often quite remote. That always influences the enrollment” (TCU06). The poverty of the community worsens this situation because the tribe cannot provide sufficient public transportation financial support for all students. “Some of the tribal colleges are located in the poorest areas in America, they are in rural and isolated locations. Sometimes, the only way into and out of the reservation is the highway. There is no rail system, no bus line, no airport, and such things. Isolation is another challenge that people face in tribal colleges” (CAE15).

## *7.1.2 Internal Challenges*

### *7.1.2.1 Student Readiness and Enrollment*

Interviewees indicated student readiness as one of the severest internal challenges for TCUs. As most TCUs are community colleges, they are open to the whole community, and therefore, a significant part of their students are non-traditional college students.

At tribal colleges ... they are dealing with non-traditional students. Some of the non-traditional Native American students will take the class for one quarter, but someday they will step out. They say “I have to step out to take care of my home and I will come back for quarter two.” At community colleges, if everything goes well, students should be able to finish everything within two years. However, for non-traditional Native American students, it can be more, like three, four, or even five years to get an associate degree. That would be the biggest factor that is non-traditional students—like single parents or both parents with kids and a job—those kinds of elements

make it difficult for them to progress through that [traditional HE] pipeline. (CAE14)

Meanwhile, many TCU students have never received basic education before entering college. This situation makes the student readiness a big challenge for TCUs to conquer. “Students coming into the institutions are not always coming out of the K-12 system and [are not always] academically prepared for college-level rigor. They need special help to get through” (CAE02). And indicated by three TCU administrators’ responses, 75 to 90 percent of their freshman students need some type of remedial education. Therefore, TCUs usually have to devote a big portion of their budget to developmental and remedial education programs.

Our students coming from high school have many needs regarding developmental education. Just between 10 and 25 percent of our entering freshman class, varying from year-to-year, are ready for the college curriculum. I did talk about developmental education, but not the number of students who need our developmental work, which is one of our big challenges. Devoting our resources to developmental education is one of our challenges. While we devote our resources to the programs and development, we always devote a serious percentage of our courses to the developmental coursework. (TCU02)

In addition to the student readiness for a college education, student enrollment is another big challenge for TCUs. Even though TCUs are mainly serving AIAN students, they cannot take it for granted that native students will autonomously choose them. Interviewees argued two reasons for the issue of student enrollment. The first reason is the competition for students from prestigious universities around the country and other community colleges around the reservations.

These kids that graduated at the top usually are those who will be successful wherever they go. Naturally gifted kids will succeed wherever they go. I know tribal colleges would love to have those kids, but those kids end up going elsewhere. That is a challenge you need to overcome.... That is a battle that tribal colleges need to be ready to find a way to equal their share of obtaining these students. (CAE11)

The second reason is the social problems that hinder students from being able to enter TCUs, especially alcoholism and drug abuse on some tribal reservations.

To be honest with you, it is a social problem. It is drugs that make the major barrier for our students coming to school. If they come, they are not always able to be focused. We are having very serious drug issues here. Many communities have one of these issues, and we have. Our reservation is such a closed community that most people do not leave the reservation. It becomes a multi-generational issue as alcohol and unemployment. We have serious issues here, and we are struggling to try to keep our enrollment up. In the last probably four or five years, our enrollment was down by 75 to 100 students, which you are looking at could be our operational money. (TCU05)

In conclusion, TCUs need to put a big part of their already-insufficient financial sources to build the developmental (or remedial) education programs, which is a big challenge for them in the harsh financial conditions. Additionally, TCUs are battling with other HEIs for the enrollment of students, especially for the top graduates of high schools, while some social issues further decrease the number of their enrollments.

#### *7.1.2.2 Lack of Qualified Faculty*

The lack of qualified faculty is another major internal challenge for TCUs because it is directly related to the quality of the education they provide. Furthermore, the most-qualified native faculty members bear the responsibility of preserving their tribal cultures and values. “When we look at the list of faculty members, you do not see too many faculty members with PhDs or doctoral degrees, or advanced degrees in general. You will see quite a few at the master’s degree level. You might see [some with] only bachelor-level [credentials]. I think all tribal colleges have that challenge. You will also see a large number of non-Indian faculty teach in these roles” (CAE11).

The challenges of the lack of qualified faculty are primarily manifested in the recruitment and retention of TCU faculty members, as well as the decrease of native faculty. First, because of the remoteness and poverty of the rural areas and the relatively low salaries, not many qualified faculty candidates are willing to teach at TCUs or stay long after they choose to come. “Tribal colleges are small and poor, and in rural locations. It can be hard to recruit faculty in that context. They do not pay well, they do not

have tenure, and they cannot provide the research opportunities, or the opportunities of collaboration with faculty” (CAE12). To address this challenge, some TCUs put the effort into cultivating their own faculty team. However, the cultivation of new faculty members familiar with the tribal cultures and philosophies becomes another challenge for some TCUs, especially when their native faculty members are getting older.

One of the challenges...is that we have faculty who are getting older, so when new faculty come in, how do we ensure that the next group of faculty would have an understanding of the way of our people? We have faculty members that are very traditional and old. How do we have them transfer their knowledge? How do we facilitate that? ... How will it go from our elders to the young people that come out of universities with PhDs? How do we transfer that knowledge just like transferring knowledge from the grandfather to the grandson? Those are the challenges we are having. (TCU03)

The challenges TCUs face about faculty include not only how to recruit and maintain qualified faculty members, but also the cultivation of new faculty members who understand the tribal cultures and ways of knowing and learning.

### 7.1.2.3 *Lack of Facilities*

Because of the lack of sufficient funding, some TCUs also face the challenge of the lack of sufficient facilities. Many TCUs are still using the old facilities since their foundation, but they have no capacity to upgrade them. With the growth of enrollment, their current facilities cannot always meet institutional development needs. “We are growing so quickly and have to work out some of our plans [to meet the needs of our stakeholders]. We have to expand our campus to provide additional square footage for classrooms, faculty offices, and auxiliary services. The things we need are related to our financial budgeting resources” (TCU01).

Also, the old facilities have become a barrier to the recruitment of new faculty members. “There is not a lot of infrastructure in their communities devoted to tribal colleges. So, for example, it is hard to recruit people to come to teach in your colleges because you do not have housing for them. They might have to drive great distances in order to teach at your institution” (CAE07).



At last, because of the remoteness and poverty, the lack of technical facilities is another challenge for some TCUs to develop online education programs. “The other big challenge we have is dealing with technology. Because of our remoteness, we have the challenge of having enough bandwidth to provide the type of education that is needed in today’s world. That is a big challenge for us” (TCU03). The lack of sufficient and up-to-date facilities have become an obstacle for some TCUs to recruit faculty members and provide online education programs. In general, the lack of facilities limits the development of some TCUs.

#### *7.1.2.4 Barriers to Culture Preservation*

As interviewees argued, TCUs face two major challenges in the realization of their mission of preserving their tribal cultures. First, most TCUs operate like community colleges, but from a HE institutional perspective, the organizational structure of TCUs is not optimally efficient and geared toward preserving indigenous cultures. Meanwhile, the HE-related organizations that TCUs partner with generally lack the necessary understanding of the tribal cultures.

The other [challenging] thing is that tribal colleges or these educational institutions in our organizational structures are not inherently natural to tribes. We are not inherently hierarchical in our structures. We are very much a value-based people, and bureaucracy and organizations that we work with like the accrediting bodies, they are not operated by humanistic and holistic native people, and we sometimes find it a challenge to work in those environments. (CAE07)

Second, while it is vital for TCUs to get accredited as HEIs, accreditation requirements are additional challenges for TCUs to preserve their cultures. This is because most HE accrediting bodies have not recognized tribal cultures and traditions as part of the accrediting process.

One of the major problems is the tribal colleges want to have their culture, language, and regional definition throughout all of the work they do, but also, they want to be a higher education institution. In order to do that, they have to be accredited. In order to get funded, they have to be accredited. In order for their students to be eligible for the workforce, [they have to be accredited]. So, they can’t really be an institution of higher education that just delivers cultural values because they still have the same rules and

regulations as higher education institutions everywhere. Therefore, trying to accomplish these two things together is really difficult. (CAE06)

The reason TCUs face persistent challenges about cultural preservation is primarily that their tribal cultures are not well-integrated into or aligned with the organizational structure of TCUs. Furthermore, tribal cultures are not well recognized by other HE organizations, especially the accreditation bodies when they formulate the criteria of accreditation.

## 7.2 CHALLENGES FACED BY ETHNIC MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS

The external challenges faced by EMSIs to realize their missions include those related to policies and the marginalized position of EMSIs in the Chinese HE system. From the internal perspective of EMSIs, the primary challenge for them is how to improve their ethnic programs. Also, EMSIs are facing the internal challenges caused by the multi-level administration and the traditional organization structure, inadequate support for student successes, and faculty turnover.

### 7.2.1 *External Challenges*

#### 7.2.1.1 *Challenges Related to Policies*

Even though the regional ethnic autonomy system and preferential HE policies for CEM students have created a favorable policy environment for EMSIs, they are still facing some challenges related to policies. Some of these challenges are for the whole group of EMSIs, while some are mainly for a specific group of EMSIs based on their geographic locations.

First, the major challenge related to the policies faced by all EMSIs is the controversial perception against the preferential HE policies for EM students. Meanwhile, Chinese society cannot fully recognize the values of EMSIs.

There is a backlash against what is seen as preferential policies for minorities because some people do not think it is fair. They say Ethnic Minorities are getting special treatment, and some people do not think that is fair. On the other hand, the Ethnic Minority groups are still under-represented in higher

education, so there has to be a way to encourage Ethnic Minorities or to provide opportunities for them in higher education. That is one challenge. (CAE01)

This controversial perception of EM policies is derived from a superficial understanding, and sometimes a misunderstanding of CEMs and EMSIs. “Some people do not understand the complexity of Chinese Ethnic Minority issues.... [They think] Ethnic Minority students receive special treatment because they are not as good as Han students. This is a misunderstanding” (CAE04). Regarding the perception of EMSIs, some people in the field of HE think ethnic institutions are created because of the CEM policies, so their most important and only task is to realize the policy mission on serving EMs and keeping ethnic unity. Some interviewees pointed out that this perception has negatively influenced EMSIs in self-positioning and receiving support from the central and local governments.

[Based on the wrong perception of Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions,] in the institutional positioning, they only need to keep the primary function of providing higher education access to Ethnic Minorities and guarantee ethnic equality. The development of other disciplines is the task of regular higher education institutions. Influenced by this perception, the policy, financial, and physical support will incline to the regular institutions. (EMI01)

Also, some interviewees mentioned that some of the new-emerging national policies related to the economy, development, and foreign affairs create a challenging environment for EMSIs. For example, as a foreign policy focus of China, the Belt and Road Initiative brings international competition to those EMSIs located within the border provinces. “We are locating in the Ethnic Minority areas and serving Ethnic Minorities, the Belt and Road Initiative will bring a challenge to the student enrollment of ethnic institutions located in the border provinces. For example, EMSIs in Yunnan Province need to face added competition from the good universities in Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore” (CAE05).

Challenges related to policies for EMSIs include the controversial perceptions against the preferential policies for EMs and the misunderstanding of EMSIs as merely “policy-oriented” institutions. Moreover, new-emerging policies also challenge some EMSIs because of their geographic locations.

### 7.2.1.2 *Marginalized Position in the Higher Education System*

Even though the Chinese government has implemented a series of policies to facilitate the development of EMSIs, they are still in a marginalized position in the Chinese HE system. Their marginalized position is demonstrated by the fact that very few EMSIs are included in the list of the national prestigious HE projects and plans—*Project 211* and *Project 985*—and the current newly implemented *Double First Class University Plan*.<sup>1</sup> “In the national higher education strategy of developing key universities, Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions are basically excluded, or they can get minimal resources and policy support. This is relatively unfair.... Only two ethnic institutions and several disciplines of ethnic studies are included in the *Double First-Class University Plan*” (CAE05).

In addition, the marginalized position of EMSIs leads to the inadequacy of top ethnic institutions for EM students to choose. Therefore, it is highly competitive for EM students to enter the prestigious EMSIs, like Minzu University of China in Beijing.

Minzu University of China in Beijing is on the list of “211” and “985” so it receives more money from the government, which means that they can prioritize specific areas. However, there is also an adverse effect that it has become a competitive university, which means that many of the most disadvantaged students are not going to be able to meet the admission standards for that university. It is one of the challenges as a university that wants to provide opportunities for underserved Ethnic Minorities, but as it becomes more competitive, Ethnic Minority students are not able to enter that university. (CAE01)

At last, the marginalized position of EMSIs also makes their graduates in a disadvantageous situation in the competitive job market, which in turn influences EMs’ motivations to receive HE. “Some Ethnic Minority students have a negative attitude to receive higher education because of the disadvantageous situation in the job market after graduation. The fact that graduating from a college or university cannot ensure a job has become a negative factor that keeps weakening Ethnic Minority students’ motivations for receiving higher education” (EMI04).

## 7.2.2 *Internal Challenges*

### 7.2.2.1 *Ethnic Programs*

Ethnic programs, including ethnic languages, literature, art, and medicine, are essential for EMSIs to preserve ethnic cultures and to help EMs learn about their heritages in formal educational settings. Ethnic programs are also the primary factor that differentiates EMSIs from regular HEIs. However, as many interviewees argued, EMSIs face several challenges when creating and developing ethnic programs.

First, most ethnic programs using the ethnic languages as the medium of instruction are in the humanities and social sciences fields, and there is still no definite clue to incorporate ethnic languages into the natural science and engineering disciplines. This situation makes it hard for EMSIs to meet all the needs of EM students on discipline choices. “The engagement of ethnic languages and cultures varies in different disciplines, which is a barrier for ethnic institutions to realize their mission of preserving ethnic languages and cultures. Obviously, ethnic languages and cultures are more engaged in the traditional [humanity and social science] disciplines than that in the natural science and engineering disciplines” (CAE16).

In addition, in the current competitive job market, ethnic programs cannot ensure a promising career future for the vast majority of EM students after graduation.

If you are majoring in Uyghur language and literature, written language or history, there are not many jobs available. From a practical standpoint, in these days, more people would like to major in business, finance, and even English. That is true everywhere in the world not only in China. However, it makes it challenging to cultivate talents who are experts in the Ethnic Minority cultures because, in the market-driven economy, it is hard to place people into jobs which are not relevant to their conceptual nature. (CAE01)

Finally, an EMSI administrator mentioned the central government does not sufficiently consider EM students’ needs on developmental education in the curriculum design.

The course requirements for higher education students are the same in all Chinese universities and colleges. However, some Ethnic Minority students need to take some courses to strengthen their foundational knowledge basis.

But due to the tight policy, ethnic institutions have little flexibility to provide such [developmental] courses. It is impossible for [some] Ethnic Minority students to achieve a good educational performance [without taking these developmental courses and being prepared]. (EMI01)

Therefore, regarding the ethnic programs, EMSIs are faced with the challenge to consider EM students' needs in discipline choices, career development after graduation, and in developmental or remedial education circumstances.

#### *7.2.2.2 Multi-level Administration and the Traditional Organization Structure*

In the centralized HE system, generally speaking, EMSIs are administered by the government. However, EMSIs vary depending on their administrative structure. Many EMSIs are co-administrated by as many as three levels of educational authorities from the central government to the local governments. As was pointed out by some interviewees, while this multi-level administration structure can bring more support to EMSIs, it has the potential to cause challenges in the management of EMSIs. This is because all bodies need to put in significant efforts to make their responsibilities clear to each side.

The administrative structure of Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions is different from that of regular higher education institutions. The State Ethnic Affairs Commission of China directly administers several ethnic institutions. However, most ethnic institutions in the Ethnic Minority areas are under a three-level administration. They are co-built by one of the ministries or commissions, the provincial governments, and the municipal governments. This multi-level administration may bring a challenge to the development of Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions. (CAE05)

Also, within EMSIs, the organizational structure has kept the traditional university-school-department way for a long period. This traditional way lacks the flexibility of including the new-emerging research organizations and centers of ethnic studies, as well as integrating them into the organizational structure. "Currently, many academic and research centers emerge, but they cannot easily integrate into the university's organizational structure. A new structure needs to be developed by the University. We are still using the old way, which cannot meet the new needs" (EMI02).

### 7.2.2.3 *Inadequate Support for Student Success*

Benefiting from the national preferential HE policies, EMSIs have played an important role in providing HE access to EM students. However, some content area experts (CAEs) of Chinese ethnic HE argued that EMSIs need to improve their student support services, especially the service for EM students' success.

As far as I know, my general impression is that [Ethnic Minority] students have better opportunities to go to college. However, they have relatively fewer opportunities in school to be successful [in comparison with their Han student counterparts]. That does not mean they are unsuccessful; rather, it often means the necessary effort they must invest in order to be successful may be considerably higher than for Han students. (CAE03)

In specific, as argued by one EMSI administrator, one challenge for EMSIs to promote student success is how to provide comprehensive information to EM students even before they enter colleges or universities. For example, most of the EM students come from remote and rural areas, and they have limited access to information about the programs and majors provided by EMSIs. "Because of the limited conditions in transportation and telecommunication in Ethnic Minority areas, after entering the universities, many Ethnic Minority students do not really know what the majors are about, and what they can do after graduation" (EMI01).

### 7.2.2.4 *Faculty Turnover*

At EMSIs, an excellent faculty team plays a significant role in providing quality educational programs to EM students. However, because of the remote location and the poverty condition, it is a great challenge for most EMSIs to recruit and retain qualified faculty. "Ethnic Minority areas are usually in an economically underdeveloped condition; therefore, in the recruitment of university graduates as teachers, Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions cannot compete with the higher education institutions in the economically-developed areas, like Beijing" (EMI06).

Meanwhile, another challenge that EMSI faculty face is how to remain when other opportunities arise to go elsewhere. Additionally, how can EMSIs retain many of their top graduates as future faculty members? "The top graduates cultivated by ethnic institutions and their excellent faculty members are more inclined to develop their career in the Eastern coast. The loss of excellent faculty members with their research projects makes it

difficult for Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions to realize their mission in ethnic talent training” (CAE16).

#### NOTE

1. The Double First Class University Plan is a higher education plan implemented in 2015 by the Chinese government to create world-class universities and disciplines by the end of 2050.





## CHAPTER 8

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# Meeting Challenges: Highlights of Strategies and Practices in Serving Indigenous/Ethnic Minority Peoples

Facing external and internal challenges, TCUs and EMSIs successfully survived through the early stage and continue developing to realize their mission in serving their AIAN and CEM students and communities. In some ways, policies and governmental support in the United States and China create an enabling environment for TCUs and EMSIs to develop; in other ways, it is the efforts of TCUs and EMSIs that are the primary reason for making them survive and grow. Their efforts are manifested by their strategies and practices of realizing their missions of serving their students and communities. In the interviews, content area experts (CAEs) and institutional administrators were asked to share the strategies, practices, and models they think are successful in serving AIANs and CEMs. This chapter presents the themes that emerged from sound strategies and practices extracted from interviewee responses. Moreover, some successful models are also highlighted as exemplary cases.

### 8.1 HIGHLIGHTS OF TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

In the sharing of successful strategies, practices, and specific models, US interviewees emphasized some highlights covering students, research, community service, culture preservation, and institutional cooperation.

### 8.1.1 *Student-Centered Strategy*

In the interviews, many TCU administrators directly or indirectly expressed that they are applying a student-centered strategy. “I talked a lot about the programs, but the fact is that students are the reason why we are here” (TCU07). The focus of the student-centered strategy is to promote student success after they enter TCUs. Specifically, TCUs have implemented a series of student success programs to assist them to deal with the major challenges and have a good career future after graduation. Also, TCUs are also considering students’ opinions in decisions related to institutional governance.

#### 8.1.1.1 *Student Success Center*

Among those TCUs of implementing student success programs, the Little Big Horn College (LBHC) stands out because of the Student Success Center, which focuses on providing optimal service to its student body. LBHC was chartered by the Crow Tribe of Indians in 1980, and as the higher education and cultural center, LBHC grants Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees, as well as certificates in areas that meet local development needs (LBHC 2018).

Clearly stated by an administrator of LBHC, they are implementing a student-centered strategy. In practice, they have established a Student Success Center to help students deal with various challenges in academic and daily life. First, the Center has put significant effort into helping students achieve excellent academic performance.

We do have a Student Success Center that provides no-cost and free tutoring in all subject areas. This particular Center looks after students after the faculty members identify students with attendance or academic problems. They can be identified. The Student Center staff will contact and locate the students to try to identify what might be keeping them from attending or to address any sort of academic issues that are coming up.... Our Student Success Center has acquired the textbooks for the general courses. They are there for students to use on-site. If students go to the Center, they can use the textbooks. If they are unable to afford textbooks, or they do not have immediate access for one reason or another, they can use the textbooks. Our Student Success Center also has PCs for students to use for the completion of their homework. Those are the aspects of our Student Success Center. Our Student Success Center also conducts placement testing, and therefore, advising for replacement in reading, writing, and mathematics. (TCU02)

Moreover, the Student Success Center also carefully considers the challenges in life that hinder students' academic performance and provides relevant assistance. "The Student Success Center has an emergency fund that they manage. Students can apply for small car repairs or gas vouchers if they are short of money to put gas into their cars or pay for a babysitter. Last semester they distributed several small emergency grants. Students applied to them, and we documented what it is they need. That has been very helpful" (TCU02).

Second, facing the challenge that most tribal college students are not academically ready for college-level education, besides providing developmental/remedial education programs covering various subjects, LBHC also has set up a unique First-Year Experience Program to help their students conquer the challenge of college preparedness.

The second service we have is an important strategy to address student success in the First-Year Experience Program. All of our first-year students are recruited into this program. We have one critical course they must take in order to graduate here. That is called Skills for Success. They meet in the first half of their first semester to study skills and apply them in their scholarship. Just look at this very strategy that we help them become more successful in their college courses. Moreover, the Director and Coordinator of the First-Year Experience Program monitor all freshmen every week, especially in week 4 and week 12. (TCU02)

Third, LBHC also created a mentoring program to help their students have a good college experience. "We have a Mentor Program. In this mentoring program, we pair students with mentor students to have (positive peer) role models or partnerships to help them negotiate the whole enterprise of being in college" (TCU02).

Through all these programs housed in the Student Success Center, the student-centered strategy of LBHC has gained outstanding achievements regarding student success. The interviewee particularly highlighted their success in student retention and graduation. "We have a relatively very high retention rate and graduation rate. If you have the chance to read our performance report, we can show that we are very successful in serving our population" (TCU02). However, the interviewee also clearly realized that they need to keep improving their service to meet their students' needs. "But that does not mean we can rest on our success because every year it is a new group of students with their own unique needs and we have

to recognize what those are constantly. Moreover, hopefully, our services will be appropriate to the coming students” (TCU02).

As demonstrated by the case of LBHC, the Student Success Center has presented a great picture of one aspect of the student-centered strategy that helps their students go through their college life, as well as achieve success.

#### *8.1.1.2 Family Education Model*

As argued by many interviewees, the high student drop-out rate remains a significant barrier for TCUs, and the Family Education Model was proposed in the early 2000s as a tool for TCUs to partially address this issue. The Family Education Model suggests that the incorporation of the family structure and culture at TCUs will enhance students’ sense of belonging and increase the retention rate (HeavyRunner and CeCelles 2002). It has been applied by many TCUs and received recognition for its success in increasing student retention rates. “All those things like a family model that tribal colleges operate on have been successful, but it is different for every community. However, the language, culture, tradition, and other culturally-appropriate things are what you can see in every college” (CAE09).

Also, the creation of the Family Education Model was with the help of some TCUs. “We are using the Family Education Model. We use it as a method, and we actually helped develop it. Iris HeavyRunner came to our campus as a part of her dissertation. She developed this thing called the Family Education Model. It is kind of a best practice model. We use it among our main retention tools and it helps students succeed” (TCU05).

#### *8.1.1.3 Students’ Engagement in Institutional Management*

As shared by many interviewees of TCUs, another demonstration of the student-centered strategy is to incorporate students’ voices in institutional management and development. TCUs are adopting different forms to hear from their students. One form is a listening session.

The other thing is that we have the listening session too. For example, in the past Board meeting last Monday. For each Board meeting, we have a listening session, and we have invited students to come and share their concerns with the school Board of Regents. We had a group of students selected to respond to questions we asked them for the Board of Regents. We take that

information too. We try to be understanding in a lot of different ways, and it helps us better obtain feedback from students. (TCU03)

The second form of incorporating students' voices in the institutional management and development of TCUs is setting up a student representative position in the Board.

We are trying to utilize more strategies to get students' inputs. We have a student representative on the Board of Trustees. We have a student representative who can come to the admin team meeting if there is anything needed for/from them. A representative comes from the Student Senate. We also ask the entire student body what the definition of "student success" is so that we are recently restructuring our definition and make sure to include what they think is important but not what just we think is important behind the scene. Our strategic plan is being updated, so we sent out the survey to the whole student body and took their feedback for the strategic plan. We include them in our fundraising efforts and all of our programs. (TCU07)

At last, the Offices of President of some TCUs are implementing open-door policy to better welcome students to express their opinions in relation to institutional governance and development. "I personally have an open-door policy and have probably five students a week come in just for a talk with me. Sometimes, they tell me what they are thinking; other times, we are just chatting" (TCU03).

US interviewees constantly emphasized that serving AIAN students is one of the most critical roles of TCUs; they also clearly understood the importance of students' voices for successful institutional development. Therefore, TCUs are implementing different ways to incorporate their students' opinions, which has been an important component of the student-centered strategy.

### *8.1.2 Community Serving: Place-Based and Needs-Based*

Besides mentioning TCUs' strategies in serving AIAN students, interviewees also highlighted several successful strategies, practices, and models in serving their communities, which is another crucial role of TCUs. In relation to community service and outreach, TCUs keep the openness of college resources and providing free programs to the tribal communities. For example,

Our programs are free to the community, and they are all grant-based. So, we do not charge anyone to come in and take a class on weekends. Moreover, we get many guest speakers. The Wellness Center is what I mentioned about the pantry and diapers. We started another strategy to serve students and community elders. If anyone is over 65 years old, he or she can take the classes with free tuition. They only buy their books and pay their fees. (TCU07)

As interviewees stated, when providing services to their communities, many TCUs apply place-based and needs-based strategies. Based on the needs of their tribes, including addressing social issues, promoting economic development, or exploiting natural resources, TCUs provide corresponding programs to meet various community needs. “Of the three tribal colleges in Montana, one is providing a variety of programs to help answer questions from their communities regarding water quality and drug abuse; one is heavily engaged in its community in solving social issues; the last one is trying to provide the first four-year teacher education program among tribal colleges” (CAE02). One TCU administrator shared her institution’s practice of teaching the children of her tribe about water conservation and utilization.

We have a land-grant program that focuses on teaching the children in the Crow elementary school about water resources. We have a summer field school that helps children explore the rivers, creeks, and the various habitats in our immediate environment (a 25-sq mile area). We also have a water testing service, which is a huge grant from Montana State University. Our crew goes out and tests the water, including the groundwater and wells, which people are drinking. We measure the contamination levels and give feedback to the good owners as to remediation recommendations if they are needed. We recently won a million-dollar grant with the University to carry that out. Most of our people live rurally so for people out there with their wells, water is one of the major issues for anyone or any human being. For us, we are interested in monitoring their water. (TCU02)

TCUs apply the place-based and needs-based strategies to help guide their service providing practices to their tribal communities. Being based on reservations, TCUs take advantage of this strategic location to best meet the needs of their tribes in solving social issues and enhancing economic development.

### 8.1.3 *Research: Community-Based and Culturally Grounded*

Many interviewees highlighted the efforts of TCUs in promoting research. Most TCUs are community colleges, but usually, as the only center of HE in the tribe, they have devoted many resources to research. “The area of research, especially community-based and culturally-grounded research, is a very interesting model of exemplary success. They are doing something that no other colleges are doing in those areas” (CAE12).

In addition to helping students master scientific research skills, TCUs conduct research that is relevant to their communities in meeting the needs of tribal economic development, natural resources exploitation, and natural environment protection.

Looking at the current trends and what is happening right now, one is that tribal colleges are doing very interesting and innovative work related to research. You need to keep it in mind that these are primarily undergraduate institutions, and in fact, most of them are primarily two-year colleges. In the United States, two-year and four-year colleges historically have no research mission. However, tribal colleges desire to research, first of all, to provide education to the students, and second of all, to strengthen their communities. Tribal colleges are doing more than most two-year and four-year colleges in the area of promoting student research. They are developing research projects that students can engage in, which have use and value to the communities they serve. Many colleges are doing this, and I do not have one particular story, but it is not uncommon for students to do work in environmental science. They may be investigating pollution in their communities caused by mining in the past that damaged the environment. They are looking at water resources and water pollution. They are also looking into issues such as when the oil pipeline is being built on their land, what environmental impact it may/will have, which is a very political issue going on in the Standing Rock Reservation right now. (CAE12)

Moreover, the improvement of research ability is also seen as a significant aspect for some TCU administrators who have the ambition of upgrading their colleges to research-focused institutions.

We are very interested in becoming a research institution to a greater degree than we have been able to. We have a partnership with our two big universities, which allow us to conduct specific kinds of research, but as an institution, we would like to be able to step into research areas in a comprehensive

umbrella. Our tribal nation is in need to know more about our changing economy, to know more about the socio-economic nature of our own population. And for many of the tribal colleges designated for the research for their nations, we have also been designated. We would like to become that, and we do a lot of activities and courses in our nation. However, we also have many focuses coming from outside doing research here and taking out with them. We are not even a repository of what research has been done in the last 25 years. We maybe have some of them, but we do not have them all. The knowledge comes and goes and develops in some other universities and institutions, and corporations and bureaucracies. Also, our community is interested to see our institution develop into a four-year level institution to offer baccalaureate degrees. We have, from time to time, the partnership with senior institutions to offer baccalaureate degrees, locally and based right here, but currently, we are not in any partnerships of that nature. I know we have high interest to do that. (TCU02)

Research as a highlighted strategy or best practice is being realized at different levels at each TCU. While some TCUs take research as a priority in their mission, others emphasize it less and retain the primary focus on providing a college-level education and vocational training to their tribe.

#### 8.1.4 *Culture Preservation*

The preservation of tribal cultures and languages is one significant aspect of the dual mission of TCUs. In the realization of this mission, interviewees highlighted some practices that TCUs are doing well. First, for almost all TCUs, they have done very well in setting up native language and culture programs and curriculum.

One of the things that we require in our general education program is the native language. All the attending students, including native or non-native students, must take these classes. They learn the Muscogee language as the general education requirement. In addition to that, they are required to take courses about the tribal government along with the US government and US history. They also can take the course of Native American history as a core or a selective requirement. Therefore, we try to support those cultural and traditional native concerns we have with providing a curriculum that is Native American sensitive. (TCU01)



Meanwhile, in the delivery of the tribal cultural programs, TCUs provide the cultural courses that are immersed in the tribal communities.

We also encourage every student to participate in at least one culture program. We also have “Monday Drum.” We have drummers coming to begin the week in a good way with the traditional Native American drum song, and we provide a free meal to everyone who attends. Anyone of the community can come to the Monday Drum event. We also incorporate the language immersion time for students. If you cannot speak the Ojibwe language, you can come to these immersion times, play games, and learn some basics. And free meals are provided to them. (TCU07)

As discussed previously, TCUs usually serve as cultural centers for their tribes. Taking advantage of the culturally grounded characteristics, TCUs also prioritize research as an important tool in the preservation of their cultures.

Other research is related to the cultural factor. I have not talked about culture too much, but all tribal colleges, to some degree, work to reflect their cultural heritage, and they teach their cultural values and languages. Related to that, much of the research has a cultural component. For example, [we are] looking at traditional foods, traditional medicines, traditional agricultural practices, and environmental knowledge. (CAE12)

In the preservation of tribal culture, TCUs are doing relatively well in providing academic programs and conducting research rooted in their communities and culture. But more could be done if greater resources were available to help facilitate these initiatives.

## 8.2 HIGHLIGHTS OF ETHNIC MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS

Because of the centralized HE system, the highlights of strategies and practices of EMSIs shared by interviewees were mostly related to the national policies on EM HE, including the preferential policies to EM students, the Preparatory Program (*Yu Ke* Program), and the Partnership Assistance Program. EMSIs are the implementation agents of these policies while they also benefiting from these policies in realizing their missions. Some interviewees also shared some excellent practices and models which deserve more attention.

### 8.2.1 *National-Policies-Related Practices*

In the centralized Chinese HE system, national policies often serve a strategic role in setting the priorities for the development of EMSIs, and these priorities are often demonstrated by the missions proposed by the educational authority in the central government. For example, the current priorities of EMSIs are to realize the mission of “Three Centers and One Window,” which means “EMSIs should serve as the center of cultivating high-quality ethnic talents, the center of conducting research on ethnic theories and policies, and the center of preserving and promoting excellent ethnic cultures, as well as serve as the window of displaying Chinese ethnic policies and strengthening international cooperation” (EMI05). Interviewees of EMSIs shared some good practices under the guidance of national policies and the government-initiated missions. In specific, the national-policy-related practices highlighted by interviewees include the Preparatory Program, the Free Normal Higher Education Program, and the Partnership Assistance Program.

#### 8.2.1.1 *Preparatory Program (Yu Ke Program)*

The Preparatory Program or *Yu Ke* Program is designed and implemented by the Chinese government to help EM students prepare for their college-level education. The Preparatory Program is provided by EMSIs and usually takes one year. “Another successful model is the *Yu Ke* program. The preparatory education helps minority students who may come from rural areas where, for example, they did not have much time to be exposed to Mandarin, or maybe did not have a strong foundation for college to get the pre-college courses” (CAE01).

Some interviewees shared that the Preparatory Program has been an essential component of the ethnic talent training at EMSIs. “Ethnic talent training is the major task of my university ... and we also provide the Preparatory Program for Ethnic Minority students. The scale of this program is relatively big, and every year there are around 200 students enrolled in this Program” (EMI02). Meanwhile, because of the close relationship between instructors and students in the Preparatory Program, it does an excellent job of helping EM students and addressing their academic needs.

I have spoken with a lot of teachers who instruct in those programs; I actually think these teachers are more supportive of their students than teachers

or professors generally are. Because they know their students really well, and they understand the needs of their students, I think that provides a kind of college support that these students at college need. (CAE01)

The Preparatory Program is a significant way of helping EM students get ready for their college-level education. It is particularly crucial for those EM students from remote and rural ethnic areas. The Preparatory Program provides them with an excellent platform to get their Mandarin and academic skills ready. Meanwhile, it is also a good chance for them to adapt to life in larger cities.

#### *8.2.1.2 Free Normal Higher Education Program for Ethnic Minority Bilingual Teachers*

The Free Normal HE Program was proposed and implemented by the Chinese government to cultivate teachers for the remote and poor rural areas. This program is implemented by national and local normal colleges and universities. By signing a five-year service contract, students in this program enjoy tuition and other fee waivers and receive monthly stipends. Also, graduates from this program are assigned to teaching positions at primary and middle schools in rural and remote areas. The service time is usually for five years, based on each contract.

As an expansion of the Free Normal HE Program, some EMSIs are implementing the same program for EM students to cultivate bilingual teachers who will serve at the primary and middle schools in EM areas. Yanbian University in the Korean Chinese Autonomous Prefecture of Jilin Province administers the Free Normal HE Program, and its primary beneficiaries are Korean Chinese students. “The Free Normal Higher Education Program at Yanbian University aims to cultivate Ethnic Minority bilingual students. The cohort of participating students is around 30, and they do not need to afford any cost at the University. Each month, they can receive a stipend of 600 *Yuan*” (EMI02).

#### *8.2.1.3 Partnership Assistance Program and Institutional Cooperation*

In China, the development of EMSIs is also treated as one responsibility of regular HEIs. Therefore, in 1987, the China Ministry of Education and the State Ethnic Affairs Commission implemented the Partnership Assistance Program. Through this Program, regular HEIs in economically developed areas provide institutional support to EMSIs, including sending faculty members to the partnership EMSIs to serve for a period. Meanwhile,

regular HEIs also provide opportunities for EMSI faculty members to pursue advanced degrees. In this sense, interviewees recognized the significance of the Partnership Assistance Program, especially regarding faculty training and ethnic research opportunities.

Serving Ethnic Minorities and preserving ethnic cultures should not be the sole responsibility of Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions. All higher education institutions in China should share this responsibility. For example, Nankai University has set up a particular doctoral program for its partner ethnic institutions—Yanbian University and Kashgar University. This program only enrolls faculty members from these two universities, and their dissertation projects must be related to the educational issues in their ethnic areas. The partnership assistance is a national policy, and it is not a superficial policy. Many regular higher education institutions are doing very well in supporting their partner ethnic institutions. (CAE05)

Meanwhile, in addition to the Partnership Assistance Program, some EMSIs expand the form of institutional cooperation among EMSIs. This institutional cooperation is particularly important for those EMSIs located in non-ethnic areas because the cooperation serves as a bridge for them and the ethnic areas, through which they can better serve those areas.

My Center of Ethnic Education Studies has set up some liaison offices in Xinjiang and the ethnic prefectures in Guizhou and Hubei. For example, through the cooperation with the Yili Normal College in Xinjiang, my center and university can provide some teacher training services or offer master's and doctoral program opportunities to their faculty members. The liaison office there can help us conquer the language barrier when we are serving there. (EMI 05)

Guided by several national policies, the partnership assistance between EMSIs and regular HEIs and the institutional cooperation among EMSIs have been an important way for EMSIs to receive support and address the issue of the shortage of qualified faculty members.

### 8.2.2 *Cultural Preservation*

The preservation of EM languages and culture is a major task of EMSIs. In addition to the common practices of providing ethnic programs in

language and culture, some EMSIs are doing very well in innovating the application of EM languages.

#### 8.2.2.1 *Ethnic Programs*

Ethnic programs offered at EMSIs have been recognized by many interviewees as the primary way of preserving EM languages and cultures.

These universities are repositories of Ethnic Minority culture through the museum, the library, other resources, and the ethnic majors that they offer. You will not be going to find Tibetan language and literature as a major in most universities in China, but in the Ethnic Minority universities in the area that has a high population of Tibetans and also the Minzu University of China, you will find it as a major. Therefore, I do think that is a successful model. These universities are serving these students and communities. (CAE01)

Besides ethnic programs, EMSIs are also conducting ethnic research which is important for the preservation of ethnic languages and cultures. “The successful cases include research on ethnic society, culture, economy, and so on. Ethnic research contributes to the unity and development of EM areas, especially those along the border” (CAE04).

The process of ethnic talent training also emphasizes the integration of ethnic culture into teaching. For teachers, “in teaching activities, they focus on fieldwork and investigations in ethnic areas, as well as on the application of ethnic theories in ethnic affairs” (EMI03). One EMSI administrator shared that his university invites the ethnic folk artisans to teach their skills in the class. “We invite those ethnic folk artisans to our classes to teach our students their skills. More importantly, our students learn not only specific skills but also the culture behind that form of art or skills” (EMI01).

#### 8.2.2.2 *Innovative Development of Ethnic Languages*

As discussed in the previous chapter on challenges, it is a major challenge for EMSIs to incorporate ethnic languages into the disciplines of the natural sciences and engineering. As shared by some interviewees, the Ethnic Education College of Qinghai Normal University has gained a significant achievement in creating textbooks in the Tibetan language.

They have created many basic higher-education level textbooks in Tibetan language covering many natural science disciplines, including physics, chemistry, and biology, which are of excellent quality. This college is an exceptional case because it shows that ethnic languages can engage in the whole area of ethnic higher education. In the majors like mathematics and physics, the Tibetan language is highly involved. In this sense, the talent training model covers the dual missions of talent training and ethnic language and culture preservation. (CAE16)

In addition to the creation of Tibetan-language textbooks, the innovation of Tibetan-language preservation is demonstrated by the creation of the computer operating system in the Tibetan language at Northwest Minzu University. This innovative practice was also recognized by the Chinese government and received the National Science and Technology Progress Prizes twice in 1999 and 2001.

The Northwest Minzu University developed a computer operating system in Tibetan, which is MS Windows in Tibetan. Even though the audiences of this system are small (approximately two-to-three million people), it has considerable political influence. Northwest Minzu University has been awarded the National Science and Technology Progress Prize, which is a very big award in China. More than the operating system, they have also developed the Tibetan word input system. (EMI05)

EMSIs rely on ethnic programs to preserve EM languages and cultures. Some EMSIs are doing well in integrating ethnic cultures into their programs and the ethnic talent training process. Meanwhile, some innovative practices of the preservation of ethnic languages and cultures also received the recognition of interviewees and the Chinese government.

### 8.2.3 *Community Serving: Industrial Cooperation*

As shared by several interviewees, EMSIs focus a great deal of effort and resources on industrial cooperation to promote local economic development. In specific, many EMSIs cooperate with local advantageous industries to promote their positive influence on the local economy.

The School of Computer Sciences at my university is cooperating with the tea factory in the Enshi [Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture]. The School provides the tea factory with a barcode tracking system, through

which customers can trace the production information of each pack of tea, including the production location and process. This system helps the tea factory establish a logistic chain of production and sales. (EMI05)

Moreover, because in many EM areas, tourism with ethnic characteristics is the leading industry, the consultation services of EMSIs not only contribute to tourism development but also improve ethnic culture preservation. “Through serving the ethnic tourism industry, Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions contribute to the inherence of intangible cultural heritages in ethnic areas and protection of ethnic arts. Also, through creating ethnic-cultural brands, ethnic institutions are promoting the development of local cultural and service industries” (CAE04). Regarding the community services rendered by EMSIs, interviewees highlighted their contributions to the local economic development and culture preservation through industrial cooperation, especially with the advantageous local industries, which can amplify the positive influences on the economic development of ethnic areas.

#### 8.2.4 *An Exemplary Model: Graduate Internship Program*

Among the strategies and practices shared by interviewees of EMSIs, the Graduate Internship Program implemented by the Normal Education College of Yanbian University stands out because this program covers various missions of EMSIs, including ethnic talent training, ethnic research, and community outreach. Furthermore, this program greatly addresses the issues of shortage of qualified bilingual teachers in local K-12 schools. Yanbian University is located in the Yanbian Korean Chinese Autonomous Prefecture of Jilin Province, and it is a comprehensive research university that can grant doctoral, master’s, and bachelor’s degrees.

According to the document shared by the interviewee from Yanbian University, the Graduate Internship Program is a mandatory program for master’s students in the Normal Education College. Based on their majors, students are required to serve as an intern teacher in local kindergartens, primary schools, or middle schools for a period of 12 weeks. “Their serving schools include both Korean Chinese schools and Han schools. For those Korean Chinese master’s students, they go to the Korean Chinese schools” (EMI02). During the internship experience, all students can receive a salary and some stipend funds to cover their living and transportation costs. After completing the internship, all students are required to

submit an evaluative report about their experience. In the 2017 fall semester, the Normal Education College sent out 670 master's students from 16 educational majors. These students were sent to 58 K-12 schools, among which there were 23 Korean Chinese schools.

This Graduate Internship Program is highlighted as an exemplary model because it has accomplished tremendous achievements in realizing the EMSI missions. First, in ethnic talent training, this program provides EM students with opportunities to gain professional teaching experiences. Second, during the internship experience, these master's students take the opportunity to develop and conduct research for their master's theses on topics relevant to local educational needs, especially to the Korean Chinese basic education. Their research products, in turn, help with local education development. Third, this program helps reduce the number of unqualified basic education-level teachers, especially the bilingual and even trilingual (Korean, Mandarin, and English) teachers. In this sense, through the Graduate Internship Program, Yanbian University can better complete several key areas of its institutional missions.

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## Into the Future: Better Development

Regarding the future of TCUs and EMSIs, most of the interviewees presented a positive and optimistic perception. Meanwhile, interviewees provided specific suggestions on how to better the development of their own institutions or TCUs and EMSIs as a group. A better future of TCUs and EMSIs also means a better future for AIANs and CEMs.

### 9.1 SUGGESTIONS FOR TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

In order to improve TCUs for the future, interviewees gave many good suggestions, which covered a variety of themes: the visibility of TCUs, sustainable funding, leadership and management, faculty, partnership, relationship with the tribe, program optimization and development, and developing optimal facilities and technology.

#### 9.1.1 *Increase Visibility*

Before talking about the specific suggestions for the future development of TCUs, interviewees suggested that TCUs should increase their visibility to have society better recognize their value and significance.

I think tribal colleges like all ethnic minority-serving institutions are hidden gems, especially the tribal colleges because people do not know how lucky

we already are to have a college in the area. Who would establish a community college on our reservation? Nobody really thought tribal colleges were going to succeed. But look, we are here, and we are here all these years later because we have such dedication. All the tribal institutions serve the purpose to support our people, to keep our people healthy, and to provide our people with an avenue to a better life. That is the whole idea of our tribe. You work for the people. (TCU05)

In specific, the general population should have a better understanding of what TCUs are doing and achieving. Notably, the successes of TCUs in surviving through the early years and maintaining growth as an essential part of AIAN HE should be recognized by the general population in the United States.

Tribal colleges and universities are there, and they need to be more visible. Many people just do not know about them in the way they should. I think something needs to be done. Plus, [students from tribal colleges] are turning out to be good students, because we are seeing them come to our institution as transfer students. Many of them are well-prepared academically and are successfully receiving their four-year degrees. Those things should be out there to show the work that tribal colleges are doing and give them the credit that they have been able to exist this long with minimum resources. They are doing much good. I think that is something that really needs to be out there. (CAE09)

Summarizing what the interviewees argued, through increasing the visibility of TCUs and their successes and importance in the general US society, AIANs can attract more attention to their histories and current status, which will, in turn, provide additional support to the development of their education.

### 9.1.2 *Improve Funding Ability*

The lack of stable funding sources has been a primary barrier hindering the future development of TCUs. Given this barrier, content area experts (CAEs) and TCU administrators expressed their suggestions to the federal government and TCUs.

First, the federal government needs to give more credit to TCUs for their contributions to AIAN HE. More importantly, the federal government needs to realize its promise to guarantee funding according to the

*Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Act* and to provide additional funding in support for TCUs. “Tribal colleges provide an opportunity to a special kind of education for many people on different tribal nations.... The government needs to continue and expand their support, including such things as achieving the prosperity of the 1994 land-grant institutions” (TCU06).

Compared to placing all of the burdens upon the federal government, many interviewees pointed out how TCUs should unite to better coordinate with the federal government for their own promised rights. Therefore, TCUs need to strengthen the institutional lobbying ability of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) in Washington, DC. “[TCUs should] become more effective at lobbying Congressional representatives and promoting American Indian education as a ‘national priority’ based on treaty obligations with the President and Congress by passing legislation that mandates each Federal Agency to create special initiatives including funding on an annual basis with the tribal colleges” (CAE13). Moreover, to reduce the dependency on federal funding, TCUs should recruit or cultivate grant-writing expertise to improve their grant application ability to obtain more soft-money funding opportunities.

We are always scanning our environment inside to identify our needs that are unique to each coming group of students and to the community that has ever-changing development in our economy among our people, family, health, and employment. Our ability to respond to these changing challenges is one that concerns all of us. Our resources are slim. If we had the grant writing department with some broad-based expertise, it would really help the growth and expansion of our resources to develop new programs. (TCU02)

Solving the major funding challenge for the future development of TCUs requires a multi-pronged approach. Many interviewees argued that while it is necessary to reemphasize the promised responsibilities of the federal government, TCUs should also depend more on themselves through improving their lobbying ability as a solid group. Moreover, TCUs should improve their grant writing and application ability to obtain additional funding opportunities.

### 9.1.3 *Strengthen Leadership and Management*

The stable and competent leadership has been recognized by many CAEs as a critical factor of the future development of TCUs. Because TCUs are owned and governed by tribes, tribal leaders play a vital role in ensuring excellent leadership for TCUs.

Leadership is key, and leadership is stability. Once they are doing better, they are having stable leadership.... The tribal colleges will succeed if they can have long-term stable leadership. That means the regions which run these [tribal colleges] have to give credits to them and not to fire people from left to right. They need to hire qualified leaders for the college and give them the necessary leader support. (CAE10)

In specific, a good leader or an excellent team of leaders of TCUs can give the right vision for the future development of their institutions. In addition, stable leadership and good leaders can attract better faculty to create programs for their students, which will eventually build up a positive reputation for their institutions. Meanwhile, qualified leaders can positively apply their connections to gain various support for their institutions. "Another thing about great leaders is that they reach out to the state legislature, and they reach out to people in Congress. That will improve [their institutions] a lot, and as a result of that, [there will be] more funding [opportunities] and support will be more positive" (CAE11).

In the view of TCU administrators, to realize sound management of their institutions, constant and open communications within the institution are key ingredients. "We need to make sure everyone talks to each other. And for the communication with our Board of Trustees, we need to strengthen that.... [We are] trying to utilize strategies where the Board of Trustees and faculty and staff can communicate more through participation in fundraising efforts, or certain programs that are going on" (TCU07).

As a CAE mentioned, good professional development programs are necessary for TCUs to improve the management abilities of administrators, faculty, and staff members. "For leadership, what they are doing is they are growing their own. They conduct the development program for their faculty now through grants and the American Indian College Fund" (CAE09).

Stable leadership is a key factor for the future development and sustainability of TCUs. Therefore, TCUs should work closely with their tribal

governments to ensure the right persons are in positions of leadership. And for sound management, TCU leaders should promote open communications. Professional development programs for administrators and faculty and staff members are essential to improve the management level of TCUs.

#### 9.1.4 *Maintain and Grow Faculty*

The lack of qualified faculty has been a significant barrier for TCUs to realize their missions because faculty members play a significant role in serving AIAN students through excellent programs.

[Tribal colleges] should ensure to have highly-qualified and highly-engaged faculty. As in any institution of higher education, if you do not have faculty that engage with students and their professions, people will not be in their classes. And they do not learn anything even if they are [in the classroom]. That is a huge problem for tribal colleges because where they are located there are not that many highly-qualified faculty members, so the people they have are really working double, triple, or quadruple time sometimes to make sure that this place is not dead. (CAE06)

Interviewees provided two suggestions to address the issue of qualified faculty. Generally speaking, TCUs should take some actions to maintain their faculty members and even create their own faculty team. First, to maintain their faculty members, the primary thing that TCUs should do is to provide better compensation for faculty members. “They need to raise faculty salaries overall because they need to be in the run for the top-notch people. That helps with the accreditation and helps in the classroom. I think that will help them become better” (CAE09).

Second, as a TCU administrator introduced, his institution is working on growing their faculty team, which can be considered a method other TCUs can help solve their faculty issues as well. “The final area is that we are interested in growing our own faculty. We are so rural. When we recruit someone far away who often are urban people and are used to large cities, we cannot keep people here. So, the best strategy for us is to develop our expertise and our own faculty” (TCU02).

### 9.1.5 *Maintain and Expand Partnerships*

As presented in the chapter on facilitating factors, partnerships with mainstream HEIs and other tribal colleges are crucial for the development of TCUs. Therefore, interviewees suggested that TCUs should maintain their good cooperative work among tribal colleges as a group and expand connections with other mainstream colleges and universities. The establishment of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) has in many ways helped TCUs gain excellent achievements thus far in this regard. Therefore, TCUs should place greater value on and help strengthen this Consortium. “All TCUs should work together. TCUs should try to work as an organization to gain more power in their development. They should conduct more collaboration and should not just work as an individual institution” (CAE02). One CAE gave his opinion on the significance of cooperation among TCUs:

I would say that it is not simple to say that tribal colleges need more money, and it is that tribal colleges need to maintain the strategy that gives them the political clout and the political leverage they can get. That means the future is a shared future, and they must work together. I think they always need to work together. I think there is always a danger that, as the decades pass, the sense of cohesion and the sense of shared destiny can get lost, especially when there is a conflict within and between the institutions. Maintaining and strengthening the cooperation of institutions is vital for the better development of tribal colleges. Through that, they can get support to succeed. (CAE12)

Also, TCUs need to maintain and expand their connections with mainstream HEIs and the state HE systems. “I also believe that they should strengthen their memorandums of agreement and the transferability of the credits [with other higher education institutions].... Therefore, they need more communications and dialogues. More than that, the right policy should be put into practice. That is where the key is. It is our policies that would make it put into practice” (CAE14). TCUs cannot have a bright future if they fight individually or develop in a closed system. Therefore, TCUs should treasure the existing AIHEC partnership, and they should improve and expand upon their connections.

### 9.1.6 *Strengthen Relationships with Tribe*

Even though TCUs are chartered by their tribes, it does not necessarily mean that they have taken for granted support from the tribal governments. Therefore, for better development in the future, TCUs “need to continue the relationship building with the band and the community” (TCU07), and “should grow with their communities” (CAE02). This connection is significant because it is directly related to the tribal support for TCUs. “Developing a stronger relationship with local tribal leaders to ensure that the tribe makes greater commitments to the college and takes a political stand with the funding agencies, namely the Congress” (CAE13).

To maintain these relationships, TCUs should keep their needs-based strategy to serve their communities. “[The tribal college] meets the needs of the community and tribal people, and I think it will make them better, but it depends on what the needs are. They have to respond to those needs of the community and tribal group for what students are needing” (CAE09). As a specific example, some interviewees highlighted the vital role of TCUs in developing the natural resources and technology industry on their reservations.

I think in some time in the future we are going to be able to have the credentials of the tribal members to help tribal nations to capture some of the benefits and take advantage of the area’s natural resources. I think that is a logical step but really helps tribal nations gain greater wealth. Another area is technology and energy. I think it is a great opportunity for tribal nations to build upon the success and capture the benefits that can come from technology and energy. I think there is tremendous potential there.... I think we will hit those areas as more tribal members earn advanced degrees and knowhow. (CAE15)

TCUs should do everything they can to strengthen their relationships with their tribes. Therefore, TCUs should work closely with the tribal governments to identify the development needs and finally work together to understand how to best address these needs.

### 9.1.7 *Provide Quality Programs*

Many interviewees argued that the quality of programs offered at TCUs is the key to success and the future. Given the various challenges that exist,

funding or money cannot fix everything for TCUs. So they need to keep improving the quality of their programs to ensure every student can learn what they want and achieve what they dream.

If you ask the presidents of tribal colleges, they would say the biggest challenge is money. They said they do not have enough money to support students and to operate the college. I personally do not think the money is the end-all of fixing everything. I think if you have good and strong programs, and you can engage students then you are successful in what you are doing, even though there are only ten or twelve people that are graduating. (CAE06)

In specific, to guarantee the quality of programs, TCUs should establish a sound monitoring system for quality assurance purposes, especially of those newly established TCUs and programs. “I think for the better development, we need to strengthen our current programs. As I said, a lot of our strategies are new, our programs are new, or the way of being run [is new], so we just need to monitor those and apply continuous improvement processes to make sure we always are in a strengthening mode” (TCU07). Also, some interviewees suggested that good institutional research can contribute to program quality improvement. “We are currently reviewing our data collection process as we feel we can streamline that to better collect data that is meaningful [for the quality of our programs]” (TCU04).

## 9.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR ETHNIC MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS

For the better development of EMSIs in the future, interviewees suggested that, first, EMSIs should take full advantage of the national policies not only on HE, but also on other areas like the economy, development, and foreign affairs. Furthermore, EMSIs should improve institutional management, balance their institutional role in serving as both ethnic and regular HEIs, and at last, improve the quality of their programs.

### 9.2.1 *Take Advantage of National Policies*

As discussed previously, national policies have been recognized by many interviewees as the major facilitating factor in the development of EMSIs. Therefore, interviewees argued that EMSIs should take full advantage of



not only the HE policies, but also the general national policies on the economy, development, and foreign affairs. First, for EM HE, EMSIs should seize the chance of current plans focusing on recruiting student talents nationwide and globally. “Our university has become a candidate of the national *111 Plan*,<sup>1</sup> and beginning next year, we will be eligible to [receive the financial support] to introduce talents listed in the *Thousand-Talent Plan and Hundred-Talent Plan*” (EMI02). In addition to the talent plans, EMSIs should take the opportunity of the latest *Double First-Class University Plan* that includes not only HEIs but also disciplines. In this sense, this plan provides a broader platform than previous ones for EMSIs to enter the prestigious HE plans. Therefore, EMSIs should make use of their advantages of ethnic programs to enter the *Double First-Class University Plan* and receive support for the further development of these programs.

In addition to the HE policies, EMSIs should also carefully consider and seize the chance brought by the general national economic, development, and foreign policies, like the Belt and Road Initiative. For example,

[Our] university should take full advantage of the current economic-oriented Belt and Road Initiative and the Develop-the-West Strategy.... If we can fully apply these two policies to the development of our university, we will have an excellent development [strategy].... [They can bring resources,] and resources are important. Moreover, these national policies can guarantee stable resources on a long-term basis. Therefore, we need more research on these policies and how to apply them with our characteristics to serve the local needs. (EMI02)

In the Chinese centralized political and HE systems, EMSIs should take a careful review of the policy environment, and perhaps more importantly, they need to identify and seize the opportunities offered by these policies for their future development.

### 9.2.2 *Enhance Institutional Management*

From vocational post-secondary schools to research universities, EMSIs cover all levels of HEIs in China. So the institutional management abilities of EMSIs are different due to their institutional levels. Treating EMSIs as a group, many interviewees argued that enhancing institutional

management is a crucial point for their improvement, especially of those institutions trying to enter the list of world-class universities.

To reach high-level institutional management, in general, EMSI leaders should have a strategic vision for their future development.

Let me emphasize strategic planning and development as being really important. Let us try to brainstorm that Ethnic Minority groups on the level of the playground at the very beginning. The mindset is very important if we want to be successful. If you think you are inferior to someone, usually you are really inferior to someone at the end of the day. However, if we can be strategic and have a competitive mindset, let me say, “Okay, what are my competitive advantages?” “Can I be better than those groups who are competing with me?” Definitely, Ethnic Minority people have a lot of competitive advantages, but the only thing is that we need to utilize that visibility and dig deeper into that visibility until there are favorable policies, available funds, and a good governance structure. Moreover, a leader should have the vision to guide those projects. I see this as a project. If I have a school—and I am the dean or president coming to that school—I really need a strategic vision for my school to be prosperous and an attractive place for Ethnic Minority people to come. So, all that hinges upon leadership. (CAE03)

Regarding the vision of the future of EMSIs, they also need to deal with the misunderstanding of them as “policy institutions” that their most important and only task is to realize the policy objectives in providing HE access to EM students and guaranteeing ethnic unity. “I think there is some misunderstanding about the overall purpose and the need for these universities. Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions, as well as the Chinese government, could do a better job to promote the value of ethnic institutions to the broader Chinese society” (CAE01).

Interviewees also suggested that EMSIs should take advantage of the Chinese cultural tradition that promotes the harmonious relationships of different cultures in their institutional management and development. “Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions should focus on the future and create a community of a shared future for mankind in a harmonious way. [To realize this mission,] Ethnic Minority Colleges and Universities should creatively promote the Chinese tradition of treasuring multicultural and harmonious co-existence. This is a soft power which can help lead the future of ethnic institutions” (EMI03).

### 9.2.3 *Balance the Dual Institutional Role as Ethnic and Regular HEIs*

As emphasized by many interviewees, EMSIs are essentially regular HEIs with particular tasks of serving EM students and areas. In this sense, for their future development, interviewees further suggested that EMSIs should balance their position between the roles of ethnic institutions and regular HEIs.

On the one hand, as a special group of HEIs, EMSIs have their specific target population—EM students—and therefore, they are offering ethnic programs. EMSIs should leverage this unique institutional characteristic as a competitive advantage with China's regular HEIs. "In the competition with other regular comprehensive research universities to qualify as Double First-Class Universities, Ethnic Minority Colleges and Universities focus too much on the criteria to be top-class comprehensive universities while ignoring their advantages in Ethnic Minority serving, training, and research" (CAE04). EMSIs should recognize their significance and indispensability in the Chinese HE system. "We need to keep our unique characteristics; then there will be people needing you.... The talents we have cultivated are also important. Just as Peking University and Tsinghua University are indispensable, we are also indispensable" (EMI01).

On the other hand, EMSIs should not ignore their role as regular HEIs that serve in talent training, academic research, and social service. "Universities are special organizations in society with their own characteristics of academic freedom and autonomy, which is also the vitality of Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions as social organizations. Ethnic institutions have their special mission and target populations, but the realization of the special mission relies on their characteristic as institutions of higher learning" (CAE05).

To realize the balance between ethnic and regular roles, interviewees suggested that EMSIs should internalize the ethnic characteristics throughout the institutional operation and the delivery of their programs.

Actually, there is not a conflict between the dual roles of EMSIs in serving both Ethnic Minorities and the development pursuit of EMSIs as regular higher education institutions. Ethnic institutions should internalize the ethnic characteristics in their development as an academic organization, rather than merely make ethnic characteristics as a slogan. For example, they should apply ethnic languages in the organizational operation and create

more textbooks of ethnic languages to serve more Ethnic Minority students. Of course, in the aspect of regular higher education institutions, ethnic institutions should devote their efforts to serve the general population and society as well. Only with the development as regular higher education institutions, can they more fully promote their unique ethnic characteristics. (CAE16)

From this point of view, some interviewees thought that to be a comprehensive institution will bring about the positive development of EMSIs. “It is important for [ethnic institutions] to offer programs covering all disciplines. Because they are coming from the low-level institutions, to be comprehensive will increase their institutional standing” (EMI05).

#### 9.2.4 *Improve Program Quality*

As argued by many interviewees, the future development of EMSIs in many ways relies on the quality of the programs they provide. “Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions should improve discipline and program quality because it directly influences the institutional ability in talent training, research, and social service. They should put more emphasis on this area” (EMI05).

Regarding the specific suggestions to improve the quality of programs, many interviewees expressed that there should continue to be a particular emphasis on talent training. First, EMSIs should emphasize the significance of multicultural program delivery while reaching the goal of helping EM students live a better life in modern society.

[Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions] should, on the one hand, continue respect and positively support the development of multicultural programs. Ethnic institutions should eliminate negative stereotypical perceptions about Ethnic Minority youth and apply a culturally-appropriate way of instruction to help Ethnic Minority students bring out the best in them. On the other hand, by respect multiculturalism, ethnic institutions should recognize Ethnic Minority students’ great potentials in adapting to cultural changes and engaging in modern life. Moreover, these programs should strengthen students’ abilities to effectively use modern technology. (EMI03)

In alignment with the growing internationalization trend that exists within Chinese HE, EMSI programs should serve as a platform for EM students to grow their global competencies. “The primary concern of my

university is still in talent training. However ... the university [also] needs to be creative to ensure the management of the training process is in line with internationalization” (EMI02).

## NOTES

1. The *111 Plan* is a term shorted for the Program of Introducing Talents of Discipline to Universities, which was implemented in 2006 by the China Ministry of Education and the State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs. The *111 Plan* aims to introduce talents from the global top 100 universities to improve national key disciplines and promote the building up of world-class universities.



## Discussion: A Comparative Analysis

This discussion chapter juxtaposes and synthesizes all themes of TCUs and EMSIs from a comparative perspective to discuss their roles, facilitating factors, challenges and responses, and future development. This section also covers the research question, “What can TCUs and EMSIs learn from each other to address their challenges?” Meanwhile, the analysis process has also provided some insights on the comparability between TCUs and EMSIs.

### 10.1 ROLES

In the general AIAN and CEM HE contexts, mainstream universities and colleges are the main forces to provide HE opportunities to these two groups of underrepresented students. The mainstream universities and colleges enroll much more AIAN and CEM students than TCUs and EMSIs do. However, it does not mean TCUs and EMSIs are not important. On the contrary, they play significant roles in providing culturally relevant HE to AIAN and CEM students. In addition, they are filling an important role gap that mainstream HEIs cannot play or do not play well, such as tribal nation building for TCUs, ethnic research for EMSIs, and tribal or ethnic community service for both.

Regarding the differences that exist between TCUs/EMSIs and regular HEIs in the United States and China, some reasons are common to both TCUs and EMSIs, and others are unique to each of them. First,

focusing on serving a particular group of the population and cultural preservation is the major difference between TCUs/EMSIs and mainstream HEIs (Rainie and Stull 2015; Ou 2017). Second, TCUs and EMSIs have their specific reasons differentiating them from their public mainstream counterparts. For TCUs, the major difference between them and mainstream HEIs is the chartering body, which is the tribal governments instead of the state governments. Moreover, tribal nations maintain government-to-government relationships with the federal government. For EMSIs, the differences between them and regular HEIs in China come from the national policies, which regulate EMSIs to be a group of institutions to serve CEMs and their communities. Therefore, the serving targets of students and communities make EMSIs different from regular HEIs (Ou 2017; Zhang 2017).

However, among some Chinese scholars, there is a discussion about the role of EMSIs that they should emphasize their role as regular HEIs instead of only serving as ethnic institutions. One rationale underpinning this discussion was referenced by an interviewee's (EMI01) comments on the common misperceptions about EMSIs that they are primarily policy-oriented institutions, and their most important role is to fulfill the policy objectives providing HE to EMs and keeping ethnic unity. This common misperception has contributed to the unbalanced distribution of HE resources between EMSIs and regular HEIs, which has hindered the further development of EMSIs and the fulfillment of their institutional missions. In addition, the current HE trend toward becoming comprehensive universities contributes to this debate because if EMSIs only focus on their ethnic role, it is hard for them to also cover other non-ethnic-related disciplines.

For the specific roles of TCUs and EMSIs, the primary one for them is to serve as institutional agents in accomplishing their dual missions—(1) to provide HE opportunities to AIANs and CEMs, and (2) to preserve their cultures and languages. However, TCUs and EMSIs have different emphases in their respective roles due to the historical, political, and HE systemic reasons, as well as their geographic locations.

First, when talking about the roles of TCUs, tribal nation building has been mentioned by many interviewees who argued it is the most critical role for TCUs. This point has been supported by the literature (Brayboy et al. 2012; Cornell and Kalt 2003; Frickey 1997; Helton 2003/2004; Stull et al. 2015). The emphasis of TCUs on tribal nation building can be traced to their founding and to the Native American Self-Determination

Movement in the 1960s. Being established and operated by tribes creates a strong sense of ownership, recognition, and symbolic power which are reflected as part of Native Americans' self-determination (Cornel and Kalt 2010). For EMSIs, when talking about their roles, interviewees did not emphasize the ethnic group building as a separate mission, but they did talk about the political and economic development of ethnic areas as important contexts for community service. In the current Chinese political system, EM groups are under the full administration of the central government which acutely focuses on ethnic and national unity (Clothey 2005). In this sense, the locus of responsibility of ethnic group building currently resides on the shoulders of the central government instead of the EMSIs.

Second, regarding the specific role of providing HE opportunities, interviewees of TCUs emphasized the access to "culturally relevant HE," which is also called "culturally responsive education" in the literature (Brayboy et al. 2012; Gollnick and Chinn 2009). However, interviewees of EMSIs talked about "HE access," which also refers to general HE. This difference shows the degree of engagement of the cultural aspects in program and curricular designs at TCUs and EMSIs. TCUs generally place more emphasis on integrating their cultures, especially their philosophies of learning and knowing into their programs and curricula, as well as their institutional management. However, for EMSIs, because of the government-curtailed and centralized HE system, program and curricular structure and requirements are similar nationwide. Within EMSIs, ethnic languages and cultures are usually taught as subjects (Lin and Chen 2017). EMSIs are also trying to change this situation and engage more with ethnic cultures and languages, but the centralized governance of HE leaves them minimal space to create enough ethnically or culturally relevant programs and curricula. As one interviewee (EMI01) mentioned, his university opens a university-wide required course on an ethnic theory which has been very popular among students and was awarded by the Chinese government as an exemplary course. This example shows the potential of ethnically relevant courses at EMSIs, but the amount of such courses at present, in reality, is too small to make a significant impact on the overall curriculum.

Third, compared to the relatively stable roles of TCUs—as is reflected in their mission and vision statements—the roles of EMSIs are always influenced by the changes in the general Chinese HE system. As discussed previously, both TCUs and EMSIs first serve the dual missions of



providing HE opportunities and preserving cultures and languages. TCUs also focus on tribal national building and community service. For EMSIs, in addition to serving the dual missions, their roles are also following the traditional three functions of HEIs—talent training, scientific research, and social service—as well as guided by the national policies. For the general missions of HEIs in China, in addition to the traditional three functions listed above, some scholars are discussing new ones such as the transformation of knowledge, promotion of employment, and life-long education (Wang 2012). Meanwhile, internationalization has recently been proposed as the fourth function of HEIs in China. While these new proposed functions or foci of general HEIs are influencing EMSIs, there are also new emphases particularly for them. The newest mission for EMSIs is to serve as “Three Centers and One Window,” which means “EMSIs should serve as the center of cultivating high-quality ethnic talents, the center of conducting research on ethnic theories and policies, and the center of preserving and promoting excellent ethnic cultures, as well as serve as the window of displaying Chinese ethnic policies and strengthening international cooperation” (EMI05). This national directive for EMSIs is rooted in the traditional roles EMSIs have played, as well as emphasizes a new role that EMSIs should strengthen. From a positive perspective, the continually updating roles of EMSIs can help them keep up with the development of Chinese HE and the whole society. However, it may also bring more burdens upon EMSIs. So long as they remain within government policies and guidelines, EMSIs can determine whether the changing roles benefit or hinder them through their efforts. Meanwhile, this mission shift situation in China may provide some insights to TCU administrators that it is significant for their development by continuously scanning their circumstances and updating their mission and vision to meet changing times and circumstances. As one interviewee (CAE11) highlighted, one TCU is doing an excellent job of reviewing and updating its mission and vision statements.

## 10.2 FACILITATING FACTORS

The interviews show that several facilitating factors help in the establishment and development of TCUs and EMSIs. These factors include the external contexts that provide an enabling environment for TCUs and EMSIs to grow. In addition to the favorable external contexts, the internal factors—or the endeavors of TCUs and EMSIs—play critical roles in this

development process. Regarding the specific external and internal facilitating factors, the interviewees of TCUs and EMSIs gave different emphases, which reflect the different situations that exist between the two country contexts. The discussion of these facilitating factors aims to review and compare the favorable situations and the available resources possessed by TCUs and EMSIs. They need to realize the importance of these factors while taking advantage of them instead of ignoring them or even giving them up.

Regarding the external facilitating factors for TCUs and EMSIs, many interviewees discussed the factors related to the political or policy context. For TCUs, the political factor is the tribally controlled status; and for EMSIs, it is the national policies on EM HE. As discussed previously and in the literature, TCUs are the products of the Native American Self-Determination Movement (Cornell and Kalt 2010). A relatively few of the largest AIAN tribes took control of their own HE. In addition, a series of assistance acts provide continued policy support to the growth of TUCs. Just as one interviewee said, “tribal colleges exist because they were allowed to exist, and at least they are not opposed” (CAE11). For EMSIs, the favorable political environment is founded on a series of national laws and policies on EM issues, especially on EM HE, including the creation of EM colleges and universities in the 1950s, and the preferential policies for EM students in HE access. A significant body of Chinese literature has treated the national policies as the most important reason for the development of EMSIs (Clothey 2005; Zhang 2011; Zhang and Qu 2009), which is also reflected in the responses of interviewees.

As to the second external facilitating factors for TCUs and EMSIs, interviewees presented a big difference between the two groups of institutions. For TCUs, many interviewees argued that the available funding sources are both a significant facilitating and hindering factor for the establishment and growth of TCUs. Funding has been discussed a lot as a hindering factor since the foundation of TCUs (Stein 2009; Stull et al. 2015). However, as interviewees explained, after considering the condition of poverty on American Indian reservations, especially back to the 1960s and 1970s, the available funding promised by the federal government through assistance acts and supported by the tribal governments was vital to the creation and existence of TCUs. Even today, available funding sources are still important factors for TCUs. For EMSIs, the second external facilitating factor is the favorable social context, which is partially coming from the national policies on ethnic issues that promote ethnic unity

while recognizing diversity (Gan and Peng 2012; Ma 2006). Moreover, the favorable social context comes from the Chinese historical traditions on creating harmonious relationships among ethnic groups, especially the relationship between EM groups and the Han people. As articulated by one interviewee who is an EM member serving as an EMSI administrator, “from the long Chinese history, we have learned that we should live a harmonious life with other ethnic groups” (EMI01).

When covering the internal facilitating factors for TCUs and EMSIs to achieve their roles of serving their students and communities, interviewees’ responses showed more disparities than similarities. First of all, the internal facilitating factors for TCUs are closely related to the inherent characteristics of the institutions and the tribes. For example, the internal facilitating factor discussed most by interviewees is the on-reservation location of the TCUs. It is crucial because the close-to-community location of TCUs perfectly comply with their place-based and needs-based characteristics. With this close proximity, TCUs are strategically positioned to provide immediate services to their communities. In addition to the location, the tribal culture and tradition and native institutional leaders are other factors that are directly related to their tribes and cultures.

In comparison, the internal facilitating factors for EMSIs are closely related to the national policies, which reflect the perception of EMSIs that they are policy-oriented institutions. For example, as one facilitating factor, the self-positioning of EMSIs within the HE system is directly related to the policies of how to define EMSIs. While the government and some scholars keep emphasizing the importance of the ethnic characteristics (Zhong and Lei 2017), there is a trend among EMSIs of balancing their characteristics as ethnic and regular HEIs (Ou 2017; Zhang 2017). Many interviewees argued that EMSIs should focus on this trend because regular HEI status can bring them additional resources, which can be applied to accomplish their target goals in primarily serving EM students and communities. Another example is the institutional cooperation among EMSIs and the partnerships that exist between EMSIs and regular HEIs in China. The government initiates the cooperation as a policy like the “National Ethnic Minority College Presidents Conference” and the Partnership Assistance Program, both of which are administered by the government. However, the partnership that exists as an internal facilitating factor for TCUs like AIHEC and partnerships forged with other mainstream HEIs is based on the willingness of TCUs and governed by themselves.

Second, in the interviews, the strategic location was highlighted by interviewees from both countries as a significant internal facilitating factor to realize their institutional missions. However, the emphasis on this factor also has its differences. For TCUs, as previously discussed in this section, being located on reservations means an ability to offer immediate services to the needs of their students and communities, especially in remote and rural areas where public transportation is not well developed. Furthermore, because most TCUs are located on reservations, the facilitating effects of the location can apply to most of them. In comparison, for EMSIs, the factor of location mentioned by the interviewees stresses the available resources to them because of their geographic locations. On the one hand, because most EMSIs are located in rural and remote areas, for those Ethnic Minority Colleges and Universities (EMCUs) located in major urban centers—such as Minzu University of China in Beijing and Central-South University for Nationalities in Wuhan—they can benefit from the economically developed conditions, as well as the HE resources in finance and quality faculty and staff. On the other hand, for those EMSIs located within the border provinces—such as Yanbian University in Jilin next to the Korean Peninsula and Inner Mongolia University for Nationalities in Inner Mongolia next to Mongolia—they can benefit from the ethnic connections to better help their students find employment opportunities following graduation and better preserve their cultures and languages (Xiong et al. 2016). In this sense, different from the effects of location on TCUs, the benefits from the location can only apply to a small group of EMSIs.

Finally, different groups of people at TCUs and EMSIs were discussed by interviewees as the facilitating factor in realizing their missions. For TCUs, interviewees emphasized the significant roles of the indigenous presidents, especially those founding presidents in their development. In many TCUs, the founding presidents have served for a very long period, and some of them are still serving in this leadership position. The visions and dedications of the founders were the primary reason to make TCUs happen in the early days of the Tribal College Movement, and their legacies are still helping their institutions (Boyer 2015). In this sense, TCU leaders were highlighted by interviewees as a key facilitating factor of their development and the realization of their missions. For EMSIs, people mentioned by interviewees are referring to a broader group of people, including ethnic students, faculty, and leaders. Their dedication to

promoting the development of EM HE as well as preserving their cultures and languages is a major facilitating factor for EMSIs.

The establishment and development of TCUs and EMSIs, as well as the realization of their missions, are benefited from the favorable external environments and their endeavors. However, TCUs focus primarily on the characteristics of their own tribes and institutions, while EMSIs generally stress the importance of policy-related internal factors.

### 10.3 CHALLENGES

TCUs and EMSIs face many more challenges than facilitating factors when it comes to implementing their institutional missions. These challenges are organized similarly to how the analysis of facilitating factors section was, where the author examines both external and internal challenges. Many of the challenges can also be viewed as facilitating factors, which causes some complexities but also provides some insights to TCUs and EMSIs to better understand and overcome these types of challenges.

Regarding the external challenges, the major one faced by TCUs is the unstable and mostly single-source funding strategy. While the available funding sources are also viewed as a facilitating factor for TCUs to establish and develop, the uncertain status of these funds is a major challenge as well for TCUs to set up new programs and meet the emerging needs of AIAN students and communities. There are six reasons for the unstable status of funding for TCUs discussed in the interviews, which are also supported by the literature (Clement 2009; Stull et al. 2015). First, the unstable nature of the funding is derived by the highly political and sometimes divisive federal government in guaranteeing to fund according to the *Tribally Controlled Universities and Colleges Assistance Act of 1978*. The federal government remains the primary funding source for most TCUs, so without guaranteed funding, it complicates the operational capacity and potential of these institutions. Second, most tribes have no tax base for their TCUs. Third, TCUs also depend on obtaining soft-money grants, and many of them have no qualified grant writing staff to compete in this highly competitive arena. Fourth, the funding shortage sometimes results from tribal politics which can significantly influence what financial support is given/available from the tribal governments. Fifth, the poverty of the rural and remote tribal communities is another external challenge contributing to the underfunded situation of TCUs. Sixth, some interviewees mentioned that an increase in the number of non-native students worsens

the financial situation of TCUs because they cannot receive funding from the federal government for these students. However, while the growth of AIAN student enrollments also complicates the funding crisis for some TCUs, very few interviewees mentioned this point.

Compared to TCUs, EMSIs face challenges in relation to national policies and their marginalized position in the Chinese HE system. First, there are always controversial perceptions on the preferential policies to EMs in HE, especially considering Han students in the ethnic and rural areas who are poor and struggling to obtain a HE degree, while they cannot enjoy the preferential policies (Feng and Cheung 2010). Second, despite the national policies to promote their development, EMSIs are still in a marginalized position in the Chinese HE system. This is manifested by the fact that not many EMSIs can enter the prestigious HE development plans such as the previous *985 Plan* and *211 Plan*, and the current *Double First Class University Plan*. These prestigious plans mean sufficient financial and policy support given to HEIs. However, very few EMSIs enjoy access to this level of support.

Regarding the internal challenges, both US and Chinese interviewees discussed some related to the students; however, they have placed different emphases in relation to these challenges. TCUs deal with challenges related to low student enrollments and readiness, while EMSIs are focused heavily on student success in HE. For TCUs, the primary challenge is students' readiness for college-level education (Nguyen et al. 2015). Because many first-year students are non-traditional and some of them have not completed their basic education, TCUs must devote a considerable portion of their budgets to remedial education programs. Also, some TCUs also face the challenge of low student enrollment because of the competition from other mainstream HEIs near the reservations and the social issues hindering students to enter TCUs such as prevalent drug abuse and alcoholism. In comparison, for EMSIs, because the Chinese government has put significant efforts in promoting HE access to EM students, EMSIs have done very well in enrolling EM students and keeping the required ratio of EM students in their institutions. Meanwhile, the Preparatory Programs have greatly helped EM students prepare for HE. Therefore, the primary student needs at EMSIs are additional support services for EM students to achieve good academic performance and compete with their Han counterparts in colleges and universities, as well as in the job market after graduation (Ye et al. 2017).

In addition to the challenges related to student enrollment, readiness, and success, TCUs and EMSIs also lack the ability to attract and retain quality faculty, leaders, and staff. The difficulty of recruiting quality faculty and the high turnover rate are two major challenges for both TCUs and EMSIs, and one common reason can be attributed to the relatively low salaries, poor living conditions, and rural/remote locations. However, TCUs and EMSIs have different emphases on how to deal with this challenge. Many US interviewees emphasized that the decreasing native faculty members and the death of tribal elders are enormous challenges that need to be addressed. Also, TCUs are trying to grow their own faculty members, but the challenge lies in how to equip the new faculty members with a good understanding of their tribal cultures and philosophies in learning and knowing. In comparison, Chinese interviewees focused how to alleviate the high turnover of faculty members, especially those excellent faculty members who choose to relocate to the economically developed areas on the eastern coast of China. Moreover, the faculty members of EMSIs mentioned in the interviews mainly refer to the general faculty members instead of EM ones, especially those EMSIs located outside autonomous ethnic areas. This situation also reflects that the ethnic programs at most EMSIs only take a small part of the whole disciplinary structure.

As just mentioned, ethnic programs at EMSIs are only a part of the whole disciplinary structure. Moreover, the trend in China for HEIs to become comprehensive institutions makes the share of ethnic programs gradually smaller. Many kinds of literature argue that this trend dismisses the ethnic characteristics of EMSIs (Bai 2005; Lei 2010; Meng 2016; Ou 2011). Explicitly, this situation places a barrier for EMSIs to allocate scarce resources to ethnic programs and serve their ethnic students. In comparing this situation to TCUs that well integrate their tribal culture and philosophy into the organization operation and program delivery, EMSIs are superficially setting up ethnic programs rather than integrating ethnic cultures into the programs. EMSIs need to think further than just focusing on providing natural sciences and engineering courses using ethnic languages as the medium of instruction.

Many studies argue that the HEI accreditation requirements in the United States and the comprehensiveness-oriented trend in China are enormous challenges for TCUs and EMSIs, especially for them to preserve indigenous and ethnic cultures (e.g., Brayboy et al. 2012; Randall 2014; Stull et al. 2015; Willeto 2014). This is because the criteria for HEI accreditation

in the United States and the requirement to be a comprehensive university in China have not fully integrated and taken into consideration indigenous and ethnic cultures and traditions in the accrediting and evaluation process. However, many interviewees presented different perspectives on this issue. For TCUs, the accreditation process guarantees eligibility in receiving federal funding, and more importantly, this process ensures the quality of their programs which is the most critical aspect of attracting students and preparing them for the workforce or to advance to higher-level graduate study at a major university. For EMSIs, the comprehensiveness trend will help them increase their institutional level within the Chinese HE system, which means more potential support in policy, finance, and human resources. With more support and resources, EMSIs can be able to better provide their unique institutional services to EM students and communities.

Even though TCUs and EMSIs face various challenges, it is the challenges that make them struggle and alive. These challenges are valuable experiences and provide them with space to grow. Just as one TCU administrator stated, “Those are the challenges that we are having, but those challenges are what we want. Because we have those challenges, it means we are still around, and we are still here. If we are not faced with them, it means we are done, and we are not around anymore. Because we have them and they are difficult, we can take confidence in addressing them” (TCU03).

#### 10.4 STRATEGIES AND GOOD PRACTICES

One of the objectives of this book is to present the proper strategies and good practices of TCUs and EMSIs, which can add to the depth of understanding how to better serve AIAN and CEM students. Meanwhile, these sound strategies and practices can also provide some insights into their domestic peers and foreign counterparts. In the interviews, participants expressed different perspectives on this topic. In specific, the strategies and practices of TCUs highlighted by interviewees focus on the institutional level, while the strategies and practices shared by the interviewees of EMSIs focus on the national policies. However, interviewees of EMSIs also highlighted some excellent programs that serve their students and communities well.

Regarding the strategies, most TCUs are adopting a student-centered strategy because as one interviewee said, “students are the reason why we



are here” (TCU07). From a practical perspective, many challenges faced by TCUs are related to students, such as enrollments, readiness for a college education, retention, and employment. TCUs clearly recognize the importance of addressing the challenges related to students, which makes it easy to understand why many interviewees treated the student-centered strategy as a critical one (Williams and Pewewardy 2009). Guided by this strategy, TCUs have taken different actions and provided various programs, such as setting up the Student Success Center or incorporating student representatives as part of the Board of Trustees.

The needs-based strategy in community service and outreach is another strategy highlighted by interviewees and is aligned with best practice community engagement in HE strategies (Jacob et al. 2015). This strategy reflects the close relationship between TCUs and the tribal nations. Moreover, several interviewees stressed even though most TCUs are two-year community colleges, they are also engaged in meaningful research activities to meet tribal needs and address local social issues. Also, many TCUs are cooperating with the mainstream research universities to conduct research. Therefore, research is a highlight for TCUs especially when considering most of them are community colleges.

Compared to TCUs, when talking about strategies, interviewees of EMSIs mentioned a lot about national policies, such as the preferential policies for EM students in HE and national-policy-guiding programs like the Preparatory Program and the Partnership Assistance Program. It is because, in the centralized HE system, the government bears the responsibility to address the inequality in HE access for EM students. Also, these national policies have gained notable achievements, so they have been recognized by scholars and EMSI administrators. However, because of the variety of EMSIs, the coverage and effects of the national policies are different for each institution. For example, those institutions administered by the provincial governments receive fewer resources than those directly administered by the State Ethnic Affairs Commission of China. Therefore, in addition to the national policies, these local EMSIs have focused on their specific strategies. These strategies leverage local educational policies to solve their unique issues.

Regarding cultural preservation, which is one important side of the dual missions of TCUs and EMSIs, both groups of interviewees provided some similar responses. They felt it was critical to establish required programs in indigenous and ethnic languages and cultures. However, interviewees shared differing perspectives on how to accomplish this

preservation. For TCUs, interviewees stressed that TCUs integrate their cultures, especially their philosophies of learning and knowledge into the curriculum design and delivery, as well as the management of their institutions. For example, in addition to the mission and vision statements, many TCUs also have statements that reflect tribal philosophies. For EMSIs, interviewees highlighted the need to further development ethnic programs, especially in relation to ethnic research as the main venue to preserve cultures. In specific, many EMSIs have established various research centers on ethnic cultures and languages. While TCUs rely heavily on tribal elders in providing courses on tribal history and culture, only one interviewee of EMSIs mentioned they invite local ethnic artisans to teach classes about the ethnic arts.

### 10.5 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Interviewees from China and the United States (US) presented two fundamentally different perceptions about future development. US interviewees were pragmatic, and self-determination- and detail-oriented about the future development of TCUs. They expressed optimism that if TCUs can address the challenges they currently face and persevere, they can have a bright future. However, Chinese interviewees presented an idealistic and context-oriented emphasis in their suggestions for the future development of EMSIs. In specific, interviewees emphasized the creation of a more favorable environment for EMSIs, and that EMSIs should take the full advantage of this environment.

For the future development of TCUs, interviewees generally focused on solving their current challenges related to funding, leadership, students, and faculty. In addition, most interviewees argued that they should continue what they are doing well, such as supporting institutional cooperation ventures like AIHEC and partnerships with mainstream HEIs. Meanwhile, TCUs should also focus on creating a favorable social context for their development by increasing greater visibility in US HE and society. As “hidden gems” (TCU05), TCUs should recognize the importance of introducing to the US society what they are and all the tremendous efforts they engage in for AIANs. Additionally, to create a more favorable context, TCUs should maintain a good relationship with their tribes because it is the direct environment where TCUs are operating. In this sense, interviewees stressed that TCUs should keep their place-based and needs-based characteristics to better serve their communities and tribes. Meanwhile, the importance of

partnerships with mainstream HEIs was also highlighted by interviewees and the literature (Gasman et al. 2013; Jacob et al. 2015; Stull et al. 2015).

For the better development of EMSIs in the future, interviewees suggested to better align their missions with national policies and to strategically position EMSIs within the Chinese HE system. First, a significant suggestion from the interviewees was to actively respond to and take full advantage of the government's HE policies (e.g., Hu and Chen 2017; Jin 2015) and other policies in the areas like economy, development, and foreign affairs. The second suggestion interviewees mentioned is to balance the roles of EMSIs to meet the needs of EM students and communities while also aligning closer to regular HEIs (Ou 2017; Zhang 2017). This suggestion is related to the better positioning of EMSIs within the Chinese HE system. On the one hand, EMSIs should keep their ethnic characteristics in serving EM students and communities and conducting ethnic research; on the other hand, EMSIs should realize their general missions, which can be broader to serve as other regular HEIs in talent training, scientific research, social service, and the newly proposed mission of internationalization. The reason for this positioning suggestion is that the classification criteria of EMSIs are based on their target populations; therefore, EMSIs should not be viewed as a separate group of HEIs. EMSIs include all levels of institutions from vocational post-secondary schools to comprehensive research universities granting doctoral degrees. In many ways, EMSIs are essentially the same as regular HEIs, but because their missions are highly regulated by national policies, they are usually categorized as a separate group of institutions. Balancing their position within the Chinese HE system can enable EMSIs to better take advantage of the existing national policies. In addition to the focus on policies, several interviewees suggested the importance of EMSIs to continue promoting harmonious ethnic relationships in all aspects of their operation and services.

A common suggestion proposed by interviewees from both countries emphasized the importance of strengthening and maintaining the quality of the programs they provide. Quality is a key factor for these institutions to be able to attract students and faculty, as well as to guarantee necessary support and resources, which will significantly influence the realization of their missions in serving AIAN and CEM students and communities (Lin and Chen 2017).

## 10.6 REFLECTIVE REMARKS

Given the discussion on the key findings, TCUs and EMSIs face some common roles, facilitating factors, and challenges, and which are also similar to their mainstream counterpart HEIs. For example, TCUs, EMSIs, and mainstream HEIs are trying to prepare their students with needed competencies to perform well in the job market. However, TCUs and EMSIs have additional and unique purposes to provide indigenous/EM HE, conduct meaningful research, and provide needs-based community service and outreach. For instance, TCUs and EMSIs serve specific groups of population. Also, their dual missions—especially their attention on culture and language preservation—make them differ from mainstream HEIs.

During the research design of this study, the author carefully examined underpinning rationales to compare TCUs in the United States and EMSIs in China. Both groups of institutions were established under very different historical, political, social, and educational environments. Before the implementation of this study, no study had compared and examined TCUs and EMSIs. The underrepresented status of AIANs and CEMs in their respective HE systems, as well as the institutional missions of EMSIs and TCUs in preserving indigenous and ethnic cultures, languages, and identities provide some important rationales for the comparison. Also, from an organizational perspective, both TCUs and EMSIs are relatively new institutions, which face many of the same organizational challenges.

This study offered a balanced perspective by providing both positive and negative findings from study participants and a content analysis of the respective institutional guiding documents. Findings provided many insights and recommendations for TCUs and EMSIs to review and consider as strategies and good practices for future implementation. Usually, TCUs and EMSIs self-reflect on their respective contexts of the US and Chinese HE. Bringing an international comparative perspective, TCUs and EMSIs have one more angle to look at their education, programs, and services provided to their students and communities.

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## Conclusion and Recommendations

### 11.1 CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, TCUs and EMSIs play significant roles in providing HE opportunities to AIAN and CEM students, as well as in preserving native and ethnic cultures and languages. However, because of their respective historical and political contexts, TCUs and EMSIs have different emphases in reaching their institutional goals and accomplishing their missions. For example, TCUs tend to focus primarily on tribal nation building, and EMSIs tend to focus more on ethnic talent training. While both TCUs and EMSIs enjoy some facilitating factors—including the favorable external environment and their own characteristics and efforts—they also face many challenges, some of which are also noted as facilitating factors. However, challenges can be viewed as opportunities for TCUs and EMSIs to grow and further develop. They increase their confidence as they overcome these challenges through their collective and persistent efforts. In their responses to the challenges and efforts of realizing their missions in serving their students and communities, as well as preserving native and ethnic cultures, TCUs and EMSIs present some exemplary strategies and practices. These exemplary cases demonstrate the high potential of the HE and other support services they provide to their students and communities.

From a comparative perspective, the efforts of TCUs and EMSIs in addressing challenges to realize their dual missions are manifested through



different approaches and emphases because of their respective political and HE contexts. TCUs have a pragmatic and institutional-level focus to solve current problems and continue their successful strategies and practices. In comparison, the efforts of EMSIs are greatly influenced by the Chinese national policies, not only on HE, but also related to other areas like the economy, development, and foreign affairs. Therefore, EMSIs focus on the efforts to better take advantage of the resources brought on by national policies. Through presenting the various aspects of TCUs and EMSIs in their efforts to serve their people and communities, as well as to save the indigenous and ethnic cultures, the author wants to emphasize the important role these institutions play in the promotion of multiculturalism and diversity in the United States and China, as well as the whole world.

## 11.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter has highlighted several suggestions for the future development of TCUs and EMSIs. This section briefly presents a series of recommendations for both TCUs and EMSIs. Afterward, several suggestions are given for future areas of research that should be explored on AIAN and CEM HE.

### *11.2.1 Recommendations for Tribal Colleges and Universities*

First, TCUs should increase their visibility and promote their values to US society. More can be done to highlight the excellent work already accomplished in serving the various needs of AIAN students and communities, as well as in preserving indigenous languages, cultures, and identities. Second, TCUs should diversify and further improve their funding ability by strengthening their lobbying and grant-writing abilities.

Third, TCUs should enhance their leadership and management capacity by establishing professional development programs and promoting open communications in institutional management. Fourth, TCUs should maintain and grow their own faculty teams by increasing faculty salaries and putting more emphasis on faculty recruitment, cultivation, and retention efforts.

Fifth, TCUs should maintain and expand their partnership base with mainstream HEIs. Meanwhile, they should also strengthen their relationships with each other by focusing on their roles in tribal nation building and needs-based community service and outreach. Sixth, TCUs should

improve the overall quality of the programs they offer by establishing best practices in accreditation and quality assurance that are evidence-based on research and international standards and best practices. In addition to interviewees' suggestions, the author recommends that TCUs should learn from EMSIs to keep scanning their circumstances to updating missions and visions to better serve the needs of their students and communities.

### *11.2.2 Recommendations for Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions*

First, EMSIs should take full advantage of the national policies on not only HE but also other areas like the economy, development, and foreign affairs to obtain additional resources and support for their development. Second, EMSIs should enhance their institutional management by strategizing the priorities of their future development.

Third, EMSIs should balance their characteristics of ethnic and regular HEIs to better leverage resources for their institutional development while keeping their special roles in serving CEM students and areas. Fourth, EMSIs should improve the quality and internationalization level of their programs. Finally, EMSIs should learn from the best practices already in place at TCUs, including to put more effort into exploring how to integrate ethnic cultures and philosophies into their talent training and institutional management.

### *11.2.3 Recommendations for Future Research*

Given the focus of this book on the institutional-level strategies and practices and the data collection from senior TCU and EMSI administrators and content area experts, many other important stakeholder voices are not reflected. Additional research should focus on students, faculty, indigenous/EM leader, and government policymaker perspectives on AIAN and CEM HE, including indirect reference to their involvement with EMSIs and TCUs. Therefore, future research could pay attention to the expectations and experiences at/with TCUs and EMSIs from each of these stakeholder groups. Besides, future research could explore the definition of "success" and the measurement of "successful outcomes" at TCUs and EMSIs to examine the difference between them and mainstream HEIs. Finally, future research could focus on some specific groups of TCU and

EMSI students, such as TCU students who transfer to mainstream four-year universities and EMSI students who participated in the Preparatory Program before entering EMSIs. TCUs and EMSIs could benefit from these kinds of additional research projects to further improve their programs and better serve their students and communities.

## APPENDIX

### APPENDIX A: LIST OF TCUs IN THE UNITED STATES

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Chartered Time</i>	<i>Accreditation Status</i>	<i>Highest Degree</i>	<i>Enrollment (Fall 2016)<sup>c</sup></i>
Aaniih Nakoda College	MT	1984	Fully accredited	Associate	149
Bay Mill Community College	MI	1984	Fully accredited	Associate	467
Blackfeet Community College	MT	1974	Fully accredited	Associate	425
California Tribal College	CA	2017	Pre-candidate	Associate	NA
Cankdeska Cikana Community College	ND	1974	Fully accredited	Associate	178
Chief Dull Knife College	MT	1975	Fully accredited	Associate	168
College of Menominee Nation	WI	1993	Fully accredited	Bachelor	394
College of the Muscogee Nation	OK	2004	Fully accredited	Associate	213
Diné College	AZ	1968	Fully accredited	Associate	1396

*(continued)*

(continued)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Chartered Time</i>	<i>Accreditation Status</i>	<i>Highest Degree</i>	<i>Enrollment (Fall 2016)<sup>c</sup></i>
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College	MN	1987	Fully accredited	Associate	2101
Fort Peck Community College	MT	1978	Fully accredited	Associate	385
Haskell Indian Nations University <sup>a</sup>	KS	1884	Fully accredited	Bachelor	820
Iñisagvik College	AK	1996	Fully accredited	Associate	188
Institute of American Indian Arts <sup>a</sup>	NM	1962	Fully accredited	Master	582
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College	MI	1975	Fully accredited	Associate	104
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College	WI	1982	Fully accredited	Associate	288
Leech Lake Tribal College	MN	1990	Fully accredited	Associate	286
Little Big Horn College	MT	1980	Fully accredited	Associate	223
Little Priest Tribal College	NE	1996	Fully accredited	Associate	132
Navajo Technical University	NM	1979	Fully accredited	Master	1675
Nebraska Indian Community College	NE	1979	Fully accredited	Associate	175
Northwest Indian College	WA	1983	Fully accredited	Bachelor	579
Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College	ND	1974	Fully accredited	Bachelor	268
Oglala Lakota College	SD	1971	Fully accredited	Master	1301
Red Lake Nation College	MN	2001	Candidate	Associate	149
Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College	MI	1998	Fully accredited	Associate	116
Salish Kootenai College	MT	1977	Fully accredited	Bachelor	859
San Carlos Apache College <sup>b</sup>	AZ	2015	Fully accredited	Associate	NA
Sinte Gleska University	SD	1971	Fully accredited	Master	581

*(continued)*

(continued)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Chartered Time</i>	<i>Accreditation Status</i>	<i>Highest Degree</i>	<i>Enrollment (Fall 2016)<sup>c</sup></i>
Sisseton Wahpeton College	SD	1979	Fully accredited	Associate	142
Sitting Bull College	ND	1973	Fully accredited	Master	282
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute <sup>a</sup>	NM	1971	Fully accredited	Associate	367
Stone Child College	MT	1984	Fully accredited	Associate	544
Tohono O'odham Community College	AZ	1998	Fully accredited	Associate	267
Turtle Mountain Community College	ND	1972	Fully accredited	Bachelor	584
United Tribes Technical College	ND	1968	Fully accredited	Bachelor	483
White Earth Tribal and Community College	MN	1997	Fully accredited	Associate	77
Wind River Tribal College	WY	1997	Pre-candidate	Associate	NA

*Note:* <sup>a</sup>Federally chartered TCU. <sup>b</sup>San Carlos Apache College is an accredited site of Tohono O'odham Community College. <sup>c</sup>Data is retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics (2017). Data of Red Lake Nation College is retrieved from its official website.

## APPENDIX B: LIST OF SELECTED EMSIS IN CHINA

<i>Name of EMSI</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Type</i>
<b>Ethnic Minority Colleges and Universities (EMCUs): 17</b>			
Minzu University of China	Beijing	Bachelor	Public
South-Central University for Nationalities	Wuhan, Hubei	Bachelor	Public
Southwest Minzu University	Chengdu, Sichuan	Bachelor	Public
Northwest Minzu University	Lanzhou, Gansu	Bachelor	Public
Beifang University of Nationalities	Yinchuan, Ningxia	Bachelor	Public
Dalian Minzu University	Dalian, Liaoning	Bachelor	Public
Guangxi University for Nationalities	Nanning, Guangxi	Bachelor	Public
Hubei University for Nationalities	Enshi, Hubei	Bachelor	Public
Xizang Minzu University	Xianyang, Shaanxi	Bachelor	Public
Guizhou Minzu University	Guiyang, Guizhou	Bachelor	Public
Qinghai Nationalities University	Xining, Qinghai	Bachelor	Public
Yunnan Minzu University	Kunming, Yunnan	Bachelor	Public

(continued)

(continued)

<i>Name of EMSI</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Type</i>
Inner Mongolia University for the Nationalities	Tongliao, Inner Mongolia (IM)	Bachelor	Public
Hebei Normal University for Nationalities	Chengde, Hebei	Bachelor	Public
Gansu Normal University for Nationalities	Gannan, Gansu	Bachelor	Public
Sichuan Minzu College	Ganzi, Sichuan	Bachelor	Public
Hohhot Minzu College	Hohhot, IM	Bachelor	Public
<b>Institutions in Ethnic Autonomous Areas (IEAAs): 66</b>			
Inner Mongolia University	Hohhot, IM	Bachelor	Public
Inner Mongolia Medical University	Hohhot, IM	Bachelor	Public
Inner Mongolia Normal University	Hohhot, IM	Bachelor	Public
Chifeng University	Chifeng, IM	Bachelor	Public
Inner Mongolia University of Finance and Economics	Hohhot, IM	Bachelor	Public
Hulunbuir University	Hulunbuir, IM	Bachelor	Public
Jining Normal University	Ulanqab, IM	Bachelor	Public
Hetao College	Bayannur, IM	Bachelor	Public
Inner Mongolia Arts University	Hohhot, IM	Bachelor	Public
Ordos Institute of Technology	Ordos, IM	Bachelor	Public
Xing'an Vocational and Technical College	Xing'an, IM	Associate	Public
Xilingol Vocational College	Xilingol, IM	Associate	Public
Inner Mongolia Police Professional College	Hohhot, IM	Associate	Public
Horqin Vocational College of Art	Tongliao, IM	Associate	Public
Hulunbuir Vocational Technical College	Hulunbuir, IM	Associate	Public
Art Vocational University Inner Mongolia	Bayannur, IM	Associate	Private
Inner Mongolia Nationality Child Junior Normal College	Ordos, IM	Associate	Public
Zhalantun Vocational College	Hulunbuir, IM	Associate	Public
Ningxia Medical University	Yinchuan, Ningxia	Bachelor	Public
Ningxia Vocational and Technical College for Nationalities	Wuzhong, Ningxia	Associate	Public
Xinjiang Medical University	Urumqi, Xinjiang	Bachelor	Public
Xinjiang Normal University	Urumqi, Xinjiang	Bachelor	Public
Kashgar University	Kashgar, Xinjiang	Bachelor	Public
Yili Normal University	Yili, Xinjiang	Bachelor	Public
Xinjiang University of Finance and Economics	Urumqi, Xinjiang	Bachelor	Public
Xinjiang Arts University	Urumqi, Xinjiang	Bachelor	Public
Changji College	Changji, Xinjiang	Bachelor	Public
College of Science and Technology, Xinjiang University	Urumqi, Xinjiang	Bachelor	Private
College of Science and Technology, Xinjiang Agricultural University	Urumqi, Xinjiang	Bachelor	Private
Hotan Teachers College	Hotan, Xinjiang	Associate	Public

(continued)

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<i>Name of EMSI</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Type</i>
College of Xinjiang Uyghur Medicine	Hotan, Xinjiang	Associate	Public
Xinjiang Career Technical College	Yili, Xinjiang	Associate	Public
Xinjiang Teacher's College	Urumqi, Xinjiang	Associate	Public
Turpan Career Technical College	Turpan, Xinjiang	Associate	Public
Guangxi University	Nanning, Guangxi	Bachelor	Public
Youjiang Medical College for Nationalities	Baise, Guangxi	Bachelor	Public
Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine	Nanning, Guangxi	Bachelor	Public
Guilin Medical University	Guilin, Guangxi	Bachelor	Public
Guangxi Normal University	Guilin, Guangxi	Bachelor	Public
Guangxi Normal University for Nationalities	Chongzuo, Guangxi	Bachelor	Public
Guangxi Arts University	Nanning, Guangxi	Bachelor	Public
Guangxi University of Finance and Economics	Nanning, Guangxi	Bachelor	Public
Xiangsihu College of Guangxi University for Nationalities	Nanning, Guangxi	Bachelor	Private
Guangxi College of Sports and Physical Education	Nanning, Guangxi	Associate	Public
Tibet University	Lhasa, Tibet	Bachelor	Public
Tibetan Traditional Medical College	Lhasa, Tibet	Bachelor	Public
Lhasa Teachers College	Lhasa, Tibet	Associate	Public
Yanbian University	Yanji, Jilin	Bachelor	Public
Science and Technology College of Hubei University for Nationalities	Enshi, Hubei	Bachelor	Private
Jishou University	Xiangxi, Hunan	Bachelor	Public
Xichang College	Liangshan, Sichuan	Bachelor	Public
Aba Teachers University	Aba, Sichuan	Bachelor	Public
Xingyi Normal University for Nationalities	Qianxinan, Guizhou	Bachelor	Public
Kaili University	Qiandongnan, Guizhou	Bachelor	Public
Qiannan Normal College for Nationalities	Qiannan, Guizhou	Bachelor	Public
Qiannan Medical College for Nationalities	Qiannan, Guizhou	Associate	Public
Qiandongnan National Polytechnic	Qiandongnan, Guizhou	Associate	Public
Qiannan Vocational Technical Institute for Nationalities	Qiannan, Guizhou	Associate	Public
Southwest Guizhou Vocational and Technical College for Nationalities	Qianxinan, Guizhou	Associate	Public
Guizhou Forerunner College	Qiannan, Guizhou	Associate	Private
Qiannan Preschool Education College	Qiannan, Guizhou	Associate	Public
Dali University	Dali, Yunnan	Bachelor	Public
Chuxiong Normal University	Chuxiong, Yunnan	Bachelor	Public
Wenshan University	Wenshan, Yunnan	Bachelor	Public
West Yunnan University of Applied Sciences	Dali, Yunnan	Bachelor	Public
Dehong Teachers' College	Dehong, Yunnan	Associate	Public



### APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW OUTLINES

**For TCUs/EMSIs Administrators:**

Date of Oral Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your educational background: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the mission of [name of the institution] as a Tribal College and University (TCU)/Ethnic Minority-Serving Institution (EMSI)?
2. What factors are facilitating [name of the institution] to realize the mission?
3. In your opinion, what are the major challenges faced by [name of the institution]?
4. How does your institution, as a(an) TCU/EMSI, address these challenges?
  - a. In what aspects you think your institution is doing well?
  - b. In what aspects you think your institution needs to improve?
5. Please share your institution's strategic plan in serving Native American/Chinese Ethnic Minority students and communities?
6. Can you share some successful models of TCUs/EMSIs in serving Native American/Chinese Ethnic Minority students and communities?
7. Why do you think these models are successful?
8. What are your suggestions for the better development of your institution?
9. What else would you like to share not already covered in this interview?

**For Content Area Experts:**

Date of Oral Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your educational background: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1. What roles are Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)/Ethnic Minority-Serving Institutions (EMSI) playing in Native American/Chinese Ethnic Minority higher education?
2. What factors are facilitating TCUs/EMSI to play their roles?
3. In your opinion, what are the major challenges faced by TCUs/EMSI?
4. How should TCUs/EMSI address these challenges?
5. Can you share some successful models of TCUs/EMSI in serving Native American/Chinese Ethnic Minority students and communities?
6. Why do you think these models are successful?
7. What are your suggestions for the better development of TCUs/EMSI?
8. What else would you like to share not already covered in this interview?
9. This study is using a snowball sampling method, and whom would you recommend being included in this study?

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