

SKYHAWK PRESS

A PART OF YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE

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Navajo Technical University at the 2026 National Leadership & Skills Conference (NLSC)

Atlanta, GA - From June 1 - 5, 2026, students from Navajo Technical University participated in the SkillsUSA Championships. These industry-judged events are designed to confirm that students possess the real-world expertise employers require in highly skilled trade sectors.

Bryton Sewequeqtewa, competing in the restaurant service category, finished 11th. His performance was evaluated on a comprehensive suite of guest relations skills, including table preparation, reservation management, and professional communication throughout the dining experience.

MiRyan Philips participated in an intensive leadership development track for SkillsUSA officers and campaigned for a National Officer position, finishing 6th. The program emphasized the advancement of professional responsibility and communication abilities.

Advisor Chef Walter Cloud supported the delegation throughout the event. The gathering premiered for the nation's next generation of technical experts. The conference highlights some of the most in-demand vocational fields today.

Go Skyhawks!



Future Skyhawks Ready to Take Flight

Crownpoint, NM - On June 9, 2026, Navajo Technical University signed two women's basketball student-athletes from McDermitt, Nevada, who officially committed to the Skyhawks by signing their Letters of Intent today.

Kiarra and Reign Crutcher, cousins, will join NTU as incoming freshmen for the Fall 2026 semester, beginning their academic and athletic careers while competing for the Skyhawks women's basketball program. As they prepare for their first collegiate season, both student-athletes look forward to representing Navajo Technical University, competing at the next level, and contributing to the continued growth of the Skyhawks program.

Kiarra Crutcher, going into Navajo Technical University's Registered Nursing (RN) Program, has set her sights on a career that combines healthcare and travel. She hopes to work as a traveling nurse, providing care to communities wherever she is needed while making a positive impact through her profession. Beyond her academic goals, Kiarra is looking forward to competing, traveling, and connecting with others who share similar interests and passions.

Reign Crutcher, a General Studies student, chose to begin her college journey by completing her general education requirements before deciding on a specific field of study. After discovering the opportunity to enroll at Navajo Technical University, she took the initiative to further her education. Reign aims to expand her knowledge and develop the skills necessary to serve her community in the future. She is also excited to return to competition and embrace the opportunities ahead.

Congratulations to our newest Skyhawks on signing their Letters of Intent! We look forward to seeing all they accomplish on and off the court.



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La Planta Produce Distribution

Crownpoint, NM - On Thursday, June 18, 2026, La Planta and the NTU Peer Navigators once again collaborated to host a produce distribution at the NTU main campus Wellness Center.

The distribution began at 10:00 a.m. and continued until all produce was distributed, concluding shortly before 1:00 p.m. La Planta donated several pallets of fresh produce, including broccoli, Brussels sprouts, onions, radishes, mangoes, strawberries, and a variety of other fruits and vegetables. The event was open to the entire NTU community as well as members of the surrounding local community.

The distribution saw a strong turnout, with lines forming before the official opening time. Events like these play an important role in increasing access to healthy food options throughout the community.

The NTU Peer Navigators would like to thank all of the volunteers who generously gave their time to help distribute the produce, as well as La Planta for its continued collaborations and commitment to bringing fresh, nutritious food to NTU campuses.



DO YOU HAVE AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO MAKE? CONTACT DALE MORGAN AT

dmorgan@navajotech.edu

YOUR ANNOUNCEMENT WILL APPEAR IN THE FOLLOWING MONTH'S NEWSLETTER.

I BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW...



Your brain synapses shrink while you sleep.

A waffle iron inspired one of the pairs of Nike's.



Boars wash their food.

Roadrunner Food Bank Distribution

On Wednesday, June 17, 2026, the Albuquerque-based Roadrunner Food Bank made its third distribution stop of the year at NTU, with assistance from the NTU Peer Navigators. The event was held at the Wellness Center.

Distribution began at 10:00 a.m. and was open to both the NTU community and the general public. The event continued until all available supplies had been distributed. Participants received a variety of shelf-stable food items, as well as fresh produce, including bananas and melons.

These food distributions are made possible through the ongoing efforts of the NTU Peer Navigators and their collaborations with organizations such as Roadrunner Food Bank of New Mexico, helping provide nutritious food and fresh produce to the NTU community and surrounding areas.



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Students Explore Veterinary and Agricultural Careers at NTU Summer Enrichment Program

On June 16–17, 2026, the Navajo Technical University (NTU) Veterinary Technology Program hosted a two-day Agriculture Youth Enrichment Program at the NTU Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Crownpoint, New Mexico. The program was designed for students ages 13 to 17 and was offered free of charge.

The program was led by Dr. Joel O. Alibi, Assistant Professor of Animal Science, with assistance from Krystal Louis, Kimberlynibah Yazzie, Kelvina Lee, Mary Ben, and Dr. Josephy Bahe. Each instructor contributed to the program by leading classroom lectures and laboratory sessions. The primary goal of the enrichment program was to introduce students to veterinary technology education and the wide range of career opportunities available within the agricultural and veterinary science fields.

Dr. Alibi expressed excitement about the students' progress throughout the two-day program and was impressed by the knowledge they retained as they transitioned from classroom instruction to hands-on laboratory activities. Lecture topics included introductory veterinary concepts, animal health management, and artificial insemination (AI) and animal production.

During laboratory sessions, students examined blood and fecal samples to assess general animal health, evaluate cell and hormone levels, and identify parasites or nutritional deficiencies. These activities provided valuable practical experience and reinforced concepts discussed during lectures.

On the final day of the program, students learned how to perform a horse examination. The lesson began in a classroom setting before moving to a live horse demonstration. Krystal Louis guided students through the examination process, allowing each participant the opportunity to practice examination techniques under supervision.

At the conclusion of the program, Dr. Alibi presented students with certificates of completion and encouraged them to continue pursuing their interests in veterinary science and agriculture.



Early Childhood Multicultural Education (ECME) Program during the Spring 2026 Celebration

Navajo Technical University recently hosted the Spring 2026 Early Childhood Multicultural Education (ECME) Celebration, recognizing students who completed certificate, Associate of Applied Science, and Bachelor of Science programs in early childhood education.

The Hawaiian-themed event began with an invocation by Tamara J. Yazzie, followed by a welcome address from ECME Program Director Kelly Dineyazhe-Hunter. The celebration honored the hard work and dedication of students preparing to serve Indigenous children, families, and communities through education.

The event also highlighted the ongoing collaboration among Tribal Colleges and Universities, Tribal Head Start and Early Head Start programs, federal partners, and the American Indian College Fund to strengthen educational opportunities and workforce development across Tribal communities.

Navajo Technical University congratulates all graduates and certificate recipients on their accomplishments and extends its appreciation to the faculty, staff, families, partners, and colleagues whose support continues to advance student success and the university's mission.



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Exploring the Future of Learning: Blackboard Workshop at NTU

On June 23, 2026, representatives from Blackboard visited the NTU main campus to lead a workshop for NTU faculty. The session was organized by Dr. Coleen Arviso, Director of E-Learning at NTU. With Blackboard introducing several new integrations earlier this year, Dr. Arviso saw an opportunity to provide instructors with direct access to company representatives, allowing them to ask questions, explore new features, and gain a better understanding of the platform's capabilities.

One of the primary topics of discussion during the workshop was the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in education and how Blackboard is addressing potential misuse by students.

Blackboard representatives assured attendees that the company is actively monitoring the rapid development of AI technologies and continuing to develop tools and strategies to help instructors maintain academic integrity while supporting responsible use of these emerging technologies.

The workshop also highlighted Blackboard's newest integrations and their impact in the classroom. Many faculty members in attendance had already incorporated these features into their courses during the past semester and shared positive feedback about their experiences. Instructors noted that the new tools have enhanced student engagement, streamlined course management, and contributed to a more effective learning environment. The session provided an opportunity for faculty to exchange ideas, discuss best practices, and learn how Blackboard plans to continue supporting teaching and learning in an evolving digital landscape.



Science, Technology, and Telecommunications Committee Visit

Crownpoint, NM - From June 23 - 24, 2026, the New Mexico Legislative Council committee, chaired by Senator Heather Berghmans and Vice-Chair Representative Debra M. Sariñana, is responsible for overseeing state IT initiatives, university research programs, and national laboratory developments. Their ongoing efforts focus on evaluating broadband infrastructure, the telecommunications sector, and the growth of the state's technology-driven economy.

On the first day of the visit, student presentations highlighted critical research for Indigenous populations. Presenters focusing on antibiotic resistance and other essential topics included Biology students David Willie, Della Wilson, and Latasha Chiquito; Environmental Science student Blaine Nez; and Chemistry Research Assistant Justin Platero. Day one sessions also featured faculty research addressing renewable energy, hydroponics, and the impacts of climate change on traditional lifestyles.

The proceedings of the Science, Technology, and Telecommunications Committee continued into the second day, emphasizing NTU's expanding role in fostering community-led innovations for the Navajo Nation and rural regions. Faculty members presented key academic research, including Dr. Sundaram Arumugam's design for a standalone photovoltaic (PV) system engineered to sustain residential energy loads within the Navajo Nation. Additionally, Dr. Irene Ane-Anyangwe, Professor and Chair of Biology, discussed the use of soilless hydroponics as a viable agricultural alternative for Navajo communities where soil is compromised by uranium contamination.

Further academic sessions examined the anthropogenic impacts of thermal stress on traditional cultural practices, led by Melissa Riley, Chief Executive Officer for Native Community Development Associates, and Board member Stephanie Moraga-McHaley. Committee members also conducted a formal inspection of the NTU Advanced Manufacturing Laboratory and other university facilities under the guidance of Mr. Scott H. Halliday.

In closing, Navajo Technical University expressed its formal gratitude to the committee for the site visit and acknowledged its vital support in developing community-led innovations for the Navajo Nation.



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NTU Hosts Shima Storytelling Reading Revolution to Celebrate Diné Language and Literacy

On June 24, 2026, the NTU Diné Culture and Language Program helped host the Shima Storytelling Reading Revolution at the Hospitality Center on the Navajo Technical University main campus. The event featured a diverse group of Diné authors, writers, and guest readers who shared their own stories and read works that celebrated Diné culture, language, and traditions with attendees.

The event also included informational booths from organizations and departments such as First Things First, the Crownpoint Office of Diné Youth, and NTU's Diné Culture and Language & Leadership Program. Attendees enjoyed a special performance by Pabloton's, adding to the day's celebration of culture and community. The first 50 children who attended received swag bags and free books to take home, generously donated by the Crownpoint Office of Diné Youth to encourage literacy and a love of reading among local youth.

The Shima Storytellers program is a grassroots literacy initiative for youth of all ages that promotes reading and learning through storytelling, singing, and interactive activities conducted in Diné Bizaad. Through events such as the Storytelling Reading Revolution, community partners continue to support language preservation, cultural education, and youth engagement by creating opportunities for families to learn, read, and celebrate Diné heritage together.



UC Berkeley and Navajo Technical University: Internship Exchange

Crownpoint, New Mexico - On June 15-26, 2026, Navajo Technical University recently concluded a collaborative Internship Exchange Program with the University of California, Berkeley, bringing together students, faculty, and researchers for two weeks of innovation, academic development, and community-focused problem solving.

Throughout the exchange, participants worked across three major initiatives: Artificial Intelligence Course Design, AI Micro-Credential Development, and the creation of a future NTU “Big Ideas” Entrepreneurship Competition. Faculty and students from both institutions collaborated to develop new educational pathways, curriculum frameworks, and entrepreneurial opportunities to prepare future generations of leaders, innovators, and problem-solvers.

The partnership highlighted a shared commitment to advancing research, technology, and education in ways that directly benefit communities facing real-world challenges. By combining Indigenous knowledge systems with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, both universities explored practical solutions that support economic development, workforce readiness, energy sustainability, and improved quality of life for underserved and rural communities.

Participants also engaged in cultural exchange activities, field visits, community discussions, and presentations that strengthened relationships between the two institutions while fostering a deeper understanding of how innovation can be guided by community values and local needs, especially with the local food.

Navajo Technical University extends its appreciation to UC Berkeley, faculty mentors, staff, and student participants for their dedication and contributions to this successful partnership. Together, both institutions continue to build pathways that connect education, research, culture, and innovation in the service of communities seeking sustainable solutions for the future.



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BHP Scholarship Ceremony Honors Academic Achievement Among NTU Students

Chinle, Arizona—On June 3, 2026, Navajo Technical University proudly marks the third year in a row that scholars from our Chinle instructional site have received Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP) scholarships. These prestigious awards celebrated and honored the students' unwavering dedication to their vocational and academic pursuits.

The celebration began with an opening prayer by Dennis Dedman, NTU Lead Security, who spoke on the university's mission and history. Arlena Benallie, Chinle Site Director, welcomed guests and highlighted the campus's recent expansions and modern facilities. Benallie and Financial Aid Assistant Judy Yazzie then jointly presented tablets and the scholarships to the honorees.

During the event, Benallie expressed gratitude to BHP for their multifaceted support, including tablet donations to bridge community connections and scholarship funding that positions NTU as a premier choice for higher education. She noted, "We congratulate our Chinle students on their third year of BHP Scholarship success. Your commitment to excellence is opening doors in vital sectors such as Business Management, Electrical Trades, and IT. These pathways allow our students to build the expertise needed to remain essential pillars of their communities."

Through its steadfast commitment to accessibility and affordability, the Navajo Technical University Chinle instructional site remains a premier destination for academic advancement. Congratulations to all BHP scholarship recipients!



NTU Hosts 2026 Technology Conference

Chinle, AZ — On June 16, 2026, Navajo Technical University (NTU) Chinle Site, in partnership with the Office of Diné Youth Chinle Division, convened the Summer Youth Conference.

Utilizing a Star Wars theme, the event served as a creative forum for integrating traditional cultural values with emerging technological advancements. Attendees were invited to participate by wearing character-themed attire as they explored sophisticated, innovative concepts.

The conference proceedings commenced with an invocation by Aljerino Tstaha, Manager of the Office of Diné Youth, followed by a rendition of the National Anthem performed by Paulita Whitesinger. Arlena Benallie formally introduced Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren, who delivered the keynote address emphasizing a strategic vision for the Nation’s technological development.

The summit facilitated essential engagement between youth and academic professionals, with a focus on several specialized technical domains:

- + Robotic engineering and autonomous systems
- + Unmanned Aerial Vehicle structure and high-speed communications
- + Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for land management
- + Machine learning datasets for Artificial Intelligence (AI)

This public event included interactive demonstrations by the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, the University of Arizona, and NTU students and staff. Notable presentations included research by Cajuan Cleveland on converting Diné Bizaad into machine-learning datasets. Additionally, Edsel Pete of Navajo Nation TV & Film and Belinda Cowboy of True North Financial provided professional perspectives on digital media and financial literacy.

Afternoon activities consisted of experiential learning sessions, including technical builds and drone flight demonstrations by NTU Security. The program concluded with a musical performance by Distroy Kasmin, marking the successful integration of community creativity and innovation.

The event successfully enabled students, staff, and faculty to explore the intersection of technical boundaries and imaginative thought.



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Academic Engagement in Baa Hózhó Mathematics at Navajo Technical University

Chinle, AZ — The Navajo Nation Math Circles Project successfully executed a sophisticated mathematical outreach program. This two-week non-residential initiative was hosted at the Navajo Technical University Chinle campus for students in grades 6 through 12.

The Navajo Nation Math Circles (NNMC) are under the direction of Dr. David Auckly of Kansas State University and Dr. Henry Fowler of Navajo Technical University. This professional assembly of mathematicians is committed to promoting rigorous mathematical inquiry within the established academic schedule.

Through collaboration with mathematicians across the United States, the project cultivates academic excellence while preserving and respecting Diné linguistics, culture, and history. This integration of cultural heritage is characterized as Baa Hózhó Mathematics.

The Baa Hózhó community, which includes students, faculty, and academic advisors, developed a comprehensive curriculum featuring physical relays, sophisticated puzzles, analytical challenges, Math Wrangle competitions, and an educational field study near Wheatfields Lake. The initiative took place between June 8 and June 19.



Featured Student

Navajo Technical University proudly recognizes student William K. Pioche from Chinle, AZ. Deeply rooted in his heritage, William is Totsohnii born for Honaghéaahnii; his maternal grandparents are Tódich'ii'nii, and his paternal grandparents are Tachii'nii.

A 2010 graduate of Chinle High School, William is currently pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Multicultural Education. His passion for teaching grew from his impactful experiences as a substitute teacher and football coach.

William's background includes studying at Northern Arizona University, the University of Arizona, and Pima College, as well as working in hotel management. His early leadership included serving as FBLA class president and participating in Culinary Arts and the Native Skill Competition.

Raised by a single parent, William developed strong communication skills with young children. An avid motocross enthusiast, he uses extreme sports to introduce practical math concepts and calculate risk.

During the pandemic, William transferred to NTU to assist his grandparents, completing three degrees and certificates and witnessing the groundbreaking for Chinle Instructional Site. As a student, athlete, and volunteer, he deeply connects with NTU's traditional philosophy of Nitsáhákees, Nahátá, Íina, and Siihasin.

Nearing graduation, William envisions starting an NTU fitness cycling club and aims to become a counselor or athletic director. He is grateful for the guidance of his mentor, George LaFrance, and his grandfather, Nelson Gormon.

Interested in building your future in Early Childhood Multicultural Education? Contact Coordinator Thomas Yazzie at thomas.yazzie@navajotech.edu



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Featured Alumni

Navajo Technical University proudly recognizes Dr. Perry James as he continues to blaze new trails in higher education in his fifth year as an assistant professor at Western New Mexico University. Dr. James is Tábaqahí, Táchii'nii, Áshiihí, and Táneszahnii. He is from Continental Divide, NM.

By combining his robust academic expertise with his deep cultural roots, he established WNMU's M.A. in Diné Bilingual Education—the sole master's program of its kind in the state and across higher education.

Through innovative curricula, rigorous academic standards, and impactful mentorship, Dr. James elevates language mastery and Indigenous perspectives into vital mechanisms for enduring leadership.

Highlighting the efficacy of this methodology, Dr. James recently contributed as a cultural relations specialist to a historic partnership between NTU and NASA through the MAIANSE program. In this role, he co-created an all-ages educational book exploring the extraordinary geology of the Navajo Nation, highlighting dinosaur tracks, historic pictographs, and ancient petrified wood. This project makes geology accessible to all generations while anchoring advanced space science within the sacred soil of Diné lands.

As a veteran, academic, educator, and devoted NTU alumnus, Dr. Perry R. James embodies how higher education can be transformed when rooted in Diné wisdom. He recognizes that each degree, program, and milestone he achieves is not an individual triumph but the realization of his grandparents' love, spiritual guidance, and enduring lessons. While simultaneously celebrating a historic milestone as Perry R. James earned the inaugural Master of Arts in Diné Culture, Language & Leadership.

Today, as he guides others in both community and academic spheres, Dr. James is passing these sacred cultural values and traditions to his son, guaranteeing that the resilience and wisdom bequeathed by his ancestors will thrive in the next generation.

Despite his extensive achievements, the 51-year-old scholar notes that his mission is far from complete. There remains much to accomplish—whether researching academic frontiers, running the local trails, managing the ranch, or fostering a stronger environment for his family and community. Each day offers Dr. James a new chance to serve, lead, and celebrate the Diné way of life.

