

## **Haskell Indian Nations University Board of Regents Focus Group Findings**

On May 2, 2024, the Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU) President's Office and the Center for Institutional Effectiveness held a focus group session with the HINU Board of Regents (BOR). The session provided valuable insights into the BOR's perception of HINU's charge, key challenges the university faces, and potential opportunities to address those challenges. Additionally, the discussion focused on improving academic programs and strengthening relationships with communities, tribes, and other stakeholders. By organizing the findings and emerging themes into these areas, HINU can develop strategies to address areas for improvement and foster growth across various aspects of the institution.

### **BOR members and area of representations:**

- Brittany Hall (BOR President)
- Clarena Brockie-Online, Rocky Mountain Region
- Alternate for Corey Bunch-Online, Eastern Oklahoma Region
- John Bush, Western Region
- April Carmelo, Pacific Region
- Dalton Henry, Eastern Region
- Jessica James, Northwest Region
- Alternate for Melissa Johnson-Randy Estrin - am only, Alaska Region
- Ryman LeBeau, Northern Plains/Great Plains Region
- Joseph "Zeke" Rupnick, Four Tribes of Kansas
- Gil Vigil-Online, Southwest Region

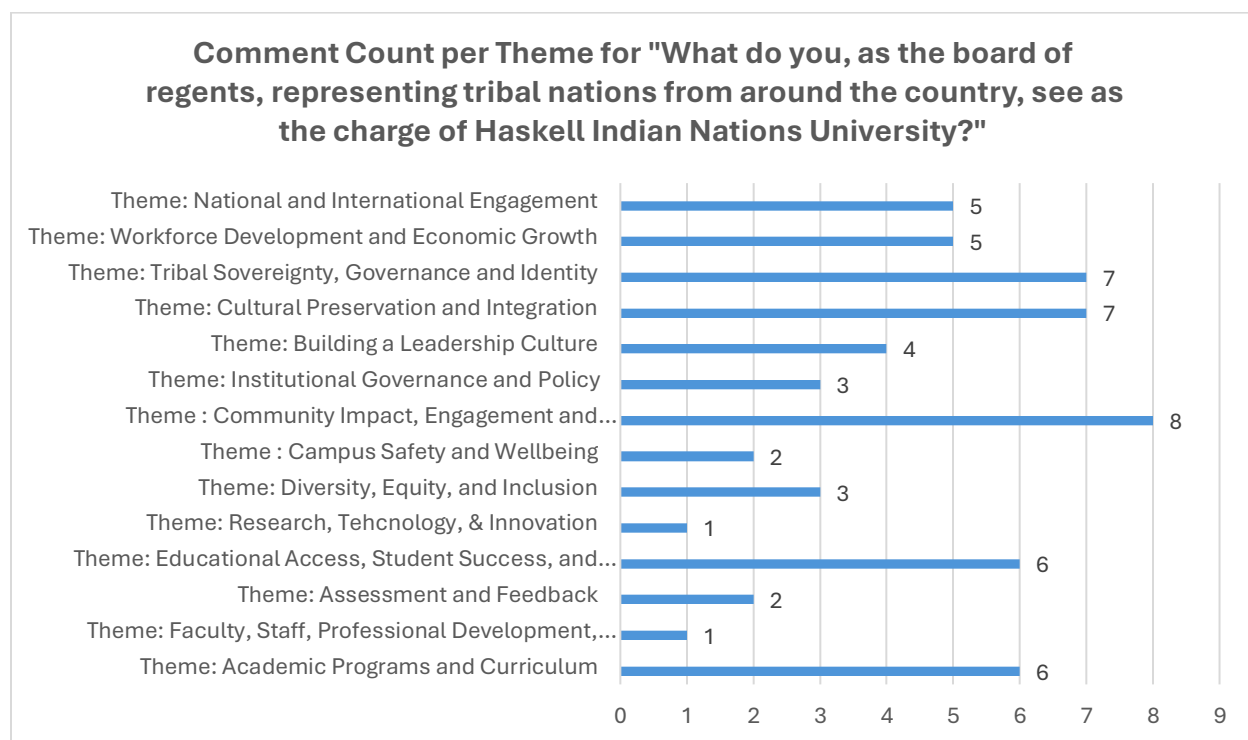
The focus group session, led by HINU's President Dr. Frank Arpan and recorded by the Center for Institutional Effectiveness (CIE), aimed to gather insights from participants using five targeted questions. These concise and focused discussions encouraged meaningful input from a range of stakeholders across HINU. The questions asked were:

1. What do you, as the Board of Regents, representing tribal nations from around the country, see as the charge of Haskell Indian Nations University?
2. What are the key challenges facing tribal nations and Haskell in the next 5-10 years?
3. What are the key opportunities for Haskell to address those challenges?
4. How can we improve the relevance and responsiveness of our academic programming? How can we strengthen relationships with communities, tribes, and other stakeholders?

Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using Excel to identify key themes from each question. By focusing on the top three themes in each category, HINU can address key areas of concern and start developing strategies that align with strategic objectives and drive continuous improvement.

**1. What do you, as the board of regents, representing tribal nations from around the country, see as the charge of Haskell Indian Nations University?**

Three main themes that emerged from this question were: **Community Impact, Engagement and Partnerships (13%), Cultural Preservation and Integration (12%), and Tribal Sovereignty and Governance (12%):**



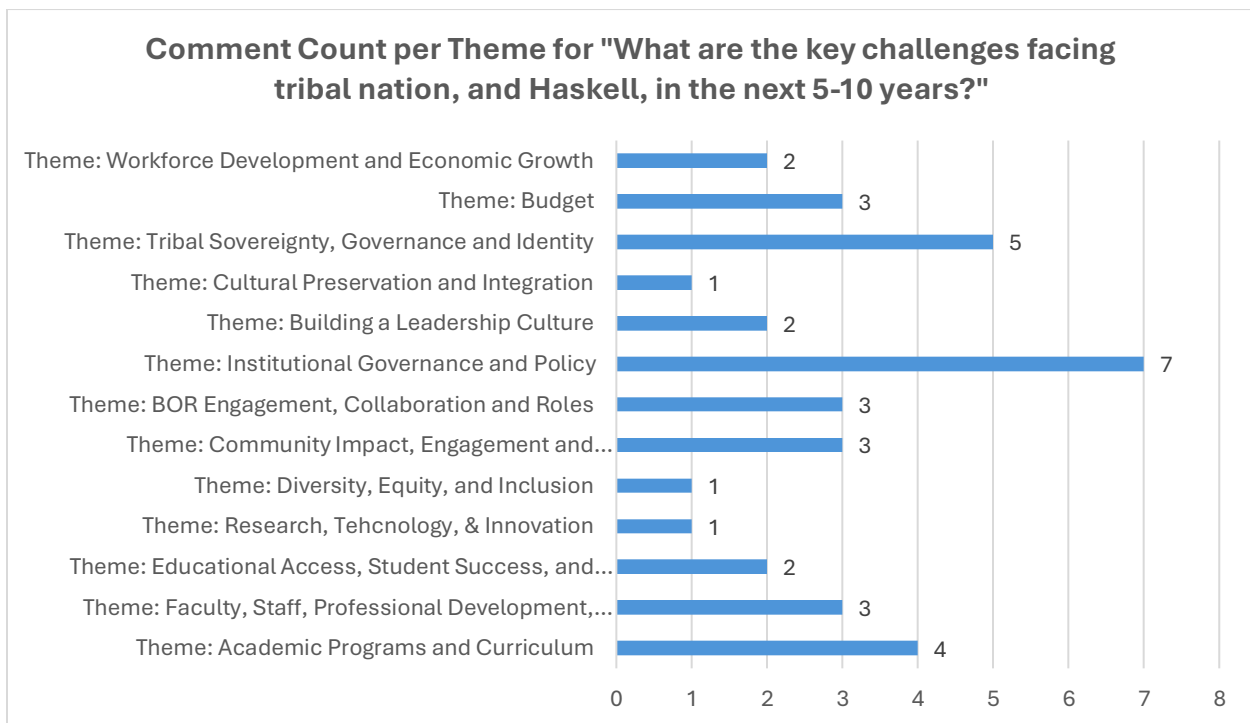
As the Board of Regents representing tribal nations, the charge of Haskell Indian Nations University is to recognize and uphold the sovereignty of Native American nations and treaty rights. Haskell is tasked with creating future leaders who strengthen communities and families, including kinship bonds, and providing leadership opportunities for Native American students, such as in the gaming industry. Many tribal leaders have emerged from Haskell, and its mission is to continue fostering leadership at the tribal level.

The university's role is to provide education that helps Native Americans succeed in life while promoting tribal sovereignty. This includes bringing in tribal leaders to train the next generation. Additionally, Haskell must foster a desire for leadership in tribal politics, fulfilling federal obligations and trust responsibilities.

Education at Haskell should reflect the needs of tribal communities, with graduates returning to support their tribes. The university also plays a role in healing, acknowledging that creating something meaningful is challenging but achievable. Reconnecting tribal communities through networking, collaboration, from California to the Dakotas, is crucial. These efforts aim to strengthen bonds, connect education with community needs, and foster healing among Native American nations.

## 2. What are the key challenges facing tribal nation, and Haskell, in the next 5-10 years?

Three main themes that emerged from this question were: ***Institutional Governance and Policy (19%)***, ***Tribal Sovereignty, Governance and Identity (14%)***, and ***Academic Programs and Curriculum (11%)***



Haskell Indian Nations University faces significant challenges due to the bureaucratic obstacles imposed by the BIA, which affects both finances and operations. The delayed release of the budget, which is not aligned with the academic calendar, creates additional difficulties. There is a desire for more student autonomy and for decision-making power to be centered at Haskell rather than being dependent on the federal budget. Growth in courses and degrees is slow, and even making simple improvements has proven difficult.

The Board of Regents (BOR) is encouraged to take a more aggressive stance in addressing these issues, including being involved in interviewing key leadership positions like the Vice

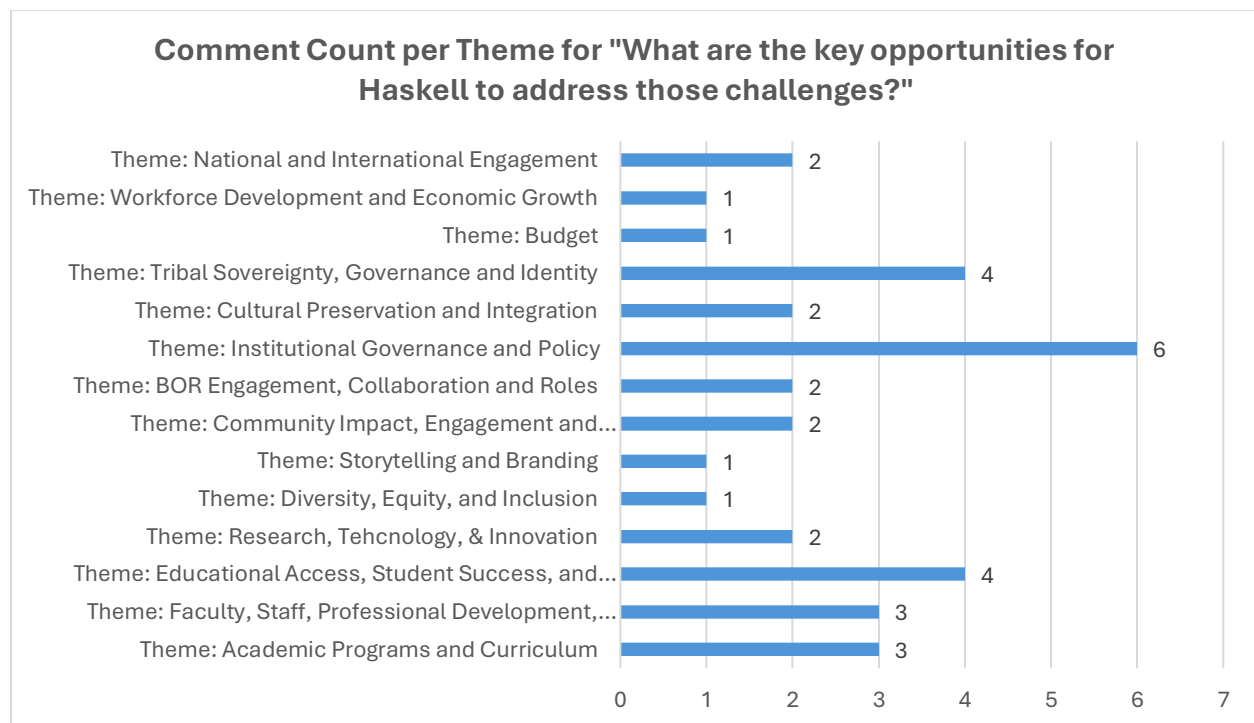
Presidents of Academic Affairs (VPAA) and Operations (VPO). The bureaucratic BIE system also delays essential processes, such as hiring and campus maintenance tasks like landscaping and lighting.

There's a need for more financial literacy and business courses to empower students. To support future leadership, mentorships and opportunities for young people should be created, allowing them to learn from successful tribal leaders and preserve valuable knowledge. Additionally, there is a need to engage younger people in leadership roles by creating mentorship opportunities with successful tribal leaders. Without these opportunities, valuable knowledge and leadership experience could be lost.

Outside corporations often benefit at Haskell's expense, and steps should be taken to prevent exploitation. There are ongoing discussions about potentially separating funding for SIPI and Haskell to allow for better allocation of resources to address the specific needs at Haskell.

### 3. What are the key opportunities for Haskell to address those challenges?

Three main themes that emerged from this question were: ***Institutional Governance and Policy (18%), Educational Access, Student Success, and Retention (12%), and Tribal Sovereignty, Governance and Identity (12%)***



The university has several key opportunities to address its challenges and position itself as a leading institution for Native American students. One major objective is to establish itself

as the "Native Harvard" by setting high standards for academic excellence and leadership. Advocacy for education as a treaty right must be upheld, ensuring that Native communities have access to the resources and support they deserve. Regaining non-profit status for the Board of Regents would improve their autonomy and open up new funding opportunities.

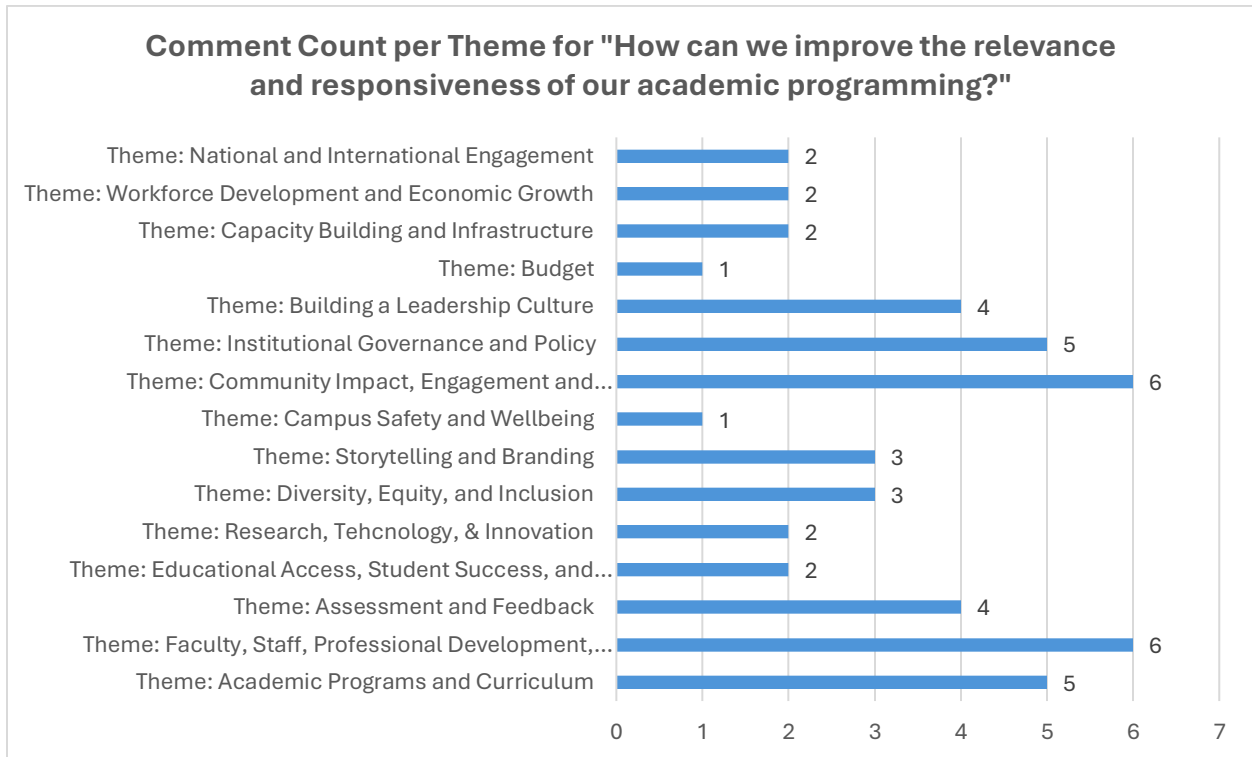
Expanding academic and workforce development programs, such as in healthcare, clinical psychology, and community and behavioral health, can further strengthen the university's role in preparing students for diverse careers. Similar to initiatives in Alaska, the university can create partnerships for education and training, to prepare students for roles such as community health representatives (CHRs).

Additionally, the university should develop a strategic plan to lobby Congress, particularly leveraging support from Kansas tribes, to separate Haskell from the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), gaining greater control over its governance. To ensure success, the institution must "make sure our house is clean" by ensuring our operations are in order and by upholding a high standard of accountability across all areas.

Finally, advocating for advanced degree programs, such as master's and doctoral degrees, is crucial for expanding educational opportunities and meeting the needs of its community. By addressing these opportunities, the university can create a foundation for long-term growth and success.

#### 4. How can we improve the relevance and responsiveness of our academic programming?

Three main themes that emerged from this question were: **Community Impact, Engagement and Partnerships (13%), Faculty, Staff, Professional Development, Hiring, & Retention (13%), and Academic Programs and Curriculum (10%)**



Engaging tribal communities and leaders for their input through national surveys and direct outreach would improve the relevance and responsiveness of academic programming. Investing in students is more than just providing education—it's shaping the future.

Investing in students as the future is key. When we invest in students, we're empowering them with the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to tackle future challenges and contribute meaningfully to society. By nurturing their potential today, we are cultivating leaders, innovators, and change-makers who will drive progress, and strengthen communities.

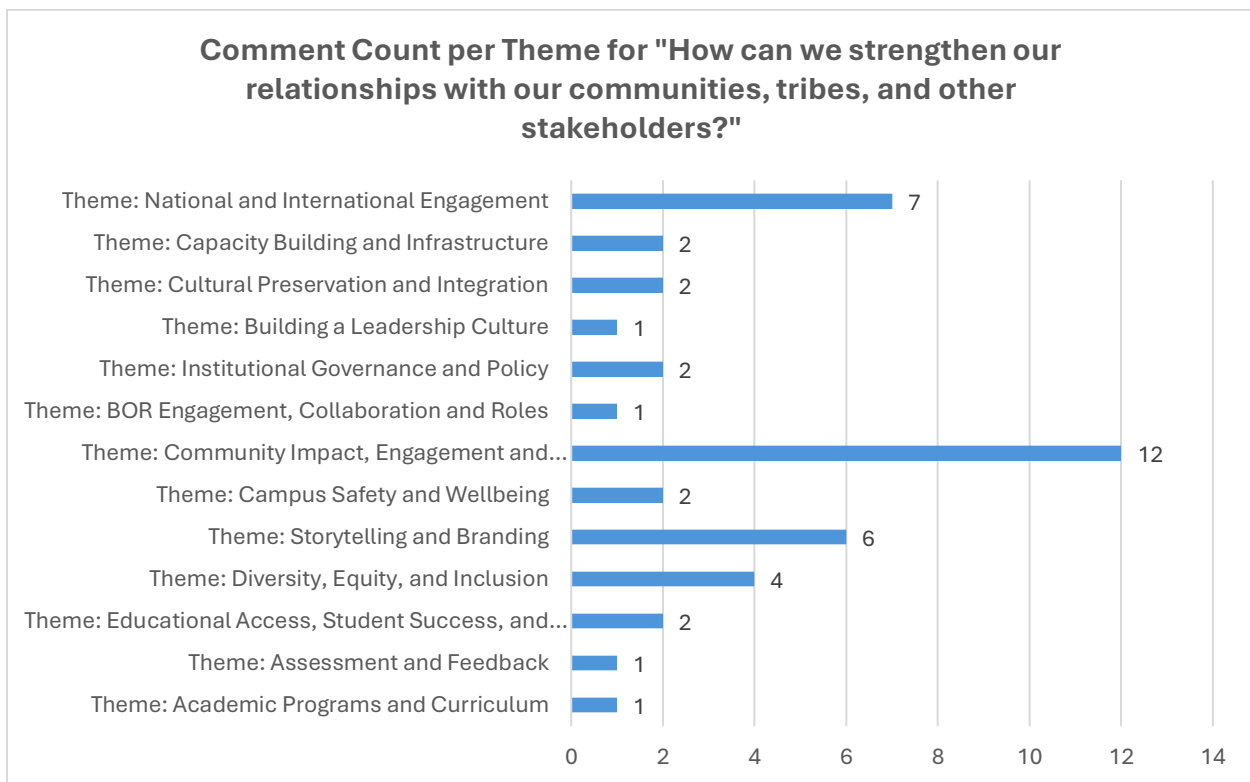
When the HLC assessment is completed, it's important to share the results openly and highlight the positive changes. Promote the university's success and put out good news. We need to share the great stories happening at Haskell to shift the narrative and celebrate its growth and accomplishments.

Regular course and program reviews can help identify and eliminate offerings that are no longer needed. Building a strong academic reputation requires hiring and keeping quality faculty and staff, and ensuring career advancement opportunities, such as tenure status.

Additionally, expanding programs, acquiring state-of-the-art equipment, and looking into new offerings like dental care and natural resource management can enhance academic success and attract more students. Cross-training and learning from each other would foster a culture of collaboration and shared knowledge, which enhances the university's collective esteem, while student evaluations of staff would offer valuable insights for ongoing growth and improvement.

### 5. How can we strengthen our relationships with our communities, tribes, and other stakeholders?

Three main themes that emerged from this question were: **Community Impact, Engagement and Partnerships (28%), National and International Engagement (16%), and Storytelling and Branding (14%)**



To strengthen relationships with communities, tribes, and stakeholders, Haskell should conduct a comprehensive survey to gather input and insights. To increase visibility and strengthen relationships, Haskell should attend events in New Mexico and Arizona, through recruitment outreach and collaborations with Native urban resource centers and

nonprofits. We need to understand why our students are choosing other institutions. HINU must improve its recruitment strategies and increase visibility in places like Arizona and other key regions.

We need to engage in open and honest conversations with communities, addressing interracial topics and promoting diversity on campus to break down existing barriers, dispel misconceptions, and build understanding. Additionally, hiring a public relations officer and using graduates as ambassadors will help share Haskell's stories and enhance its positive image.

Establishing stronger Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with tribes, improving recruitment strategies, and promoting the university through press and public relations efforts are crucial. Engaging graduates as ambassadors, exploring dual enrollment and satellite campuses, expanding sports offerings, and sharing success stories will help enhance Haskell's appeal and attract more students.