



**Board of Regents of the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute  
2025 Quarter 2 Meeting Minutes  
April 17, 2025**

A. Call to Order

Chairperson Begaye called the meeting to order at 9:16 AM MDT.

B. Welcome and Invocation

Chairperson Begaye gave the welcome and Regent Bush gave the Invocation.

C. Roll Call

*Present*

Mr. Adam J. Begaye, Chairperson, Navajo Nation-New Mexico

Ms. Esther Peterson, Secretary/Treasurer, Navajo Nation-Arizona

Dr. John Bush, Member, Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona-South

Ms. Pablita Chavez SGA President

Mr. Timothy Harjo, SIPI Alumni

Ms. Donna Montoya, Jicarilla Apache Nation

Mr. Francis Tafoya, Eight Northern Pueblos

Mr. Clyde Davis Jr., Mescalero Apache Tribe

Mr. Monte Monteith, Acting President, SIPI (Ex-Officio, non-voting member)

*Absent*

Ms. Tanya Lewis, Vice Chairperson, Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona-North

Mr. Raymond Gachupin, Southern Pueblos Council

Mr. Hershel Gorham, Oklahoma Tribes

Dr. Tamarah Pfeiffer, President, SIPI (Ex-Officio, non-voting member)

D. Special Guest: Ms. Stephanie Conduff, Associate Deputy Director, Bureau of Indian Education

Ms. Conduff asked if there were any Board questions, concerns, and/or information needs.

Regent Harjo thanked Ms. Conduff for her time and support of SIPI.

In her remarks, Ms. Conduff indicated that the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) is stressing to the administration the importance of local control. She noted that the President's Budget comes out in June or July, with congress setting the final appropriations thereafter.

Ms. Conduff also reported that Mr. Scott Davis is serving as Assistant Secretary in the Department of the Interior and has extensive experience working in and with Tribal Colleges and Universities.

Ms. Conduff noted that there is a pause in reductions in the federal workforce until after tribal consultations are completed. The Department of the Interior is hosting six Tribal Consultation Sessions and one virtual session between May 20, 2025, and June 6, 2025.

The Sessions seek tribal feedback on the restructuring of Indian Affairs to support more efficient interactions with the Tribes; addressing current funding structures, including identifying efficiency barriers to expedite funding to Tribes and Tribal programs; and increasing Indian Affairs support for Tribal self-governance and self-determination.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs will also conduct one virtual consultation session specifically related to the Bureau of Indian Education. This session is scheduled from 8:00 AM – 1:30 PM MDT on May 30, 2025.

Chairperson Begaye indicated that SIPI will host the Tribal Consultation Session on May 27, 2025 from 10:00 AM – 3:30 PM. Ms. Conduff will let Chairperson Begaye and Acting President Monteith know which political officials are attending this Session.

Acting President Monteith disseminated correspondence from the University States Department of the Interior, Office of the Secretary stamped April 14, 2025. It provides information on the Tribal Consultation Sessions and instructions for providing written and oral feedback.

Dr. Rives suggested that the Board pull together the Board's Policy Statement of Native American Education Goals and Objectives, Resolution for Tribes and Tribal Governance to Support Exempting the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute From Any Reduction in Workforce or Federal Hiring Freeze, and other related documents into one, unified response from the SIPI Board of Regents. The Board agreed. Chairperson Begaye, Mr. Wallace, and Dr. Rives will draft a document for the Board's review and feedback.

Regent Chavez asked if students could participate in the Tribal Consultation Sessions. Mr. Monteith indicated that students can attend any of the Sessions.

Chairperson Begaye thanked Ms. Conduff for her time before she left the meeting.

E. Approval of the Agenda

Acting President Monteith requested an additional action item be added to the agenda: Board support for Diné College (Tsaile, Arizona). Mr. Monteith noted a fire destroyed their Student Union.

**A motion to amend the Agenda to include a letter of Support for Diné College under Item I7 of the Agenda was made by Regent Bush, with second by Region Harjo: 8 yes; 0**

**no: The motion to amend the agenda to include a letter of support for Diné College passed.**

F. Confirmation of New Regents

Chairperson Begaye introduced Mr. Clyde Davis, Jr. who was nominated by the Mescalero Apache Tribe to serve on the SIPI Board of Regents. Mr. Davis indicated that he was a firefighter, used SIPI's GIS services, is on his Tribal Council, has experiences in and looks forward to tribal advocacy and getting things done.

**Motion to approve Mr. Davis' appointment to the SIPI Board of Regents made by Regent Bush, with a second by Regent Tafoya: 8 yes, 0 no. The motion for Mr. Davis' appointment to the SIPI Board of Regents passed.**

Chairperson Begaye indicated that the Oklahoma Tribes have nominated Mr. Hershel Gorman to serve on the SIPI Board of Regents. This appointment was made less than two weeks ago. Due to prior commitments, Mr. Gorman could not attend today's Board meeting.

Chairperson Begaye noted that Mr. Gorman is the Lieutenant Governor of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes in Oklahoma. He has a Juris Doctorate, is a General Council for the Tribes, and was a City Commissioner for Reno. Mr. Wallace added that he and Chairperson Begaye vetted Mr. Gorman and that he is committed to allocating his time to service on the Board of Regents.

**A motion to approve Mr. Gorman's appointment to the SIPI Board of Regents was made by Regent Tafoya, with a second by Regent Harjo: 8 yes, 0 no. The motion for Mr. Gorman's appointment to the SIPI Board of Regents passed.**

Regent Peterson expressed appreciation to Chairperson Begaye and Mr. Wallace for successfully filling the two open Board positions and all that they do.

G. Approval of the Meeting Minutes

Regent Peterson reviewed minutes from the 2025 Quarter 1 meeting and special meeting with representatives from the BIE on February 21, 2025.

**A motion to enter the 2025 Quarter 1 Minutes and Special February 21, 2025, Minutes into the record was made by Regent Montoya, with a second by Regent Tafoya: 8 yes, 0 no. The motion to enter these two sets of Minutes into the record passed.**

H. Introduction of New Employees

Acting President Monteith indicated that Mr. David Fire is a new Cybersecurity Officer, who is shared ½ time with Haskell Indian Nations University. Mr. Monteith noted that although we are still under a federal hiring freeze, Mr. Fire's position is required for institutions that receive federal Title IV funding. Hence, his appointment.

Mr. Monteith indicated that 16 of the 17 employees that we laid off have been reinstated as new employees. One employee that was laid off chose not to come back to SIPI.

I. Action Items for Approval/Concurrence:

1. *Academic Calendar with Summer*

Acting President Monteith indicated that the Higher Learning Commission approved SIPI's Transition from a trimester to semester calendar, effective fall 2025. The Academic Year 2025-2026 calendar presented today includes the fall 2025 semester along with the spring and summer 2026 semesters. Summer 2026 will be the first eight week semester offered at the College.

Regent Harjo encouraged the College to utilize its resources for internal and external audiences in the interim periods between semesters.

**A motion to approve the Academic Calendar with Summer was made by Regent Bush, with a second by Regent Harjo: 8 yes; 0 no. The Board provided concurrence for the Academic Calendar with Summer.**

2. *Policy on Distance Education*

Mr. Michael Samudio indicted the Institutional Roles in the Acquisition and Use of Distance Education Tools Policy defines the roles and educational tools that SIPI uses in distance education. He indicated that software standardization helps in the evaluation of software and the assessment of student learning.

Regent Harjo asked Regent Chavez if SIPI's software was user friendly. She concurred.

Regent Bush asked how many students are enrolled in distance education and how many programs are online. Mr. Samudio said there are 120 distance students, with the Geospatial Information Technology, Early Childhood Education, and Business degrees online. He added that Accounting will be the next distance program and the College is using Quality Matters to ensure the quality of distance education courses. Dr. Rives asked if General Education requirements could be completed through distance education. Mr. Samudio concurred.

Regent Montoya asked if distance students participate in commencement. Mr. Samudio said they are invited to the ceremony and it is streamed. Regent Montoya asked if distance students could participate virtually. Mr. Samudio will look into it and report back to the Board.

Regent Tafoya believes distance learning will help increase enrollment of place bound students. And Regent Chavez expressed, on behalf of the students, appreciation for the offering of Hybrid and Zoom courses.

Regent Harjo recommended that SIPI find a different word for distance education. He observed that the word distance does not support inclusivity and the feelings that we are all part of the SIPI community.

**A motion to approve the Institutional Roles in the Acquisition and Use of Distance Education Tools Policy was made by Regent Montoya, with a second by Regent Bush: 7yes; 1 no. The Board provided concurrence on the Institutional Roles in the Acquisition and Use of Distance Education Tools Policy.**

3. *Policy: Modality Change in Online Courses*

Mr. Samudio indicated that the Modality Change in Online Courses Policy was updated to include the use of section numbers that identify the instructional modality used in a course. Regent Montoya asked what is STARS that is referenced in the policy. Mr. Samudio indicated STARS is the College's Student Information System.

**A motion to approve the Modality Change in Online Courses Policy was made by Regent Bush, with a second by Regent Tafoya: 8yes; 0 no. The Board provided concurrence to the Modality Change in Online Courses Policy.**

After the Policy approval, Regent Harjo indicated that he voted no for the previous motion since it used the word distance in the title; whereas the policy just voted on did not.

4. *Policy: Graduation Requirements (Updated)*

Ms. Gloria Mariano indicated the updated Graduation Requirements Policy eliminates the stipulation that a new SIPI graduate has to wait one year after graduation if they want to re-enroll at the College for additional educational opportunities.

Regent Bush would like to see the College's graduation grade point average requirement raised from 2.0 to 2.5.

**A motion to approve the Updated Graduation Requirements Policy was made by Regent Bush, with a second by Regent Montoya: 8yes; 0 no. The Board provided concurrence to the updated Graduation Requirements Policy.**

After the Policy was approved, Chairperson Begaye asked Acting President Monteith to leave track changes on when policy updates are presented to the Board, so Board Members can readily see where policies are being modified. Mr. Monteith agreed.

5. *Student Handbook*

Ms. Gloria Mariano asked for this item to be tabled until July to address changes in the new semester schedule.

**A motion to table discussion on the Student Handbook until the 2025, Quarter 3 meeting was made by Regent Bush, with a second by Regent Tafoya: 8yes; 0 no. Discussion on the Student Handbook was tabled until the Quarter 3 Meeting.**

6. *Support for SIPI Track*

Dr. Servin asked the Board for letter of support to create a new track. The estimated cost of a six-lane track is \$900,000, with an additional \$700,000 for an inside turf. Dr. Rives along with Regents Harjo and Montoya agreed that the College should provide a draft letter to the Board on the support for the project that it seeks.

Regent Montoya asked about the status of the gymnasium project. Acting President Monteith said Phase I: Foundation work/gym stabilization has begun and it will be followed by Phase 2: complete modernization of the HVAC system and the interior. He indicated that this is a \$4.5 million, two-year project and the track will be adjacent to it.

Chairperson Begaye asked the College to draft a support letter for the Board on the track project. Dr. Servin agreed. Regent Harjo asked if SIPI is bringing the track team back. Acting President Monteith indicated that there would first have to be funding for the team.

**A motion to take no action until the College provides the Board with a requested draft letter of support for the track project was made by Regent Bush, with a second by Regent Montoya: 8yes; 0 no. No action was taken on the track project letter of support at this time.**

7. *Letter of support for Diné College.*

**A motion that the President's Office prepare a joint letter of support for Diné College from the Board of Regents and College was made by Regent Tafoya, with a second by Regent Bush: 8 yes, 0 no. Acting President Monteith agreed to prepare the letter for Chairperson Begaye's co-signature.**

The Board recessed for Lunch from 11:44 AM to 12:26 PM. After lunch, the Student Government Officers were introduced to the Board. All of the officers will be graduating and participating in tomorrow's graduation ceremony.

- Regent and SGA President Pablita Chavez is from Tohajiiles, New Mexico, Navajo/Chippewa. She studied Vision Care Technology and plans to continue her studies at Arizona State University or the University of New Mexico.
- Ms. Dehlah Washee is from Oak Springs, Arizona, Full Navajo. She studied Vision Care Technology and is planning to study Exercise Physiology at Fort Lewis College.
- Ms. Tracy Wilson is from Gallup, New Mexico, Navajo. She studied Vision Care Technology and has a 14 year old son.
- Ms. Sage Bacu is from Alamo, New Mexico, Navajo. She studied Vision Care Technology and plans to go back to her community to provide vision care.

Many positive accolades were given to the SGA Officers with lots of encouragement to continue their studies and give back to their communities.

## J. College Status Reports on BOR Resolution Implementation

### 1. *Addition of a Key Performance Indicator for Adult and Basic Education (Resolution # 1 2024-7)*

Acting President Monteith indicated that the College is currently developing a matriculation policy from developmental education into career and technical education. The College had hoped to present this during this meeting; however, it is delayed until the Quarter 3 meeting due to all of the changes occurring at the federal level.

### 2. *Key Performance Indicator Goal Setting and Reporting (Resolution #2 2024-7)*

Mr. Edward Hummingbird said that this is also delayed until the Quarter 3 meeting for the same reasons as mentioned above.

He then elaborated on the three ways a student can progress out of developmental education: (1) Successfully completing the sequence, (2) Testing out, and (3) Receiving instructor referral. Students have three trimesters to complete the developmental sequence or they cannot progress to the degree level. Regents Harjo and Montoya recommended that instructor referral should be eliminated or conducted in conjunction with test results.

Dr Rives suggested and Mr. Hummingbird agreed to looking at a different name for developmental education to remove the stigma associated with it. Regent Montoya suggested teaching students speed reading and study skills.

### 3. *Northern Arizona University Partnership Exploration (Resolution # 3 2024-7)*

Dr. Begaye stated that this is delayed for the reasons mentioned above. He indicated that the dates in the MOU have to be revised and reviewed by the Solicitors. The updated MOU should be ready for the Quarter 3 meeting.

Regent Bush asked if SIPI has partnerships with the University of New Mexico. The largest one is adjunct provision. He asked the same question about New Mexico State University and Fort Lewis College. Dr. Begaye did not know.

With regards to partnerships, Acting President Monteith indicated SIPI participates in statewide articulation agreements for General Education and discipline-specific areas, dual enrollment will be serving BIE and other schools, and that SIPI needs articulation agreements with Haskell Indian Nations University.

### 4. *Partnership Exploration with the Canoncito Band of Navajos (Resolution #1 10-24)*

The Canoncito Band of Navajos presented SIPI with a list of requirements to open one of their healthcare facilities on the SIPI campus. Acting President Monteith indicated that SIPI will be going back to them on their proposal to see what they realistically need. Chairperson Begaye observed that they had asked for much more

than the land offered in the signed MOU. Dr. Begaye added he would like for them to support student internships and SIPI's academic programs.

K. New Business

1. *July 2025 BOR Work Session*

Chair Begaye proposed a Board of Regents Work Session/Retreat followed by the Quarter 3 Board Meeting July 7-8 at the Western Maricopa Education Center in Phoenix, Arizona. The Board agreed. Regent Harjo agreed to make a request to support costs associated with these meetings.

2. *Board of Regents Development Office FY 2025 Budget Approval*

The Board of Regents Development Office's FY 2025 Budget was brought back to the Board. There was not a quorum at the time it was presented at the 2025, Quarter 1 meeting due to inclement weather.

Acting President Monteith asked if SIPI provides \$200,000 for the Development Office, how can the budget be set at \$243,000. Mr. Wallace indicated that the additional funds were received from fundraising.

**A motion to approve the Board of Regents Development Office's FY2025 Budget was made by Regent Tafoya, with a second by Regent Bush: 7 yes, 0 no, and 1 abstain. The Board of Regents Development Office's FY25 Budget was approved.**

Regent Tafoya had to leave the meeting at 2:10PM. A quorum remains.

L. Reports

1. *Office of Analytics and Outcomes*

a. Students Enrollment by Tribes/States

Mr. Edward Hummingbird noted declines between Academic Years 2019-2020 and 2023-2024 in: (1) total student enrollments from 625 to 324, (2) Tribal enrollments at SIPI from 74 to 47, and (3) the number of states represented at SIPI from 21 to 14.

He also reported on student enrollment by state. Students from New Mexico increased from 72% to 77% of total enrollment and the corresponding rate for students from New Mexico and Arizona increased from 92% to 93%.

Representative Montoya asked for counts of students by tribe to support advocacy and enrollment. Dr. Rives also asked for occupational outcomes and economic impact data to support fundraising efforts. Mr. Hummingbird agreed to provide an Annual Report with the requested data by the Quarter 3 meeting.

Regent Davis asked if SIPI recruits at middle school levels. Acting President Monteith indicated that SIPI is just starting these efforts, called “backreach” with grades five and up. Mr. Hummingbird strongly supported the use of backreach, calling such events “life changing.” Regent Harjo encouraged a focus on urban populations in recruitment efforts, with more Native Americans living in these areas than tribal lands.

b. Graduation Rate Report

Mr. Hummingbird indicated the latest IPEDS submission showed an increase from 9% to 14%

c. Transfer Rate Report

Mr. Hummingbird indicated that the rate decreased from 16% to 12%. He strongly recommended that students need (integrated) transfer advisement.

d. Retention/Persistence Report

Mr. Hummingbird indicated that the persistence rate increased from 26% to 43%. However, he indicated the rate should be at 70% and the College still has much work to do.

e. Strategic Planning

Mr. Hummingbird talked about the importance of a culture of evidence in strategic planning. He also said the Mission statement is too long and the vision needs to be revised. The Board will discuss these matters in July, with Mr. Hummingbird noting that our new Strategic Plan needs to be linked to the new Vision Statement.

2. *Freshman Seminar Course*

Dr. Begaye indicated that the College is implementing a mandatory, two credit hour college transition course for all freshmen. It will start this fall and uses the text *Native American & First Nations College & Career Success*.

Regent Montoya recommended an introduction to speed reading and study skills in this course. Acting President Monteith indicated that such seminars and workshops could be offered by Student Services.

3. *SIPI Quarterly Reports*

a. College Overview

Acting President Monteith expressed his gratitude for the strength and resilience displayed by SIPI employees despite all of the changes and uncertainties caused at the federal level.

Mr. Monteith asked the Board to question why SIPI should engage in exercises related to Fiscal Year 2026 funding when the College is already forward funded

for that year. He noted that other federal agencies and departments funding expires on September 30, 2025, but not SIPI's.

Mr. Monteith also highlighted examples of recent federal government changes, including DOGE approvals for IT expenditures over \$25,000 and other expenditures over \$50,000; and removal of anything in print or electronic communication related to DEI, transgender, and gender identification.

b. Appropriated Funds

Bella Lujan reviewed the FY24 rollover and reviewed FY25 revenues and expenditures by source of funds. She will provide a detailed report to the Board as the information was unintentionally omitted from the Board Materials.

c. Grant Funds

Dr. Servin noted that SIPI has 50 grants valued at \$20 million, which represents approximately 30% of the College's expenditures. He also noted that Title III grants covers such items as distance education, Summer Bridge, and the Board of Regents Development Office. Dr. Servin indicated that Title III grants are statutory and should continue. However, we are in a holding pattern because the application process has not been opened at this time.

Discussing federal complexities, Dr. Servin and Acting President Monteith noted that any grant with the word equity was paused pending further review and justification. SIPI's Library Renovation and Broadband grants also had to be justified.

4. *Board of Regents Development Office*

a. Development Office Updates

Mr. Bobby Wallace indicated the December 2024, January 2025, and February 2025 Balance Sheets are included in the Board Book and he stood on his report

b. Fiscal Year 2024 Audit

Mr. Wallace indicated that the target for completion of the Fiscal Year 2024 Audit is by the Quarter 3 Board of Regents Meeting. Acting President Monteith will need the Scope of Work before the audit can begin. Regent Harjo recommended that engagement letter is approved by the Board of Regents. Chairperson Begaye agreed. Mr. Wallace will provide information requested by Acting President Monteith and Chairperson Begaye.

Mr. Wallace thanked Regent Montoya for the opportunity for Chairperson Begaye and him to make a presentation about SIPI and request funding with the Jicarilla Apache Nation tribal governance leaders. A similar presentation was made to the Mescalero Apache Tribe. Mr. Wallace will be asking all Board members to help open doors for similar meetings with their tribal leadership.

c. Student Government Association

The Student Government Association hosted 13 Activities during spring trimester, each serving between 25-35 commuter and residential students.

M. Old Business

1. *Accomplishments and Next Steps in HLC Monitoring Report*

Acting President Monteith indicated that actions related to the assessment of student learning and program review are on-track, per Mr. Edward Hummingbird.

He also cited the deployment of backreach, dual enrollment, moving recruiting from the Office of Analytics and Outcomes to Student Services, development of new program proposal processes, updating the Graduation Requirements Policy, and hosting evening and weekend courses in the Science and Technology Building as examples of new strategies intended to increase enrollment.

Examples of supporting future increases in student persistence and completion rates cited included increased staffing (instructors and tutors) in the Adult and Basic Education program, implementing the mandatory college transition course for all freshmen, and moving counselors from Student Services into the academic buildings to facilitate more frequent interactions and collaborations.

N. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

O. Announcements

The Board of Regents meeting schedule for the remainder of calendar year 2025 includes Commencement (April 18), the Board Retreat and Quarter 3 Meeting in Phoenix (July 7-8), and the Quarter 4 Meeting (October 6).

P. Adjourn

A Motion to adjourn was made by Regent Bush, with a second by Regent Montoya: Unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 4:49 PM MDT.

Respectively Submitted,  
Joseph Rives, Ph.D.  
Recording Secretary