



**Board of Regents (BOR) Quarter 4 Meeting Minutes
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI)
October 27, 2025
SIPI Hogan and Zoom**

A. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Begaye at 9:15 AM MDT.

B. Welcome and Invocation

The invocation was given by Regent Peterson

C. Roll Call

Present

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

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

Mr. Hershel Gorham, Oklahoma Tribes

Mr. Francis Tafoya, Eight Northern Pueblos

Mr. Caleb Secatero, SGA President (or designee)

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

Absent

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

Mr. Clyde Davis Jr., Mescalero Apache Tribe

Mr. Timothy Harjo, SIPI Alumni

Ms. Donna Montoya, Jicarilla Apache Nation

Vacant

Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona-North

Southern Pueblos Council

D. Special Guest In Attendance

1. Ms. Stephaine Conduff, Associate Deputy Director of Post-Secondary Education, Bureau of Indian Education.
2. Mr. John Billison, Acting CEO/COO for Canoncito Band of Navajos Health Center, Inc.

E. Approval of the Agenda

President Pfeiffer requested a copy of the Board Governing Documents related to the Changes in the Resolutions voted on at today's Board meeting. Chairperson Begaye

indicated that the proposed changes to the BOR Constitution will be presented on screen in redline format.

President Pfeiffer also asked that the agenda be modified to include Executive Sessions before the Resolutions on the NAU MOU and the BOR-BIE MOU. A motion to make the agenda changes as suggested by President Pfeiffer was made by Regent Tafoya with second by Regent Peterson: 5 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain. **The agenda was modified to reflect President Pfeiffer's suggestions.**

F. BOR Membership Updates

1. Appointment of a Vice Chair

Chairperson Begaye indicated that Vice Chairperson Lewis concluded her term as the Chairperson of the Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona (North) last Friday and, therefore, had to vacate her position on the SIPI BOR.

He then asked Board members if anyone had interest in serving as Vice Chairperson. Regent Gorham volunteered. A motion to appoint Regent Gorham as Vice Chairperson was made by Regent Tafoya with a second by Regent Peterson: 5 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstained. **Regent Gorham was elected as the new Vice Chairperson.**

2. Welcome to the New Student Government Association President

Chairperson Begaye welcomed Mr. Caleb Secatero as the new President of the Student Government Association. Mr. Secatero indicated he was from Alamo, New Mexico, has been at SIPI for one year, and is studying environmental science and liberal arts. Mr. Secatero also introduced the new SGA officers:

- Eli Smith, Vice President
- Alyssa Two Babies, Secretary
- Elise Big Bow, Treasurer

3. BOR Vacancies

Chairperson Begaye indicated that there are currently two BOR member vacancies and that he and Mr. Bobby Wallace are working with tribal leadership to fill these vacancies before the SIPI BOR 2026 Quarter 1 Meeting. The vacancies are from:

- i. Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona-North: Vice Chairperson resigned from the Board for the reasons cited above.
- ii. Southern Pueblos Council: Regent Gachupin resigned in order to spend more time fulfilling tribal obligations and to spend more time with family.

G. Review of Meeting Minutes

Regent Peterson reviewed the minutes of the Quarter 3 meeting (July 7, 2025) and the Board Work Session for Voting Members on (July 8).

President Pfeiffer asked if the SIPI-BOR MOU captured Regent Harjo's recommendations. Chairperson Begave confirmed that they did.

A motion to approve the July 7 and July 8 meeting minutes was made by Regent Tafoya with a second by Vice Chairperson Gorham: 5 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain. **The July 7 and July 8 meeting minutes were approved.**

H. Introduction of New Employees

Mr. Monte Monteith indicated that SIPI continues to be under a federal hiring freeze, but is allowed to hire in facilities and security. He then introduced Mr. Al Garcia who works in Facilities and mentioned that SIPI also has two new security officers. They work on different shifts and will be asked to attend the 2026 Quarter 1 BOR meeting for introductions.

I. College Status Reports on BOR Resolution Implementation

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

President Pfeiffer indicated that Policy development has occurred and Dr. Begaye discussed the Adult and Basic Education courses and processes. The College will begin reporting on this new KPI in the fall of 2026.

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

President Pfeiffer indicated that the Student Success Committee was revitalized this fall and will begin KPI reporting in the fall of 2026.

Chairperson Begave then re-ordered the agenda so Mr. John Billison could give his presentation before the BOR entered Executive Session to discuss Northern Arizona University Partnership Exploration.

3. Partnership Exploration with the Canoncito Band of Navajos (Resolution #1 10-2024)

President Pfeiffer indicated that SIPI does not have space to support waiting room, exam rooms, and full-time security that the Canoncito Band of Navajos requested after the original MOU was passed by the BOR.

Mr. Billison, Acting CEO/COO for Canoncito Band of Navajos Health Center, Inc. discussed that they are exploring coordinating with IHS Health Care for serving SIPI students and being a primary care provider to help reduce student costs. They will not be moving forward with construction at SIPI. However, they are looking at providing transportation services to serve medical needs of students.

President Pfeiffer asked that Mr. Billison coordinate with Mr. Monteith and Dr. Cometsevah so we are not duplicating services.

4. Northern Arizona University Partnership Exploration
(Resolution # 3 2024-7)4

The BOR moved into Executive Session at 10:00 AM and reconvened at 10:28 AM. In open session, Chairperson Begaye indicated that the BOR would send a letter seeking clarification of NAU's intent to proceed with partnership exploration.

J. Reports and Presentations

1. SIPI Human Resources

Mr. Jerry Tomhave was not in attendance, so there was no presentation that was requested on the agenda.

2. SIPI Quarterly Reports

i. College Overview

Dr. Pfeiffer's report included:

- Providing a one-page overview of high level SIPI issues to the Southern Pueblos Council.
- Preparing a two-year calendar under the new semester calendar.
- Hosting elected officials on-campus.
- Welcoming Dr. French who was detailed to SIPI for 120 days.
- Learning that the Vision Care Technology program received reaffirmation of discipline-specific accreditation.

She also reported that:

- Dr. Lesky received extended detail at SIPI and her portfolio includes IT and SIPI master planning.
- Mr. Edward Hummingbird and Mr. Monte Monteith submitted SIPI's Monitoring Report to the Higher Learning Commission.
- Sponsored Programs received a First Nations grant.
- Dr. Cometsevah prepared SIPI'S Student Sexual Misconduct Policy and ensured SIPI and Haskell Indian Nations University have similar language in their respective policies.
- The Student Success Committee is working on proscriptive and descriptive methods to increase student persistence and completion.

Chairperson Begaye welcomed Ms. Stephaine Conduff to the meeting. She did not have formal remarks but indicated that she is taking notes on items that require Bureau of Indian Education follow up from today's meeting.

ii. Appropriated Funds

- Quarterly Update

Mr. Monte Monteith reviewed the close out data and mentioned that SIPI was flat-funded at \$12.1 million. He also noted that the Science and Technology Building had to be closed due to an air handling issue. The anticipated repair costs are \$600,000

Mr. Monteith also noted that the additional BOR Requested FY25 SIPI Budget Information was included in the Board Book. Note: The Board asked that the following information be included in future annual college budgets presented for Board approval/concurrence at future Q3 BOR Meetings.

- a. Summary of Operations Costs by Function of Expenditure
- b. Summary of Operations Costs by Object of Expenditure

iii. Grants

Dr. Servin in his report mentioned:

- Received \$30,000 from First Nations for internships.
- Title III Grants fund 17 SIPI full-time positions and SIPI has \$1.0 million in extra funds. He is seeking a no cost extension to spend these funds.
- There are several other grants where he is seeking no cost extensions, but the federal shutdown has delayed these decisions.
- He is seeking grant funding for remediation to the Science and Technology Building.

iv. Office of Analytics and Outcomes

Mr. Hummingbird indicated:

- The Jobs Report is still being worked on.
- Total fall 2025 student enrollment is 214 students, (189 matriculated, 14 dual credit, and 11 HiSet). This is the fourth consecutive fall semester of enrollment decline. Demographic comparisons were shared on the handout entitled, SIPI Fall 2025 Enrollment Statistics.
- Graduation Rates decreased from 14.0% to 11.6%.
- Transfer Rates increased to 23.6%
- The new Strategic Plan includes developing a new 10-year retention plan. It will be aligned to Student Success Reporting/Monitoring to the Higher Learning Commission. The goal is to keep transfer rates above national norms, and to get persistence and graduation rates above national norms.

Regent Tafoya indicated concern over students not speaking their native languages. He also requested a report of the number of students from the Northern Pueblo Council.

Chairperson Begaye asked Mr. Hummingbird to prepare a historic and current enrollment report by the tribes/tribal governments each Regent represents. Dr. Rives will provide Mr. Hummingbird with the operational definitions requested by Chairperson Begaye.

President Pfeiffer indicated that SIPI is engaging in a lot of community outreach and hosting to ensure the public that the College is open. Dr. Rives noted local colleges are on display at Sunsport and suggested SIPI might want to look into it.

Chairperson Begaye would like to see increased communication from the BIE to SIPI and tribal communities that the College wants more students. President Pfeiffer indicated more growth will require more residential opportunities as one of our residential facilities is closed.

3. Board of Regents Development Office

Mr. Wallace reported on:

- i. Grants managed and submitted by the BOR-Development Office.
- ii. FY25 Financials Through August 2025.
- iii. The FY24 Audit, noting it as a “completely clean audit, with no findings.” Regent Tafoya moved to accept the FY24 Audit with a second by Vice Chairperson Gorham: 5 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain. **The FY 24 Audit was accepted.**
- iv. Silent Auction Benefiting the Suazo Hutchens Emergency Assistance Memorial Fund: Mr. Wallace indicated that the silent auction will be on December 11th, 2025, and he asked all Board members to help secure 2 or 3 items for the silent auction.

4. Board of Regents Report

Chairperson Begaye overviewed the BOR-requested efforts of Mr. Wallace and Dr. Rives to learn who sponsored the Haskel Indian Nations University (HINU) Act, the current number of federally chartered postsecondary institutions in the United States, congressional findings/basis for the HINU Act, the purposes of the HINU ACT, and the current status of the proposed legislation, along with how HINU is preparing if the HINU act is passed and signed into law.

Dr. Rives noted that his and Mr. Wallace’s trip to HINU was a fact-finding trip, noting we only discussed HINU matters and that learning about shared services of the BIE would have to come from the BI

He also mentioned that we are not recommending for or against similar legislation for SIPI. He said that we are gathering information so when the time comes, the BOR can make an informed decision. President Pfeiffer suggested that we might want to watch HINU transition for a period of years to learn from them, if we are to proceed in a manner similar as HINU did.

Chairperson Begaye asked if there is a difference between 638's and a federally chartered institution. BIE works in tandem with tribes in the 638 model.

Mr. Monte Monteith advised that SIPI's deferred maintenance is \$21million. This and other federal government support services (HR, e.g., communications, legal) would become SIPI's responsibility if it becomes federally chartered.

Regent Tafoya asked if we could have joint Board meeting with HINU to discuss this matter more. Both Chairperson Begaye and Mr. Bobby Wallace agreed.

5. Student Government Association (SGA)

Mr. Secatero indicated that he has three goals for SGA: To increase student participation in activities; to promote inclusiveness, and to work on improving facilities to enhance student life.

He also indicated that SGA hosted mini ghost paints for 23 participants on October 23rd and the next SGA event is a meet and greet with the officers on October 29th.

K. Action Items for Approval/Concurrence:

Chairperson Begaye asked President Pfeiffer or her designee to overview each of the items below and then the BOR would consider if each of the items below can be voted on as a consent agenda.

1. SIPI Organizational Chart

President Pfeiffer reviewed the Organizational Chart highlighting collaborative relationships, vacancies, and renaming the Office of Analytics and Outcomes to the Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning.

2. Credit Hour Definition Policy

Dr. Begaye indicated the policy provided definitions of clock and credit hours across modalities of instruction.

3. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

Dr. Begaye said the policy defines appropriate uses and amounts of AI in academic settings. Regent Tafoya asked what the consequences are of violating the policy? Dr. French said we are training students how to use AI responsibly. It is up to the faculty to determine consequences. Vice Chairperson Gorham said as a technical school we should harness AI rather than restrict its use because it is not going away. Mr. Monteith indicated SIPI agrees and AI training has been a

focus on employee training. President Pfeiffer said if SIPI does not set its policy, we will have to follow stricter Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Education guidelines.

4. Grading Policy

Dr. French said the policy change to add pass/fail options to ABE and language changes from trimester to semester.

5. New Program Development Policy

Dr. Begaye establishes protocol for establishing new programs.

BOR discussions focused on the need for SIPI to better define how it assures student learning when AI is used since the SIPI Constitution states that the Board is responsible for ensuring the availability and quality of education programs offered to students.

Therefore, Regent Smith (Regent Secatero's Alternate) moved to table Item #3 to the 2026 Quarter 1 BOR Meeting with a second by Regent Tafoya: 5 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain. **A vote on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy was tabled until the 2026 Quarter 1 BOR Meeting,**

Additionally, Regent Tafoya motioned approval/concurrence to Items # 1, 2, 4, and 5 with a second by Vice Chairperson Gorham: 5 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain. **Items # 1, 2, 4, and 5 received approval/concurrence.**

L. New Business

Chairperson Begaye suggested Resolution #'s 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 be tabled until the 2026 Quarter 1 BOR Meeting due to time constraints; with a special meeting on Resolution #7 if needed when the federal shutdown ends. **Regent Tafoya made the corresponding motion with a second Vice Chairperson Gorham: 5 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain.**

The following Resolutions were tabled until the 2026 Quarter 1 BOR Meeting:

Resolution #1 10-2025 Term Limits for Regents Appointed by Tribes or Tribal Organization

Resolution #2 10-2025: Affirmation of Term Limits for Regents: Student Government Association President and the Immediate Past President/Alumnus

Resolution #3 10-2025: Qualifications for Ex-Officio Regents

Resolution #4 10-2025: Term Limits for Ex-Officio Regents

Resolution #6 10-2025: BOR-BIE MOU

Resolution #7 10-2025: Authorization to Tribal Interior Budget Council

Resolution #5 10-2025: Memorandum of Understanding Between
SIPI and the SIPI BOR

Chairperson Begaye indicated that former Regent Gachupin's (and Regent Harjo's) recommended reference to the Bureau of Indian Affairs Manual and that BOR strives to reflect the needs of tribal students and their respective tribal governments was included in the revised Resolution as presented. **Vice Chairperson Gorham moved for approval of the SIPI-BOR MOU with a second by Regent Tafoya: 5 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain. The SIPI-BOR MOU passed.**

Meeting Calendar for Calendar Year 2026

The following dates were set for BOR Quarterly Meetings for calendar year 2026:

- i. Quarter 1 and new Board Member Orientation January 20
- ii. Quarter 2: May 14 and Commencement May 15
- iii. Quarter 3: August 31
- iv. Quarter 4: December 7

M. Old Business

1. Update on HLC Action(s) on SIPI's Monitoring Report

Mr. Hummingbird indicated that the Higher Learning Commission accepted SIPI's report and will follow up with regards to commitments made in the Report at the College's four-year review and on-campus visit in 2027. SIPI is now in good standing with the Commission.

N. Public Comment:

- President Pfeiffer sent a letter to the union on their concerns over the Science and Technology Building.
- Regent Tafoya expressed concern that Board members are not upholding the responsibilities to attend quarterly BOR meetings. Chairperson Begaye indicated that this would be a discussion topic at the 2026 Quarter 1 BOR meeting.

O. Announcements

- It was noted that the Department of Interior is hosting a Tribal Consultation Session in the Hogan on November 13th.

P. Adjournment

Vice Chairperson Gorham motioned to adjourn the meeting with a second by Regent Smith: 5 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain. **The meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM MDT.**

Respectfully submitted,
Joseph Rives, Ph.D.
BOR Recording Secretary