

NINDS Health Disparities in Tribal Communities Summer Internship Program (HDTC - SIP)

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recognizes that enhancing diversity in the biomedical research workforce is critical to improve our capacity to address and eliminate health disparities in the United States.

Native American, African American and Latino peoples make up approximately 35 percent of the U.S. population, but according to the 2017 National Science Foundation Survey of Earned Doctorates, only 14 percent of graduates in biomedicine and 12 percent in neuroscience are from these backgrounds. The National Institutes of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) seeks to diversify the national scientific workforce by expanding the recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups in neuroscience through its Summer Internship Program.

NINDS Summer Internship Program (SIP)

NINDS is one of 27 Institutes and Centers that make up the National Institutes of Health, the nation's preeminent biomedical research agency. The mission of NINDS is to seek fundamental knowledge about the brain and nervous system and to use that knowledge to reduce the burden of neurological disease.

The NINDS Healthcare Disparities in Tribal Communities (HDTC) Summer Internship Program is a student research training program in brain and nervous system research. The eight to ten week program focuses on neurological disorders and health disparities and seeks to provide research experiences and career development opportunities for Native American students, along with students from other underrepresented communities. During the application process, students must demonstrate a background and interest in Native American health and healthcare disparities. Interns work with mentors in the NINDS Division of Intramural Research, where they are immersed in exploring basic, translational, and clinical research. In addition to performing full-time research, summer interns work closely with the NINDS program staff, meeting weekly to assess their progress and work toward goals. Interns also engage in professional development activities including:

- *Career Symposium:* Prominent neuroscientists and individuals in all stages of their scientific careers are invited to speak with interns to discuss their career paths and provide advice
- *Journal Club Lectures:* Interns engage in a weekly presentation and discussion of relevant scientific topics, together with interns from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), deepening their scientific knowledge and broadening their personal networks
- *Poster Day:* Interns develop scientific posters and present on a variety of topics ranging from missed diagnoses to approaches to increasing Native American enrollment in clinical studies at the NIH
- *Museum of the American Indian Generation-Indigenous Networking Reception:* Interns attend an opportunity fair where they meet with high-level American-Indian researchers and stakeholders who share potential career opportunities for students



**Congresswoman Sharice Davids with the 2019
HDTC - SIP Interns**

The program takes place on the NIH campus in Bethesda, Maryland and runs from eight to 10 weeks each summer. It offers Native American and traditionally underrepresented students the ability to develop their critical thinking and scientific skills and to bolster their interest and academic performance in the sciences. The hope is for program graduates to return to their communities and serve as role models for other students interested in pursuing a biomedical research career.

Program Recruitment and Accomplishments

The goal of this program is to increase the number of underrepresented groups, including Native students, in the neurosciences, through recruitment at all levels, from high school through post-graduate education (ages 18 and older are eligible to participate).

Since 2007, NINDS has spearheaded the Summer Internship Program outreach initiative to various Native American communities. To date, NINDS has successfully developed relationships with 12 Native tribes throughout the U.S. and has trained 82 Native students, many of whom continue to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Tribes that have sent students to participate in the program include: Oglala Lakota Sioux, Rosebud Sioux, Navajo Dine, Pueblo of Jemez, Seneca, Pauma Band of Luisiano, Pueblo of Laguna, Yakima, Pisacataway Conoy, Lumbee, Blackfoot and Yupik. Several students have returned to NINDS for post-baccalaureate training and fifteen Native students who completed the program have gone on to enroll in graduate or medical school.



Congressman Tom Cole with the 2019 HDTC - SIP Interns

It is very easy for me to say that without my summers at NIH there would be no way that I would've been accepted to the school I am at, that I'd know so truly what I want to do as a career, [...] the invaluable experience of working in the labs of the foremost minds in my field, and I wouldn't have the confidence of knowing that I can thrive anywhere because I thrived at the NIH.

— BOBBY POURIER, NINDS HDTC - SIP ALUMNUS

Return on Investment

The NINDS SIP offers an opportunity for Native students to educate the NIH community about Native American people, their traditions and their culture. At the same time, the program offers Native students and students with an interest in Native health issues the ability to learn critical thinking and scientific skills that can bolster their interest and academic performance in the sciences. SIP graduates serve as role models within their communities, and hopefully engage other Native students to pursue careers in the sciences.

Native students who complete the NINDS SIP will increase their competitiveness for advanced education and be empowered to pursue their academic interests in the sciences. A long-term outcome includes more robust representation of Native applicants for scientific positions across all sectors including the government, industry and academia. This diversification of the biomedical research workforce to include more Native American and underrepresented individuals can ultimately lead to an improvement in the quality of life for Native communities.

The NIH has provided financial support for operating the programming and activities of the Summer Internship Program. The FNIH is working to secure funding to provide housing for 15 students. The total support needed is \$68,000 in order to house students for the full eight-week program. Your support will provide these students with an unparalleled opportunity to build their scientific research and critical thinking skills, expand their professional networks, and serve as role models to future generations of learners in their communities.

To learn more about becoming a funding partner for the NINDS SIP, please contact:

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