In April, we had the opportunity to visit Jayhawk country. After making connections months earlier, NACP made plans to visit the University of Kansas’s main campus in Lawrence and the medical center in Kansas City. The decision to visit KU was made based on their strong connection with Haskell Indian Nations University which support Native American students. Additionally, this trip is a part of our NACP Supplement. It aims to foster relationships with institutions within our GMAP Region 3. The first day was spent on the Lawrence campus, where we met with Lynn Villafuerte, Program Coordinator of the Post-Baccalaureate Research Education Program (PREP).
and the mastermind behind our schedule for that day. Our first meeting of the day was with Dr. Kristi Neufeld of the Department of Molecular Biosciences. Dr. Neufeld shared some personal stories about her journey in education, the choices she made and also gave advice for our educational and career plans. Next, we met with Dr. Josephine Chandler also of the Department of Molecular Biosciences. Dr. Chandler showed us around her department, where she showed us the many expensive instruments housed in their building for research. After touring the Biosciences building, we found ourselves in awe of the newly built engineering building. Chemical engineering post-doc, former PREP student and Haskell alumni, Dr. William Gilbert said nothing but positive things about the programs he’s been involved in. He also mentioned the multidisciplinary research opportunities he and his department have been doing with other departments across campus. With three tours behind us, we had lunch with Dr. Gilbert and four SACNAS graduate students. After lunch, the president of the SACNAS chapter, Stephen Baca, gave us a tour of the campus while we walked to our next destination: the Biodiversity Institute and Natural History Museum.

Dr. Luke Welton, Herpetologist and Collections Manager, welcomed us and talked about his field work and research collections consisting of more than 340,000 specimens and associated data of reptile and amphibian biodiversity. This visit was by far the most interesting and surprising part of the trip, never would we have imagined to be an arm length away from one of the most venomous king cobras from Southeast Asia.

Later that day, we joined Mrs. Villafuerte and current PREP, SACNAS, and Haskell students at the Student Scholar Research Symposium held on Haskell campus. An event where students showcase their research to the public. While there we got to meet with KU-Haskell Liaison, Mrs. Becky Welton. She is a great connection for Haskell students that are interested in attending KU. Mrs. Welton gave us a tour of the Haskell campus and talked about its history as a boarding school. At the end of the day we had dinner with Mrs. Villafuerte and SACNAS students downtown at The Burger Shack. The next day we visited the KU Medical Center in Kansas City.

by Pamela Scott, Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Next, Director of Admissions, Jason Edwards shared some information about the medical school application process, what makes a great applicant, and shared some great tips about shadowing and how keeping a journal during that time could help during your application and interview process. For instance, you could go back and read about the time you had to deal with a cultural or ethical issue or about how you felt when you had to be present to tell a family bad news. They also shared information about summer opportunities like the MCAT Prep program for undergraduate students who are getting ready for the application process.

After a great information session, fourth year medical student, Teliquah, gave us a tour of the medical center and shared her experiences in the program.

When the tour ended, we were joined by three other students in their first year of medical school. They talked about how what interested them in medical school, the applications process, and the post-bac program some of them were offered instead of being admitted to medical
school the first time they applied. Once they completed the post-bac, they were guaranteed a position with the next class. They all had great experiences with the program so far and encouraged those interested to apply. After listening to some inspiring stories from first year students, we met with Mr. Charley Lewis and Mr. Jason Hale of the Center for American Indian Community Health (CAICH). They shared their role with the medical center and the Native American communities in the area. Most of their work is outreach, but they do offer resources for students, like a scholarship for graduate students in Public Health. Overall, the KU trip was a success. We made great connections with both campuses. Both of which were very excited about the connection and maybe future collaborations with NAU.
Kyle Lopez, Choctaw, grew up in Riverside, CA and made his way to Tucson to pursue higher education. Kyle wanted to go to medical school, but getting involved in research with NACP and the MARC programs early in his undergraduate years aided in a focus for a research career. Kyle liked the problem solving associated with it. He was affiliated with NACP for about a year before joining the MARC program. He spent a summer with Dr. Greg Rogers working on a project to understand centriole biogenesis. Kyle then worked for the remainder of his time with NACP with Dr. William Montfort, where his project consisted in analyzing conformational dynamics with the enzyme soluble guanylate cyclase (sGC).

Kyle will be starting his graduate education in Fall 2017 in the Integrative Program in Quantitative Biology with a focus in Biophysics at the University of California, San Francisco. Once he gets his PhD, he plans on remaining in academia by pursuing a post doctoral fellowship and then potentially starting up his own lab. What inspires him the most is when he sees young minds that are curious, not just about science, but about life in general. Curiosity is what drives him and when he sees it in others it also inspires him.

One advice Kyle gives to students is to get involved early and to try as many things as possible to find out what interests them. Programs like NACP are great for this and expose students to many career and educational options. He would also advise talking to professors and to start networking in your field as early as you can.
Hello, my name is Amber Laughter. I am of the Red-Running-into-Water clan, born for the Bitter Water clan, my maternal grandfather is of the Edge Water clan and my paternal grandfathered is of the Ute clan. In this way, I am a Navajo woman. I am from Shonto, AZ. My major is Chemistry and Biomedical Sciences. I began working with NACP during the summer of 2013 as a summer intern in Dr. Matthew Gage’s biochemistry laboratory.

My parents are my inspiration. Their determination, dedication and work ethic has been the standard at which I try to uphold myself. Their unconditional love, support and encouragement has motivated me to try new things and experiences that has led to my personal and academic growth. My Chemistry professors have also been an inspiration and have set examples of what it takes to be a scientist and a researcher.

I always knew that I wanted to pursue an education in science but I did not initially plan to pursue chemistry and biology. Coming from a small rural community on the Navajo reservation there was not a lot of exposure to S.T.E.M related occupations. The health occupations and education are dominant fields on the reservation so naturally I had chosen to pursue an occupation in the field of nursing. However, that changed once I completed my general chemistry courses at Dine College. It was then that I had decided to change my major and pursue a degree in the natural sciences. My mentor and professor at Dine College had introduced me to research and the opportunities available. It was all downhill from there.

My post-graduation plans include a gap year to explore the opportunities that my degree has to offer and to apply for graduate schools across the country.

Some advice I would give an incoming college student is to take every opportunity that is presented to you and don’t be afraid to fail. I would also like to share a quote that has been significant to me, “Climb the mountain not to plant your flag, but to embrace the challenge, enjoy the air and behold the view. Climb it so you can see the world, not so the world can see you.”- David McCullough Jr.
My name is Roslyn Curry and I am half Navajo from Kaibeto, Arizona. I am majoring in Biology and minoring in Biochemistry. I have been participating with NACP for the last year, working in Dr. William Montfort’s Lab. When I think about what inspires me the most, I think of a curiosity about why things are the way that they are. I didn’t always know what I wanted to do, but over the years, I had a more and more defined direction of where I wanted to go with my life. Advice I would have given myself before beginning college is that there is nothing wrong with going slowly. It’s not a race to finish. It’s to begin at community college and to take general courses until you are sure of what you want to major in. A heavy course load in something that you are not passionate about is just going to make your experience less than what it could be. For now, I am planning on pursue a Master’s degree at the University of Arizona in Cellular and Molecular Biology and later on getting a doctorate in Genetics or Biochemistry.

Adam Fernandez, Hispanic-Mestizo, is from Walnut, California. He has been apart of NACP for about a year working with Dr. Julie Baldwin. He will be graduating with his degree in Biomedical Science and a minor in Anthropology. After completing his time at NAU, Adam plans to return to California to attend EMT and Paramedic school while also preparing for the GRE and MCAT tests. In the years to follow, he hopes that his education and work will allow him to travel to other rural nations or aid in disaster cares. What most inspires Adam is leaving a positive impact on where he’s been; he hopes that his studies and future career paths will involve aiding others in some form. He also includes his grandmas as inspiration, for their support and positive reinforcement when he needs it most. One advice he leaves for students is “ask your professors a million questions, it doesn’t have to be class related. More opportunities will appear in school or in a career path if you speak out to more people about how they got where they are.”
Melanie Begaye, Navajo, grew up in Fort Defiance, AZ but is originally from White Clay, AZ. As a child, she always knew she wanted to do something in healthcare. However, after a frightening illness due to a nutritional deficiency, she solidified in the healthcare field. This led her to the UA where she has been working with Dr. Mary Koithan of the UA College of Nursing for the past two years. Her projects include ‘Nutritional Support for Symptom Management During Cancer Care in Native Americans’ and ‘Creation and Dissemination of Cancer Navigation Materials for the Tohono O’odham Cancer Program’. Melanie will be graduating with her degree in Nutritional Sciences with an emphasis in Dietetics and a minor in Biochemistry. This month, Melanie will be starting the Master’s Entry to the Profession of Nursing program at the UA College of Nursing. Her goal is to become a Registered Nurse emphasizing in Native American Health and Community Health Promotion and Prevention.

The greatest inspirations for Melanie are her mother, Sylvia, and older brother, Adrian. Without her mother’s teachings and strength, she would not be where she is today. When times got difficult, her mother always persevered to ensure her children's lives were filled with love and hope. Her older brother Adrian has always been her role model. He’s excelled in school, worked hard everyday, and completed medical school. He is now entering his residency in radiology. He always has encouraging words and tips to get her through the hard times. One advice Melanie leaves for students is “hardships and obstacles help us to grow”. She’s always heard this from her family but did not experience it until college. Whenever she didn’t do so well on an assignment or had financial difficulties, she would feel discouraged and question her college experience. However, she took the time to rethink her errors and talk herself through the situation. Through challenging situations, she learned more and became confident in her abilities. She learned it’s all a matter of perspective. “If you view a possibly bad time as a learning experience, you’ll be able to get through it much easier rather than focusing on the negatives.”
Phillip Belone, Navajo, grew up in Tucson, AZ. He knew he wanted to pursue some form of higher education from an early age. His professional desires wavered until he volunteered at a hospital in high school. It was from then on that he was set on eventually becoming a physician. Phillip will be graduating with a degree in Cellular and Molecular Biology and a minor in Biochemistry. He has been accepted into the University of Arizona College of Medicine where he will be starting in the Fall as a medical student.

Phillip has been apart of NACP for three years where he worked in the Laukaitis/Karn lab. He performed research on Androgen Binding Protein, a protein thought to function in assortative mating.

An inspiration for Phillip is his dad, as he says “he always reinforces the value of a good education. I believe the importance I place in meeting my own educational goals is largely a byproduct of his parenting”.

Advice he leaves for students is “survey the variety of opportunities available to you and get involved in activities you think you’d have a genuine passion for. This will make participation in them easy and it’ll increase the likelihood that you get a greater sense of fulfillment out of it”.

“ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU ARE BRAVER THAN YOU BELIEVE, STRONGER THAN YOU SEEM, SMARTER THAN YOU THINK, & LOVED more THAN YOU KNOW”. - ANONYMOUS
Summer Internships

Deionna Vigil, Nambe Pueblo, from Nambe Pueblo, NM is an undergraduate at Fort Lewis College in Durango, CO. Her major is Cellular and Molecular Biology. Deionna spent last summer on NAU campus, where she worked with Dr. Fernando Monroy. This summer she will be at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke at the NIH main campus in Bethesda, MD for 10 weeks. She will be doing research with neurologist, Dr. Barbara Karp. After she receives her undergraduate degree next spring, she plans to pursue a PhD in Nutritional Sciences to study nutrition as a means of disease prevention and treatment in Native populations. Deionna’s inspiration comes from the struggles of her family and community, they push her to move forward to create a better reality for them and their future.

- Tasha Nez, Navajo, is an undergraduate in Dr. Ingram’s lab. She will be in Phoenix for the summer at the National Institutes of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), where she will be working with environmental determinants on obesity in Pima.
- Darien Fuller - Four Directions Summer Research Program, Harvard Medical School
- Adrian Begay - Four Directions Summer Research Program, Harvard Medical School
- Caleigh Curley - Summer Research Trainee Program, Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Diversity & Inclusion in Boston, MA
Role Model Speaker Series

On April NACP held its monthly Native American Role Model Speaker Series at the Native American Cultural Center. Before presenting the speaker, NACP honored the Spring and Summer 2017 Graduates. Each person received an NACP shirt for all their hard work with NACP. Role model Dr. Joslynn Lee was the invited speaker. She grew up on the Navajo reservation just outside of Farmington, NM. Her father is Navajo and her mother is Laguan/Acoma Pueblo. Her intent in sciences stemmed from herding goats with her grandma. They would look for wild tea near Red Valley, AZ which her grandma would use to dye weaving materials. Joslynn knew that basic chemistry was ingrained in traditional Navajo practices and that her grandma was the first scientist she knew. This led to degrees in Chemistry and Cellular and Molecular Biology at Fort Lewis College in Durango, CO. She received her doctoral degree in Computational Chemistry at Northeastern University in Boston, MA. After finishing her post doctoral fellowship at the University of Minnesota School of Medicine in Duluth, MN, she joined Cold Spring Harbor’s DNA Learning Center as a Data Science Educator. While in Long Island, NY, she was presented with the opportunity to engage with Native populations through programs like the Genomic Science and Leadership Initiative Workshop. This year the workshop invited students from Northern Arizona University, Dine College, Fort Lewis College, and San Juan College. The students will participate in hands-on laboratory and computer experiences to explore the presence of bacteria in Colorado and New Mexico river samples affected by the Gold King Mine Spill. Dr. Lee’s passion for working and teaching students reflected in her presentation, as she had many experiences and advice to share with those present.
2016-2017 Year In Pictures

UBRP/GPP 2017

SACNAS 2016

Summer 2016 Showcase Fall 2016
Announcements and Upcoming Events

STUDENTS
• NAU Commencement - May 12-13, 2017
• UA Commencement - May 12, 2017

FACULTY AND STAFF
• PSC Meeting - May 4-5, 2017

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