October 21, 2016, President Kirk Schulz hosted his first meeting with the WSU Native American Advisory Board on the Pullman Campus. One of the highlights of the meeting was the formal signing by the Quinault Nation of the Memorandum of Understanding between Washington State University and regional tribes. Quinault President Fawn Sharp officially signed the MOU addendum in advance of the meeting and President Schulz formally signed during the board meeting with Quinault Council member Clarinda Underwood signing as a witness for the Quinault Nation. The Quinault Nation is the twelfth tribe to sign the MOU with WSU. The signing was witnessed as well by the Advisory Board and by Urijah Willis, a current WSU student who is an enrolled member of the Quinault Nation. A big shout out and welcome to the Quinault Nation!!!

A second highlight of the meeting was the introduction of our current Tribal Nation Building Leadership Program students to the President, Provost, and Advisory Board members. Nineteen of the twenty-one Nation Building students were in attendance and joined the Board for lunch.

President Schulz in his first meeting with the board requested that each advisory board member working with their signatory tribe identify priority topics for presentation to him. President Schulz also signed a letter of commitment to the Memorandum of Understanding with the Tribes. The MOU was originally signed in 1997 under the leadership of President Sam Smith. Each consecutive President, including Presidents Lane Rawlins, Elson Floyd, and Interim President Dan Bernardo, signed letters of commitment to honor the Memorandum of Understanding. We are looking forward to President Schulz’s leadership and engagement with the tribes!

A number of our students, undergraduate and graduate, have been actively involved in supporting the efforts at Standing Rock, North Dakota, and several have made visits taking supplies and standing in solidarity against the Dakota Access Pipeline. Their courage, commitment, and passion for justice and for addressing critical issues is commendable and reflects the leadership and integrity of these individuals. Giving back to the Native community and protecting and exercising tribal sovereignty are core values of our WSU Native American Programs and we support the efforts of our students.

Each generation since time immemorial has faced challenges and uncertainties. Such concerns are a call to action as opposed to apathy. Action in and of itself, however, is not the end, but a means to an end. It is important to be cognizant of the principals that are shaping or driving our actions and what is the desired outcome. The protests at Standing Rock are examples of action driven by a principle expressed in the Great Law of Peace of the Iroquois people and common among many Native peoples: “Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people and have always in view not only the present but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground — the unborn of the future Nation.” Taking a stand to protect our environment and water is taking a stand for our future generations. We can also stand strong bolstered by the good words of tribal leaders such as the late Wilma Mankiller, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma: “The secret of our success is that we never, never give up.”
One role of education is to assist us in being able to identify and articulate the values and world views that shape our personal understanding and drive our decision-making and actions. As Native people we are most blessed if our education has been grounded in the traditional values and knowledge of our ancestors. In order to protect the welfare of future generations, however, and of "the whole people," we must work and collaborate with others who may or may not share our same cultural values and worldviews. College provides that opportunity to expand one’s knowledge and engage with others who have different values, beliefs, and priorities. The skills and experiences gained here should strengthen our foundation as an L.L.L. (Life Long Learner). I look at our students and they are leaders here and now, but I also see in them the future leaders of our Tribal Nations and I am inspired and comforted for they give me hope and I believe in them.

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