

Student-led business organization celebrates community, Indigenous heritage

By Molly Loonam, ASU News
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ASU has seen significant growth in Native American student enrollment in recent years. And yet, Native American students make up less than 2% of the student population.

A member of the Navajo Nation, Ethan Tacheene knows firsthand the unique challenges faced by Native American students pursuing a college education.

"It took climbing a mountain for many Native American students to get to what some people would call 'just university,'" says Tacheene, who is studying business law.

He hopes the [Native American Business Organization](#), a student-run club dedicated to empowering Native American students through cultural, academic and professional development opportunities, will support students of similar backgrounds seeking community at ASU.

"For many Native students, NABO is more than a student organization — it is a space where we celebrate our heritage, empower one another, and work toward creating pathways to success in higher education and beyond," says Tacheene, who serves as the organization's chief operating officer.

When Tacheene discovered the Native American Business Organization last spring, it felt like a natural fit. Since the start of his [W. P. Carey School of Business](#) career, Tacheene had been searching for opportunities to support Native American student success on campus. At the time, the club struggled with low membership and didn't have an academic advisor. But Tacheene saw its potential.

One year later, the organization is thriving. With new processes, a host of professional development opportunities and a dedicated leadership team, the club has grown to include dozens of members. Recently, it reached a major milestone: becoming an official W. P. Carey-affiliated club.

"NABO is at its peak," Tacheene says. "We're doing our best to support ASU's Native American population."

The organization offers its members a variety of ways to grow their business and professional skills through development conferences and internship opportunities as well as resume, negotiation and communication workshops.

The club's Indigenous career mixers provide opportunities to network with local organizations, firms and agencies. To prepare students to interact with business owners, it also hosts mock mixers to coach students on how to dress professionally, network with business owners and inquire about employment opportunities. The club hosts company site visits, offering students firsthand exposure to departments and roles in large organizations — such as engineering, human resources and accounting — that they may not have encountered before.

This spring, the organization is debuting a new entrepreneurship mixer that will connect members with entrepreneurs and business owners from the Native American community.

"The idea of entrepreneurship is talked about a lot in Native American communities because not many businesses have been formed yet," Tacheene says.

As COO, Tacheene tracks and promotes the club's events, secures event venues and supports fellow board members as needed. He also identifies internship opportunities and directly contacts members who would make good candidates based on their majors and availability.

Tacheene says he's waited too long for access to the resources available through the club and wants to ensure future students reap the same benefits even sooner.

"NABO reminds students that Native American communities are still here," says Tacheene. "We are not a thing of the past. We want to be best known for our excellence and resilience on campus, not our artifacts in a museum."

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