January 22, 2021

To: All Faculty
   ABCD Distribution List

From: Michael Ray, Director, American Indian Program

Re: Recognizing American Indian Religious and Spiritual Observances

New Mexico is a state endowed with true diversity. A myriad of vibrant cultures with strong traditions coexist here, including 23 sovereign Indigenous entities. Nineteen are Pueblo communities, three are Apache groups, and the largest—the Navajo Nation—occupies much of northwest New Mexico and reaches deep into Arizona and Utah.

Each tribal community hosts annual public events and visitors are welcome in the various communities during those times. Spiritual practices, however, are different. The overwhelming majority of New Mexico tribal people and their communities engage in their spiritual practices privately. Spirituality and ritual are highly private matters and will not normally be discussed with non-community members. These practices are not public information and attempting to obtain information about these practices can be regarded as invasive. While attending NMSU in Las Cruces, most New Mexico and out-of-state tribal students will maintain close connections with their communities, returning home as their sense of obligation or desire for participation warrants.

The acceptance that not all information is public information contributes to our enduring ability to co-exist. Respect for others and cultural sensitivity are just two of the attributes that make New Mexico such an enchanting place. Please be fair and encourage open channels of communication with your students.

As professional educators at our state university and as citizens of New Mexico, we should familiarize ourselves with the Indigenous peoples of our region. Although no one web site can provide a comprehensive education about the tribal communities, here are some links for reference:

   www.indianpueblo.org
   www.discovernavajo.com
   www.mescaleroapachetribecom
   www.janofficial.com
   www.fortsillapache-nsn.gov

For additional questions, please call the American Indian Program at (575) 646-4207.