Engaging Native Students

Dr. Stefan Sommer, Director of Education
Merriam-Powell Center
Northern Arizona University
Native students - many different backgrounds

* Navajo
* Hopi
* Yavapai Apache
* Kaibab Paiute
* Havasupai
* Zuni
* Ak-Chin
* Cocopah
* Tonto Apache
* Pipa Aha Macav
* Quechan

* White Mountain Apache
* Colorado River Tribes
* Hualapai
* Pascua Yaqui
* Salt River Pima-Maricopa
* Fort McDowell Yavapai
* San Carlos Apache
* Tohono O’odham
* Gila River Community
* Yavapai Prescott
* San Juan Southern Paiute

* Lakota
* Hawaiian
* Monacan
* Tlinkit

and many more.....
Native students - many different backgrounds

* Native cultures are distinct from Euro-American culture
* some students non-traditional
* some students very traditional
  - English as second language
  - Flagstaff/NAU foreign place
  - deference to Elders
  - quiet when outnumbered
  - community goals instead of degree goals
BIO 171: Skills for Success in Science

- intro science courses have high DFW rate
- this hits many Native students particularly hard
- many of these students were honors students in their high schools
Things you can do:

• I like to use Navajo style of self introduction

• Assign office hours –
  get to know each student if possible
  let students know you are ready to help

• Acknowledge that you know they were top students in their high schools
- Honor traditional Native knowledge
  - all of our ancestors were careful observers
    ☉ scientific method is a more systematic way of doing this

- dragonfly is the water bringer
- archeoastronomy
Things you can do:

• get students to lead discussions

• engage students with questions, honor all answers

• provide students with study guides, practice exams, and/or old exams

• Be creative. As you get to know your students you can adapt new approaches to capitalize on their talents.
Earth at Night
More information available at:
http://astw.nas.nasa.gov/apod/ap061127.html

Astronomy Picture of the Day
2006 November 27
http://astw.nas.nasa.gov/apod/ap061127.html
Thank You.