

# NEWS RELEASE

## Office of Public Relations

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### Diné College Gearing Up For 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events

**TSAILE, Ariz.** — Diné College will kick off its 50<sup>th</sup> year as the first tribal college with a private ceremony on April 13, and other public events to follow in the coming months.

Then the following month on May 11, the College is hosting an alumni reunion of former graduates, employees and past Board of Regents members and their families as part of the graduation commencement.

“This is an exciting time for everyone associated with Diné College,” Bernie Dotson, public relations officer at the College, said.

Diné College was founded in 1968, but its first graduating class was in 1969 with one graduate. A year later, the College’s second graduating class contained three graduates.

One of the graduates was Lawrence Isaac, Jr., Ph.D., who is now the Dean of the Department of Diné Studies and Education and is a member of the 1969 graduating class of two. The only degrees awarded in 1972 were two-year associate degrees and a certificate in welding.

From its humble beginnings of one student graduating in 1969, the college now offers 8 bachelor’s degree programs, 22 associate degrees, and 8 certificate programs, plus a student body over 1,300. The College also founded the Diné Policy Institute, a Think Tank whose research serves as the basis for the current law-making structure of the Navajo Nation Council and is based on Diné values.

Besides the May 11 commencement, there are other events slated throughout the summer and fall of 2018 that commemorate the founding of Diné College. A 50<sup>th</sup> gala and golf tournament — tentatively scheduled for Phoenix — are in the planning stages for late summer or early fall, but no dates have been set yet.

For the first few months of 2018, the College has hosted a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Speaker Series that has featured notable Navajos such as Manley Begay, Ph.D., Jack Jackson and Tommy Lewis, Ed.D., a former Diné College president who presided over the College’s name change from Navajo Community College in the late 1990s.

The Speaker Series continues throughout the year and is open to the public. Each speaker presentation has been aired on Diné College radio station KXWR (92.1 AM) and streamed live on the web. The College has started a separate website ([ncc50dc.com](http://ncc50dc.com)) which leads up to the planned events.

The College is also up for accreditation renewal in October. A listening session took place March 26 to kick-off the upcoming comprehensive visit from the Higher Learning Commission. The last HLC comprehensive visit was in 2015. HLC will meet with College officials on May 14, with follow-up meetings to continue into the fall.

Also, the HLC evaluation team will review the recently approved academic degree programs. Then, in November, the year-long anniversary events will conclude with some events around the signing of the 1972 Navajo Community College Act.

“We look forward to seeing everyone from across the Navajo Nation and beyond join us in being a part of our progress over the past 50 years, and where we want to go in the coming years,” Greg Bigman, president of the Diné College Board of Regents, said.

Some of the College milestones are:

- Initial accreditation in 1976.
- In 1997 Navajo Council renews Navajo Community College charter, which included a name change to Diné College.
- Reaccreditation for 10 years in 2008.
- First bachelor’s degree (education) awarded in 1998 through a partnership with Arizona State University.
- Diné College conferred its first bachelor’s degree in elementary education in 2010.
- Diné College up for reaccreditation from the Higher Learning Commission in 2018.

In its 50 years, the College has had 17 presidents. Monty Roessel is currently the president of Diné College.

Diné College is the first tribally-controlled institution of higher learning in the U.S. Besides Tsaile, the College operates satellite campuses in Shiprock, Chinle, Window Rock, Tuba City and Crownpoint.