



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SB 1238 Wins Approval from State Education Committee

TSAILE, ARIZ. — A bill that would provide funding for Arizona high school students attending Diné College who take remedial courses in math, reading and writing passed the Arizona State Senate education committee on Feb. 1, officials confirmed.

The 6-0 vote paves the way for the bill to go on to other committees within the State Senate and House of Representatives. Monty Roessel, president of Diné College, addressed the committee in opening comments. Regents Greg Bigman and Theresa Hatathlie of Diné College testified before the seven-member committee in support of Senate Bill 1238.

Roessel delivered a presentation to the committee highlighting disparities in remedial education in Arizona. Roessel said approximately \$1 million is spent on remedial education by Diné College and that a student takes a remedial course at least four times before passing.

“To say remedial education is expensive is an understatement,” Roessel said. “At Diné College this is doubly true. The cost of failure impacts the Navajo Nation and the State of Arizona. Employees with college experience greatly expand their earning power and in turn contribute more to the economy. This is more than a Navajo problem.”

Roessel said Senate Bill 1238 would:

- Provide additional tutoring and classes for state remedial students.
- Identify students who are at-risk of not being prepared for college earlier by working with area high schools and taking the Accuplacer test.
- Provide a “Summer Gap” pilot with area high schools to teach remedial courses during the summer so students are prepared for college by fall.

State Senator Jamescita Peshlakai, who represents Legislative District 7 and sponsored the bill, commented that she fully supports the intent. Peshlakai is Navajo, a graduate of

Northern Arizona University and a U.S. Army veteran who served in the Persian Gulf War.

“I would like to extend my thanks to Dr. Roessel, the Board of Regents and the staff at Diné College for bringing this issue to my attention, and following up with the important information and detailed data figures in presenting to the Senate’s Education Committee,” Peshlakai said. She continued, “While I applaud the ‘Do Pass’ recommendation from the Committee, I will caution that we are not ‘out of the woods,’ as this measure must clear several more committees in the Senate and the House to pass. I am working diligently with Diné College and my colleagues in the legislature to move this bill forward to the Governor’s desk.”

Diné College was created in 1968 as the first tribal college in the United States. Today, the college offers eight bachelor programs, 20 associates of arts and associate of science degrees, and eight certificate programs across four sites in Arizona and New Mexico.