



The possibilities to pursue education and advance in a career are not limited to children and young adults. In an effort to broaden opportunities for all Tribal members, the Center for Student Success and Services will host its Education Expo on Oct. 21 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Signature Grand, 6900 W. State Road 84 in Davie.

Alphonza Green, assistant director for CSSS, explained that the expo is a chance for Tribal members of all ages to come together and learn about various aspects of education and careers. Tribal departments, colleges and other organizations will have booths at the expo to teach guests about college and K-12 opportunities, discuss education trends, provide test-taking strategies and offer one-on-one assistance with career exploration for students and adults.

"We're focusing on a wide variety of educational needs, not just college opportunities or opportunities for high school seniors," Green said. "This opportunity that we're providing will give families and students a way to identify new schools and learn about careers that they may be interested in."

While many students tend to gravitate toward college fairs, Education Director Randall Budde said that the expo is an event catered to the students, not to the visiting colleges and universities. Traditionally, college fairs center the attention on college marketing to help schools reach their enrollment goals, he explained.

"The goal for the education expo is different from a college fair because our goal isn't to help the colleges or high schools enroll students," he said. "Our goal is to help create the future leaders within the Seminole Tribe of Florida."

According to a survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, as of 2012, only about 17 percent of Native American students pursue education after high school and only 13 percent continue to obtain a bachelor's degree or higher. Education Week has found that even high school graduation rates have significantly decreased since 2008, getting down to just over 51 percent as of 2010. While the decline is more of a national average, Green claims the key to ensuring student success is identifying institutions that are the best fit for students from the get-go. In this way, he says, students pursue education that caters to their goals and helps them stay committed to pursuing education experiences.

"We're happy to say that our students are graduating," he said. "The students who are going through school at a 4-year institution are actually more likely to graduate because they found the appropriate placement at the very beginning."

Since 2014, CSSS has held three education expos to ensure those fits are made.

Budde explained that the Seminole Tribe consistently supports education and it makes all the difference in students' ultimate pursuits.

"We're very lucky that the Seminole Tribe of Florida truly supports education and allows students and families to choose a school because it's the best fit [for the student]," he said. The expo is free for Tribal members and their families. CSSS will distribute more information about the event in the coming weeks.

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