

# INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Northern Arizona University sits at the base of the sacred mountains, on homelands sacred to Native Americans throughout the region. We honor their past, present, and future generations, who have lived here for millennia and will forever call this place home.



- Northern Arizona University is a public university offering undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees.
- The university is a high-research institution with nationally recognized programs in forestry and climate change.
- NAU is located in Flagstaff, Arizona, a mountain town at an elevation of 7000 feet and borders the Navajo and Hopi reservations.



# WHAT IS BRIDGES?

- The Bridging Arizona Native American Students to Bachelor's Degrees (Bridges) is a partnership between Coconino Community College (CCC) and Northern Arizona University (NAU).
- It is designed to develop a diverse pool of research-oriented undergraduates who bridge from CCC and complete Bachelor's degree in STEM fields at NAU.
- The program is sponsored by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS).
- Two-year commitment from CCC students (two years of fully paid tuition, stipends to offset living cost, and research mentorship at CCC and NAU).

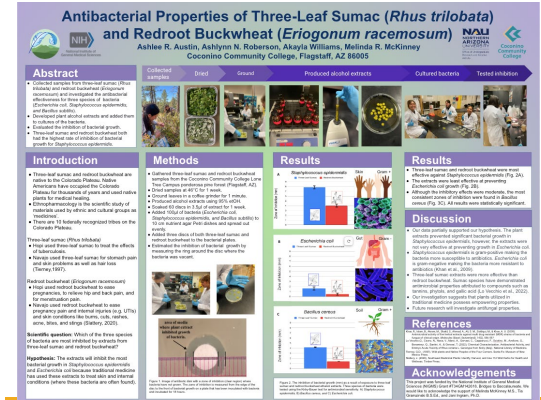
# BRIDGES DIRECTOR

**Dr. Jani C. Ingram** is a Regents' Professor in the Chemistry & Biochemistry Department, and her research focuses on investigating environmental contaminants with respect to their impact on health in at risk populations. She is a member of the Navajo Nation (born to the Náneesht' ézhi clan) and has been involved in outreach activities for Native American students in K-12, undergraduate, and graduate research.



# BRIDGES: FIRST YEAR

- The Bridges students start at CCC in the fall semester of their sophomore year.
- They engage in learning research processes from CCC Program Co-Director, Melinda McKinney.
- In the spring semester, they participate in a poster presentation at the NAU Undergraduate Research Symposium.



# PARTNER INSTITUTION: COCONINO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

- At CCC, students explore research-based projects at the community college, giving students experience and confidence.
- Projects are often tied to Indigenous knowledge and traditional knowledge.
- Close connections with NAU partners help students get to know faculty and students through networking meetings and department tours before they make the transition to the university.



# BRIDGES: SUMMER

- The Bridges students earn 3-credit hours through enrollment in an NAU summer course (CHM 299: Communication in Health Sciences) that focuses on topics such as career development, professional skills, scientific writing, literature reviews, and poster development.
- Individual research project with an NAU faculty member.
- End of summer poster session and luncheon.
- Research abstract submission to national conferences (SACNAS, AISES, etc.).



## BRIDGES: SECOND YEAR

- The Bridges students enroll at NAU in the fall semester.
- They continue doing research with their NAU faculty mentor.
- They receive continuous support from the Bridges faculty and staff until they graduate with their baccalaureate degree in biomedical or behavioral sciences.



## FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

- I love research! I cannot wait to complete my bachelors and move on to do research with the National Institute of Health and the Navajo Nation!
- I plan to receive a master's degree in chemistry and biochemistry from NAU and as well continue the research that I conducted over the summer.
- I feel like the research and program will help me perform better in the classroom as I achieve the goal in becoming a Dental Hygienist and eventually a dentist.
- My summer research activities increased my motivation to pursue my career in not only psychology but social health as well. One of my goal is to work with Native American youth.

# DEGREE COMPLETION AND RETENTION

Table 1. Bridges Trainee Start Date and Current Status (Aug. 2023)

| Student | Participation Start | Bridges Status                          | Degree Status                                                      |
|---------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| VG      | Y1 (2021-2022)      | Completed Bridges summer 2023           | Senior, Biomedical Sciences, planned graduation Sp. 2024 (NAU)     |
| FE      | Y1 (2021-2022)      | Completed Bridges summer 2023           | Senior, Biomedical Sciences, planned graduation Sp. 2024 (NAU)     |
| AH      | Y1 (2021-2022)      | Completed Bridges summer 2023           | Senior, Psychological Sciences, planned graduation Fall 2024 (NAU) |
| AH      | Y2 (2022-2023)      | In progress, NAU (2 <sup>nd</sup> year) | Junior, Biomedical Sciences (NAU)                                  |
| BY      | Y2 (2022-2023)      | Completed Bridges spring 2024           | Junior, Biomedical Sciences (NAU)                                  |
| TB      | Y2 (2022-2023)      | Completed Bridges spring 2024           | Junior, Forestry (NAU)                                             |

# CHALLENGES

- Recruitment has most often resulted from consistent, repetitive one-on-one, face-to-face interactions. Online students are harder to reach.
- Successfully maintaining a 3.0 GPA in biomedical-related courses. Required tutoring and attendance at faculty office hours have helped.
- The transition from a smaller, flexible environment at CCC to a more rigorous course load at NAU, plus the high cost of housing in Flagstaff, AZ

