



INDIAN COUNTRY SNAPSHOT: Santa Fe Indian School

In 1977, the All Pueblo Council of Governors assumed control of the Santa Fe Indian School (SFIS) from the federal government.¹ Recognizing many young Pueblo people were pursuing higher education and taking jobs elsewhere when “their skills were very much needed at home,”² key Pueblo leaders subsequently pushed SFIS to establish its Leadership Institute, whose mission includes “[transforming] the impacts of externally-developed policy on Tribal community institutions by cultivating emerging intergenerational Indigenous leaders”³ committed and prepared to make lifelong contributions to their Pueblo communities.⁴ Among the Institute’s programs is its Summer Policy Academy (SPA), a four-year leadership development and public policy training program established in 2007 and consisting of two-week sessions the first two summers. SPA Year One introduces rising high school juniors to tribal, state, national, and international policy issues, who then travel east the following summer to Princeton University and Capitol Hill where they form teams to formulate and present policy solutions “harmonized with our traditional values”⁵ that address issues directly impacting their communities.⁶ In SPA Year Three, students serve internships with Pueblo government departments and programs, state legislative offices, and other local placements where they apply their SPA learnings and advance the policy solutions developed the previous summer. In Year Four, SPA participants serve as junior faculty for the incoming Year One cohort and staff for the Community Institutes, the Leadership Institute’s hallmark convenings.⁷ Ninety percent of SPA participants end up attending college, with many obtaining bachelor’s and graduate degrees before returning home to support their communities in the critical ways SPA envisioned.⁸ Invoking the Pueblos’ deeply rooted “planting and farming culture,”⁹ SPA is well on its way to achieving its original goal of cultivating 500 “Pueblo thought leaders” over the program’s first 25 years, leaders who are ready to embrace “the sacred and inherent responsibility of sustaining our Indigenous life ways, while drawing upon our western knowledge so that we are successful in generating a better quality of life for our people today and into the future.”¹⁰

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RELATED RESOURCES

[Santa Fe Indian School Leadership Institute: Summer Policy Academy \(Facebook page\)](#)

[Harvard Honoring Nations: Leadership Institute at the Santa Fe Indian School](#)

[Harvard Graduate School of Business: Educational Sovereignty and the Santa Fe Indian School \(video\)](#)

[Shannon Douma: Cultivating Good Leadership: The Santa Fe Indian School's Summer Policy Academy \(video\)](#)

[Indian Country Today: Summer Policy Academy Teaches Core Values to Students](#)

[Students from Pueblo and Navajo Nations Visit Princeton During Summer Policy Academy](#)

[Princeton University: Students from Native American tribes in New Mexico attend summer policy academy at Woodrow Wilson School](#)

[First Nations Development Institute: Leadership Institute at the Santa Fe Indian School](#)



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- ¹ Originally named the All Indian Pueblo Council, the All Pueblo Council of Governors represents the 19 Pueblos located in New Mexico and Ysleta del Sur Pueblo in Texas.
- ² Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, “Leadership Institute at the Santa Fe Indian School,” Honoring Nations 2010 Honoree, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 2010, p. 1 (https://hwpi.harvard.edu/files/hpaied/files/hn_report_leadership_institute_at_the_santa_fe_indian_school.pdf?m=1639578993, accessed July 16, 2024).
- ³ Santa Fe Indian School, “Leadership Institute” webpage (<https://www.sfis.k12.nm.us/community/leadership-institute>, accessed July 16, 2024).
- ⁴ Joining these Pueblo leaders in securing the creation of the Leadership Institute (LI) were LI Co-Founders Regis Pecos, Former Governor of Pueblo de Cochiti, and Dr. Carnell Chosa. As the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development explains, “In Pueblo governance, traditional leadership is sometimes conferred by community appointment. This means that all Pueblo citizens need to be ready if and when they are chosen to serve. Readiness, however, does not simply come from wanting it to be so. Nations need to create opportunities for leadership experience and growth” (“Leadership Institute at the Santa Fe Indian School,” 2010, p. 1).
- ⁵ Kelly Koepke, “Summer Policy Academy Teaches Core Values to Students,” *Indian Country Today*, October 6, 2011 (<https://ictnews.org/archive/summer-policy-academy-teaches-core-values-to-students>, accessed July 16, 2024).
- ⁶ SPA selects students for the program after they are “nominated by their teachers, community leaders, business professionals and tribal leaders” (Arva Hassonjee, “Students from Native American tribes in New Mexico attend summer policy academy at Woodrow Wilson School,” Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, July 2, 2018 (<https://www.princeton.edu/news/2018/07/02/students-native-american-tribes-new-mexico-attend-summer-policy-academy-woodrow>, accessed July 16, 2024). The policy solutions SPA students develop address a wide range of issues, including higher education, workforce development, sacred sites protection, and proper implementation of the *Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico* court decision, “in which families and school districts sued the New Mexico Public Education Department and the state legislature for failing to provide students – particularly low-income, Native American, English language learner, and students with disabilities – the programs and services necessary for them to learn and thrive” (Brittany N. Murray, “Students from Pueblo and Navajo Nations Visit Princeton During Summer Policy Academy,” Princeton School of Public and International Affairs, July 7, 2022, (<https://spia.princeton.edu/news/students-pueblo-and-navajo-nations-visit-princeton-during-summer-policy-academy>, accessed July 16, 2024).
- ⁷ At these convenings, Pueblo community members, leaders, and advocates develop action plans to formulate and advance pro-Pueblo policies, programs, and initiatives at the tribal, state and federal levels (Regis Pecos, Co-Founder, SFIS Summer Policy Academy, Correspondence with NCAI, July 25, 2024).
- ⁸ Regis Pecos and Carnell Chosa, “Leadership Institute at the Santa Fe Indian School,” *Green Fire Times*, Vol. 15, No. 4, July/August 2023, p. 4 (https://issuu.com/whitstewart/docs/gft_july_aug2023_web2, accessed June 24, 2024). In 2012, the SFIS Leadership Institute launched a partnership with Arizona State University (ASU) to create the ASU Pueblo Indian Doctoral Program, which has graduated 20 Pueblo doctoral degree students since its inception (Regis Pecos, Correspondence with NCAI, July 24, 2024).
- ⁹ Brittany N. Murray, “Students from Pueblo and Navajo Nations Visit Princeton During Summer Policy Academy,” July 7, 2022.
- ¹⁰ Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, “Leadership Institute at the Santa Fe Indian School,” 2010, p. 3. According to SPA Co-Founder Regis Pecos, 350 Pueblo community members have participated in SPA over the program’s 18 years of existence (Email correspondence with NCAI, June 25, 2024).