

Haskell



HASKELL INDIAN NATIONS UNIVERSITY • 155 Indian Avenue, Lawrence KS,

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To the Haskell and Lawrence Communities:

We, the faculty of Haskell Indian Nations University, wish to address recent reports concerning our university following the congressional hearing held in July 2024.

Haskell operates within a slow and cumbersome federal bureaucracy, a reality that was painfully evident during the recent congressional hearing. It is unique also because university officials cannot speak on Haskell's behalf without prior approval from the government. It is with a deep sense of responsibility and commitment to our students, our community, and our shared vision that we now speak to ensure the voice of our university is heard.

The issues raised at the hearing were, for many of us, a rehash of old news—some serious, some imagined. We acknowledge that sexual assault is a grave issue on many campuses, and Haskell is no exception. While faculty may not be privy to all the confidential details, we do know that our post-Graham leadership has taken significant steps to address these concerns, including filling the position of Campus Advocate Coordinator who addresses Title IX-related complaints.

Unfortunately, much of Dr. Graham's testimony grossly mischaracterized Haskell. This is likely due to how few interactions he had with members of the university and how little he cared to engage with Haskell's students, faculty, staff, and the tribal nations Haskell serves. As federal employees, we take an oath to protect the U.S. Constitution. Former President Graham failed to uphold this oath by infringing on students' and faculty's First Amendment rights. During his brief tenure at Haskell, Dr. Graham seemed unable to grasp the concept and practice of shared governance and appeared generally uneducated about the unique American Indian and Alaska Native higher education environment and culture into which he stepped.

The idea of a "runaway faculty" is a myth, one that ex-President Graham stated and repeated at the hearing. It was a tactic used for political theatre. The reality is that faculty are here, steadfast, and committed to ensuring Haskell's mission to serve as a shining star of post-secondary Indigenous education.

We stand united in our efforts to fulfill this vision, regardless of the challenges we face. We want to dispel the notion that Haskell faculty are indifferent to the well-being of our students. On the contrary, we have demonstrated unwavering resilience and dedication through years of administrative upheaval and even the global challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We kept classes going, managed grants, engaged in professional development, and remained active within the Lawrence community—all while continuing to nurture and educate the next generation of Indigenous leaders.

Under the leadership of Dr. Arpan, Haskell has seen a number of positive developments. For example, key leadership roles have been filled, including Vice-Presidents for Academics and University

Operations, a Dean of Students, four permanent Academic Deans, a Housing Director, a Student Accessibility Coordinator, and a Director of Student Success. Additional substantial improvements include:

- Enrollment has steadily increased from 701 students in Fall 2021 to 984 students registered for the Fall 2024 semester (pre-census day count).
- 24-hour access to mental health services is now available to all students and employees.
- Staff positions have grown from 144 in May 2022 to 175 as of May 2024.
- Full-time faculty numbers have increased from 28 in May 2022 to 39 by August 2024.

These are not just numbers—they are a testament to the resilience, dedication, and hard work of everyone at Haskell. They represent the ongoing transformation of our campus into a place where students can thrive, faculty can teach and research in supportive environments, and the entire community can grow together.

Despite the bureaucratic and political challenges, Haskell remains a beacon of hope and progress for Indigenous-based education. We are proud to be part of this journey and are committed to ensuring that Haskell continues to shine within the Lawrence community and beyond.

To our students and alumni: Haskell is your home, your foundation, and your legacy. The challenges we face operating under the Department of the Interior are real, but so too is our resolve to overcome them. We ask you to stand with us, to continue to believe in the power of education, and to help us build the future that Haskell—and all Indigenous peoples—deserve.

Respectfully,

The Haskell Faculty Senate