



# DARTMOUTH

The Thomas A. 1977 and Gina T. Russo 1977 Executive Director  
Dartmouth Tribal Sovereignty Institute  
Hanover, New Hampshire

## THE SEARCH

Dartmouth College seeks a dynamic individual to lead its newly established Dartmouth Tribal Sovereignty Institute (DTSI or the Institute), the permanent home for Dartmouth's tribal leadership and sovereignty initiatives. The DTSI will serve as the embodiment of Dartmouth College's founding purpose to advance the interests of the Native Peoples. Organized around three core pillars: the Tribal Services and Solutions Project, the Tribal Leadership Academy, and a comprehensive portfolio of solutions-focused research, convenings, and summit, the Institute will address real-world challenges, cultivate the next generation of leaders, and advance knowledge and innovation.

Reporting directly to the Executive Vice President, this appointment represents one of the most significant investments in Dartmouth's modern engagement with Native and Indigenous communities. The Thomas A. 1977 and Gina T. Russo 1977 Executive Director (Executive Director) will shape the Institute's strategic vision and organizational foundation, cultivate partnerships across Tribal Nations, Indigenous organizations, higher education, philanthropy, and public leadership, and position Dartmouth as a leading national partner in advancing Indigenous self-determination and leadership.

More than an administrative role, the Executive Director will serve as a nationally recognized leader responsible for building the Institute, expanding its influence and impact, advancing its intellectual and public profile, and securing the resources necessary to sustain its long-term mission and growth.

## BACKGROUND

Founded in 1769, Dartmouth College is a vibrant, inclusive learning environment, one of the world's premier academic institutions, and a member of the Ivy League. Dartmouth's mission is to educate the most promising students and prepare them for a lifetime of learning and of responsible leadership through a faculty dedicated to teaching and the creation of knowledge.

In 1970, Dartmouth's leadership recommitted the university to its founding charter -- the education of Native Americans -- and in the years since, Dartmouth has made significant strides in advancing opportunity for our country's Indigenous population, including:

- Establishing one of the first Native American Studies programs in the country.
- Contributing ground-breaking scholarship toward a collective understanding of American history and Native American rights.
- Producing two generations of alumni who have assumed leadership roles in their communities, in their tribes, in industry, and at the highest levels of the U.S. government. As a result, the Dartmouth Native American alumni body is considered one of the largest and most accomplished networks of alumni from any private university in our nation.

- The creation of a Native American Visiting Committee (NAVC), reporting to the President, made up of members of the alumni community who have provided counsel to Dartmouth's President's Office for over five decades, among other significant contributions.
- Launching The Tribal Services and Solutions Project (TSSP) in 2022. To date, TSSP has supported 13 Fellows and 5 Interns from more than 14 Tribal nations, placing Dartmouth students and recent graduates in direct partnership with Tribal communities and institutions to develop solutions and expand best practices.
- Launching the Tribal Leadership Academy (TLA) in 2024. To date, the TLA has convened 45 leaders from more than 43 Tribes, representing a combined population of more than 1.26 million Indigenous people — approximately 7.5% of all federally recognized tribes in the United States.

## THE DARTMOUTH TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY INSTITUTE

As an entity, the DTSI will more directly position the College as the first-choice partner for Native and Indigenous communities, leaders, and organizations seeking real-world solutions, collaborative knowledge creation, and the place of powerful convenings. The Institute will unite the strengths and advances of the College's recommitment to its founding charter and boldly carry them forward. Being launched as a comprehensive impact institute, the DTSI will be dedicated to addressing the most pressing challenges facing Indigenous communities through a holistic focus on tribal sovereignty and leadership.

The Institute will integrate two successful pilot programs—the TLA and the TSSP—to expand their impact and create a unified platform for leadership development and applied problem-solving in Indigenous communities. Building on Dartmouth's charter commitment to Native Americans, the Institute will foster strategic partnerships with tribal nations and organizations dedicated to advancing the interests of Indigenous peoples. The Institute will function as a touchstone for experiential learning—combining applied scholarship, research, and real-world engagement to address critical issues facing Tribal Nations. Through this approach, the Dartmouth Tribal Sovereignty Institute aims to move beyond academic inquiry to deliver meaningful, long-term impact for Indigenous communities.

## ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As leader of the DTSI, The Thomas A. 1977 and Gina T. Russo 1977 Executive Director will represent Dartmouth College in Indian Country and will have principal responsibility for establishing strategic partnerships with tribal nations, and relevant non-profit entities and governmental bodies to work collaboratively, intentionally, and respectfully on solutions to issues of common concern and significance, including, but not limited to, Indian Country economic development, cultural vitality and perpetuation, physical and social wellbeing, and environmental stewardship.

The Executive Director of the DTSI provides visionary leadership, strategic direction, and comprehensive operational oversight for a university-based institute dedicated to advancing Tribal sovereignty,

Indigenous governance, and Nation-building. This role is central to shaping and executing the Institute's mission as a leading platform for applied scholarship, leadership development, and meaningful engagement with Tribal Nations.

The Executive Director will play a pivotal role in the continued development and evolution of the Institute, with responsibility for building organizational infrastructure, recruiting and leading personnel, implementing and sustaining high-impact programs, and establishing clear frameworks to measure outcomes and long-term impact. As a key institutional leader, the Executive Director serves as a vital bridge between the College and Tribal Nations—representing the College in Indian Country and representing Indian Country within the College—while also cultivating relationships with Indigenous communities globally.

With an enterprise-wide perspective, the Executive Director oversees the full breadth of the Institute's activities, ensuring alignment across strategic, academic, and operational priorities. The Executive Director leads the development, articulation, and execution of campus-wide strategies that advance the Institute's goals, fostering collaboration across departments, schools, and external partners.

This role encompasses leadership of all administrative, operational, financial, outreach, and programmatic functions of the Institute. The Executive Director designs and implements organizational strategies and establishes effective systems and processes that promote coordination, communication, accountability, and operational excellence.

The Executive Director is a senior leader with deep expertise in strategic planning, financial management, organizational leadership, and operational execution. The ideal candidate brings an entrepreneurial, creative, and community-building approach, with demonstrated ability to build and scale complex initiatives within a dynamic academic environment.

Reporting directly to the Executive Vice President, the Executive Director represents the Institute internally across the University and externally with Tribal Nations, strategic partners, advisors, donors, and other key stakeholders. In this capacity, the Executive Director serves as the Institute's primary ambassador and advocate, advancing its mission, values, and impact.

## EARLY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Over the next three to five years, the Executive Director will be expected to:

- Establish the Institute's long-term strategic and operational framework;
- Expand and strengthen the impact of TLA and TSSP;
- Cultivate deep and reciprocal relationships with Tribal Nations and Indigenous organizations;
- Build sustainable philanthropic and institutional support for the Institute's mission;

- Foster interdisciplinary collaboration across Dartmouth's schools, centers, and academic programs;
- Elevate Dartmouth's national leadership in Tribal sovereignty and Indigenous governance; and
- Develop measurable frameworks for evaluating institutional and community impact.

## Key Responsibilities

### Strategic Leadership & Institute Development

- Lead the continued development and growth of the DTSI as a flagship initiative of the College.
- Establish the Institute's strategic vision, organizational structure, and operational priorities.
- Build and oversee institutional infrastructure, including staffing, governance structures, systems, and processes.
- Guide the integration and expansion of the TLA and TSSP.
- Develop systems for measuring program effectiveness, institutional impact, and community outcomes.
- Foster a culture grounded in collaboration, accountability, reciprocity, and mission-centered leadership.

### Tribal, Community & External Relations

- Build, sustain, and deepen relationships with Tribal Nations, Indigenous organizations, and Native leaders across the United States and globally.
- Serve as a senior representative of Dartmouth in engagements with Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities.
- Advance meaningful and reciprocal engagement between the College and Indigenous communities.
- Cultivate strategic partnerships across higher education, government, philanthropy, nonprofit organizations, and civic institutions.
- Help shape and communicate the Institute's public identity, mission, and impact.

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### Academic & Programmatic Leadership

- Promote interdisciplinary scholarship and applied research related to Tribal sovereignty, Indigenous governance, federal Indian law, economic development, cultural preservation, and community wellbeing.
- Advance the Institute's role as a touchstone for experiential learning and collaborative problem-solving, with the goal of delivering meaningful, long-term impact for Indigenous communities.
- Support academic initiatives, student engagement, leadership development, and community-based learning opportunities.
- Foster collaboration among Dartmouth faculty, students, researchers, and external partners.

### Advancement & Fundraising

- Partner closely with Dartmouth's Office of Advancement to secure philanthropic support for the Institute's priorities and long-term sustainability.
- Cultivate relationships with donors, foundations, Tribal partners, and funding agencies.
- Develop a sustainable financial model based on current use and endowment gifts.
- Serve as a compelling advocate for the Institute's mission and strategic vision.
- Ensure responsible stewardship of donor investments and institutional resources.

### Operations & Financial Management

- Oversee the Institute's administrative, operational, and financial functions.
- Develop and manage budgets aligned with strategic priorities and institutional goals.
- Recruit, mentor, and support high-performing staff and program leaders.
- Ensure effective coordination, communication, and operational accountability across the Institute's activities.
- Represent the Institute on institutional committees and strategic initiatives as appropriate.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Dartmouth seeks a visionary and relationship-centered leader with deep credibility in Indian Country and demonstrated success building mission-driven organizations, initiatives, partnerships, and communities.

The successful candidate will bring strategic leadership experience, political and cultural fluency, entrepreneurial energy, and a strong commitment to advancing Tribal sovereignty and Indigenous self-determination.

The ideal candidate will possess:

- Deep experience working in Indian Country and with Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities, and a prominent profile in the Native American community
- The ability to navigate effectively across higher education, government, philanthropy, and public policy environments and experience bridging connections across Tribal and governmental relations, policy, nonprofit, environmental, and public health arenas
- Demonstrated success leading complex initiatives and building collaborative partnerships;
- Exceptional communication, diplomacy, and relationship-building skills, with the ability to navigate discussions with college students and their Nation as ably as navigating discussions with funders and policymakers
- A record of advancing meaningful, community-centered impact.
- An existing network of influence in media, philanthropy, and civic life that will expand the College's reach
- Skilled fundraiser who will direct every dollar toward the mission and build the case for Dartmouth as the essential partner for Tribal nations
- Natural coalition-builder able to cultivate partnerships across higher education, government, nonprofits, and Tribal nations

**Required Qualifications:**

- Advanced degree in Indigenous Studies, Law, Public Policy, Political Science, Education, or a related field.
- Significant leadership experience in academia, Tribal government, nonprofit leadership, public service, or related sectors.
- Demonstrated expertise in Tribal sovereignty, Indigenous governance, federal Indian law, or related fields.
- Extensive knowledge of Indian Country and the governmental relationships among Tribal Nations, states, and the federal government.

- Demonstrated success building organizations, programs, partnerships, and teams.
- Experience working collaboratively with Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities.
- Proven ability to lead complex initiatives and navigate multifaceted institutional environments.
- Strong strategic planning, organizational leadership, and operational management experience.
- Excellent communication, consensus-building, and interpersonal skills.
- Demonstrated commitment to ethical engagement, accountability, reciprocity, and community partnership.
- Experience in fundraising, advancement, stakeholder engagement, or external relations.

**Preferred Qualifications:**

- Lived experience within a Tribal Nation and/or longstanding relationships with Indigenous communities.
- Experience working within or in close partnership with higher education institutions.
- Deep familiarity with Indigenous scholarship, leadership development, or community-based research.
- Demonstrated success securing philanthropic or institutional support for mission-driven initiatives.
- Experience leading within complex organizations or shared governance environments.
- Strong understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities today.
- Familiarity with Dartmouth College and its historical commitment to Native American and Indigenous education.

**Core Competencies:**

- Strategic and visionary leadership
- Cultural fluency and political judgment
- Relationship-building and diplomacy
- Organizational development and operational leadership



- Collaborative and inclusive management style
- Entrepreneurial thinking and initiative
- Ethical engagement and community accountability
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: [Dartmouth Tribal Sovereignty Institute, Executive Director](#). Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

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