

DR. DEBORAH JACKSON-DENNISON is a distinguished Diné educational leader whose work reflects a lifelong commitment to Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and the Diné philosophy of lifelong learning. She is Bilagáana (Scottish), born for Kinyaa'áanii (Towering House People). Her maternal grandfather is Bilagáana, and her paternal grandfather is Ashjǫ́hí (Salt People). Her work is grounded in the Diné philosophy of Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón, a lifelong process of thinking, planning, living, and reflecting to grow in knowledge and purpose.

Dr. Jackson-Dennison began her higher education journey at Diné College, the first tribally controlled college in the United States, grounding her leadership in the understanding that education is a lifelong path of identity, purpose, and responsibility to future generations.

Across nearly four decades of service, she has led transformative work in Indigenous-serving education systems. As Superintendent of Window Rock Unified School District, she supported the founding of Tsehootsooi Diné Bi'Olta', advancing Diné language revitalization and academic excellence. From 2016 to 2025, she served as Superintendent of San Carlos Unified School District, leading system-wide reform focused on culturally responsive leadership and continuous improvement, including development of the Reconciliation of Knowledge and Wisdom (RKW) framework aligning Indigenous knowledge with research-based educational practice.

Dr. Jackson-Dennison currently serves as President of Diné College, Chair of the National Advisory Council on Indian Education, and Past President of the National Indian Impacted Schools Association, continuing the work of strengthening education systems so future generations may fulfill their purpose and responsibilities as Diné leaders.

Inaugural Reflection

"Knowledge is many things, gained through many experiences, but true knowledge is knowing your reason for being and becoming."

— Dr. Dean C. Jackson



PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION

Of
DR. DEBORAH JACKSON-DENNISON
As The 19th President Of Diné College

Thursday, April 16, 2026 / 9:00 A.M.
Tsaile Campus Gymnasium
Tsaile, AZ.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

MISSION

Diné bina'nitin t'áá úyisú á siláago binahjí, olta'í na'nitin náasjí' yee inááhwiidoo'álgíí yéego bidziilgo ádiilníł, áko Diné nilínígíí t'áá altso yá'át'éehgo bee bił nahaz'áa dooleel niidzin.

Rooted in Diné language and culture, our mission is to advance quality post-secondary student learning and development to ensure the well-being of the Diné People.

VISION

Nihí'ólta'gi, Diné Bidziilgo olta'gi na'nitin al'aa ádaat'éii olta'í bee nanitinígíí dóó t'áá ha'at'íi shíí bee bíká'aná'álwo'ígíí bidziilgo dóó bohónéedzaago ádiilníł niidzin. Díí binahjí' Diné bí'ólta'gi óhoo'aah ts'idá bohónéedzáníi bee bił haz'álgíi dooleel.

Our vision is to continuously improve our programs and services to make Diné College the exemplary higher education institution for the Diné People.

PRINCIPLES

Our educational principles are based on Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón, the Diné traditional living system, which places human life in harmony with the natural world and universe. The system provides for protection from the imperfections in life and for the development of well-being. The principles are four-fold: Nitsáhákees - Thinking, Nahat'á - Planning, Iná - Implementation, and Siłhasin - Reflection.

ORDER OF CEREMONY

EMCEE: Travis Teller, Diné College Mental Health Coordinator

PROCESSIONAL:

INVOCATION: Dr. Johnson Dennison, Hataaki

POSTING OF COLORS: Diné Saani Silaoltsoi Color Guard

NATIONAL ANTHEM: Hansen Dempsey, Diné College Computer Technician

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Tséhootsooí Diné Bi' Ólta'

WELCOME ADDRESS: Dr. Janet Slowman, Chair Diné College Board of Regents

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Jacob Moore, V.P. Special Advisor American Indian Affairs, ASU

FAMILY MESSAGE: Charlene Jackson-Etnire & Carol Jackson-Holyan

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY ADDRESS: Dr. Maggie Mangini, Former Academic Advisor, Navajo Fellows ASU

SWEARING IN CEREMONY: Honorable Victor Clyde, Judge, Dilkon/Ramah District Court

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: Dr. Deborah Jackson-Dennison, 19th President of Diné College

CONGRATULATORY REMARKS: Honorable Crystalyne Curley, Speaker 25th Navajo Nation Council
Dr. Buu Nygren, Navajo Nation President

JOURNEY SONG BLESSING: Dr. Wilson Aronilth, Retired Diné College Professor

BENEDICTION: David Nez, Diné College Dean of the School of Diné Studies & Education

RETRIEVAL OF COLORS: Diné Saani Silaoltsoi Color Guard

RECESSIONAL:

COLLEGE ADMINISTRATION

BOARD OF REGENTS:

Dr. Janet Slowman, Chair, Appointed Member
Dr. Maggie L. George, Vice-Chair, Appointed Member
Kimberlee Williams, Treasurer, Appointed Member
Dr. Dolly Manson, Secretary, Appointed Member
Claudia Edgewater, Ex-Officio Member
Ashleigh E. Chee, Ex-Officio Member
Rosalind Smith, Designated Member

CABINET:

Patrick Blackwater, Acting Provost
Leon Jackson, Interim Vice President of Finance and Administration
Glennita Haskey, Vice President of Student Affairs
Serena Denetsosie, Vice President of Institutional Advancement

SCHOOL DEANS:

School of Arts & Humanities
Irvin Morris, Dean, Professor

School of Business & Social Science
Rosalind Smith, Acting Dean, Assistant Professor

School of Diné Studies & Education
David P. Nez, Dean, Senior Lecturer

School of Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
Dr. Shazia Tabassum Hakim, Interim Dean, Professor