



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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25th Navajo Nation Council mourns the passing of Diné College President Dr. Charles M. Roessel



Dr. Charles M. Roessel delivers an address during the 2024 Diné College Spring Commencement Ceremony.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The 25th Navajo Nation Council is deeply saddened by the passing of Diné College President Dr. Charles Monty Roessel, who passed away early Monday morning, as confirmed by official notice from Diné College.

“Dr. Roessel was a tireless advocate for tribal education and a visionary leader whose work transformed Diné College from a two-year institution to a four-year university,” said Speaker Crystalyne Curley. “His leadership and dedication were pivotal in shaping educational opportunities for Navajo students, and his efforts have left an indelible mark on the future of our people.”

Before taking on the role of Diné College President, Dr. Roessel served as the director of the Bureau of Indian Education, where he was responsible for overseeing 183 schools and two tribal colleges and universities. During his tenure, he spearheaded a transformative \$1 billion reform initiative that prioritized tribal sovereignty, self-determination, and self-governance as essential pathways to educational advancement.

Dr. Roessel also served as the superintendent of the Rough Rock Community School, where he championed the creation of a Navajo language immersion program and successfully secured \$56 million in funding for the construction of new school facilities, including an elementary school, dormitories, and high school renovations.

Chair of the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee, Vince James, reflected on Dr. Roessel's profound legacy in the field of education.

"Education is the cornerstone of progress for our people, and Dr. Roessel was instrumental in ensuring that Navajo students had the resources and opportunities to succeed," Chair James stated. "He was unwavering in his commitment to elevating Diné College to a four-year accredited institution, offering a full range of academic programs. His legacy will continue to inspire future generations of Navajo scholars."

Carl R. Slater, Vice Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee and Dr. Roessel's nephew, shared his personal reflection on his uncle's leadership.

"Shidá'í was a man of integrity and insight – someone who always spoke truthfully and with purpose," Vice Chair Slater said. "He dedicated his life to advancing the cause of our Diné and demonstrated his immense love for our learners, no matter their background. His children and family, who live his legacy each day, were his life's greatest pride. His loss, while painful, is a challenge for each of us to serve, in our own ways, our Dine, families, clans, and communities."

The 25th Navajo Nation Council extends its heartfelt condolences and prayers of comfort to the Roessel family during this difficult time.

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