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National Science Foundation Awards AIHEC Grant to Facilitate Cyberinfrastructure at the Tribal Colleges and Universities

Alexandria, VA – Sept. 18, 2023 – The National Sciences Foundation has awarded a $4,999,494 five-year grant entitled "Tribal College and University (TCU) Cyberinfrastructure (CI) Facilitation" (NSF# 2334701) to the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC). The project will facilitate the use of cyberinfrastructure resources in support of STEM research and education activities at the 37 TCUs nationwide. The CI Facilitation project will be implemented through four basic activities: campus cyberinfrastructure facilitation, cyberinfrastructure engagement, strategy and policy development, and CI workforce and professional development.

Campus cyberinfrastructure facilitation will focus on an initial set of crosscutting, mission-driven, STEM applications including Native language, climate science, and geographic information systems. Cyberinfrastructure engagement through exposure to existing and emerging CI trends will expand the reach, knowledge, and presence of the TCU community while strategy and policy development activities will empower TCUs to effectively engage and advance STEM research and academic activities. Finally, the CI workforce and professional activities will foster skill development, provide STEM training opportunities, and build human networks. "This grant represents not just a financial investment but a commitment to the future of education, innovation, and community engagement", explained Tyler Postma, Chair of the Computer Information Science Department at Bay Mills Community College and senior personnel on the award. "As the world of education continues to evolve, we must stay at the forefront to ensure we provide exceptional opportunities for learning, research, and collaboration". Similarly, Al Anderson, Chief Information Officer at Salish Kootenai College lauded the potential benefits the award will bring to the campus, "This collaborative effort promises to revolutionize our research and education avenues, ushering in notable improvements in network infrastructure, elevating our data storage capabilities to accommodate extensive research databases, and leveraging cloud-based computing resources to foster innovation and efficiency in our educational pursuits."

As part of the campus facilitation activities, eight TCUs, two selected for each of the first four years of the project, will form TCU Cyber Teams receiving project funds to seed on-campus facilitation activities specifically aligned with campus academic and cyberinfrastructure priorities. "Whether through cyber teams, ongoing CI initiatives, or engagement activities, the project's flexibility empowers each TCU to tailor the CI project activities to their individual science applications, campus information technology, and faculty and student needs", noted Wendy Huntoon, AIHEC CI Team lead and project PI.

Since 2017 the AIHEC CI Team has worked to further the TCUs' advancement and adoption of campus cyberinfrastructure by leveraging NSF funding including the TCU CI Study (NSF 1644185), North Dakota

American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 121 Oronoco Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 Cyber Team (NSF 2018975), CC* CIRA TCU CI Strategies (NSF 2018979), and most recently the TCU Cybersecurity (NSF 2226083) project.

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American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) provides a support network to the nation's accredited Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) and works to influence public policy on American Indian and Alaska Native higher education issues through advocacy, research, and programmatic initiatives; promotes and strengthens Indigenous languages, cultures, communities, lands, and tribal nations; and through its unique position, serves member institutions and emerging TCUs.