Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College:
TCU Ongoing Challenges during the COVID-19 Pandemic
117th Congress – February 2021

Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College received urgently needed funding to move classes online wherever possible, and began to address the inequities among our students brought on by the pandemic. The College was able to provide emergency grants, equipment, and supplies to our students to help them stay enrolled in classes. As we continue to support students during this difficult time and plan for onsite classes, our needs continue to grow. To address current pandemic-related challenges and plan for an uncertain future, TCUs like Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College need your ongoing support.

CARES and CRRSSA Fund Expenditures at FDLTCC:

- Emergency student aid
- Laptops for student loan program
- Work study Screener positions at entry doors
- Sanitizing and cleaning supplies and equipment
- Lab simulation equipment
- Classroom technology upgrades
- Compassion circle supplies

Since the start of the pandemic, FDLTCC has gone under a series of rapid changes: we have made technology upgrades in classrooms for better class delivery, purchased laptop computers to develop a student laptop loan program, allowing many students to complete their courses remotely, transitioned over 200 classes from in-house delivery to remote delivery, and moved vital student services functions to an online format including new student orientation, advising, counseling and financial aid supports. Providing support to students was maintained as we transitioned all employees to working remotely from home and ensuring they were equipped to do so.

Ongoing Challenges at FDLTCC:

- Keeping building safe while transitioning employees and students back to campus
- Addressing emotional, mental and behavioral health concerns
- Ongoing student and employee support needs
- Getting emergency funds into students' hands in a timely manner
- A short period of time in which to spend funds. Some facilities projects have long lead times for delivery of supplies/materials

Several ongoing challenges still exist for FDLTCC. We have been fortunate to not have community spread on campus, and we want to start bringing students and staff back by fall semester. Maintaining the safety and cleanliness of the building as we transition students and employees back to campus is a concern, along with addressing emotional, mental and behavioral health concerns our campus community is experiencing due to the pandemic. We need to provide work study jobs for students who have lost income, we need to assist with day care for students and employees with young children, and find ways to address other support needs that will arise as a result of transitioning individuals back to campus.

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Ongoing Facilities needs at FDLTCC:

Some of our classrooms are small, which makes social distancing difficult, if non-existent. This may require splitting up course sections into two rooms, in a facility that is already short of classroom space. We hope to build an outdoor classroom that would help with space, in addition to safety. Safety of students in our housing facility is also of utmost concern. Cleanliness and sanitization is a priority and equipment purchases are needed.

The pandemic has exacerbated the digital divide and has underscored the lack of broadband access across Indian Country. To address these deficiencies, we respectfully request a permanent TCU IT Service Fund within the existing USDA – Rural Utilities Service Program. An annual $24 million set-aside for TCUs which are the 1994 Land-grant institutions is needed to cover ongoing equipment costs, maintenance and upkeep, infrastructure expansion, and IT staffing. If TCUs had adequate funding for IT service and infrastructure support they would have already put in place many of the community-based mobile hot spots needed to address the gap on many reservations.

Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College Broadband and IT Challenges:

- Access to personal computers for students and staff.
- After-hours and weekend technology support is not currently available for students.
- Course design and developers are needed to support increased number of online courses. FDLTCC lacks the capacity to initiate, update, and maintain increased number of online courses in our learning management system.
- We need faculty training regarding quality-based online course design standards.
- We need faculty and staff training for accessibility and Universal Design for development of online course and digital learning materials.