



IḷISAḠVIK COLLEGE



Iḷisaḡvik College: TCU Ongoing Challenges During COVID-19 Pandemic 117th Congress - February 2021

Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), Iḷisaḡvik College received urgently needed funding to move classes online to the extent possible and begin to address tremendous digital divide challenges. We were also able to provide emergency grants, equipment, and tuition assistance 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 are growing. To address current pandemic-related challenges and plan for an uncertain future, TCUs need your ongoing support.



CARES and CRRSAA Funds at Iḷisaḡvik College

- Direct Student Aid: COVID-19 Relief and Internet Stipends
- Cleaning, Safety, and PPE
- Technology Improvements
- Distance Education Improvements
- Payroll and Labor Costs
- Student Support Activities: Behavioral Health and More
- Other COVID-19 Mitigation Costs

Iḷisaḡvik College immediately prioritized distance education improvements as we transitioned to virtual learning during COVID-19.

Concomitant with those improvements were technology improvements—both are ongoing endeavors. Iḷisaḡvik increased its internet bandwidth, purchased new computer hardware (laptops, webcams, etc.), and purchased software and apps to help our virtual learners access their coursework more easily. We also prioritized direct and indirect student aid. Starting in Spring 2020 and continuing in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, Iḷisaḡvik College has been issuing direct COVID-19 relief payments to students as well as internet stipends. We have also instituted a technology request form where students can request any type of technology need and Iḷisaḡvik will meet that need. This endeavor has resulted in us supplying webcams, laptops, printers, software, and more. Iḷisaḡvik has also prioritized augmented campus cleaning, securing a separate quarantine house for faculty and staff use, retrofitting the campus to make it safer, and securing PPE.

Ongoing Challenges at Iḷisaḡvik College

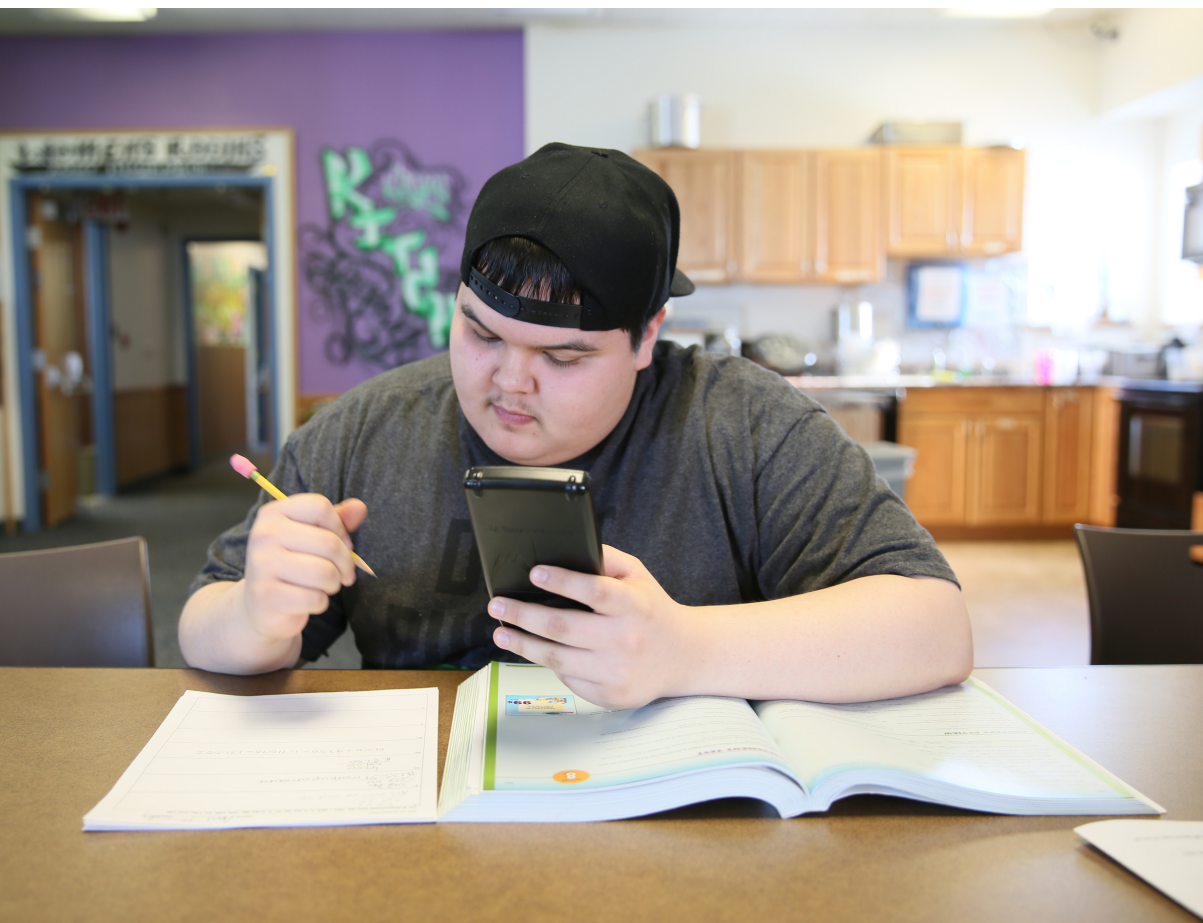
- Short Grant Period: To ensure stability, we would like to see an additional year added to grant periods.
- Authorized Uses: Expand to include sustainability activities (i.e. endowment contributions)
- Lasting Effects of COVID-19: Behavioral health needs of students in future years as a result of COVID-19 interruptions and effects; persistence and retention issues due to COVID-19
- Safety: Ensuring students, staff, and faculty are safe while vaccines are not fully accessible to all yet



Iñisaġvik College's challenges include the diminished enrollment, persistence, and retention of our students as a direct result of COVID-19. We can see the effects of COVID-19's interruptions on our students, and we are working on addressing these challenges so they do not become enduring. Looking to the future, we know we need to be proactive and engaged on addressing the reverberating effects of COVID-19 for at least several years. This includes implementing new measures to address enrollment, persistence, and retention (increasing behavioral health services; ensuring accessible financial aid; etc.). As such, Iñisaġvik would like to see grant periods extended so funds can be used to address these issues into 2022, 2023, and 2024. Other challenges include the authorized uses of funds. Iñisaġvik would like to see usage expanded to construction and sustainability activities, such as endowment contributions.

REQUEST: \$24 million TCU IT Service Fund: USDA – Rural Utility Service

The ongoing pandemic has exacerbated the digital divide and homework gap and underscored the lack of broadband access across Indian Country. To address these deficiencies, Congress should establish a permanent **TCU IT Service Fund** within the existing (and previously under-used) **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 "homework gap" on many reservations.



Iñisaġvik College: Broadband and IT Challenges

- According to a 2015 survey shared by AIHEC, Iñisaġvik College has the least amount of bandwidth of any tribal or community college in the nation, while paying the highest for bandwidth.
- The pandemic has heightened the bandwidth challenges we face in rural Alaska. Our villages have varying levels of connectivity, however, all our communities struggle with low bandwidth availability and extreme high internet costs.
- Iñisaġvik College is using CARES Act funding to increase our bandwidth during the pandemic, however, funding for future bandwidth needs has not been identified.
- Iñisaġvik College depends heavily on a donation of bandwidth (in addition to the bandwidth we pay for) from Quintillion for the College's day-to-day operations.

REQUEST: \$500 million TCU Construction Fund: DOI - Bureau of Indian Education

A recent AIHEC survey of TCUs revealed a list of chronic facilities-related maintenance and rehabilitation needs, including student and faculty housing, classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. The TCUs have an estimated total need of \$489.75 million in deferred maintenance and rehabilitation and need \$837 million to fully implement existing master plans. A dedicated TCU deferred construction and maintenance/rehabilitation fund through the DOI-BIE would help meet the 21st century needs of all TCUs, including technology-enabled facilities; campus renovations; IT infrastructure; and facilities necessary for career, technical, and pipeline programs.

Iñisaġvik College: Facilities Needs - Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation

Iñisaġvik College resides on the North Slope of Alaska and occupies a total of 13 buildings, varying in size, age and physical condition. A majority of our facilities were constructed in the 1940s for use by the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory (NARL). Because our facilities are aging and becoming more expensive to maintain and lease, Iñisaġvik has been working towards a new college campus.

- Main campus was constructed in 1968. We experience frequent plumbing and electrical issues which is expensive.
- The road to our main campus experiences severe erosion and at times, the campus is inaccessible during extreme weather events.
- We are fortunate to have partnerships with local organizations who provide additional space/buildings for college use, such as our local Library.
- We have Quonset huts on our main campus that we utilize for our skilled trades programs, such as carpentry, welding, plumbing and electrical. These are our oldest facilities, and being safety compliant has been challenging. A new college campus will alleviate these issues.

