

## PRIORITIES OF THE TRIBAL COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (TCUs) FOR THE 113<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS

### **REQUEST – Plan for Equity: Adopt a 5-Year Plan to Address Long-term TCU Inequalities in Federal Programs**

We need a commitment to establish a process, beginning in the FY2015 Budget/Appropriations cycle, that: (1) identifies current funding inequities faced by TCUs in federal programs; and (2) steadily works to rectify them.

**JUSTIFICATION:** The Tribally Controlled Colleges & Universities Assistance Act of 1978 authorizes \$8,000/Indian Student (ISC) for TCUs' operating budgets, but TCUs receive only \$5,850/Indian student. The president requests and Congress appropriates over \$200 million annually to operate Howard University (HU), *the only other Minority Serving Institution that receives federal operating funds*. HU's federal operating funding is almost \$30,000/student. HU needs this funding - so do TCUs.

Congress designated TCUs as land-grant institutions in 1994. Our USDA partnership is important because as American Indians, land is central to who we are. Yet, the TCU (1994) land-grant programs are absurdly small compared to other land-grants. In FY2013:

- Extension: 1994s = \$4.4M (competitive) 1862s (state) = \$300M (formula) 1890s (17 HBCUs) = \$43.9M
- Research: 1994s = \$1.8M 1862s = \$243.7M 1890s = \$52.5M (min. \$1M each)

The situation is similar throughout the federal government. According to a fall 2009 report, the National Science Foundation awarded \$4.2 billion in science and engineering funding to institutions of higher education. TCUs received one-quarter of one percent (\$10.5 million) of this funding. This disproportionate distribution trend has yet to be addressed.

Some people do not like to hear such comparisons. Yet, these are the facts. We need a detailed accounting of the extent of the inequities TCUs face; a realistic plan for working toward equity, and a commitment to do so. We have proposed a reasonable 5-year plan of incremental growth for our Interior and land-grant programs. We need your help to achieve our modest goals.

### **REQUEST – Improve Native Workforce Opportunity: Re-establish the TCU Adult Basic Ed/GED Training Program**

**JUSTIFICATION:** In 1994, Congress eliminated a modest set-aside within the Adult Basic Education block grant program that funded vitally-needed TCU GED and ABE training programs. Now, all federal funding goes to the states, which rarely – and minimally – fund tribal GED programs. American Indians have the highest high school drop-out rates, highest unemployment, and highest poverty rates in the nation. With the launch of the new GED, the need for this modest program (ED-OVAE) is even more critical. The fix is simple, no-cost, and life-changing.

### **REQUEST – Ensure Ongoing Operations: Provide Forward Funding for Five Remaining TCUs Not So Funded**

**JUSTIFICATION:** All schools/colleges receiving operating funds from the Department of the Interior are forward funded except five TCUs. These colleges and their students face the same financial issues as others; yet, other schools/colleges begin each academic year with at least some of the year's funding in hand. These TCUs rely completely on the federal government for basic operations, so even if appropriations were available at the start of a fiscal year – which hasn't been the case for years – the academic year would have already started. Given recent appropriations delays, the five TCUs must struggle to operate for 5-7 months before funding comes. The FY2014 shutdown nearly led to their closure. We need \$22 million, in a one-time "early" appropriation.

### **REQUEST - Honor Treaties & Tribal Sovereignty: Hold TCUs Harmless from Sequestration & ATB Cuts**

**JUSTIFICATION:** Across-the-board cuts, including sequestration, undermine the treaty and trust obligations to American Indian tribal governments rooted in the federal government's unique relationship and responsibility to recognized tribal nations. Continuing to operate with reduced funding – as demand for access increases – is catastrophic for TCUs, which have worked since inception on austere budgets. Our students, faculty, and communities, ranking among the nation's poorest, will see a greater drop in student aid; support services (e.g. day care and tutoring); administrative resources; courses and training (including GED prep); and vital community outreach services if funding is not restored to at least the FY2010 levels.

TCUs are not seeking a handout. We are only asking that Congress hold harmless the nation's only Tribal institutions of higher education and their American Indian/Alaska Native students. We urge Congress to uphold the federal responsibility to meet the higher education needs of Native students by restoring TCU programs to the FY2010 levels as the base, rather than erecting additional barriers to access and success for this historically neglected population.