

**STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM
SUBMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES SENATE - COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION,
AND RELATED AGENCIES**

March 27, 2015

This statement includes a summary of our FY 2016 funding recommendations and an outline of the 1994 Institutions' multiyear plan for increasing their capacity so that they might truly begin to fulfill their land-grant vision and mission of self-sufficient, place-based peoples employing an Indigenous model that incorporates holistic planning, traditional knowledge, and the integration of education, research, and extension activities.

Summary of Requests

The Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act, the legislation that created the 1994 (tribal college) land-grant institutions, was signed into law over two decades ago. In those twenty years, the number of 1994s has grown to 34, but funding for the five 1994 specific programs has grown very little and remains wholly inadequate. To address these inequities, we propose a multiyear plan to garner the 1994s adequate funds to fulfill their land-grant mission. While we recognize the economic constraints, we believe our multiyear plan is sound, especially given the fact that appropriated amounts are shared by the 34 land-grant institutions. The 1994s' programs are within the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the Rural Development mission areas. In NIFA, the TCUs request: 1994s' competitive Extension, \$6 million in FY 2016 and the same amount added to the prior year base for each of the next four fiscal years, resulting in a total \$30 million program by FY 2020; 1994s' competitive Research program, \$3.5 million in FY 2016 and the same amount added to the prior year base for each of the next four fiscal years, resulting in a total \$17.5 million program by FY 2020; 1994s Education Equity Grants, \$3.5 million in FY 2016 and the same amount added to the prior year base for each of the next four fiscal years, resulting in a total \$17.5 million program by FY 2020; a doubling of the corpus in the Native American Endowment fund over two years; and Rural Development, Rural Community Advancement Program (RCAP), \$8,000,000 for the TCU Essential Community Facilities Grants program to help address the critical facilities and infrastructure needs that advance their capacity to participate as full land-grant partners, as included in the President's FY 2016 Budget recommendations.

Additionally, funding levels are not the only inequities that exist within the nation's land-grant system. The 1994 institutions are the only federal land-grant institutions that are barred from participating in the McIntire-Stennis (forestry) grants program and from competing for Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) grants.

- **McIntire-Stennis:** In 2008, McIntire Stennis was amended to include Tribal lands in the formula calculation for funding of *state* forestry programs. However, the 1994 institutions, which are the Tribal Land-Grant Institutions, were not included in the

funding formula, nor were states required to include them in funding distributions. This oversight is significant because 75 percent of Tribal land in the U.S. is either forest or agriculture holding. In 2005, in response to the severe under-representation of American Indian professionals in the forestry workforce in Montana and across the United States, Salish Kootenai College (SKC) in Pablo, MT, began a Forestry baccalaureate degree program. In 2013, SKC became the first tribal college land-grant to join the National Association of University Forest Resource Programs, a consortium of 85 forestry schools, the vast majority of which receives McIntire Stennis funding. However, when SKC recently sought specialty accreditation for its program, the college was told that it was “one forestry researcher short” of the optimum number needed. Participation in the McIntire Stennis program, even with the required 1-1 match, would help SKC secure the researcher it needs to gain this valuable accreditation. Yet, although a land-grant institution, it cannot participate in the program. Once again, TCU land-grants are prohibited from participating as full-partners in the nation’s land-grant system. And although currently, only SKC has a baccalaureate degree in forestry, considering the wealth of forested land on American Indian reservations, other such programs could arise at the nation’s other Tribal College Land-Grant institutions, to further the effort to grow the Native workforce in this vital area.

- **Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR):** The 1994 Institutions are the only land-grant institutions that are barred from participating in programs administered under Smith-Lever 3(d). However, some of the programs therein could address serious situation that exist in Tribal communities. Access to one program in particular would be especially valuable to the 1994s given that Native American teens suffer the highest rates of suicide in the nation. In some of the 1994 tribal communities, suicide among Native youth is nine to 19 times as frequent as among other youth. Native youth have more serious problems with mental disorders, including substance abuse and depression, than other youth, and Native youth are more affected by gang involvement than any other racial group. American Indians also have the highest high school drop-out rates in the nation and some of the highest unemployment and poverty rates as well. Yet, our Native children and youth are the only group in the country essentially excluded from the benefits of the CYFAR program because 1994 institutions are the only members of the land-grant family that cannot even apply for competitively awarded CYFAR grants. The CYFAR program “supports comprehensive, intensive, community-based programs developed with active citizen participation in all phases. CYFAR promotes building resiliency and protective factors in youth, families, and communities.” There is no argument that the 34 Tribal Colleges and Universities land grant institutions (1994 institutions) are truly community-based institutions. Their governing boards are majority tribal members and they provide public libraries, tribal archives, career centers, computer labs, community gardens, summer and after school programs, and child and elder care centers to their communities. This is not a request for additional funding, a set-aside or other special treatment, although Native children and communities clearly need it. We are simply asking for the right to *compete* for this vitally needed funding and that the prohibition on 1994 eligibility for CYFAR be removed. We strongly urge the committee to include language in the FY 2016 Agriculture Appropriations bill to rectify these unfortunate errors.

Illustration of Inequities in Land-Grant System Funding: The first Americans were not granted Federal Land-Grant status until 1994. As earlier stated, initial funding of programs established under this Act was very modest and today, over 20 years since the enactment of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994, funding remains untenably inadequate. A clear illustration of the inequity of land-grant programs funding can be found in the FY 2016 Budget request. The amounts requested therein for the formula distributed Research grants for the 1862 land-grants (states) and 1890s (18 HBCUs) are \$256.2M (an increase of \$12.5M), and \$60.5M (an increase of \$8.015M), respectively. In contrast, the Budget recommends that the competitively awarded Research grants for the 1994s (34 TCUs) receive \$1.9M (an increase of \$113K). In other words, the recommended increases alone for the 1862 Research and the 1890s Research programs are 85 percent, and 76 percent, respectively more than the entire amount proposed for the 34 TCUs competitively awarded research grants. A comparison of extension and education programs reveals similar disparities within land-grant programs funding. These inequities cannot be justified or allowed to continue.

1994 Land-Grant Programs—Solid Investment in Economic Capacity

In the past, due to lack of expertise and training, millions of acres on Indian reservations lay fallow, underused, or had been developed using methods that caused irreparable damage. The Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 is helping to address this situation and is our hope for the continued improvement of our reservation lands. Our current land-grant programs remain very small, yet critically important to us. It is essential that American Indians explore and adopt new and evolving technologies for managing our lands. With increased capacity and program funding, we will become even more fundamental contributors to the agricultural base of the nation and the world.

Conclusion

The 1994s have proven to be efficient and effective vehicles for bringing educational opportunities to American Indians/Alaska Natives and the promise of self-sufficiency to some of this nation's poorest and most underserved regions. The small federal investment in the 1994s has already paid great dividends in terms of increased employment, access to quality higher education, and economic development. Continuation of and growth in this investment makes sound moral and fiscal sense. American Indian reservation communities are second to none in their potential for benefiting from effective land-grant programs and, as earlier stated, no institutions better exemplify the original intent of Senator Morrill's land-grant concept than the 1994 Institutions.

We truly appreciate your support for and recognition of the 1994 Institutions' important role in the nation's land-grant system. We ask you to renew your commitment to help move our students and communities toward self-sufficiency and request your full consideration of our proposed multi-year plan, beginning with our FY 2016 appropriations requests.