

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

April 3, 2014

This statement includes a summary of our FY 2015 funding recommendations and an outline of the 1994 Institutions' 5-year 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 through an Indigenous Land-Grant model that incorporates holistic planning, traditional knowledge, and the integration of education, research, and extension activities.

I. Summary of Requests

This year marks the 20th Anniversary of the signing of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act, which created the 1994 (tribal college) Land-Grant institutions (1994s). In those two decades, the number of 1994s has grown to 34, but funding for the five 1994 specific programs remains wholly inadequate. To address these inequities, we propose a 5-year plan to garner the 1994s adequate funds to fulfill the Land-Grant mission. While we recognize the economic constraints, we believe our 5-year plan is reasonable given the fact that appropriated funds are shared by 34 institutions. The 1994 programs are within the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the Rural Development mission area. In NIFA, we request: 1994 competitive Extension, \$6 million in FY 2015 and the same amount added to the base for each of the next four fiscal years, resulting in a \$30 million program by FY 2019; 1994 competitive Research, \$3 million in FY 2015 and the same amount added to the base for each of the next four fiscal years, resulting in a \$15 million program by FY 2019; for the 1994 Education Equity Grants, \$6 million in FY 2015 and the same amount added to the base for each of the next four fiscal years, resulting in a \$30 million program by FY 2019; and a doubling of the corpus in the Native American Endowment fund over two years. In the Rural Development, Rural Community Advancement Program (RCAP), \$10 million as authorized, for the TCU Essential Community Facilities Grants program to help address critical facilities and infrastructure deficiencies, which hampers the 1994s' ability to participate as full Land-Grant partners. Additionally, we request language be included in the FY 2015 Agriculture Appropriations bill to establish eligibility for Tribal Land-Grant Institutions that offer a bachelor's degree in forestry, to participate in the McIntire Stennis program.

II. 1994 Land-Grant Programs—Solid Investment in Economic Capacity

The Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 is our best hope for restoration and continual improvement of our tribal lands, which include approximately 72 million acres, 80 percent of which are forested or agriculture lands. Our current land-grant programs remain pitifully small, yet critically important to us. It is essential that American Indians explore and adopt new and evolving technologies for managing and using our lands in sustainable ways. With increased capacity and adequate resources, we will once again become fundamental contributors to the agricultural base of the nation and the world.

Competitive Extension Grants Programs: The 1994 Institutions' extension programs strengthen communities through outreach programs designed to bolster economic development; community

resources; family and youth development; natural resources development; and agriculture; as well as health and nutrition education and awareness. Without adequate funding the 1994 Institutions' ability to maintain existing programs and to respond to the many emerging issues, such as food safety and homeland security (especially on border reservations) is severely hampered. The 1994 Institutions have continued to apply their resourcefulness for making the most of every dollar they have at their disposal by leveraging funds to maximize their programs whenever possible. For example, the extension program at Oglala Lakota College (SD), which is located in one of the poorest counties in the nation and serves a reservation of nearly 3,550 square miles, coordinates activities between the college's Agriculture and Natural Resources department, reservation schools, other tribal departments, South Dakota State University, and county extension programs. Critical issues addressed by this program include poverty, isolation, health disparities, cultural dissonance, and land use practices by Lakota landowners.

1994 Competitive Research Program: Impressive efforts to address economic development through natural resource management have emerged from the 1994 Institutions collaborative research projects conducted in partnership with 1862/1890 Land-Grant institutions. The 1994 Research Grants program illustrates an ideal combination of federal resources and TCU-state institution expertise, with the overall impact being greater than the sum of its parts. The \$1,805,000 appropriated in FY 2010 is the largest appropriation for this program to date, and is by any measure, grossly inadequate to develop capacity and conduct necessary research at our institutions, which are charged with protecting and helping to manage several forests, wilderness areas, natural waterways, and two of the largest lakes in the U.S. The 1994 Research Grants program is vital to ensuring that TCUs may finally be recognized as full partners in the nation's Land-Grant system. While many of our institutions are conducting basic and applied research, continuing to find the resources for this research to address their communities' needs is an unceasing challenge. Priority issue areas that are currently being studied at the 1994 institutions include: sustainable agriculture, including research on traditional plants that may be a key in fighting Type 2 diabetes and forestry, including genetics research on invasive species such as Flowering Rush and native infestations, such as Mountain Pine beetles; biotechnology and bioprocessing; agribusiness management and marketing; plant propagation, including native plant preservation for medicinal and economic purposes; animal breeding; aquaculture; consequences of human nutrition (including health, obesity, and diabetes); and family, community, and rural development. For example, on the Navajo Nation in Arizona and New Mexico, students at Diné College conducted research on drought resistant forage crops that had been proven effective in desert environments around the world, along with Native plants, as alternatives to a single crop alfalfa system that has been almost exclusively used by Navajo farmers and ranchers for decades. Alfalfa, the students determined, was contributing to severe soil surface erosion and high water use on the reservation. By exploring alternative crops, the students hoped to improve hay security for Navajo farmers, increase production of native plants, and preserve dwindling water resources in the southwest. The research was quite successful: students identified drought tolerant native plants that could be effectively rotated into a small farmer's cropping system as well as a highly nutritious drought resistant/low water use grass grown in Ethiopia that could be tremendously valuable to Navajo and other desert farmers and ranchers in the Southwest. Based on the research, Diné College student-interns are now working with their 1994 extension program to educate Navajo farmers about the benefits of multi-cropping systems, including the introduction of the drought-tolerant Teff Grass, as an alternative to thirsty alfalfa. According to the students, greater use of Teff Grass, particular in rotation with native plants, could make a tremendous positive impact on water use and soil stability on the Navajo Nation for generations to come. Their sole challenge now is developing and implementing new strategies for spreading the word about these potentially transformative crops, over a reservation that is larger than 10 of the 50 states, with such abysmally low funding for extension services.

1994 Institutions' Educational Equity Grant Program: This program is designed to assist 1994 Institutions with academic programs. Through modest appropriations, the 1994 Institutions have developed and implemented courses and programs in natural resource management; environmental sciences; horticulture; forestry; and food science and nutrition. This last category is helping to address the epidemic rates of diabetes and cardiovascular disease that plague American Indian reservation communities. For example, In FY 2013, Ilisagvik College in Barrow (AK) was awarded an equity grant to help better understand and address basic health care issues for their community residents, and other Alaska Natives. The goal of the project is teaching traditional nutrition and physical education development, to residents of the North Slope Borough as an augmentation to the Allied Health program. The classes will include; food gathering as related to traditional Native foods indigenous to the North Slope region, menu planning, development and implementation of personal and family wellness goals. Classes will be offered Barrow and surrounding villages. Through development and implementation of this project the college seeks to document an increase in the healthy lifestyle of North Slope Borough residents, and a decrease in the onset of congenital complications.

Native American Endowment Fund: Endowment installments that are appropriated under the 1994 Institutions' account remain with the U.S. Treasury. Only the annual interest yield, less the USDA's administrative fee, is distributed to the 1994 Institutions. The latest interest yield distributed among the eligible 32 TCU Land-Grants by statutory formula was \$4,882,043 after the USDA NIFA claimed its standard four percent administrative fee of \$203,418. Once again, to simply make the funds available for draw down by the eligible 1994s, NIFA will receive a larger share than 80 percent of the 1994s. We respectfully request that (1) the Subcommittee consider doubling the current endowment corpus over the next two years, to help stabilize the funding available to each of the 1994 Land-Grants, and (2) include report language that instructs USDA-NIFA to reduce the administrative fee to not more than 2 percent of the 1994 Endowment annual interest yield, so that more of these much-needed funds can be put to use by the 1994 Institutions themselves to conduct essential education and community-based programs and address critical infrastructure needs.

Tribal Colleges and Universities Essential Community Facilities Program (Rural Development): The 1994s are more than institutions of higher education; many serve as community centers by providing libraries, tribal archives, career centers, economic development and business centers, health and wellness centers, public meeting places, and child and elder care centers. This competitive program is designed to help the 34 TCUs finance infrastructure improvements, purchase equipment, and develop essential community facilities. We all know that new construction, improvements, maintenance, and equipment are expensive. Therefore, we do not think that it is not unreasonable to expect that this grant program be funded at the fully authorized level of \$10,000,000.

Eligibility for certain TCUs to receive McIntyre-Stennis funds: In 2008, McIntyre Stennis was amended to include Tribal lands in the formula calculation for funding of *state* forestry programs. However, the 1994 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 holdings. In response to the severe under-representation of American Indian professionals in the Montana forestry workforce and across the United States, Salish Kootenai College (SKC) in Polson, MT launched a Forestry baccalaureate degree program in 2005. In 2013, SKC became the first TCU Land-Grant to join the National Association of University Forest Resource Programs, a consortium of 85 forestry schools, the vast majority of which receive McIntyre 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 accreditation. Yet, it cannot participate in the program. Once again, TCU Land-Grants are prohibited from participating as full-partners in the federal Land-Grant system. And although currently, only SKC has a baccalaureate degree in forestry, considering the wealth of forested land on American Indian reservations, others such programs could arise in the future at the nation's other Tribal College Land-Grant institutions, and further the effort to grow the Native workforce in this very important field. We respectfully request that language be included in the final FY 2015 Agriculture Appropriations measure to establish eligibility for 1994 Tribal Land-Grant Institutions that offer a bachelor's degree in forestry to receive a share of the McIntire Stennis Act formula funds.

III. Program Equity and Recognition as Equal Partners in Federal Land-Grant System: In the statement we have outlined and highlighted some of the outstanding programs being conducted at the TCU Land-Grants. The work is even more impressive given the shoe-string budgets that the 1994s work with due to the perennial lack of adequate grant funds being appropriated for these programs. 1994 Land-Grant programs were first funded in FY 1996. Initial funding was very modest, and has stayed that way. The latest completed funding cycle clearly illustrates just how great the discrepancies are in awarded Land-Grant program funds. In FY2014, the 1994s (tribal) received \$4.45 million for extension programs, awarded *competitively* among 32 TCUs, many of whom serve areas larger than several states; in contrast, the 1862s (state) received \$300 million in *formula*-driven extension funds; and the 1890s (18 HBCUs) received \$43.92 million. To through this comparison into stark relief, the increase awarded to the 1890 extension program (\$4.6 million) in FY 2014 was larger than the entire 1994 extension program appropriation; and even more vivid a contrast, the increase awarded to the 1862 extension program (\$28.4M) was greater than the FY 2014 appropriation for All of the 1994 Land-Grant programs combined. These inequities cannot be justified or allowed to continue. We are not suggesting that funding for the 1862s and 1890s is not necessary and deserved. These institutions need and deserve these capacity program funds, and more – and, so do the 1994s. The first Americans, last to be brought into the nation's Land-Grant family, deserve equity. We propose doubling of the endowment corpus, which remains with the U.S. Treasury and only the annual interest is scored as outlay; and a reasonable 5-year plan of incremental growth to reach funding levels of \$30M for Extension; and \$15M each for Research and Equity grants.

IV. 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 through place-based programs that blend traditional knowledge with modern science and technology. The small federal investment in the 1994s has already paid great dividends in terms of increased employment, access to higher education, more effective land and water use, increased crop production, better health and nutrition, 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 of the 1994 Institutions and recognition of their 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 5-year funding plan, beginning with our FY 2015 appropriations requests.