

**STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM
SUBMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES SENATE - COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HHS, EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES**

May 2014

This statement includes the Fiscal Year 2015 (FY 2015) recommendations of the nation's Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), within three areas within the Department of Education and one in the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families' Head Start Program.

I. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Higher Education Act Programs:

- **Strengthening Developing Institutions:** Titles III and V of the Higher Education Act support institutions that enroll large proportions of financially disadvantaged students and have low per-student expenditures. The TCUs, which by any definition are truly developing institutions, funded under Title III-A Sec. 316 are providing quality higher education opportunities to some of the most rural/isolated, impoverished, and historically underserved areas of the country. The goal of HEA-Titles III/V programs is "to improve the academic quality, institutional management and fiscal stability of eligible institutions, in order to increase their self-sufficiency and strengthen their capacity to make a substantial contribution to the higher education resources of the Nation." The TCU Title III-A program is specifically designed to address the critical, unmet needs of their American Indian students and communities, in order to effectively prepare them to succeed in a globally competitive workforce. Yet, in FY 2011 this critical program was cut by over 11 percent, by another four percent in FY 2012, and hit by sequestration – on the lowered baseline – in FY 2013. Although sequestration was not imposed in FY 2014, the TCUs have not recovered from the earlier cuts to this vitally important program. *The TCUs urge the Subcommittee to restore the discretionary funding for HEA Title III-A, Sec. 316 to \$30,000,000 in FY 2015.*
- **TRIO:** Retention and support services are vital to achieving the national goal of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. TRIO programs, such as Student Support Services and Upward Bound, were created out of recognition that college access is not enough to ensure advancement and that multiple factors work to prevent the successful completion of postsecondary programs for many low-income and first-generation students and students with disabilities. Therefore, in addition to providing the maximum Pell Grant award level, it is critical that Congress also sustain student assistance programs, such as Student Support Services and Upward Bound so that low-income and minority students have the federal support necessary to allow them to remain enrolled in and ultimately complete their higher education degrees.

Pell Grants: The importance of Pell Grants to TCU students cannot be overstated. Approximately, 80 percent of TCU students receive Pell Grants, primarily because student income levels are so low and they have far less access to other sources of financial aid than

students at state-funded and other mainstream institutions. Within the TCU system, Pell Grants are doing exactly what they were intended to do -- they are serving the needs of the lowest income students by helping them gain access to quality higher education, an essential step toward becoming active, productive members of the workforce. However, the U.S. Department of Education has changed its regulations to limit Pell eligibility from 18 to 12 full-time semesters, without any consideration of those already in the process of earning a postsecondary degree. This change in policy has impeded some TCU students from completing a postsecondary degree, which is widely recognized as being critical for access to, and advancement in, today's highly technical workforce.

TCUs are open enrollment institutions. Recent placement tests administered at TCUs to first-time entering students indicated that 74 percent required remedial math, 54 percent required remedial reading, and 57 percent needed remedial writing. These results clearly illustrate just how serious this new Pell Grant eligibility limit is to the success of TCU students in completing a postsecondary degree. Students requiring remediation can use as much as a full year of eligibility enhancing their math, and or reading/writing skills, thereby hampering their future postsecondary degree plans. A prior national goal was to provide access to quality higher education opportunities for all students regardless of economic means, at which TCUs have been extremely successful. While the new national goal intends to produce graduates with postsecondary degrees by 2020, this change in policy does not advance that objective. On the contrary, the new regulations will cause many low-income students to once again abandon their dream of a postsecondary degree, as they will simply not have the means to continue to pursue it. The goal of a well-trained technically savvy workforce will be greatly compromised. This new policy evokes the adage "*penny wise - pound foolish.*" *The TCUs urge the Subcommittee to continue to fund this essential program at the highest possible level, and to direct the Secretary of Education to implement a process to waive the very restrictive 12 semester Pell Grant eligibility for TCU students.*

Perkins Career and Technical Education Programs:

- **Tribally-Controlled Postsecondary Career and Technical Institutions:** Section 117 of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act provides a competitively awarded grant opportunity for tribally chartered and controlled career and technical institutions. *AIHEC requests \$8,200,000 to fund grants under Sec. 117 of the Perkins Act.*
- **Native American Career and Technical Education Program (NACTEP):** NACTEP (Sec. 116) reserves 1.25 percent of appropriated funding to support American Indian career and technical programs. *The TCUs strongly urge the Subcommittee to continue to support NACTEP, which is vital to the continuation of career and technical education programs offered at TCUs that provide job training and certifications to remote reservation communities.*

Workforce Investment Act Programs and Elementary and Secondary Education Act:

- **American Indian Teacher / Administrator Corps (Office of Indian Education OESE):** Authorized in Title IX of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) the American Indian Teacher / Administrator Corps offer professional development grants

designed to increase the number of American Indian teachers and administrators serving their reservation communities. AIHEC a minimum of \$5,000,000 to fund critically needed competitive grants.

- **American Indian Adult and Basic Education (Office of Vocational and Adult Education):** This program supports adult basic education programs for American Indians offered by state and local education agencies, Indian tribes, agencies, and TCUs. Despite the absence of dedicated funding, TCUs must find a way, often using already insufficient institutional operating funds, to continue to provide adult basic education classes for those American Indians that the present K-12 Indian education system has failed. Before many individuals can even begin the course work needed to learn a productive skill, they first must earn a GED or, in some cases, even learn to read. The new GED exam, which was instituted in January 2014, has a much stronger focus on mathematics. As noted earlier, placement tests for TCU entering students reveal a tremendous need for math remediation. Additionally, the new GED test is fully computerized. While younger GED seekers may be well versed and comfortable with computer-based testing, older and poorer citizens may not be. These factors indicate a further and growing need for adult basic educational programs and GED preparation on Indian reservations. TCUs must have sufficient and stable funding to continue to provide these essential activities and to ensure their communities residents have the same chances to succeed as others throughout the country have. *TCUs request that the Subcommittee direct that \$8,000,000 of the funds appropriated annually for the Adult Education State Grants be made available to make competitive awards to TCUs to help meet the growing demand for adult basic education and remediation program services on their respective Reservations.*

II. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH and HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAM:

Tribal Colleges and Universities Head Start Partnership Program (DHHS-ACF): Tribal Colleges and Universities are ideal partners to help improve the quality and long-term effectiveness of Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The Head Start Bureau funded Head Start and Early Head Start Partnerships with Tribally Controlled Land-Grant Colleges and Universities beginning in FY1999. There are 34 land-grant TCUs; yet, at the highest participation level only 16 TCUs received awards to help in meeting the mandate that Head Start teachers earn degrees in Early Childhood Development or a related discipline, and ensuring that all children experienced excellent Head Start programs. *The TCUs request that the Subcommittee direct the Head Start Bureau to designate a minimum of \$5,000,000 of the \$8.86 billion recommended for Head Start Programs in the FY 2015 Budget, to the TCU-Head Start Partnership program, to revive these vital partnerships and ensure that these critical program can continue and expand so that all TCUs have the opportunity to participate in the TCU- Head Start partnership program and help in achieving the goals of Head Start for children in Indian Country.*

ADDITIONAL JUSTIFICATIONS FOR FY 2015 FUNDING REQUESTS FOR TCUs

Tribal colleges and our students are already being disproportionately impacted by ongoing efforts to reduce the federal budget deficit and control federal spending. The FY 2011 Continuing Resolution eliminated all of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) community-based programs, including a critically needed TCU-HUD facilities program. TCUs were able to maximize leveraging potential, often securing even greater non-federal funding to construct and equip Head Start and early childhood centers; student and community computer laboratories and public libraries; and student and faculty housing in rural and remote communities where few and sometimes none of these facilities existed. Important STEM programs, administered by the National Science Foundation and NASA were cut, and for the first time since the NSF program was established in FY 2001, no new TCU-STEM awards were made in FY 2011. While NSF-TCUP grants resumed in FY 2012, a year of grant opportunity was lost. TCUs Additionally, TCUs and their students suffer the realities of cuts to programs such as GEAR-UP, TRIO, SEOG, and as noted earlier, are seriously impacted by the new highly restrictive Pell Grant eligibility criteria more profoundly than mainstream institutions of higher education, which can realize economies of scale due to large endowments, alternative funding sources, including the ability to charge higher tuition rates and enroll more financially stable students, and access to affluent alumni. The loss of opportunities that cuts to DoEd, HUD, NSF, and NASA programs represent to TCUs, and to other MSIs, is magnified by cuts to workforce development programs within the Department of Labor, nursing and allied health professions tuition forgiveness and scholarship programs operated by the Department of Health and Human Services, and an important TCU-based nutrition education program planned by USDA. Combined, these cuts strike at the most economically disadvantaged and health-challenged Americans.

We respectfully request that the Members of the Subcommittee continue the federal investment in the nation's Tribal Colleges and Universities and full consideration of our FY 2015 appropriations needs and recommendations.