

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
JUNE 2, 2017

The following is a list of recommendations of the nation's Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) including Department, program, and amount sought for FY 2018. Detailed information and justifications are contained in the full statement.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - Office of Postsecondary Education

- HEA Title III-A, Sec. 316: \$60,000,000 (discretionary and mandatory)
- Perkins Career and Technical Education Programs (Sec. 117): \$10,000,000
- Reject cuts recommended in the President's Budget to TRIO programs, GEAR UP, and Federal Work-Study

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- Administration for Children and Families/Office of Head Start: \$8,000,000, from existing funds
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): \$10,000,000

INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES

- The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS): Reject the President's budget recommendation to eliminate this vital program.

TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: A SOUND FEDERAL INVESTMENT. In August 2015, an economic impact study on the TCUs, conducted by Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI), revealed that the known TCU alumni impact is \$2.3 billion, which supports 28,778 jobs in the nation. From a taxpayer's perspective, the study concluded that the total monetary benefits to taxpayers compared to their costs (equal to the federal funds the TCUs received during the analysis year) yields a 2.4 benefit-cost ratio. In other words, for every federal dollar invested in the TCUs, the taxpayers receive a cumulative value of \$2.40, over the course of students' working lives. The average annual rate of return is 6.2 percent, a solid rate of return that compares favorably with other long-term investments. On an individual basis, TCU students see an annual return on investment of 16.6 percent, and the vast majority of TCU-trained workers remains in Indian Country and contributes to the local economy. TCUs benefit taxpayers through increased tax receipts and reduced demand for federal social services; a win all-around.

The specific programmatic requests administered within the departments and agencies funded under the Labor-HHS, Education measure, are as follows:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

I. Higher Education Act Programs

Strengthening Developing Institutions, Title III-A Sec. 316: *TCUs urge the Subcommittee to restore the discretionary and mandatory funding for HEA Title III-A&F, Sec. 316 to \$60,000,000 in FY 2018.* Titles III and V of the Higher Education Act support institutions that enroll large proportions of financially disadvantaged students. The TCUs, which are truly developing institutions, are funded under Title III-A Sec. 316 and provide quality higher education opportunities to some of the most rural, impoverished, and historically underserved people in the country. In fact, more than 50 percent of our students are first generation; the average family annual income is less than \$18,000; and local

unemployment rates often exceed 50 percent. The goal of HEA-Titles III and V programs is "to improve the academic quality, institutional management and fiscal stability of eligible institutions... 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 American Indian students and their communities, to effectively prepare them to succeed in a globally competitive workforce. Yet, in FY 2011 this program was cut by over 11 percent and received subsequent cuts, including sequestration, until a small increase in FY 2016; but the TCUs still have not recovered from the earlier cuts to this vitally important program. In FY 2016, the TCU section (Sec. 316) was the *only* Title III/IV program that emerged from Conference in FY 2016 with a funding level BELOW the level passed by either the House or Senate in their respective appropriations measures.

TRIO: Retention and support services are vital to achieving the goal of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. TRIO programs were created out of a recognition that college access is not enough to ensure advancement and that multiple factors work to prevent successful completion by many low-income and first-generation students and students with disabilities. In the final FY 2017 consolidated appropriations bill, TRIO received a much needed \$50 million increase. It is critical that Congress rejects the cuts proposed in the President's budget and sustains and continues to increase support for TRIO programs so that low-income and minority students have the support they need to access and complete postsecondary education goals.

Pell Grants: The importance of Pell Grants to TCU students cannot be overstated. Eighty-five 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. At TCUs, 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 postsecondary education, an essential step toward becoming active, productive members of the workforce. In addition to increasing TRIO programs funding, it is vitally important the Congress provide the maximum Pell Grant award level.

II. Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Programs

Tribally Controlled Postsecondary Career and Technical Institutions: AIHEC requests

\$10,000,000 to fund grants under Sec. 117 of the Perkins Act. Section 117 of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act provides a competitively awarded grant opportunity for tribally chartered career and technical institutions that which are providing vitally needed workforce development and job creation education and training programs to American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) from tribes and communities with some of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. Jayvion Chee of Rabbitbrush, NM is an example of a young Native student and his community, benefiting from this modest program. Jayvion was named as Navajo Technical University's (NTU) Student of the Year after spending a year working on a geographic information technology (GIT) degree project that assessed the potential impacts on water resources posed by hydraulic fracturing in San Juan County, NM. Jayvion used his education in NTU's GIT associate of applied science degree program to map current natural gas fracking wells to better understand the potential risks associated with the fracking process. Through his research, he found that 87 documented wells within the San Juan region could possibly lead to adverse impacts on local communities - including the land on which his grandfather resides. He has presented the results of his research at national STEM and education conferences around the country.

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.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH and HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS

- I. **Administration for Children and Families – Office of Head Start**
Tribal Colleges and Universities Head Start Partnership Program: *AIHEC requests that just \$8,000,000, which is eight one-hundredths or 0.08 percent of the \$9,600,000,000 last proposed for making payments under the Head Start Act, be designated for the TCU-Head Start Partnership program, as authorized in PL 110-134, so that TCUs can provide high-quality, culturally appropriate training for teachers and workers in Indian Head Start programs.* In 2016, 73 percent of Head Start teachers nationwide held a required bachelor's degree; but only 39 percent of Head Start teachers in Indian Country (Region 11) met the requirement, and only 38 percent of workers met the associate-level degree requirement. This disparity in preparation and teaching demands our attention: AI/AN children deserve – and desperately needed – qualified teachers. TCUs are ideal catalysts for filling this inexcusable gap. From 2000 to 2007, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provided modest funding for the TCU-Head Start Program, which helped TCUs build capacity in early childhood education by providing scholarships and stipends for Indian Head Start teachers and teacher's aides to enroll in TCU early childhood programs. Before the program ended in 2007 (ironically, the same year that Congress specifically authorized the program in the Head Start Act), TCUs had trained more than 400 Head Start workers and teachers, many of whom have since left for higher paying jobs in elementary schools.

- II. **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**
New TCU Opioid/Substance Abuse Research and Prevention Program: *AIHEC requests that as part of the ongoing national opioid/prescription drug initiative, \$10 million be appropriated to establish a Tribal Colleges and Universities Substance Abuse/Behavioral Health Research and Prevention Initiative within SAMHSA to strategically identify and address the drug abuse and behavioral health issues impacting Native youth.* The most at-risk population in the United States is American Indian and Alaska Native college-aged youth (ages 15-24). Suicide of friends, classmates, and relatives; alcohol and substance abuse; domestic violence and abuse; bullying; and extreme poverty are all too common to Tribal College students. In fact, a seminal behavior health survey of TCU students¹, revealed that 50.4 percent of TCU students surveyed reported being physically intimidated, assaulted, or bullied/excessively teased by a peer. Twenty-four percent – almost one-quarter – reported having used opioids, compared to less than 9 percent of mainstream college students (in a 2013 national survey, which is the only comparable data available). Of the TCU students who had used opioids, 25 percent reported feeling signs of addiction, and nearly 34 percent had taken opioids without a prescription in the last three months. AIHEC and partnering entities are on the leading edge nationally in collecting data of this type due in large part to modest grants from the under-funded “Native American Research Centers on Health” program operated by the National Institutes of Health

¹ TCU-CCC Baseline Survey Conducted in 22 TCUs Nationally between March 2015 and Feb 2016. Preliminary Data. This research is supported by grants from the NIAAA, 1R01AA022068 and the NIMHD, 5P60-MD006909 through the National Institutes of Health.

and the Indian Health Service (and in needed of increased funding). Data of this type has never been collected nationally among college students, but the TCUs know that we must get a handle on this problem before it spirals out of control. Without serious, sustained, and community-based intervention, it will rapidly spiral out of control. Already, the death rate among American Indians from heroin overdose has increased 236 percent between 2010 and 2014. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that in 2014, American Indians were dying at *double or triple* the rates of African-Americans and Latinos from opioid, including heroin, addiction.

As engaged, place-based institutions, Tribal Colleges are committed to addressing the many challenges facing our communities, including the growing opioid epidemic. TCUs are leading the way through student-based participatory research to identify the specific needs of tribal communities (youth and students), so that community-relevant solutions can be identified and culturally adapted, tested, and then shared with others. SAMHSA, which has modest tribal drug abuse prevention programs and an ongoing effort with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, seems an appropriate agency to administer a TCU Behavioral Health Research and Prevention Initiative to assist TCUs, working with local communities and researchers, in taking strategic steps to identify the behavioral health challenges, develop or adapt innovative and community-practiced intervention strategies, forge relationships with local and regional non-profit providers, and create and test models that can be replicated and adapted at other TCUs and tribal communities. This targeted approach will help ensure that tribal youth have the same chance as others to become healthy, productive adults who will greatly benefit their local communities and the nation as a whole.

THE INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES (IMLS)

AIHEC requests that Congress rejects the recommendation included in the President's budget to eliminate the Institute of Museum and Library Services. IMLS is critically important to sustaining and growing TCU libraries, many of which are also the public library for their communities. Recently, six TCUs received IMLS enhancement grants that were used to address important issues of literacy in the community; digitizing tribal newspapers and cultural enrichment classes/lecture series for access through states' library systems; increasing community awareness and involvement in library-based activities and programs; and creating classroom curriculum kits addressing American Indian studies – now required to be offered in Wisconsin public schools. These kits will be accessible through the library shared catalog that includes 30 libraries in Northwestern WI. In conjunction with TCUs, IMLS is instrumental in preserving tribal culture, and elimination of IMLS would be devastating to generations present and future. In the North Slope Region of Alaska alone, seven public libraries, operated through Iliisaġvik College in Barrow, would be forced to close, leaving the most isolated Americans with no access to library or reading services.

We respectfully request that the Members of the subcommittee continue to recognize the significant contribution of the Tribal Colleges and Universities to their students, their communities, and the nation as a whole by continuing and expanding the vital federal investment in our institutions and careful consideration of our FY 2018 appropriations needs and requests.