

AIHEC STATEMENT ON FY 2018 TRUMP ADMINISTRATION BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) is extremely concerned that the Trump Administration's Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Budget includes inexplicable cuts to programs integral to the work and future of the nation's Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs).

The vast majority of TCUs in the United States are founded and chartered by their respective American Indian tribes, which hold a special legal relationship with the federal government, actualized by more than 400 treaties, several Supreme Court decisions, prior Congressional action, and the ceding of more than one billion acres of land to the federal government. The FY 2018 Budget released this week indicates a troubling unawareness or worse, disregard for the political status of American Indians with the federal government.

The budget proposes cuts to a number of TCU programs that are already underfunded despite the significant results they yield. For example:

- Cuts to the basic institutional operating budgets of the nation's only tribally chartered postsecondary career and technical institutions (Navajo Technical University in Crownpoint, NM and United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, ND), as well as the Department of the Interior - Bureau of Indian Education's postsecondary institutions (Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, KS and the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in Albuquerque, NM); and
- Complete elimination of two small but vitally important grant programs: TCU Essential Community Facilities grant program in USDA-Rural Development and the NASA-TCU Program. These programs help the TCUs to offer safe and modern campus/community facilities and STEM education/career development for their students.

Additionally, several other higher education programs are targeted for substantial cuts that would greatly impact the TCUs, including deep cuts to TRIO programs, GEAR UP, Federal Work-Study and the elimination of Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG).

AIHEC cannot understate the devastating domino effect such cuts will have on low-income students and underserved rural communities, including TCUs and reservation communities. Conversely, we must underscore the exponential impact that retaining the relatively small federal investment in our institutions returns in terms economic growth in our communities and reduced demand for social service programs.

Thankfully, Congress holds "the power of the purse." During the final negotiations of the FY 2017 appropriations cycle, the legislative branch signaled their support for the TCUs by rejecting some of the equally damaging proposals championed by the new Trump Administration. We will continue to work with Congress to reaffirm those efforts and maintain and grow the federal investment in the nation's Tribal Colleges and Universities, an investment that is proven to be a sound and moral one.