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OGLALA LAKOTA COLLEGE: Priorities for the 119th Congress (February 2025)

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) provide rigorous postsecondary education and research opportunities for American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIANs) and other rural community residents. TCUs offer higher education that is uniquely Tribal, founded on Native languages, culture, and philosophy with strong student support systems and community engagement. Through these educational opportunities, research, and industry partnerships for high-demand careers, TCUs are laying the foundation for sustainable economic development within Tribal Nations and beyond. Together, we build **Strong Sovereign Nations through Excellence in TRIBAL Higher Education**, empowering individuals and strengthening communities.

OGLALA LAKOTA COLLEGE (OLC): AT A GLANCE

- Enrollment Trends: Spring 2024: 1230; Fall 2024: 1188
- Affordable Tuition: Tribal members: \$84/credit hour
- Student to Faculty Ratio: Fall 2024: 22 students/full-time faculty
- Part-time/Full-time: Fall 2024: 61% part-time, 39% full-time
- Persistence Rate: Fall-to-Spring: 73%, Spring-to-Fall: 68%
- Highest Level of Degree/Program Available: Master of Arts
- TRIO Program: Yes
- Fun Fact: OLC uses a decentralized system with 11 instructional sites on the Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River Reservations and in Rapid City (maximum distance between sites: 225 miles).



The purpose of our decentralization is to bring instruction and student support services directly to the students rather than expecting them to travel. Oglala Lakota College (OLC) provides van transportation and gas vouchers when a class is not available at their site. Along with standard services, such as academic counseling and tutoring, we offer a free meals program. While the Cares Act was in effect, OLC provided students in need with a free laptop and hotspot to ensure everyone could participate in distance learning classes.



OGLALA LAKOTA COLLEGE: Strengthening Our Workforce

TCUs prepare professionals in high-demand fields, including agriculture and natural resources management, health, information technology, and building trades. By teaching the job skills most in demand within our communities, TCUs are laying a strong foundation for Tribal and regional economic growth.

OLC aims to provide programs tailored to the workforce needs of the Pine Ridge, Cheyenne River Reservations, and surrounding areas. These programs include four career and technical education (CTE) offerings and associate degrees in applied science focused on automotive technology, general construction, electrical technology, and office technology. These programs prepare students with the technical skills and practical knowledge required for immediate employment in high-demand fields and industries.

OLC has formed strong partnerships with local organizations and businesses to create meaningful paid internship opportunities, enabling students to gain valuable real-world experience. Examples include placements with local schools for student-teachers, hospitals and nursing homes for nursing clinical, and governmental and non-profit organizations for social work practicums.

To further support workforce development, OLC recently launched an outreach and career pathways program designed to enhance the college and career readiness of both K-12 students and college graduates.



TOTAL ALUMNI IMPACT

94 percent

**EMPLOYED
IN SERVICE
AREA**

Job equivalents indicate jobs created by TCUs, both full- and part-time. They are based on industry-specific jobs to sales ratios. 94 percent of graduates are employed in the service area and of that 71 percent work on the Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River Reservations.

OGDLALA LAKOTA COLLEGE: Driving Economic Development

TCUs act as a catalyst for economic growth locally and regionally by enhancing educational opportunities, research, and leadership skills for Tribal and other rural students.

OLC strengthens economic development within our service area by offering various degree and certificate programs. These programs are rooted in the vision to rebuild the Lakota Nation through education and are aligned with community needs. Over the past five years (2020-2024), OLC awarded 883 credentials, including 32 master's degrees, 273 bachelor's degrees, 505 associate degrees, and 73 certificates. Our graduates are equipped with skills and credentials that enhance their employability. Employers benefit from a workforce prepared to meet industry demands grounded in Wolakolkiciyapi – learning Lakota ways of life in the community. Our communities gain leaders in government and non-government organizations and the private sector.

Notably, an average of 94% of employed OLC graduates work in our service area, including 71% employed on the Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River Reservations—regions that are among the nation's most economically challenged. By retaining talent locally, we combat brain drain and contribute to economic stability and growth.

OGDLALA LAKOTA COLLEGE: Building Our Futures

TCUs are resilient, resourceful, and proud to lead the nation in many areas, including preparing an American Indian and Alaska Native workforce of engineers, nurses, land managers, technicians, and teachers. Always looking to the future, TCUs are focused on building new partnerships, advancing educational excellence, and creating economic opportunities for Tribal and regional communities.

OLC recognizes the need to periodically review whether the College continues to meet the needs of our communities. This is achieved by surveying graduates and employers of graduates annually, as well as by conducting a comprehensive workforce alignment study from time to time. Such a study is currently in progress and is expected to be completed by June 2025. Programs previously identified as necessary include commercial driver's license and certified nurse assistant programs, along with other health fields such as a medical laboratory technician program and additional education endorsement preparation programs. OLC is also exploring the possibility of adding a master's degree in environmental science.

