

COME FIND YOUR PLACE.



Gaa' Oziskwaa'jimekaag
Gabe-gikendaasoowigamig



LEECH LAKE TRIBAL COLLEGE: PRIORITIES FOR THE 118TH CONGRESS (February 2024)

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) provide rigorous postsecondary education and research opportunities for American Indians, 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. Unfortunately, federal education completion metrics fail to consider the unique nature of TCUs and our students. Federal completion rates focus on first-time, full-time students. But success at TCUs is defined holistically and most students attend part-time or are transfer students. Our shared vision: Strong Sovereign Nations Through Excellence in TRIBAL Higher Education.

LEECH LAKE TRIBAL COLLEGE AT A GLANCE:

- Enrollment Trends (Spring 2022/Fall 2022): 20% Increase
- Affordable Tuition: \$162 per credit
- Student to Faculty Ratio: 8:1
- Fall 2022 Semester:
 - Full Time: 117; Part Time: 76
- Retention Rate: 81%
- Highest level of degree/program available: A.A. Degree



LLTC STUDENT SERVICES, LEARNING CENTER, AND WELLNESS CENTER

Leech Lake Tribal College's Student Services provides a range of unique support programs tailored to meet the specific needs of Tribal College and University (TCU) students. These offerings include the Winter Bridge Program, Summer Bridge Program, and First Year Experience Course, aimed at facilitating a smooth transition into college life. The Emergency Aid Funding ensures financial assistance for students facing unexpected challenges.

The Learning Center offers academic support, while the Wellness Center at LLTC goes above and beyond by addressing issues such as food apartheid, and transportation barriers. Operating a food pantry and providing no-cost gas and food vouchers, the Wellness Center strives to alleviate essential needs. Emergency aid further supports students facing unforeseen financial crises. The center also focuses on mental health support, offering diagnostic assessments, and individual counseling led by a state-licensed social worker.

LEECH LAKE TRIBAL COLLEGE FEBRUARY 2024





Notably, the LLTC Wellness Center stands out as a land-based healing center, emphasizing cultural, and spiritual coordination. Recognizing the cyclical nature of Native societies and the integral role of spirituality in mental well-being, the center provides a unique approach to healing. It advocates for the recognition of land-based healing practices as distinct from non-secular methods, urging support from the United States Congress. Overall, Leech Lake Tribal College demonstrates a comprehensive commitment to the holistic development and well-being of its students, incorporating cultural and spiritual elements into its support services.

LEECH LAKE TRIBAL COLLEGE: 1994 LAND-GRANT PROGRAMS

1994 Land-grant Institutions: The Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act created the “1994 Land-grants” more than 25 years ago. Since then, funding for the 1994 Land-Grant programs and resources have remained inadequate to address the growing agricultural needs and opportunities in Indian Country.

LLTC continues to grow in its capacity to serve as our area’s premier community-centered institution based on a holistic approach in alignment with our Land Grant Status. Our Tribal College Extension Program offers traditional skills and cultural arts opportunities for the community, bringing in Native American experts to share their knowledge. With our upcoming federally funded building construction, we will finally have a dedicated space for this important program for the first time in thirty plus years. A new USDA NIFA grant has allowed an expansion of LLTC’s summer research internship program which was founded on the principles of equity and inclusion for Native students in the fields of food systems, natural resource conservation, and community health. This past summer we facilitated 16 full-time paid internships for LLTC students working on a set of diverse projects including: plant surveys within Reserve Treaty Right Lands, post-prescribed fire regeneration of blueberries, rapid response to starry stonewort infestation on Leech Lake, pollinator surveys, and more.

By providing steady funding, the modest McIntire Stennis Forestry grant has allowed LLTC to build a program that increases student access to local research and resource priorities while supporting





the important work of local natural resource managers. Access to competitive grants supports short term projects at our college, but to expand our long term programmatic capacity our budget needs predictable funding.

We need Native voices managing Native lands, and thus the pathway from first year students to resource professionals is one we actively promote and reinforce with best practices. The challenges of accessing child care, unreliable transportation, and poverty have often prevented Native students from participating in summer research programs. We work with our partner agencies to set students up for success with a flexible schedule, local opportunities, and a competitive wage. Students we've supported with research internships are more than twice as likely to graduate from LLTC and matriculate to a four-year college than their peers.



REQUEST: \$40 MILLION TCU IT SERVICE FUND USDA – RURAL UTILITY SERVICE

The ongoing pandemic has exacerbated the digital divide and underscored the lack of broadband access across Indian Country. To address these deficiencies that could leave Indian Country – and AI/AN students – behind the rest of the U.S. for generations, Congress must act to establish a permanent TCU IT Service Fund within the USDA-Rural Utilities Service Program. An annual \$40 million set-aside for TCUs, which are 1994 land-grant institutions served by USDA, would help cover rapidly increasing network, connectivity, and equipment costs, maintenance, infrastructure expansion, and IT staffing.

- Reliable Internet connectivity in the Leech Lake area is limited & often not attainable for residents.
- LLTC has been able to help provide access to some students by issuing cellular hotspots to those taking online courses and completing academic work online. The cost of providing hotspots is currently not sustainable for future budgets with an estimated \$54,504 in cost per year.
- With the growth and expansion of technology on campus, especially post pandemic, the need for more support personnel and resources has become a critical issue.
- Federal compliance requirements such as the newly updated FTC Safeguards rules requires significant resources and funding to obtain and maintain compliance.
- Frequent cyber security industry changes and attacks from malicious actors increasingly requires more resources to maintain a secure operating environment, including funding and in-person hours.
- Demand for technical support from end-users has grown significantly and requests are being made on a 24/7 schedule from the campus community. Meeting this need is costly in both funding and in-person hours and current budgets do not support it.
- Tribal colleges face a growing challenge of wage competitiveness, with employees earning on average \$10,000 to \$20,000 less annually compared to their counterparts at other universities. This wage disparity not only hinders the recruitment and retention of talented professionals but also undermines the overall effectiveness and sustainability of tribal colleges. Addressing this issue is crucial to ensure the continued growth and success of tribal educational institutions.





REQUEST: \$3.2 BILLION TCU CONSTRUCTION FUND DOI – BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION

A July 2021 AIHEC survey of TCUs revealed many chronic unmet facilities and infrastructure needs, including lack of student and faculty housing, inadequate classroom space, insufficient libraries, and outdated laboratories.

- **TCU deferred maintenance/rehabilitation: \$400 million (total)**
- **TCU completion of master plans: \$2.7 billion (total)**
- **TCU operation and maintenance: \$20 million (annual, recurring need)**

AIHEC strongly urges Congress to fund dedicated TCU facilities programs through DOI-BIE to modernize current facilities and build safer 21st century campuses.



LEECH LAKE TRIBAL COLLEGE: CONSTRUCTION, MAINTENANCE, REHABILITATION

The LLTC campus currently has a mix of infrastructure needs. Our HVAC systems are approaching end of life and have required extensive repairs. LLTC is planning for new construction to alleviate crowding and provide more gathering and cultural spaces. Currently, our largest gathering space’s capacity seats about 50 people, while many faculty members share a room divided by cubicles. LLTC does not have any student housing and some of the communities that we serve are more than 50 miles away. Planning for housing is a high priority as we work on updating our Campus Master Plan.

With sufficient funding for infrastructure, we could:

- Provide housing for students (some students round trip commute to campus is 100 miles)
- Gather in cultural spaces for celebrations, ceremonies, and other important events, strengthening the relationship between college and community.
- Create space for confidential meetings between faculty and students
- Update our science laboratories for safety, accessibility, and effective storage
- Expand our Wellness Center so that we can provide mental health and nutrition support to our students

