

LITTLE PRIEST TRIBAL COLLEGE: Priorities for the 118th Congress (February 2024)

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. 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.

LITTLE PRIEST TRIBAL COLLEGE FACTS:

- **Enrollment Trends: Spring 2023: 173 / Fall 2023: 210)**
- **Affordable Tuition:** \$180 per credit hour; no additional fees
- **Student to Faculty Ratio:** 6:1
- **Part-time/Full-time:**
 - Spring 2023: PT 112, FT 61
 - Fall 2023: PT 132, FT 73
- **Persistence Rate:** 50% New students only
- **Highest Level of degree/program available:** Associates degree
- **TRIO Program:** No



Critical student support services offered by Little Priest Tribal College (LPTC):

- **Free Tuition for All Students:** LPTC applies federal COVID funds to fully cover tuition for all students. LPTC has no additional fees. Unlike other area schools offering "free tuition," LPTC does not tap Pell grants and other scholarships for tuition charges, leaving those funds available to students for textbooks, laptops, dorm rent, and living expenses.
- **Free Food Carts:** High quality snacks, drinks, fruit, and fruit juices are available for free to all students outside classrooms and in the Student Services commons.
- **Free on-campus Mental Health Counseling:** LPTC provides counseling through MorningStar Counseling, a full circle mental health clinic serving communities in Nebraska. Their program that is used is tailored for Native communities.
- **Free Tutoring:** LPTC provides online tutoring through Wyzant and in-person tutoring on campus with tutors paid by LPTC.
- **Free Transportation:** LPTC provides transportation for several programs -
 - Students in chemistry and biology courses that drive 25 miles to their lab sections on a neighboring college campus;
 - Student in the welding program that drive 25 miles away on a neighboring college campus for courses;
 - Certified Nursing Assistant students that drive 80 miles to Omaha for licensing tests after graduation.

LITTLE PRIEST 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 agriculture needs and opportunities in Indian Country.



LITTLE PRIEST TRIBAL COLLEGE (LPTC)

Extension provides programming that is accessible to all community members of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. This programming includes:

- Community Education (e.g., crafting, business education, GED preparation, and wellness information and activities).
- Bi-weekly classes focused on topics related to the acquisition of food sovereignty (gardening, food preservation, culture/history).
- Internship opportunities for students.
- Weekly classes with Pathways to Education (through the Boys and Girls Club) and the Youth Crisis Intervention Center.
- Workshops of foraging and medicinal and culturally significant plant life.
- Healthy cooking demonstrations during the summer months at the weekly Farmers Market (located at LPTC's Village Market facility).
- Maintenance of the interactive gardens on campus and at the Village Market site that permits students and community members access to the flora that Winnebago Tribe ancestors relied upon for healthy living.
- Participation in the Food Sovereignty Task Force (requested by the Winnebago Tribal Council) with the aim of bringing together various community programs to better collaborate on tribal food access.



REQUEST: \$40 M 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.

LITTLE PRIEST TRIBAL COLLEGE: Broadband and IT Challenges:

- Lack of broadband options in our area.
- Network/wireless infrastructure costs are unaffordable.
- Expenses associated with cybersecurity (security event manager, vulnerability testing, and penetration testing).
- IT infrastructure costs for new campus buildings and existing offsite facilities (computers, classroom setup for hyflex modality).
- Onsite and cloud storage is expensive.
- Student connectivity: many students do not have laptops needed for classes and lack internet service at home).
- Training for IT staff.



**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.

Little Priest Tribal College: Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation

At LPTC buildings are 20 to 70 years old. The Administration (Bear Clan) Building was built in 1954. We rely on two large residential homes located off-campus to provide housing for 14 students. A new Science Building has begun construction with federal COVID funds to provide modern lab facilities for our new Biology and Chemistry programs. However, classroom space continues to be in short supply resulting in overcrowding and complicated class schedules. Offices for additional faculty and staff are unavailable.

The College completed a Master Plan several years ago to expand the campus onto an adjacent 10-acre site. Five new buildings are planned at an estimated total cost of \$50 million (which includes an estimated \$5 million for infrastructure, roads, and parking). So far, no funds have been secured to begin the build-out.

Planned buildings:

1. Career & Technology Education Building – The College does not currently have facilities to provide CTE programs, such as carpentry, electrician, HVAC, construction. These programs are needed to serve the male population on the reservation and to provide trained employees to tribal operations.
2. Cultural & Student Center – Needed to provide better services to students and to reinforce cultural activities.
3. Dormitory (50 beds) – Necessary to expand student housing and bring it on campus. We cannot currently accommodate all students in our service area who do not have transportation to campus.
4. Health Center with basketball gymnasium – The College has no space for health facilities. The popular basketball program was ended during the pandemic but cannot be restarted because our facilities to practice and play home games were provided by neighboring high schools and have become unavailable.
5. Day Care Center – For students. Many of our students are nontraditional with small children to care for. Lack of appropriate day care has been identified in surveys as a major barrier to completion.

Old buildings & postponed maintenance.

The BIE Facilities Improvement & Repair (BIE FI&R) funds which were made available to us beginning last year have enabled the College to respond quickly to routine repairs and maintenance. However, large deferred maintenance projects remain:

1. Library and Museum/Student Services buildings (built in 2003) require extensive repairs to exterior walls to prevent flooding from rain, estimated at \$500,000
2. Food service building (Wolves Den) was built more than 40 years ago and needs kitchen remodeled, walk-in freezer to handle increased patronage, and other major appliance upgrades.
3. Administration (Bear Clan) Building needs major plumbing renovation to correct water flow deficiencies.

Number of buildings in need of rehabilitation and retrofitting. Four buildings (see bullets above):

Administration, Library, Museum/Student Services, Food Service.

Sidewalks. We have been repairing and replacing sidewalks with the BIE FI&R funds.

Roads needed. New roads are needed to build out the 10-acre annex under our Master Plan. Infrastructure costs (needed before building construction can commence) are estimated at \$5 million.