



# WHITE EARTH TRIBAL & COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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## White Earth Tribal & Community 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.

### White Earth Tribal & Community College: AT A GLANCE

- Enrollment Trends (Fall 2023): 103 Students Enrolled
- Affordable Tuition: \$170 per Credit
- Student to Faculty Ratio: 1:25
- Part-time/Full-time: 39 Part Time / 64 Full Time
- Persistence Rate: 35%
- Highest Level of degree/program available: Associate of Arts (AA)
- TRIO Program: No



We have established social and psychological support programs which includes community resources (e.g., food, mental health, counseling, food insecurities, clothing, housing, utilities assistance, transportation, and resident elders.) We have Strength Quest being developed, healing circles starting shortly, and Bami (student mentorship training program) starting this semester.

### White Earth Tribal and Community 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.

**White Earth Tribal and Community College:** The White Earth Tribal and Community College’s Community Extension Service Department focuses on preserving traditional food sovereignty initiatives of growing and distributing produce, seeds, plant starts, and garden grow boxes. Currently, the Community Extension Service Department has provided hundreds of pounds of produce that was collected from local growers then distributed throughout the White Earth Nation. There were 67 participants in Ojibwe phenology (4th to 6th grade students) who participated in outdoor learning activities throughout the academic year. These activities included rice camp, sugar bush, winter storytelling, berry camp, and canning workshops.



## 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.

### White Earth Tribal and Community College: Broadband and IT Challenges

- Having access to high-speed internet at home, phone service, and hotspots
- Cost associated with upgrading the entire network
- Cybersecurity is a concern
- Moved phone providers to provide highbred phone systems (to be able to work virtually)
- Virtualize all of the learning spaces



## 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.

### White Earth Tribal and Community College: Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation

- Storage is a challenge for our college. We are currently writing a grant for a mobile training unit and this will require a storage space; at this time we cannot provide the space.
- Lack of adequate faculty and staff office spaces.
- Not having a commercial kitchen. Currently we offer hot lunches while classes are in session.
- Unusable building space; it needs renovation.
- Lack of housing for faculty, staff, and students. We have students interested in attending our college but do not matriculate due to lack of affordable housing.



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