



# SINTE GLESKA UNIVERSITY

EST. 1970

## SINTE GLESKA UNIVERSITY: 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.

### Sinte Gleska University

- Enrollment Trends (Spring 2020/Fall 2022): + 17% growth
- Affordable Tuition: \$ 175 compared to \$ 259 at SD Universities
- Student to Faculty Ratio: 6:1
- Part-time/Full-time: 2 part time/22 full-time
- Persistence Rate of 72%
- Highest level of degree/program available: Masters
- TRIO Programs: No
- Recently awarded 10 year accreditation through the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium



Sinte Gleska University (SGU) is considered an “open enrollment” institution. Students come primarily from reservation-based schools. The majority of students are not able to attend off-reservation Universities because of academic preparation or family obligations. Additionally, unlike the typical State student, the average starting age of an SGU student is 24 years old. Students often have two or more children and quite frequently are the primary breadwinner for their homes. This results in longer matriculation times. Despite the hurdles, SGU consistently enrolls over 700 hundred students each semester, more indigenous students than all the BOR institutions combined!

These challenges result in SGU providing significant supports to students. This includes provision of laptop computers, transportation to and from classes, meals while on-campus, a day care process and tutoring. Every faculty member works with the counseling staff on advisement in order to build a close rapport with our students. When possible, emergency funds are made available to students who have hurdles beyond those supported by typical Financial Aid.

## Sinte Gleska University 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.

SGU sustains a unique program among TCUs. Under the visionary leadership of President Bordeaux, SGU created a “Nation Building” division that works in collaboration with the academic division of the University and Tribal Programs to identify and build capacity within the Sicangu Oyate. The Nation Building division currently has four areas of work that are funded through USDA and TCU dollars. A major area of work is the 1994 Extension Program. Tribal food sovereignty is a priority being addressed by SGU through its campus-based garden and its bison herd. The Extension program provides family and community education in the seasonal production, harvesting, and preservation of garden vegetables. A second area is the 1994 Research Program. This area is a challenge due to lack of credentialed faculty. SGU has not been able to take advantage of the USDA grant resources due to lack of faculty housing and low salaries. This is a prime example of the importance of funding facilities and funds to allow for hiring and development of faculty beyond the typical three year grant cycles.

The Rural Development process through USDA has had a dramatic impact on SGU. The University has utilized funds for renovation of facilities that include the GED and Lakota Studies buildings. Future planning includes the development of a food sovereignty program that develops a culinary arts program and a veterinary program. Finally, the Land Grant Program is working with the Tribal Land Enterprise, an SGU initiated program, that is an economic development driver for the Reservation. Workforce development processes are identified with both short-term and degree level courses being delivered to students through the Institute of Technology (IOT). IOT provides a range of career and technical education (CTE) courses to students ranging from high school graduates to adult learners.

**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 AIAN 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.



SGU has taken advantage of USDA Funds and COVID Related Funds to address the Internet Technology needs of the students. The pivot in 2021 to on-line instruction required every student to have laptop computers, and for the network at the SGU campus to be robust enough for ubiquitous wireless connectivity across the two SGU Campuses. Additionally, funds to support home Internet access are distributed each semester to students to assure they have access to their classes. Well over a million dollars has been expended on student Internet access since the start of the Pandemic. This includes laptops, home connections, and personnel to provide technical support to students.

The most significant challenge to building a robust network is the long-term annual maintenance costs of such a network. SGU spends over \$1.1 million per year to maintain the network, pay the ISP and Phone bills, and to provide a minimal staff to support the 1000+ daily users of the network. The current staffing hovers at 1:250 users with a 1:1 computer to user ratio. Industry standards as published by Workforce.com call for a staffing of 1:27, placing SGU well below what is needed.

SGU has called for the use of Universal Services Act funding to provide a permanent flow to assure both maintenance and upgrade of network infrastructure. The development of a specific annual fund for this activity is very appropriate as SGU will continue to annually expend between \$1.3 - \$1.5 million per year on Internet maintenance, support staff and upgrade costs.



**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.**

SGU has been in existence for over 50 years. It started in a building abandoned by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and courses were taught in community buildings ranging from log homes to churches. Over the decades, the facilities have been built and acquired based on the feast and famine cycle of Federal grants and the donations of dedicated supporters of the University. Some facilities, like the library, were built using pole-barn construction techniques while others were either mobile homes or small buildings retrofitted into classroom. An example of this is a private home that was converted to house the Nursing department, where students gather around tables in what was a living room.

There have been beautiful buildings created over the past twenty years at SGU, but the lack of maintenance dollars has resulted in ongoing struggles to keep even “newer” facilities operating. An example of this is the Wakinyan Wanbli Multi Purpose Center. This facility is 22 years old and houses classroom space for the Human Services Department, a gymnasium, community meeting space, and a workout facility to help with wellness programming. During the most recent blizzard, this facility was put into action as emergency housing for the Antelope Community. Thirty people stayed in the building as the temperature fell to -30 degrees and the 34 inches of snow drifted in 50 mile per hour winds. It is not overly dramatic to note that the facilities at SGU not only are necessary to teach students, but also to save lives. Ironically, after the people left the facility, a set of pipes broke due to freezing temperature.

SGU has identified a number of facilities related needs into the future. They include:

1. Annual Facilities Management funding increase from the current \$1.3 million per year to \$1.8 million per year.
2. Replacement of the 40 year-old pole building housing the University Library with an expansion of the SGU Archives and Museum. Costs for this process will exceed \$10 million.
3. Development of a new Institute of Technology facility to house all career and technical education (CTE) activities in one area. Currently the SGU carpentry program is sharing space with the Facilities program, limiting the ability of students to construct framed products.
4. Development of a new Science Center to create a space for laboratories for the USDA funded research projects.
5. Expansion of the SGU Business Incubator program as a joint project with the Tribe’s economic development programs.
6. Upgrade the GED facilities on both the Mission Campus and expand into the Eastern Reservation service areas.
7. Develop a learning facility that can centralize classrooms for programs instead of splitting programs across small houses and renovated double-wide trailers.

**Additional Note**

Sinte Gleska University supports Ihanktowan Community College and Lower Brule Community College. SGU provides registration and accreditation of these two emerging college programs. The relationship provides funding to the College through MOUs. Critical to these relationships is the support of Internet Technologies. The figures provided in the section on Internet Technologies relate to the Mission SGU campus and do not reflect the additional support necessary for these to sister institutions.