Salish Kootenai 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.

Salish Kootenai College: AT A GLANCE

- Enrollment Trends (Spring 2023/Fall 2023):
  increase 6%-Degree Seeking Students, increase 9%
- Affordable Tuition: $2,988.00/full-time academic year (Indian Student)
- Student to Faculty Ratio: 10:1
- Part-time/Full-time: Spring 2023 395 FT/190 PT;
  Fall 2023 499 FT/165 FTE,
- Persistence Rate: 64% graduation rate and 80% retention rate
- Highest Level of degree/program available: M.S. Natural Resource Management, M.Ed. Education
- TRIO Program: Student Support Services and Upward Bound

Salish Kootenai College recognizes that students who have their basic support needs met can focus their attention to their studies and dedicate their time more effectively to being students. The college implemented and continues to support the following critical supports:
- Food pantry
- Mental Health Counseling Services
- Infant and Child Care
- Transportation
- Health Care Services

Salish Kootenai 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.

Salish Kootenai College: The College provides research and services to the reservation community. A few examples of these programs are:
- Community gardens-Food Sovereignty
- Climate initiatives- renewal energy, sustainable farming, invasive weed mitigation and research

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.

Salish Kootenai College: Broadband and IT Challenges
- Increased Internet usage on 80-90% saturation during the day
- Less reliable and available vendors
- Lower quality products
- Less availability of products
- Increased software licensing costs
- Increase in demand for technical support services, especially supporting cyberinfrastructure
- $350,000 anticipated costs for infrastructure, software, and hardware

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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.

Salish Kootenai College: Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation

Salish Kootenai College classrooms were constructed to hold a class of between 10-25. In order to meet changing enrollment, the college needs access to larger classrooms and meeting space. Our campus needs to reconfigure many of our academic spaces to allow for updated technology and increased classroom and lab enrollments. SKC does not have any outdoor, covered learning space. The need for student housing construction is critical for our students. The rent and available units in our community are expensive and the inventory is virtually non-existent due to an influx of people moving into the area to avoid more densely populated areas in our country.

- SKC needs to build additional 1, 2- and 3-bedroom family housing units. SKC consistently has between 150-350 students per academic year who are unable to attend SKC due to lack of housing.
- SKC will be breaking ground on a 42-room studio housing facility to meet some of the housing needs.
- Lab and classroom spaces need updating. They no longer meet the technology needs of the programs they serve. SKC recently completed a new Health Sciences Building and a classroom building is under construction.
- There are significant remodels needed in a few of the older buildings on campus and delayed maintenance of the campus. infrastructure is ongoing.
- An outdoor covered pavilion is in the planning stage.