

COME FIND YOUR PLACE.



LEECH LAKE TRIBAL COLLEGE: PRIORITIES FOR THE 118TH CONGRESS (February 2023)

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 FACTS:

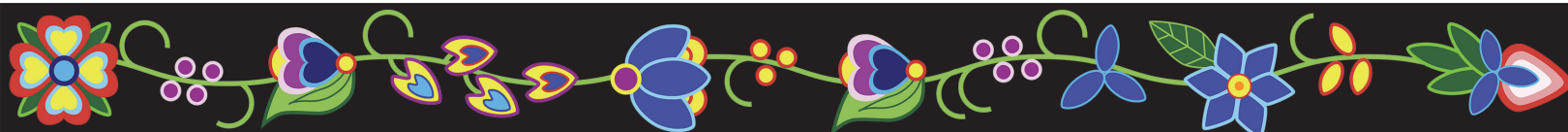
- Enrollment Trends (Spring 2022/ Fall 2022): 20% Increase
- Affordable Tuition: \$162 per credit
- Student to Faculty Ratio: 8 to 1
- Fall 2022 Semester:
Full Time-117, Part Time- 76
- Spring 2023 Semester:
Full Time-138, Part Time- 73
- Retention Rate: 81%
- Highest level of degree/program available: A.A. Degree



LLTC STUDENT SERVICES, LEARNING CENTER, AND WELLNESS CENTER

The LLTC Student Services offers the Winter Bridge Program, Summer Bridge Program, First Year Experience Course, Emergency Aid Funding, Learning Center, and the Wellness Center. The Wellness Center continues to make efforts toward addressing food apartheid and mechanical barriers such as lack of transportation by operating a food pantry, offering no-cost gas & food vouchers, and emergency aid for students. Moreover, the Wellness Center at LLTC offers mental health support and interventions. The Wellness Center is equipped to perform diagnostic assessments and individual counseling by a state-licensed social worker. More importantly, the LLTC wellness center is a land-based focused healing center that employs a cultural and spiritual coordinator. The native people, original caretakers of this land, primarily live in a cyclical society that recognizes spirituality as the foundation for mental health well-being, and healing. We urge the United States Congress to recognize land-based healing as separate and distinct from non-secular practices.

LEECH LAKE TRIBAL COLLEGE FEBRUARY 2023





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. Although our Extension Program doesn’t have a designated space though future funding would support renovation of an existing modular building that would be dedicated to Extension programming.

Our McIntire Stennis Cooperative Forestry program (inclusive of TCU forestry programs starting in the 2018 Farm Bill) supports our partnerships with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe’s Division of Resource Management (DRM) and with the Chippewa National Forest. This past summer we facilitated eight 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.



Photo credit David Villier

By providing steady funding, the 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 the DRM.

Our summer research internship program was formalized in 2016, founded on the principles of equity and inclusion for Native students in the fields of natural resource management.





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. We hope to expand our capacity to serve more students in our summer programming in the future, though the non-federal matching requirement for McIntire Stennis limits TCU's (that typically have limited non-federal money) ability to utilize the fund.



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.

- 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 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.





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. We were able to improve indoor air quality by paving a large gravel parking lot, though we are still looking at full system updates. 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
- Gather in cultural spaces for celebrations, ceremonies, and other important events
- 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

