

## Turtle Mountain Community College: Priorities for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress (February 2023)

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.

### Turtle Mountain Community College:

- Enrollment Trends (Spring 2020/Fall 2022): **31 % Increase**
- Spring 2022 Part Time: 125 Students / Full Time: 352 Students
- Fall 2022 Part Time: 158 Students / Full Time: 461 Students
- Affordable Tuition: \$1,044.00 for Full Time Students
- Student to Faculty Ratio: 8:1
- Persistence: 70.48% Retention: 73.01% Completion Rate: 36.70%
- Highest level of degree/program available: Masters
- TRIO Programs: YES



**Narrative:** Food cards were given to all students Spring of 2022, Mental Health App: Talk Campus, students have access to the local food pantry, referrals to Academic Tutoring, Peer Mentoring Services, Career Assessment and Planning, services to improve Financial Literacy, Vocational Rehabilitation, Language Project, Regional Substance Abuse Prevention Project and free Wednesday meals to all students, faculty, and staff.



### Turtle Mountain 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.

**Turtle Mountain Community College:** Turtle Mountain Community College’s USDA Equity Grant has developed and supported an Associate of Science Natural Resources Management program. Every semester the students develop, implement, and report on place-based research projects that benefit their local communities. Of the students who have completed the NRM courses, 67% are employed: of those, 67% are working in a health-related/first responder field and the other 33% are employed as maintenance workers. TMCC Equity Grant has also supported summer research on traditionally used plant populations within the Turtle Mountain region.



The following is an excerpt from a former TMCC student who is now an elementary educator within a local school system, Alyza Grant.

“There are so many good things to say about this summer experience that I scarcely know where to begin. I’ll always be grateful for the opportunities I’ve been given this summer, from the ceremonies we attended to climbing Butte St. Paul, to learning how to harvest medicine; I’m sure I wouldn’t have been able to experience those things without this program. As someone who grew up with the old traditions and has seen them decline, it means a lot to me that there are still people in our community who wish to teach our history and our old way of life to others. I hope this summer opportunity continues to reach others who will appreciate it, and pray that each of us continues to prosper in life, growing and sharing our knowledge where it’s needed”.

**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.



**Turtle Mountain Community College: Broadband and IT Progress & Challenges:**

- **What TMCC has done for security and upgrades:**
  - Moved to cloud-based with additional VPN security for logging in
  - Campus Router – Upgraded to Palo Alto and XDR Anti-Virus
- **What TMCC wants/needs:**
  - Better WIFI signal throughout main and south campus
  - Laptops for new students



**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 21<sup>st</sup> century campuses.

**Turtle Mountain Community College: Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation**

- **Narrative:** If we had these improvements, it would increase the longevity of the facility. Space for additional classrooms and faculty as well as housing would enable the expansion of programs offered by the institution and marketability to students and faculty from out of the area.
- **Unmet facilities and infrastructure needs include:**
  - Flooring throughout campus
  - Classroom space
  - Faculty office space
  - Auditorium geothermal mechanical upgrade
  - Bathrooms throughout campus need to be remodeled
  - Concrete in front of the main campus needs to be replaced
  - Handrails at building entrances need to be replaced
  - Road to the nursing center needs to be upgraded
  - Housing for students and faculty