UNITED TRIBES TECHNICAL COLLEGE

TCU Ongoing Challenges During COVID-19 Pandemic

118th 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

United Tribes Technical College Facts:

- **Enrollment Trends (Spring 2020/Fall 2022):** Enrollment increased from 343 students in Spring 2020 to 506 in Fall 2022, an increase of 48%.

- **Affordable Tuition:** Tuition and fees has remained unchanged at $4,252 for academic years of 2018-2019 to 2021-22. Average annual grant aid award for grants or scholarships was $8,480 for 2020-21.

- **Student to Faculty Ratio:** The student to faculty ratio for Fall 2022 is 11:1.

- **Part-time/Full-time:** Part-time undergraduate enrollment was 35 and full-time undergraduate enrollment was 471 for a total of 506 for Fall 2022.

- **Persistence/Retention/Completion Rate:** Persistence rates were at 71%, Retention was at 50%, and Graduation rates were at 32% for 2021-2022.

- **Highest level of degree/program available:** *Four bachelor's degrees are offered in:* Business Administration, Criminal Justice, Elementary Education, and Environmental Science and Research.

- UTTC was founded and is governed by the five tribal nations located wholly or in part in the State of North Dakota to address the workforce needs of their Nations.

United Tribes Technical College is an urban residential campus that provides family housing, dormitories, childcare, elementary school, transportation, food pantry, career closet, and student health and wellness, for the 95% Native American, 65% first generation, and 72% low-income student enrollment.

UTTC: 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.

The UTTC Land Grant program has an extensive history of programming focused on food sovereignty based in the three areas of extension, education, and research. Scholarly activity is intertwined in the form of agricultural research, peer reviewed articles, and presentations, which allows for the extension to occur on a variety of levels. Most recently, the Sustainable Agricultural & Food Systems Associates of Applied Science program was established and implemented to provide a diverse program focused on enriching not only the participating students, but the entire campus community. A variety of agricultural and horticulture-based courses are offered in food sovereignty, preservation and foraging, nutrition, and health topics. Monthly workshops are open to students and community members to become involved and connected to the Land Grant programs. Our newest activities include the addition of an apiary (honeybee hives) and the planned construction of a four-season greenhouse.

We are especially proud of our butchering large and small animal preparation and preservation programing. Beginning last year, UTTC Land Grant has offered hands-on workshops for students, faculty and community, to learn more about traditional cooking skills, traditional and contemporary preservation methods, and safe sanitary food storage methods. Participants get hands-on experience in making dishes such as bápa (air dried buffalo meat), čhaŋpȟákaškipi (chokecherry patties) and wasná (dried meat w/ dried berries and fat).

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.

United Tribes Technical College: Broadband and IT Challenges

- UTTC upgraded hard wired fiber internet connection and IT infrastructure to all education, programmatic, and residential buildings on campus.

- Upgrades resulted in increased internet speeds from 100 mps to 1 gig (100 times faster).

- Ongoing cybersecurity risk assessments and protections are being conducted.

- Multi-factored authentication is being implemented to enhance security.

- Security cameras and keyless entry door systems were installed to control and enhance facility safety.

- Estimated investment costs are $4 million and have been primarily funded through the various pandemic funds.

- IT Workforce challenges are employee turnover due to high salaries for competitors and inflation outpacing wage growth.

- Additional challenges are a delay in supply chain and the cost of maintaining technology-based equipment on an ongoing basis.

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.

United Tribes Technical College: Facilities Needs – Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation

- Established in 1969, UTTC is the second Tribal College and University (TCU) in the United States. The facilities were built in the late 1800s as the second Fort Lincoln and many of the buildings have the original doors and windows and continue to be used for programmatic or residential uses. Understandably, our main concern is the aging infrastructure of the college. Improvements are critical to providing a safe and healthy learning and working environment for our students, staff, and faculty. The most important challenge we face is having adequate funding to maintain, rehabilitate, and to build up our facilities to meet modern-day standards of operating and living. An increase in funding could assist us update and renovate in the following areas:

- Improve overall campus infrastructure such as information technology, electrical, mechanical (heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and ventilation), communications, and safety and security.

- Improve educational facilities with modern-day technology and socialization spaces to enhance scholarly activity and learning on campus.

- Build new facilities to accommodate increasing enrollment and expanding education programming in career and technical education (CTE) and education in general.

- Rehabilitate and modernize students' dormitories and family student housing to enhance learning.

- Conduct street improvements to enhance pedestrian and vehicle safety and disability access.