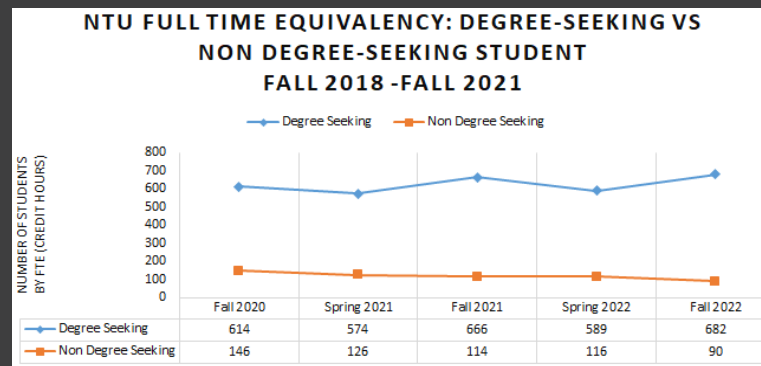# NAVAJO TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY: Priorities for the 118th Congress

(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 need 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

Navajo Technical University Facts:

- **Enrollment Trends (Spring 2020/Fall 2022):**
  - » 11% increase in general student enrollment; Non-High School DC Students.
  - » 9% increase in degree-seeking, American Indian student enrollment.
  - » 3% increase in successful course completion (C grade or better).
  - » 11% increase in full-time equivalency for degree-seeking students (see graph)
- **Affordable Tuition:** 50% reduction in Tuition - SKYHAWK CARES
- **Student to Faculty Ratio:** 5:1 (According to IPEDS Fall 2021 data)
- **Highest level of degree/program available:** Master of Diné Culture, Language, and Leadership & Management Information System.

NTU FULL TIME EQUIVALENCY: DEGREE-SEEKING VS NON DEGREE-SEEKING STUDENT FALL 2018 -FALL 2021

	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022
Degree Seeking	614	574	666	589	682
Non Degree Seeking	146	126	114	116	90

NTU continues to support the student population with a 50% reduction in tuition, the laptop, and MiFi checkout program or purchase at a discount rate, and provides online and in-house tutoring through our Nitsáhákees Bee'anooséél Student Success Center and Net tutor to sustain our enrollment, persistence, and retention of our students. Students have access to traditional counseling, ceremonies, and telehealth services through Timely MD to keep our students mentally, physically, and emotionally stable. NTU assists students with fuel, food, daycare, utility payments, and minor vehicle repairs, so students are able to continue with their education. Partnership with the state of New Mexico helps us combat our students' food and housing insecurities. Improvements to our Skyhawk for Success program – similar to an early alert program, include the addition of Skyhawk Strong - extra tutoring services during midterm and final exams, Talking Circles, cultural presentations, partnerships with companies for internships, and Student Senate's student activities. The additional support services help students stay engaged.
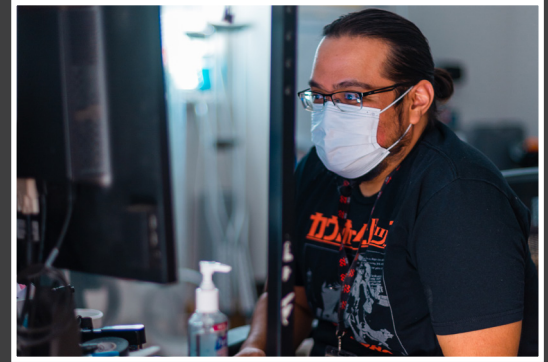
Navajo Technical University: 1994 Land-Grant Programs

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.

Navajo Technical University: NTU Land Grant/Extension is proud of the Safeguarding Natural Heritage Youth Program, a summer outreach enrichment program hosted annually since June 2013 and sponsored by USDA. Junior high and high school-aged children are accepted through a competitive, merit-based process from all backgrounds across the country to participate. Students learn about and are encouraged to pursue agriculture-related fields, including veterinary medicine, animal science, veterinary science, environmental science, natural resources, biology, and wildlife biology. USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service program personnel meet and present for the students, faculty, tribal organization personnel, and other inspiring groups. Native Americans are an underrepresented group within the USDA workforce; therefore, exposing these students to USDA career opportunities is highly beneficial.

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.

Navajo Technical University: Broadband and IT Progress & Challenges:

- The information technology office continues to expand the inventory of cellular mobile devices to ensure that all students needing these technologies have access to them. Continuous maintainence and upgrading wired and wireless network infrastructure at all NTU campuses. We have extended Wi-Fi services strategically around the new facilities that are placed on its campuses. This strategy ensures that Wi-Fi has a fiber optic link to the backbone of the wired network.
- In today's technological landscape, NTU pushes forward with innovative technology and applications of those technologies. The steady inventory of new software and hardware technologies at NTU is attributed to its administration's work to access technological focus funding. A new challenge has risen from within these developments, and cyber security concerns have started to drive this challenge more profound into the information technology offices of most of the tribal higher education organizations.
- Access to skilled labor is a challenge for all industries throughout this country. Information technology offices at the Tribal College and Universities are no different. These offices are now focusing on very advanced IT personnel such as cyber security engineers, database and ERP developers, and networking engineers, to name a few. NTU needs IT personnel with specific skill sets that can only be found outside the reservation. We are committed to the human resource techniques of developing talent within the office to external recruiting or contracting the skillset as a viable method to find that skilled information technology person.

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.

Navajo Technical University: Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation

The impacts on Navajo Technical University's (NTU) construction and maintenance projects are significant. The impacts start with limited housing for workers for construction projects, maintenance workers, and employees/faculty limiting the diversity of skilled workers at each of the campuses. The technical skill of workers needed to fill a modern campus with advancing building systems is high. A secondary impact is the base materials, or more manufactured explicitly outside the geographic radius of the campus, become problematic in the delivery of the supply chain. The most significant impact is electrical (HVAC) and plumbing goods manufactured outside the United States. Building HVAC systems at NTU are at the end-of-life stage, and the need becomes non-conducive to a learning environment. The geographic location of NTU's campus adds another layer of cost to delivery "to and from" shipping points, which adds to all construction projects.

Navajo Technical University (February 2023)