



Ahniwake Rose
President & CEO

MEMBERSHIP:

ALASKA

Iłisaḡvik College

ARIZONA

Diné College
San Carlos Apache College
Tohono O'odham Community College

CALIFORNIA

California Indian Nations College
California Tribal College

KANSAS

Haskell Indian Nations University

MICHIGAN

Bay Mills Community College
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College
Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College

MINNESOTA

Leech Lake Tribal College
Red Lake Nation College
White Earth Tribal and Community College

MONTANA

Aaniih Nakoda College
Blackfeet Community College
Chief Dull Knife College
Little Big Horn College
Fort Peck Community College
Salish Kootenai College
Stone Child College

NEBRASKA

Little Priest Tribal College
Nebraska Indian Community College

NEW MEXICO

Institute of American Indian Arts
Navajo Technical College
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute

NORTH DAKOTA

Cankdeska Cikana Community College
Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College
Sitting Bull College
Turtle Mountain College
United Tribes Technical College

OKLAHOMA

College of the Muscogee Nation

SOUTH DAKOTA

Oglala Lakota College
Sinte Gleska University
Sisseton Wahpeton College

WASHINGTON

Northwest Indian College

WISCONSIN

College of Menominee Nation
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa University

February 18, 2025

The Honorable Laura Jeanne Kelly
Kansas Governor
300 SW 10th Ave., Ste. 241S
Topeka, KS 6612-1590

RE: Urgent Action Needed to Address Terminations and Hiring Freezes at HINU

Dear Governor Kelly,

On behalf of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) and the 34 accredited Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) we represent, I write to express deep concern over the recent terminations of probationary employees at Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU) in Lawrence, Kansas. HINU is a federally operated institution, administered by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) at the Department of Interior, experiencing severe workforce reductions following the implementation of Executive Order (EO) 14210, Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative, and the accompanying memorandum issued by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on January 20, 2025. These federal directives have mandated an immediate hiring freeze and the termination of probationary employees, resulting in a devastating impact on the ability of HINU to serve Native students and communities effectively.

HINU is an essential institution that provides culturally relevant higher education opportunities for Native students. HINU serves over 1,052 American Indian and Alaska Native students from over 146 federally recognized Tribal Nations, offering two (2) certificate, ten (10) associate, and four (4) bachelor's degree programs, and almost 180 Full-time Equivalent (FTE) staff, essential to Tribal workforce development and self-determination. However, as a result of EO 14210 and the hiring freeze, HINU has already suffered substantial staff reductions – in the middle of the school year, no less – with 27 percent of HINU's workforce terminated, including vital instructors, support staff, and key leadership positions. Additionally, an estimated 25 percent of BIE staff responsible for providing essential educational support to HINU may also be impacted. These terminations threaten the institution's future and undermine the federal government's trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations.

The immediate consequences of these terminations are alarming. The abrupt reduction in workforce places HINU at significant risk of losing its accreditation. This scenario would have long-term consequences for students, funding, and institutional sustainability. The loss of faculty and support staff will



severely disrupt student services, including course offerings, academic advising, career counseling, and financial aid assistance, critical to student retention and success. Without urgent intervention, the ability of HINU to fulfill its mission and serve Native students will be severely damaged.

AIHEC urges your immediate action to protect HINU and ensure its continued operation. The hiring freeze must be lifted, and HINU must be granted an exemption from federal workforce reductions. HINU exists to help uphold the federal government's trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations, and the ongoing workforce reductions are a clear violation of those commitments. The terminated employees must be reinstated to restore institutional stability and prevent further harm to students and communities. Additionally, as the State Governor that hosts HINU, we urge you to issue a formal statement opposing these terminations and calling for an exemption from EO 14210 for all federally operated Tribal higher education institutions. We also request that you contact and engage with the White House, the United States DOGE Service, the Department of the Interior, and the Office of Personnel Management to advocate for immediate workforce protections for HINU. Furthermore, federal agencies must conduct Tribal Consultations with affected Tribes and their institutions to assess the grave impact caused by these actions entirely.

HINU is not just a federally operated college; it is an essential institution that serves Native students and directly contributes to Kansas's educational and economic well-being. We strongly urge you to take immediate action to secure an exemption from the hiring freeze and workforce reductions for HINU and all BIE-operated institutions. Please let us know how we can work together to protect HINU and the students they serve. Thank you for your leadership and attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Ahniwake Rose

Ahniwake Rose
President and CEO
The American Indian Higher Education Consortium

Cc: The Honorable Dr. Randy Watson, Commissioner, Kansas State Department of Education
The Honorable Ty Masterson, President, Kansas Senate
The Honorable Dan Hawkins, Speaker, Kansas House of Representatives