

**STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM
SUBMITTED TO THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HHS, EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES**

May 19, 2021

On behalf of the nation's 37 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), which collectively are the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), we thank you for the opportunity to share our FY 2022 funding requests. The following is a list of recommendations including Department, program, and funding requests.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION – OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

- Strengthening Institutions HEA Title III – Part A (Sec. 316): \$45,000,000 (discretionary)
- Perkins Career and Technical Education Programs (Sec. 117): \$15,000,000

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION – OFFICE OF INDIAN EDUCATION

- Indian Education Professional Development Program: \$20,000,000

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- Administration for Children and Families/Office of Head Start

TCU-Head Start Partnership Program: \$8,000,000 in existing funds

TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: SERVING STUDENTS ACROSS INDIAN COUNTRY AND RURAL AMERICA

Currently, 37 TCUs operate more than 75 campuses and sites in 16 states. TCU geographic boundaries encompass 80 percent of American Indian reservations and federal Indian trust lands. American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) TCU students represent more than 230 federally recognized Tribes and hail from more than 30 states. Nearly 80 percent of these students receive federal financial aid, and nearly half are first generation students. In total, TCUs serve over 160,000 American Indians, Alaska Natives, and other rural residents each year through a wide variety of academic and community-based programs. Funding cuts of any amount to even one TCU program would force TCUs to scale back vital programs and services

that students rely on to complete degree and certificate programs needed to succeed in their chosen career paths. Any reduction in funding will threaten TCU accreditation status and will further stretch overtaxed faculty and staff or result in cuts to faculty and staff. The following are justifications for TCU FY 2022 funding requests.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Strengthening Tribal Colleges (HEA Title III - Part A - Section 316): *TCUs urge the Subcommittee to provide \$45,000,000 for the Strengthening Tribal Colleges program (HEA Title III-Part A).*

The Strengthening Institutions HEA Title III program for TCUs (Section 316) is specifically designed to address the critical, unmet needs of AI/AN students and their communities. Through this program, TCUs are able to provide student support services, Native language preservation, basic upkeep of campus buildings and infrastructure, critical campus expansion, enterprise management systems, faculty for core courses, and other necessary elements for a quality educational experience. The Strengthening Institutions program provides formula-based aid to 35 TCUs through two funding sources: Part A discretionary funding (FY 2021, \$38.08 million) and Part F mandatory funding (FY 2020, \$28.2 million). In 2019, TCUs feared losing nearly half of Title III funding with the anticipated expiration of Part F funding. Fortunately, the “Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources to Education Act (P.L. 116-91) was signed in to law on December 20, 2019, permanently authorizing Part F mandatory funding at \$30 million for TCUs. Part A and Part F of the Title III program are essential in supporting institutional development and student services. ***We strongly urge the Subcommittee to fund the Strengthening Institutions HEA III Part A – TCU Program (Section 316) at \$45,000,000 million.***

Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Programs

Tribally Controlled Postsecondary Career and Technical Institutions: *AIHEC requests \$15,000,000 to fund grants under Sec. 117 of the Perkins Act.* Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act provides a competitively awarded grant opportunity for Tribally chartered career and technical institutions

(Sec.117), which provide critical workforce development and job creation, education, and training programs to AI/ANs from Tribes and communities with some of the highest unemployment rates in the nation.

Native American Career and Technical Education Program (NACTEP): NACTEP (Sec. 116) reserves 1.25 percent of appropriated funding to support AI/AN career and technical programs. The TCUs strongly urge the Subcommittee to continue to support NACTEP, which is vital to the continuation of career and technical education programs offered at TCUs that provide job training and certifications to remote reservation communities.

Office of Indian Education

Indian Education Professional Development Program: *AIHEC requests \$20,000,000 for grants to TCUs and other institutions of higher education.*

The Indian Education Professional Development Program, administered by the Office of Indian Education at the U.S. Department of Education, provides grants to institutions of higher education to prepare and train AI/ANs to serve as teachers and school administrators at elementary and secondary schools. There is a growing teacher shortage across the country, especially in urban and rural communities with high AI/AN populations, where teacher recruitment and retention pose unique challenges. In communities with teacher shortages, existing obstacles to student success such as inadequate facilities and limited broadband are further compounded by overcrowded classrooms. Targeted resources like the Indian Education Professional Development Program help address this shortage and ensure that AI/AN students receive high-quality elementary and secondary education.

Report Language Needed: Funding for two distinct activities is provided under the “Special Programs for Indian Children” account: the Indian Education Professional Develop Program and Native Youth Community Projects. Despite increased funding in 2016 to the overall account, increases were only provided to Native Youth Community Projects; the Indian Education Professional Development Program did not receive increased funding. In FY 2020, the Special Programs for Indian Children account received

\$67,993,000, of which \$13,668,000 was allocated for the Indian Education Professional Development Program. ***AIHEC requests specific report language in order to increase funding for the Indian Education Professional Development Program, at a minimum of \$20,000,000 in FY 2022.***

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH and HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS

Administration for Children and Families – Office of Head Start: Tribal Colleges and Universities

Head Start Partnership Program: *AIHEC requests \$8,000,000 for the TCU-Head Start Partnership*

program. The TCU-Head Start Partnership program was re-established with the designation of \$4,000,000

within the FY 2020 LHHS appropriations bill and continued with \$4,000,000 within the FY 2021 LHHS

appropriations bill. TCUs have had marked success in training early childhood educators and Head Start

teachers who are urgently needed across Indian Country. In 2017, 74.5 percent of Head Start teachers

nationwide held a bachelor's degree as required by federal law; but *less than 42 percent* of Head Start

teachers met the requirement in Indian Country (Head Start Region 11); only 70 percent of workers in

Region 11 met the associate-level requirements or were enrolled in associate's degree programs,

compared to 90 percent nationally. TCUs are the most cost-effective way for filling this gap. From 2000 to

2007, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provided modest funding for the TCU-Head Start

Program (42 U.S.C. 9843g), which helped TCUs build capacity in early childhood education by providing

scholarships and stipends for Indian Head Start teachers and teacher aides to enroll in TCU early

childhood/elementary education programs. Before the program ended in 2007 (ironically, the same year

that Congress specifically authorized the program in the reauthorization of the Head Start Act), TCUs had

trained more than 400 Head Start workers and teachers, many of whom have since left for higher paying

jobs in elementary schools. Today, TCUs such as Salish Kootenai College (Pablo, MT) are providing

culturally based early childhood education free of charge to local Head Start professionals. In Michigan,

Bay Mills Community College provides online education programming for \$50/credit to Head Start staff

nationwide. However, many Head Start programs in Indian Country are paying far more for other sources to

provide training. With the restoration and continuation of this modestly funded program, TCUs can aid in building an early childhood education workforce to better serve the education needs of AI/AN children.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

NEW Tribal College and University Centers for Excellence in Behavioral Health/Substance Abuse

Prevention: AIHEC requests \$10,000,000 to establish this program. The goal of the TCU Centers of Excellence program, similar to an existing SAMHSA program for HBCUs, is to grow a highly skilled and culturally competent AI/AN behavioral health workforce by developing an apprenticeship-based network of TCUs and partners from the health industry and local, Tribal, state, and regional providers. The TCU Centers of Excellence would share best practices in curriculum development, program implementation, and apprenticeships; recruit students to careers in behavioral health fields to address mental and substance use disorders; provide job training in behavioral health fields; and prepare students to earn credentials in behavioral health fields. The TCU Centers of Excellence would emphasize education, awareness, workforce training, and preparation for careers in mental and substance use treatment, prevention, and research, including addressing opioid abuse prevention, opioid use disorder treatment, serious mental illness, and suicide prevention.

Conclusion

Tribal Colleges and Universities provide thousands of AI/AN students with access to high-quality, culturally appropriate, postsecondary education opportunities, including critical early childhood education and behavioral health programs. The modest federal investment in TCUs has paid great dividends in terms of employment, education, and economic development. We ask you to renew your commitment to help move our students and communities toward self-sufficiency and request your full consideration of our FY 2022 appropriations requests. Thank you.