

Detrimental Impacts of 2024 Budget Cuts on Tribal Colleges & Universities



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In response to the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 budget cuts to Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) of up to 22 percent, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) surveyed the 35 accredited member TCUs to gauge the potential impact of these severe cuts. Every TCU reported that no area of their college will be exempt. Already operating on tight budgets, no TCU will be able to absorb these reductions without dealing a detrimental blow to their students, faculty, staff, and the communities they serve. After demonstrating incredible resiliency throughout the pandemic, it would be tragic for our colleges to face cuts jeopardizing their existence.

Every TCU Would Face

Significant cuts to faculty. With several Tribal Colleges already operating with just one full time-faculty per department, these **reductions mean closing entire programs or areas of study.** The loss of faculty also means limiting the direct connection that students may have with the college, as our faculty serve as both instructors & mentors. Without these faculty members, retention would suffer, even beyond the programs that would be shut down entirely. Reducing staff by this amount in tribal lands **would also exacerbate the already staggeringly high rates of unemployment in Indian Country, which is as high as 29 percent in some communities.**

Online learning and IT operations reduced. IT operations will be significantly impacted at every school, resulting in the inability to replace outdated cyber-infrastructure and an increase in our TCUs' and students' vulnerability to cyber attacks, ransomware threats, and targeted phishing operations. On an average-sized TCU campus, **the cost of recovery from one ransomware attack ranges from \$200,000 to \$400,000.** In addition, critical online learning platforms that have increased flexibility in class schedules and have directly led to increased enrollment will be impaired by limitations on their upgrade and maintenance.

Reduced academic opportunities and student services. Programs, including tutoring, counseling, and financial aid, all designed to support first generation and low income students will be cut. By reducing or eliminating these programs, persistence and graduation will be directly impacted. Also, **of specific concern to our colleges would be the need to scale back direct and referral services for mental health.** Recent studies have shown that American Indian and Alaska Native students have the highest rates of lifetime depressive episodes and suicide attempts in the country making the need for predictable, stable mental health services on campus a necessity.

Concerns for student safety. Student safety was a concern for every TCU as they indicated the need to **reduce campus security by as much as 50 percent.** With higher per capita rates of violence than those of the general population, reducing campus security by this amount would be a national concern.

Additional loss in revenue. Through cuts to student and academic services, **funding reductions will have a reverberating impact on student enrollment,** resulting in an additional loss in revenue.

New Mexico Specifically Noted

- The Institute of American Indian Arts Museum of Contemporary Native Arts is internationally acclaimed and was named the third-best art museum in the country by USA Today. The proposed budget cut will result in staff reductions, limited open hours, the suspension of exhibition programming, closing areas to the public, and curtailing community programming. Reductions to security and facility staffing could place museum assets at risk.
- Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute is concerned that they will be forced to close down residential services and potentially only enroll students who can commute.
- Funding cuts will cause either a forced layoff of over 30 full-time employees or an overall 20 percent reduction in salaries, exasperating the already existing challenge of competing for talented staff with the larger universities and national labs located in New Mexico.
- Cuts will result in the elimination of at least one graduate program and curtailing others severely, impacting an estimated 50 graduate students.
- Preventative maintenance on building components (e.g., HVAC, drainage, etc.) will come to a standstill, placing millions of dollars worth of capital infrastructure in jeopardy.





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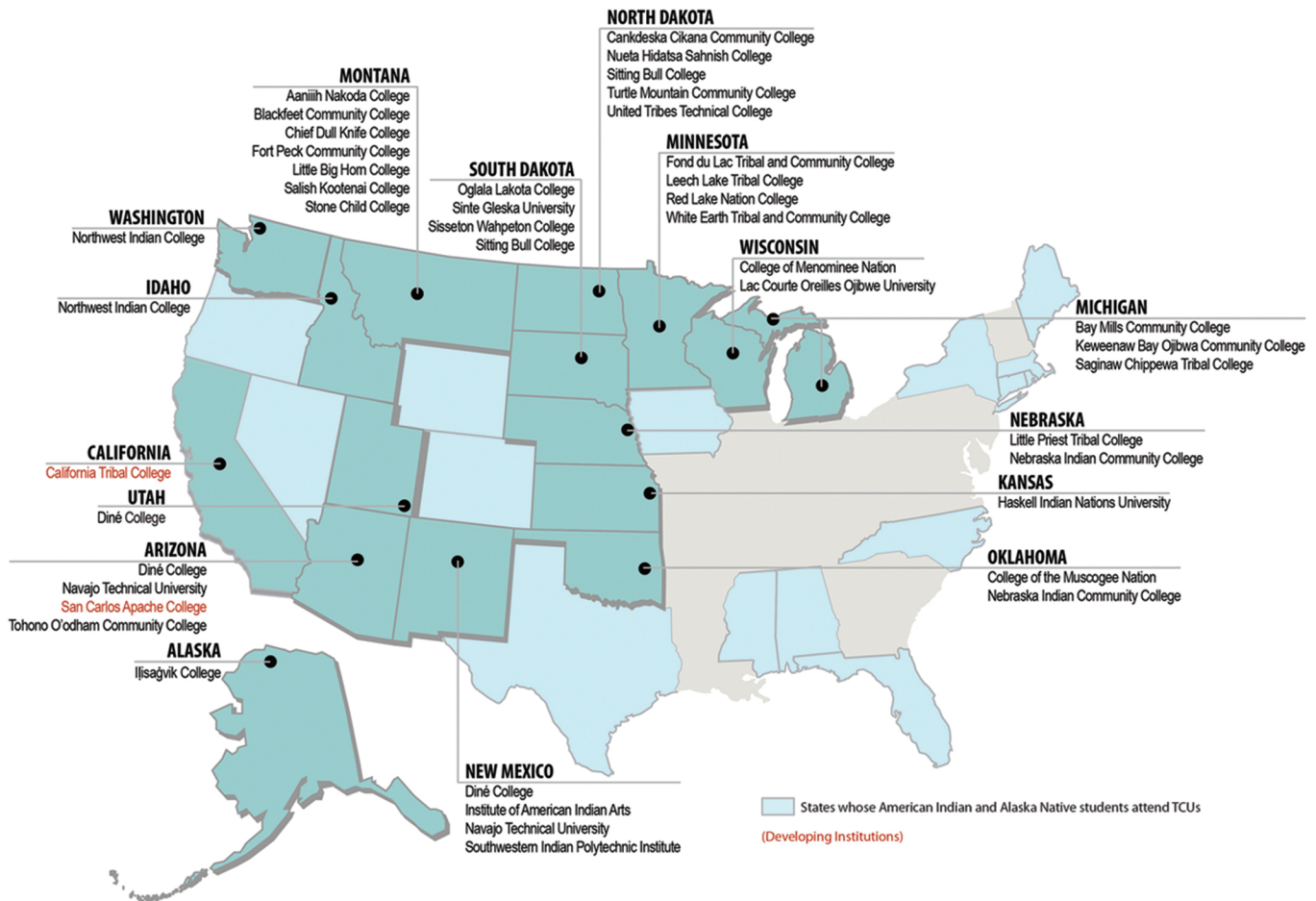
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ABOUT AIHEC

AIHEC is the collective spirit and unifying voice of our nation's Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). AIHEC provides leadership and influences public policy on American Indian higher education issues through advocacy, research, and program initiatives; promotes and strengthens indigenous languages, cultures, communities, and tribal nations; and through its unique position, serves member institutions and emerging TCUs.

ABOUT TRIBAL COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) are chartered by their respective tribal governments, including the ten tribes within the largest reservations in the United States. The 35 accredited TCUs operate more than 90 campuses and sites in 15 states — covering most of Indian Country — and serve students from well more than 250 federally recognized Indian tribes. TCUs vary in enrollment (size), focus (liberal arts, sciences, workforce development/training), location (woodlands, desert, frozen tundra, rural reservation, urban), and student population (predominantly American Indian). However, tribal identity is the core of every TCU, and they all share the mission of tribal self-determination and service to their respective communities.



For more information contact:

Ahniwake Rose, Vice President of Congressional/Federal Relations
arose@aihec.org

American Indian Higher Education Consortium
121 Oronoco St., Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 838-0400