

Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College (KBOCC): TCU Ongoing Challenges During COVID-19 Pandemic

117th Congress – February 2021

Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), KBOCC received urgently needed funding to move classes online to the extent possible and begin to address tremendous digital divide challenges. We were also able to provide emergency grants, equipment, and tuition assistance to our students to help them stay enrolled in classes. As we continue to support students during this difficult time and plan for onsite classes, our needs are growing. To address current pandemic-related challenges and plan for an uncertain future, TCUs need your ongoing support.

CARES and CRRSAA Funds at KBOCC

- Direct payments to students for assistance
- Technology and software for students, faculty, and staff
- Distance learning supplies and fees
- Personal protective equipment and sanitation supplies
- IT Upgrades for increased server use and speed
- IT support fees

KBOCC had to do many upgrades to support distance learning platforms. Our servers were very outdated, and everything needed to be upgraded.



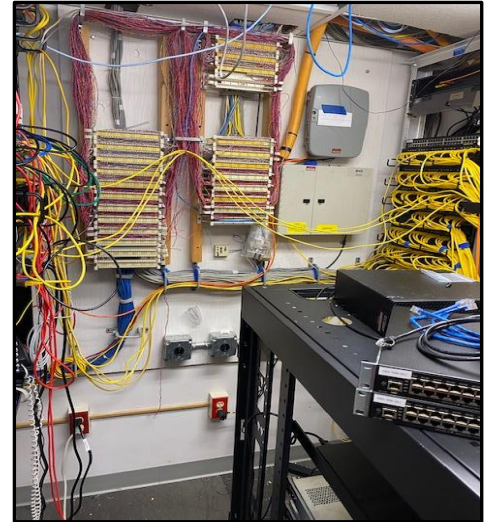
Ongoing Challenges at KBOCC

- CARES Act and CRRSAA grant performance period is too short
- Authorized uses need to be expanded to include all needs of the college including operational expenses
- Ongoing student support such as staff, technology, transportation, and food security
- Student emergency aid funding
- Professional development opportunities for employees

We implemented a laptop program for our students. Once a student successfully complete 30 semester hours or earns 30 points by participating in activities such as attending one tutoring session (3 points), the laptop will be free to that student. Being in a rural area our students face many challenges to academic success such internet connectivity, transportation, and high unemployment rates. For example, one of our students attended class during the pandemic by standing outside the college building to connect to the wi-fi. This student did not have an internet connection at home. This is evidence of the need for broadband connectivity for student use. Other items that need to be addressed are student transportation and housing needs.

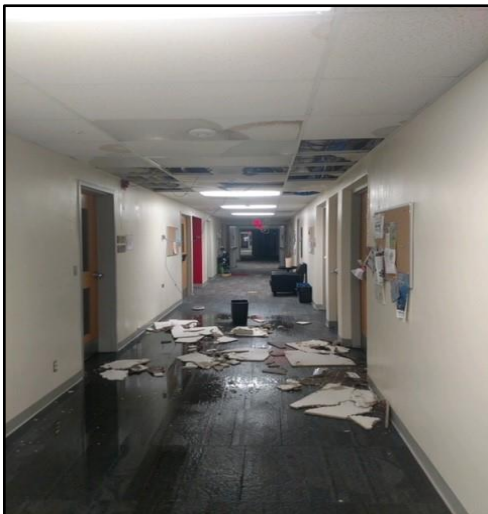
REQUEST: \$24 TCU IT Service Fund: USDA – Rural Utility Service

The ongoing pandemic has exacerbated the digital divide and homework gap and underscored the lack of broadband access across Indian Country. To address these deficiencies, Congress should establish a *permanent TCU IT Service Fund* within the existing (and previously under-used) **USDA-Rural Utilities Service Program**. An annual \$24 million set-aside for TCUs, which are the 1994 Land-grant institutions, is needed to cover ongoing equipment costs, maintenance and upkeep, infrastructure expansion, and IT staffing. If TCUs had adequate funding for IT service and infrastructure support, they would have already put in place many of the community-based mobile hot spots needed to address the “homework gap” on many reservations.



KBOCC: Broadband and IT Challenges

- 68 percent of Americans on rural Tribal lands lack access to fixed broadband, according to a 2016 FCC Broadband Progress Report.
- 31 of 35 accredited TCUs serve as community libraries.
- Industry standard for IT equipment replacement is 3-5 years. At TCUs, the average IT equipment replacement timeline is 8.29 years.
- Bandwidth is critical to the success of hardware initiatives providing ubiquitous access to learning, such as Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and 1:1 laptop and tablet programs.
- Reliable broadband is essential to making the most of online resources and opportunities for faculty professional development.
- Moving to online courses increased the need for qualified IT services to assist all students, staff, and faculty.
- Free wi-fi access locations are limited and require transportation. Our area does not have public transportation services.



REQUEST: \$500 million TCU Construction Fund: DOI – Bureau of Indian Education

A recent AIHEC survey of TCUs revealed a list of chronic facilities-related maintenance and rehabilitation needs, including student and faculty housing, classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. The TCUs have an estimated total need of \$489.75 million in deferred maintenance and rehabilitation and need \$837 million to fully implement existing master plans. A dedicated TCU deferred construction and maintenance/rehabilitation fund through the DOI-BIE would help meet the 21st century needs of *all* TCUs, including technology-enabled facilities; campus renovations; IT infrastructure; and facilities necessary for career, technical, and pipeline programs.

KBOCC: Facilities Needs -- Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation

KBOCC continues to have major challenges on our campus', our buildings are older and to continue maintenance is so costly that we must put it off. As you can see from the picture above, pipes froze this past month and caused a lot of damage to one of our wings. If we had sufficient funding, we could avoid these costly emergency repairs. When the building was built, pipes and coils were put in places they should not have been installed causing a lot of issues now. We must go through our whole building and replace or install new pipes in places where the pipes won't freeze.