

Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College



Odawa-zaaga'iganing
Lac Courte Oreilles

Mashkii-zibiing
Bad River

Waaswaaganing
Lac du Flambeau

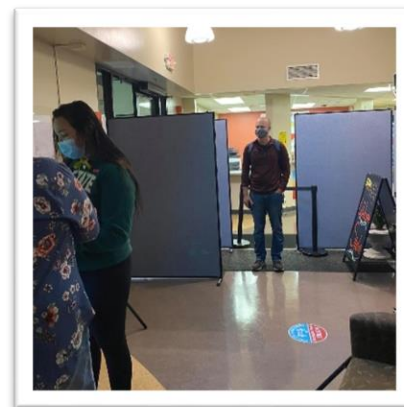
Miskwabiikong
Red Cliff

Mitaawangaag
St. Croix

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), **Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College** received urgently needed funding to move classes to a virtual environment 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 support 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 supported:

- Student emergency aid
- Major IT upgrades which included installation of fiber optics
- Laptops and computers to students, staff, and faculty
- Personal protective and sanitation equipment/supplies
- Rehabilitation of campus to correct health and safety issues
- Installation of stand-by generator



The CARES and CRRSAA funds have and will provide the college with the resources needed to ensure our students are able to continue their educational path. With these resources the college was able to greatly improve its ability to provide online instruction and correct many health and safety issues with its campus. These improvements have and will improve indoor air quality and ensure faculty are able to deliver course work virtually by upgrading and installing new Audio-Visual equipment. Several areas of the college campus that were deemed uninhabitable or undersized were repaired or remodeled to ensure social distancing requirements.

In partnership with our students, Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College faculty and staff continually identify opportunities to improve services and support to the college's students. Issues that surface time and again include available housing, childcare, accessible internet, and the ever-growing need to support mental health and AODA counseling. When students are unable to attend their classes or withdraw, the reason can typically be tied back to these four issues:

- Affordable housing
- Childcare
- Internet access
- Mental health care

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Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College relies on the unitarization of Zoom technology to provide instruction at five sites simultaneously. The reliability of internet providers is one of our challenges. While at some of our sites we can build in redundancies, at one of our Outreach Sites we do not have access to reliable internet in general. Students, faculty, and staff face similar challenges when engaging with the college virtually or remotely. There are many places in the communities that we serve that do not have any kind of internet access, and in other places, internet service is limited.



Lastly, the college is in desperate need of adequate funding to address the deferred maintenance backlog. Although the CARES Act and CRRSAA appropriations have provided funds to address some of the most concerning areas, the college still requires additional stable funding in the following areas:

- Construction of a new campus with student, faculty, and staff housing
- HVAC upgrades
- New buildings for outreach sites
- Complete interior campus renovations
- Civil work
- Vocational trades facilities



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.

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.