

Ongoing TCU 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), **NUETA HIDATSA SAHNISH COLLEGE** 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 NHS COLLEGE

- Direct student financial aid and ongoing support
- Safety/Sanitation: new entry protocols across campus
- IT Upgrades: transitioned to a laptop institution
- Classroom changes/physically distant set up for CTE classrooms to allow for social distancing and contact tracing protocols
- Professional development for faculty and staff to support distance learning



Throughout the COVID Pandemic, NHSC has made several changes through our IT department by instituting a campus-wide changeover to a laptop institution, as well as, completing our IT evaluation to update our overall IT infrastructure. The move to a laptop campus allows for both faculty/staff and students to be able to access everything that our campus provides while our campus is still closed due to the pandemic. In addition, we are now moving over to Microsoft Suite, which will allow us to access Microsoft Teams going forward. Currently, we are using Zoom for our classes and campus-wide meetings. While Zoom works well, we want to ensure that we have a better solution, which is where Microsoft Suite comes into play. Through the CARES Act funding, we have been able to provide financial support to our students and are looking to provide another round of financial support to our students in spring 2021.



Ongoing Challenges at NHS COLLEGE

- Emotional, mental, and behavioral health concerns
- Ongoing student support needs – emergency funding, more assistance with virtual learning environment
- Internet concerns for our students and faculty
- Increased costs/time for faculty due to shift to virtual instruction

The COVID pandemic has hit hard on the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nations. We have lost many people during this time, and the effects are long-lasting on our community and our students. Mental health is a big concern, and while we have partnered with Icognito as a solution to help our students, our students and our staff/faculty still have additional needs. Our campus has been closed since COVID first hit, which has put stress on faculty and students. We will continue to find additional training to support our faculty with virtual learning, and we have augmented our student success meetings to assist students in any way we can throughout this continued pandemic.

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

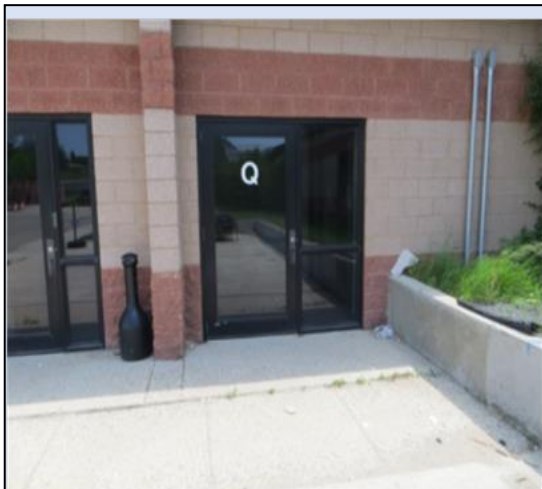
The ongoing pandemic has exacerbated the digital divide and homework gap and underscored the lack of broadband access across Indian Country. To address these deficiencies, Congress should establish a *permanent TCU IT Service Fund* within the existing (and previously under-used) **USDA-Rural Utilities 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.



NUETA HIDATSA SAHNISH COLLEGE: 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. This statement holds true for much of the Mandan Hidatsa Arikara (MAH) Nation.

- NHSC serves as a library for the community and surrounding area. Additional computers and wi-fi access would expand opportunities and access for community members.
- Many students and employees use cell phones as hotspots due to lack of access to fixed bandwidth
- Reliable access to bandwidth is critical for students, faculty and staff to learn and work in the digital environment.



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.

NUETA HIDATSA SAHNISH COLLEGE: Facilities Needs -- Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation

Ongoing CONSTRUCTION challenges at NHSC include: deferred maintenance due to lack of resources, classrooms too small for physical distancing, and sidewalks and parking lot in need of repairs. All of these challenges could be remediated if sufficient funding was made available for Tribal Colleges to access.

- Main campus building needs retrofitting to allow for improved ventilation systems
- Building space needs to be updated/reconfigured to allow for social distancing in classrooms and offices
- Sidewalks need repair to prevent further water damage and tripping hazards
- Parking lots need to be resurfacing
- Landscaping needs to be updated to allow for proper drainage