# SAN CARLOS APACHE COLLEGE

*The Higher Education Institution of the San Carlos Apache Tribe*

## San Carlos Apache College: *TCU Ongoing Challenges During COVID-19 Pandemic*
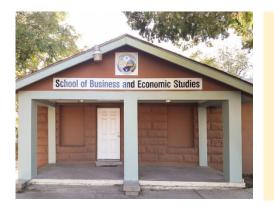117th Congress – February 2021

Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), San Carlos Apache College (through Tohono O'odham Community College, under whom it operates as a site), received urgently needed funding to move classes fully online and to 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 San Carlos Apache College**
- Direct aid payments to students
- IT upgrades: Network infrastructure, security cameras, remote IT support for students and faculty
- Outdoor study areas
- Quality Matters courses for faculty teaching online
- Regularly scheduled professional cleanings of spaces
- Touchless faucets, hot water installation
- Planned purchase of large, modular classrooms to allow social distancing for the foreseeable future



With the abrupt shift to exclusively online instruction in light of COVID, many changes have taken place starting in 2020. IT infrastructure was upgraded to enable greater network reliability, campus security, and remote monitoring. All faculty were required to update their course content for online delivery, in many cases utilizing Zoom to facilitate lectures and discussions, and provided with opportunities and incentives to take Quality Matters courses to improve their skills in online instruction. Students were given direct aid in the form of grocery store gift cards and laptops. Our buildings are regularly cleaned professionally as a COVID mitigation tactic, and outdoor study areas were built around campus to allow for social distancing.



**Ongoing Challenges at San Carlos Apache College**
- Need greater community access to broadband Internet
- Need larger skilled IT workforce and technology upgrades to account for increased reliance on online teaching and learning
- Need for student study areas and safe, quiet learning environments
- Need physical and digital library resources to support remote learning
- Need instructional design staff to support faculty new to online courses
- Too many restrictions on use: Authorized uses need to be expanded to include construction and retrofitting of facilities

Ongoing challenges for our campus are difficult to address due to restrictions in authorized uses of emergency funds that prohibit SCAC from addressing long term needs such as the need for construction. Other unmet needs include space and resources to address the emotional, behavioral, and mental health of students, faculty, and staff, and the demands of increasing enrollment facilities which are inadequate to support to support socially-distanced learning.

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

The 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.

**San Carlos Apache College: Broadband and IT Challenges**
- Many students still face challenges retaining access to reliable Internet connectivity off-campus. Our various laptop distribution programs still require students to get online in order to participate in class meetings and coursework. Limited residential Internet options often proved to be inadequate for reliable participation in Zoom classes, etc.
- Even many faculty lack Internet speeds off-campus to reliably hold Zoom classes and upload video course materials. Many faculty also lack background in online teaching, and would benefit from additional training in best practices.
- San Carlos community library to be absorbed and operated by Apache College, requiring all-new IT infrastructure.
- Need for continued improvements and upgrades for remote IT management, network redundancy, security practices.



***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.

**San Carlos Apache College: Facilities Needs – Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation**

San Carlos Apache College does not have a college campus in the traditional sense. The College is housed in several old tribal buildings that are in disrepair and that were never intended to be instructional facilities. Before the pandemic, SCAC had 5 rooms used as classrooms, with only one large classroom that could seat over 20 people. The others could only accommodate 19, 18, 16, and 6 students. To maintain social distancing for the foreseeable future, SCAC desperately needs funding to expand its facilities so that course caps can be at reasonable numbers and so that SCAC can meet growing student demand. Offices are small and some staff have to double up in the same office. There are no common areas where students can congregate, study, or socialize indoors. The roof of the main building leaks and there is no funding to replace it; two buildings are in serious need of retrofitting and rehabilitation. Sidewalks are inadequate and concrete needs to be laid in many areas to improve the facilities. SCAC has no science labs, which limits the kinds of programs it can offer. Our College can achieve much, and more quickly, with adequate and safe facilities. Instead, SCAC expends scarce funds on short-term fixes to long-term facilities issues.