

PRIORITIES OF THE TRIBAL COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (TCUs): *STUDENT CENTERED FOR STUDENT SUCCESS*

REQUEST—Equity for TCUs: Address long-term TCU inequalities in federal programs. Beginning in the FY2017 Budget/Appropriations cycle, we need a commitment to **(A) Identify current funding inequities** faced by TCUs in federal programs; and **(B) Take aggressive steps to ensure equitable TCU participation in Federal IHE programs.** Congress needs to ensure, through legislation, TCU participation in all federally funded programs administered by states and open to IHE. Because TCUs are located primarily on federal trust land, unless Congress expressly asserts that states must include TCUs in federal programs, or specific funding is set aside for TCUs, there is no guarantee that TCUs will participate in these federally funded, state-administered programs open to other IHEs. Specifically, an additional \$1,280 per Indian Student (ISC) is needed to reach full TCU Act funding for the first time since the Act was funded 35 years ago. We ask Congress for an additional \$19.5 million to fully fund these most deserving - and historically underfunded - *TRIBAL* institutions of higher education AND provide sufficient funding so that all of the TCUs can start each academic year with adequate funding appropriated and available. Funding of the Tribal College Act at \$8,000/Indian student and adequate institutional operations funding for six other TCUs, is justified.

JUSTIFICATIONS: Our 1994 Land-Grant status is important because as American Indians, land is central to who we are. Yet, the TCU (1994) land-grant programs are disproportionately small compared to other land-grant institutions. For example, in FY2016:

- **Extension:** 1994s (34 TCUs) = \$4.45M (competitive) 1862s (state) = \$300M 1890s (18 HBCUs) = \$46M
- **Research:** 1994s = \$1.8M (competitive) 1862s = \$243.7M 1890s = \$52.5M (minimum \$1M each)

Additionally, the 1994s are the only land-grant institutions barred from accessing over \$85.5M in Smith-Lever 3(d) grant program funding.

All schools/colleges receiving operating funds from the Department of the Interior are forward funded except three TCUs. These colleges face the same financial issues as others; yet other schools/colleges begin each academic year with the full year's funding in hand. These TCUs rely completely on the federal government for basic operations, so even if appropriations were available at the start of a fiscal year, the academic year would have started two months earlier. Given perennial delay in appropriations, the three TCUs struggle to operate for 5-7 months before funding is available. A one-time \$20M appropriation is needed to transfer their funding to an academic schedule, so that these colleges, like all other DoI schools/colleges will receive their annual operating grant in July, prior to the start of the academic year. Some people do not like to hear such comparisons. Yet, these are the facts.

REQUEST – Recognize Uniqueness of Our Students: Participation in the Federal student loan program must remain voluntary at the institution level

JUSTIFICATIONS: TCUs are the most affordable institutions in higher education and very few TCUs currently participate in federal student loan programs. Some TCUs are beginning to explore the federal loan programs, as more are offering an increasing number of bachelor's and master's degrees. However, TCUs work hard to keep tuition low to allow their students, especially those planning to seek advanced degrees, to graduate without debt. That goal, along with limited institutional resources to administer loan programs, has led the vast majority of TCUs to avoid federal student loans. Mandating loan program participation and tying institutional Title IV eligibility to loan performance metrics will unnecessarily impede Native and other low-income students from pursuing, let alone achieving, higher education goals. TCUs need flexibility to create aid programs that meet the needs of their students and communities.

REQUEST- Honor Treaties & Tribal Sovereignty: Hold TCUs harmless from cuts, including future sequestration

JUSTIFICATION: Across-the-board cuts undermine the treaty and trust obligations to American Indian tribal governments rooted in the federal government's unique relationship and responsibility to recognized tribal nations. Continuing to operate with reduced funding – as demand for access increases – is catastrophic for TCUs that have operated since inception on austere budgets. Our students, faculty, and communities rank among the nation's poorest. TCUs are not seeking a handout. We are only asking that Congress hold harmless the nation's only Tribal institutions of higher education. We urge Congress to uphold the federal responsibility to meet the higher education needs of Native students by restoring all TCU programs to the FY2010 levels as the growth base and in doing so; begin to eliminate added barriers to success for this historically overlooked population.