

TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: PHASE 4 COVID-19 RELIEF & ECONOMIC RELIEF NEEDS: INFRASTRUCTURE: IT INFRASTRUCTURE/ONLINE EDUCATION & DEFERRED MAINTENANCE/REHABILITATION April 2020

CONGRESS MUST ADDRESS CRITICAL TCU IT INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

The USDA-Rural Utilities Service provides funding to support a variety of critical infrastructure improvements in rural communities including telecommunications and broadband services. Congress should establish a permanent \$16 million per year set aside for TCUs under the USDA-Rural Utilities Service to better serve TCUs, as rural, community-based, and under-resourced institutions. Over the past several years, telecommunications and broadband funding has gone unused under the RUS program. A permanent \$16 million set-aside for TCUs, which are 1994 Land-grant institutions served by USDA, could be established at no additional cost using existing funds.



- Any program to provide tax credits to existing Internet Service Providers for providing free internet access to students provides little to no help in Indian Country because the IT infrastructure does not exist: 68 percent of Americans on rural Tribal lands lack access to fixed broadband, according to a 2016 FCC Broadband Progress Report.
- 32 TCUs are located in rural or remote areas. For these TCUs, lack of choice of internet service providers exist, driving up costs.
- 31 of 35 accredited TCUs serve as community libraries.
- At some TCUs, more than half the students have NO internet access at home, making online education impossible at present.
- TCUs have more expensive and, on average, much slower internet connectivity than other U.S. institutions of higher education. Average TCU connectivity speed is 336 mbps, compared to 513 mbps (2-year IHE) and 3.5 gbps (4-year IHE). **Iłisaġvik College, a TCU, has the *most expensive and slowest* Internet connectivity in the entire U.S. higher education system.**
- Industry standard for IT equipment replacement is 3-5 years. At TCUs, the average IT equipment replacement timeline is 8.29 years.
- Reliable broadband is essential to making the most of online resources and opportunities for faculty professional development.



TCU DEFERRED MAINTENANCE & REHABILITATION NEEDS (TRIBALLY CONTROLLED COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES ASSISTANCE ACT, "TCU ACT")

- TCUs have a documented need of **nearly \$500 million** in deferred maintenance and campus rehabilitation needs.
 - TCUs have a documented need of **more than \$800 million** to complete existing master plans.
 - Despite 40-year-old statutory authority, Congress has never funded the BIE's TCU Construction/Rehabilitation program.
 - Aside from two federal TCUs, TCUs have no dedicated facilities construction/maintenance line in the Interior budget. Repairs and upkeep come out of operating budgets, robbing funds from student support, curriculum development, libraries, and more.
- **TCUs need a \$500 million Deferred Maintenance/Rehabilitation Fund in a COVID-19 Stimulus bill:** 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 deferred maintenance and rehabilitation fund for TCUs in the U.S. Department of the Interior would help the 21st century needs of *all* TCUs, including technology-enabled facilities; campus renovations; IT infrastructure; and facilities necessary for career, technical, and pipeline programs. Attached is a spreadsheet of TCU immediate (and master plan) needs.