

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT REAUTHORIZATION PROPOSALS: TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

116th Congress – February 2020

As Congress reauthorizes the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA), the nation's 37 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), who are the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), propose two new programs and modifications to two existing programs to help TCUs and their tribal communities achieve their vision of *Strong Sovereign Tribal Nations Through Excellence in TRIBAL Higher Education*.

TCU NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGE VITALIZATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM (HEA-TITLE III)

This new program would authorize:

- Critically needed curriculum development and design; academic and community-based instruction
- Professional development for TCU faculty and PK-12 teachers
- Native American language research, including innovations in evidence-based PK-12 curriculum delivery
- \$20 million in competitive grant funding per year
- Includes TCUs, AN/NH serving institutions



Sinte Gleska University

Once a language is gone, the traditional knowledge it carries is lost forever. The U.S. faces an endangered languages emergency – barely 15 percent of Native languages still in use in the U.S. are spoken as first languages and several languages are only used by only a handful of speakers. AIHEC proposes a new competitive grant program to promote the preservation, revitalization, relevance, and use of endangered American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian languages. Language and culture are at the heart of the mission of each TCU, and they are among the earliest leaders of Native language preservation and vitalization efforts in the U.S. However, despite the promise shown by TCU American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) language preservation efforts, minimal federal and private sector resources are available to support these critical activities and explore new innovate strategies. AIHEC recommends the establishment of a new program to provide resources to TCUs – as well as Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian serving institutions - to support these time-sensitive efforts.



Northwest Indian College

STRENGTHENING GRADUATE OPPORTUNITIES AT TCUS (HEA-TITLE III)

This new program would authorize:

- Development and enhancement of graduate-level professional certifications and degree programs at TCUs
- Mentoring, scholarships, and fellowships for students pursuing graduate certification and degrees at TCUs
- Curriculum development, faculty development, and student research
- \$5 million in competitive grant funding annually
- Provisions consistent with existing programs for HBCUs and HSIs

This competitive grant program for TCUs would expand graduate certification and degree attainment for AI/ANs in high demand fields that are essential to tribal nation building and economic sustainability. In recent years, the capacity of TCUs to provide higher education has grown, as have the needs of tribes that TCUs serve. More TCUs are developing graduate-level programs in education administration, research methodologies, environmental science, tribal policy and management, health professions, engineering, and computer science. To support changing community demands and capacity, TCUs need this program, which is modeled after successful HEA-Title III programs for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Predominately Black Institutions (PBIs), and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).



Iḷisaḡvik College

TCU FACILITIES STUDY AND INFRASTRUCTURE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

(TRIBALLY CONTROLLED COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES ASSISTANCE ACT, "TCU ACT")

This update of the TCU Act would:

- Direct the Department of the Interior to report on TCU facilities
- Help support new libraries, classrooms, student and faculty housing
- Fund renovation and expansion of existing facilities
- Support equipment, broadband improvements, library collections
- \$35 million in competitive grant funding per year

In 1978, Congress directed the U.S. Department of the Interior to conduct a study of the facilities needs of TCUs. Forty-one years later, the study still has not been completed, nor has the construction program ever been funded. In 2018, AIHEC conducted a survey of 22 TCUs, which revealed a list of chronic facilities-related needs, including student and faculty housing, classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. The 22 TCUs have an estimated total need of \$332.5 million in deferred maintenance and rehabilitation and need \$558 million to fully implement existing master plans. The goal of TCU Act's facilities provisions remains important, but the existing language is outdated. The Department needs to be held accountable for completing a meaningful study of TCU facilities. The existing program needs to be updated to support the 21st century needs of *all* TCUs, including technology-enabled facilities; campus renovations; IT infrastructure; and facilities necessary for career, technical, and pipeline programs.

FEDERAL E-RATE PROGRAM SHOULD INCLUDE TCUS (COMMUNICATIONS ACT OF 1934)

The federal E-Rate program, known as the School and Library Program of the Universal Services Fund and authorized by the Telecommunications Act of 1996, provides discounts to help schools and libraries secure affordable telecommunications and internet access. The program is particularly important for rural America. In 2016, the E-Rate program helped connect 53.6 million students to the internet and provided discounts for Wi-Fi connections and high-speed data lines to 120,000 school buildings and more than 4,000 library systems nationwide. TCUs, as rural, community-based, and under-resourced institutions, should be designated eligible to participate in the E-Rate program.



College of Menominee Nation

Why do TCUs need E-Rate?

- 32 TCUs are located in rural or remote areas. For these TCUs, few choices of internet service providers exist, driving up costs.
- 68 percent of Americans on rural Tribal lands lack access to fixed broadband, according to a 2016 FCC Broadband Progress Report.
- 31 of 35 accredited TCUs serve as community libraries.
- 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). **Iḷisaḡvik 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.
- Bandwidth is critical to the success of hardware initiatives providing ubiquitous access to learning, such as Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and 1:1 laptop and tablet programs.
- Reliable broadband is essential to making the most of online resources and opportunities for faculty professional development.

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