



American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 121 Oronoco Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

## TCU Student Emergency Aid Fund – A lifeline for TCU Students

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### Emergency Financial Aid for Students – A lifeline for TCU Students

The current COVID-19 crisis is jeopardizing the educational success and well-being of thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native students attending Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). AIHEC respectfully requests a specific emergency set-aside of **\$40 million/year** for a TCU Student Emergency Financial Aid Grant Fund at the nation’s 37 Tribal Colleges and Universities, with flexibility for the Secretary of Education to design a program in consultation with TCUs to ensure that it meets the needs of Native students.

**Supporting Students in Response to Coronavirus Act (H.R. 6276/S. 3476): Amendment Need to Existing Emergency Student Financial Aid Program:** Any Emergency Student Financial Aid provision (e.g. section 4 of S. 3476) included in an emergency COVID-19 funding measure should include a specific set-aside of \$40 million/year for TCUs, to ensure that citizens of their chartering tribes, to whom the U.S. government has certain treaty obligations and a trust responsibility, receive desperately needed support.

The history of federal program participation shows that small, under-resourced TCUs are not competitive in pools where they must compete with large state and private institutions. Most TCUs do not even have sponsored programs office or full time grant writers. Yet, we know that emergency aid is critically important to TCU students, and that it is extremely effective.

In a recent survey of a small existing emergency grant program, TCUs students who received small emergency aid grants of \$1000 or less (most are less than \$500) had a retention rate of more than 90 percent, compared to overall retention rates of 30-40 percent. Key needs due to TCUs moving to online learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are food support, diapers for babies, gas, assistance with bill payment, including internet and phone. Many TCUs students are losing paid internship and work-study positions. It is essential that a set-aside be established, or American Indian and Alaska Native students will see very little of this critically needed funding.

### Project Success and Emergency Aid

Since 2017, 33 Tribal Colleges and Universities have participated in the Project Success initiative funded administered by Ascendium Education Group. Through Project Success, TCUs provided small emergency aid grants to students to cover needs such as childcare, transportation computer repairs, food, and housing. (TCUs are limited to \$15,000/year each for the program, although the need is much greater.)

- Currently, 33 TCUs and 7 HBCUs provide emergency student aid grants through Project Success
- Total amount of Emergency Student Aid awards distributed: **\$1,618,878**
- Total number of Emergency Student Aid awards distributed: **2,863**
- Average amount of emergency grant: **\$565**
- **82%** of students that received an emergency award in spring/summer 2019 **re-enrolled in fall 2019**
- **Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College (Hayward, WI):** Students receiving emergency aid had a 91 percent retention rate. This is consistent with many TCUs.

Use of Emergency Funds	
Child Care	3%
Food	9%
Gas	7%
Housing	24%
Medical	1%
Transit	1%
Utilities	13%
Vehicles	35%
Other	7%

**Emergency Aid:** *“As a returning student, I find myself with many obstacles that seem overwhelming at times. I believe the Emergency Aid Grant helped me in the biggest way possible. Without it, I don’t know how I would have been able to continue as a perfect attendance student, due to my transportation problems.”*

Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College Student