DINÉ COLLEGE: RESPONDING AND ADAPTING TO COVID-19
117 CONGRESS—2ND SESSION (MARCH 2022)

Institutional Background
Diné College is the first tribally controlled institution in the United States. Established in 1968, the College predominantly serves Navajo students across the Navajo Nation. As a four-year institution, students earn a quality education in various certificate, associate, and bachelor degrees. Federal funding has further advanced the College’s response to Covid-19 and improve the higher education institution for the Navajo people.

STUDENT SUPPORT
COVID pushed the institution to change it’s services and expand in the areas of IT to allow students to continue education safely from home.

$336K Laptop/Wifi Loaner Program allowed 200 students to check out equipment from the Institution that provided access to online classes from home.

Tuition Discount Program: Since Summer 2020, the Institution provided over $532K in student aid relief to those enrolled in classes with a 50% tuition cost discount.

Student Housing Discount Program: Since Spring 2021, students received financial relief with the support of 50% discount for room and board for on-campus living that encouraged continued education during the pandemic. Investment of $56K was supported for students living on-site.

Student Relief Aid: During the peaks of the pandemic, $1.6M was provided to students facing financial challenges that allowed students to continue their educational journey.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES
$9M Expanded broadband allowed the institution to increase it’s digital traffic flow that allowed offering of more online courses and providing virtual education to those who were not ready to return on-site.

Five Outdoor Learning spaces of $852K supported multiple campuses to encourage an atmosphere of learning and safe gathering outside of classrooms without the fear of COVID-19.
Taking College Support Services to the Students

The Navajo Nation spreads over 4 states and reaches over 17.5 million acres of land. Diné College expanded its support services to students that faced transportation challenges and delivered to two tribal communities in Aneth, Utah and Newcomb, NM a College Learning Center. The two $664K microsites were created to provide computer labs, wifi, support services and face to face college resources to students far out in rural communities.

Increasing Online Courses

Prior to the pandemic the Institution offered up to 20% courses. In 2020, the College transitioned 100% online during the surge of COVID-19 spreading across the Navajo Nation. By 2021, the Institution invested $643K of Zoom online platform that bride on-site classes to those taking joining virtually.

Safety Proofing On-Site Classrooms & Office Spaces

$168K was invested in redesigning 112 classrooms at the 8 campus locations to increase COVID-19 preventative measures among students & faculty returning back into classrooms. These redesigns included table-top plexiglass installations, partitions, installing double-dutch doors for faculty offices visits and supplying all classrooms with sanitation equipment and supplies. The College Library was supported with a UV system that allowed students to check-out books that were sanitized safely to prevent any potential COVID spread on passing textbooks.

Improving Air Quality Control

$2.8M allowed the institution to upgrade several facility’s HVAC system in high and enclosed traffic areas where students would gather for learning or social activities. Improvement to air quality control allowed the College to open up facilities for use during the pandemic and afford students the opportunities to gather for College events and presentations. One major project involved an HVAC upgrade is our Gorman Classroom Building where majority of classes are taught face-to-face ($2.4M).

INSTITUTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

Expansion on fighting COVID-19 to protect our People.

- Mask and Sanitizer Distribution: $107K
- COVID-19 Test Kits: $16K
- COVID Health Screeners: $217K
- Sanitation Personnel: $165K