Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College: RESPONDING AND ADAPTING TO COVID-19
117th Congress – 2nd Session (March 2022)

Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) and American Rescue Plan (ARP), Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College received urgently needed funding to immediately transition to online learning platforms, modify campuses for health and safety concerns, and address the digital divide challenges in Indian Country. Our students received emergency grants, laptops, tuition assistance, and internet stipends to help them stay enrolled in courses. As we continue to support students during this difficult time and develop a plan to “return to normal,” TCUs need your continued support to address ongoing and increasing needs.

Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

- **Emergency Student Aid Total**: $609,853.30 (March 2020-April 2022/anticipated)
- **IT Upgrades**: Installation of all new network infrastructure which included network cabling, switches, Wireless access points, cell phone boosters, battery backups and redundant control systems.
- **Safety/Sanitation**: Temperature check-in, personal protective and sanitation equipment provided. Increased room sanitation
- **Campus Modifications**: Remodeled all restroom facilities for touchless usage and to enable the proper disinfecting and cleaning of those spaces

The CARES and CRRSAA funds have and will provide the college with the resources needed to ensure our students are able to continue their educational path. With these resources the college was able to greatly improve its ability to provide online instruction and correct many health and safety issues with its campus. These improvements have and will improve indoor air quality and ensure faculty are able to deliver course work virtually by upgrading and installing new Audio-Visual equipment. Several areas of the college campus that were deemed uninhabitable or undersized were repaired or remodeled to ensure social distancing requirements. In partnership with our students, Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College faculty and staff continually identify opportunities to improve services and support to the College’s students. Issues that surface time and again include available housing, childcare, accessible internet, and the ever growing need to support mental health and AOD counseling.

Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College: Virtual Help Desk

The Virtual Held Desk (VHD) is a one stop virtual location for students to provide virtual support for students in a variety of ways:

- **Direct Support**: VHD provides direct support to college students for navigating software such as CANVAS, MyLCO, Micro-Soft Office 365, and more.
- **Referral Services**: Students can also receive referrals to internal and external assistance that goes beyond the scope of VHD duties; scholarships, FAFSA, internships, emergency aid, tutoring, etc.
- **Technology Lac Loans**: The program also assisted in administering technology rentals at no cost to students including equipment like laptops, tablets, wi-fi boosters, headphones, calculators, and more.
- **Early-Alert**: VHD also assists LCOOC staff in establishing pro-active communication with students as part of the early alert process. Students who are identified on Drop-Out Detective are flagged and contacted by VHD and other college staff.
The ongoing pandemic has exacerbated the digital divide and underscored the lack of broadband access across Indian Country. To address these deficiencies that could leave Indian Country – and AI/AN students – behind the rest of the U.S. for generations, Congress must act to establish a permanent TCU IT Service Fund within the USDA-Rural Utilities Service Program. An annual $40 million set-aside for TCUs, which are 1994 land-grant institutions served by USDA, would help cover rapidly increasing network, connectivity, and equipment costs, maintenance, infrastructure expansion, and IT staffing.

Congress recognized this need in the pandemic and attempted to provide support to TCUs by including them in the new NTIA Tribal Connectivity Broadband program. Unfortunately, due to NTIA’s design of the program, to date, not even one TCU has been awarded direct grants.

**REQUEST: $40 million TCU IT Service Fund**

**USDA – Rural Utility Service**

Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College: Broadband and IT Challenges

- Students do not have adequate, or in many cases, any access to adequate broadband at their residence.
- Without the technology loan program students do not have the technology they need to complete their course work.
- LCOOC purchased new firewall systems to better protect our students, staff and faculty.

Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College: Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation

In 2019 LCOOC completed a Master Facility Plan which identified deferred maintenance and future space needs based on our Strategic Plan Enrollment Management Plan. The plan incorporated student, staff, faculty, and community feedback on what is needed for students and the community to succeed. Areas identified include:

- Student
- Campus expansion as we are out growing our main campus
- New building for the outreach sites

**REQUEST: $3.2 billion TCU Construction Fund**

**DOI – Bureau of Indian Education**

A July 2021 AIHEC survey of TCUs revealed many chronic unmet facilities and infrastructure needs, including lack of student and faculty housing, inadequate classroom space, insufficient libraries, and outdated laboratories.

- TCU deferred maintenance/rehabilitation: $400 million (total)
- TCU completion of master plans: $2.7 billion (total)
- TCU operation and maintenance: $20 million (annual, recurring need)

AIHEC strongly urges Congress to fund dedicated TCU facilities programs through DOI-BIE to modernize current facilities and build safer 21st century campuses.