Bay Mills Community 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), Bay Mills Community College (BMCC) 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. BMCC used the CARES Act and CRRSA, and ARP pandemic funding to develop the college’s data infrastructure to meet the demand of bandwidth requirements to support online courses and remote work. These upgrades included increasing the college’s internet connection, installing fiber optics to all facilities, and replacing outdated servers and network switches. BMCC also continues to provide a safe learning and working space by supplying hand sanitizer at each entrance, providing home COVID-19 test kits for employees, and facemasks for students and staff.

Overcoming Challenges at Bay Mills Community College
- Emergency Student Aid Total: $1,161,650 (March 2020-April 2022/anticipated)
- IT Upgrades: Network infrastructure improvements to support online courses and remote work
- Safety/Sanitation: Sanitation stations placed at every entrance
- Campus Modifications: Required facemasks and limited available seats per on campus course
- Professional Development: Safe Colleges Webinars for employees: Coronavirus 101: What you need to know and Coronavirus 104: Transitioning to a Remote Workplace

TCU Student Highlight: Crimson Lewis:

Bay Mills Community College: Hello! My name is Crimson Lewis, and I am currently attending Bay Mills Community College. In May, I will be graduating with my Associate’s in Applied Sciences. I am looking forward to continuing my education and focusing on the medical field. Becoming a Physician’s Assistant is one of my biggest goals. I am looking forward to serving my community and treating my future patients.

During this pandemic, learning online has become the new norm, which certainly has its challenges. However, I was able to overcome those challenges with a lot of grit, patience, attention, and a drive for success to be able to succeed in my studies. I would like to thank all my professors and family who helped me throughout this process.
Bay Mills Community College: Broadband and IT Challenges

- BMCC’s annual internet costs are $77,000. This is an increase from the $20,000 pre-pandemic internet costs, representing a 75% increase in broadband costs. Increasing internet capabilities were required to conduct online classes when BMCC moved all courses to an online format during the pandemic.
- The network infrastructure was improved to enable remote management of the entire BMCC network through new virtual servers, switches, and firewalls. The network improvement cost for the entire college was $157,000.
- Fiber-optic cable connections to all remote campus sites cost $29,000.
- Virtualization of critical servers plus management costs came to $80,600.

Bay Mills Community College: Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation

Like other TCUs, Bay Mills Community College is limited when it comes to space in classrooms, space for storage, and space to provide additional student services that will ultimately help students become successful in their academic, personal, and professional endeavors. Having the ability and means to provide maintenance for existing structures and having funds to build new facilities would allow BMCC to expand on occupational programming that would enable students to gain hands-on experience while providing skilled labor talent to employers in the region.

- More classroom space is needed to train future health care professionals.
- More classroom space is needed to accommodate occupational programs in the trades field.
- New data centers to ensure access to learning material and online classrooms are always available.

REQUEST: $40 million TCU IT Service Fund
USDA – Rural Utility Service

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: $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.

Pre-pandemic Annual Internet Costs (2019) and Speeds:
- $20,000
- 100 Mbps

Current Annual Internet Costs (2022) and Speeds:
- $77,000
- 1000 Mbps