117th Congress - 2nd Session (March 2022)
Turtle Mountain Community College
Responding and adapting to covid-19

Turtle Mountain Community College - TMCC: Overcoming Challenges
- Emergency Student Aid Total: $541,350.00 (March 2020-April 2022): Provide internet, food, utilities, financial aid, tuition assistance, and other household needs.
- IT Upgrades: Classrooms updated with audio and video capabilities for distance learning.
- Safety/Sanitation: Purchased PPE, Clorox 360 machines, HVAC ionizers, and filtration systems.
- Campus Modifications:
- Professional Development: Purchased courses on effective online teaching practices from ACUE.
- Inflation: Returning to campus has resulted in a 6.54% increase in comparison to pre-pandemic costs. Janitorial supplies have increased – FY 20 were 32,696; FY 21 were 46,853 and FY 22 TMCC is already at 57,304. The costs of food for the cafeteria have risen significantly as well as costs for the bookstore. Construction Materials are expensive and hard to get due to rural location, high shipping costs.

Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) and American Rescue Plan (ARP), Turtle Mountain Community College (TMCC) 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.

Student Spotlight Angie DeCoteau - “White Buffalo Earth Woman”
Amid the pandemic, Angie was laid off from her job so decided to return to school. She is a full-time mom to eight children, a full-time TMCC student, and working full-time. Angie is very grateful for what they have been given as students to assist them financially through the hardships. This included a free laptop for virtual courses. She also received reimbursement for the expenses of her internet costs for the school year and emergency relief funding. She now feels she can instill in her children the importance of education. When K-12 returned to in-classroom sessions, she watched her children go “off to school,” while pushing herself to go to college. Her message to her children is that there is so much more out there and pursuing an education after high school is attainable. Not only do you get self-satisfaction out of it, but you also gain more confidence and self-worth once you attain your goals.
TMCC: Broadband and IT Challenges

- A continued need for improvements in telecommunications, networking, support staff, and computer technology to support education and remote work.
- The demand put on our systems and network infrastructure has grown dramatically. The CAT 5 cabling in our existing network needs to be upgraded to CAT 6.
- The costs of maintaining existing IT systems, such as Jenzabar and Canvas, have increased.
- The demand for video conferencing and distance learning has put a burden on our network.
- Students continue to require financial assistance in order to purchase computers and pay for internet costs.
- TMCC’s internet costs remained stagnant from 2019-2022 because of a negotiation agreement. If it was upgraded it would have double the costs so TMCC did not upgrade it at this point.

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.

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 County. 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.

TMCC: Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation
Priority has been given to the main campus complexes due to budgeting and needs, leading to old infrastructure being neglected. Access needs to be updated to include steps, hand railing, handicapped ramps, and handicapped doors built pre-ADA rules and regulations. Roads and parking lots need to be updated with signage, parking lines, fire zones, handicapped parking, and Covid-19 protocols stated clearly before entering the buildings.

- Barriers need to be created in public service areas
- Need anti-virus protection with commercial standards
- Updates need to include exterior hand sanitizing stations, exterior mask dispensers, exterior auto door openers
- New public flooring such as hard surfaces that are floor machine friendly
- Auto door openers
- Motion sensor light switches
- The mechanical system is outdated
- Mechanical upgrades to include virus protection and Indoor Air Quality measures.
- Access to Professional Tradesmen in Industries such as HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical, and Construction.
- Not enough space for social distancing in classrooms and faculty offices.