Nebraska Indian 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), Nebraska Indian Community 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.

Nebraska Indian Community College: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

- Emergency Student Aid
- IT Upgrades including the creation of two EBS Systems that offer services to all K-12 and NICC’s students on the Omaha and Santee reservations, as well as offering internet services to those who are not reach of the system.
- Campus modifications to assist with social distancing as well as health and safety concerns.
- Professional Development to staff and faculty to assist with remote academics, tutoring, advisement and emotional/healthy behaviors issues.
- Inflation assistance including reducing tuition, providing laptops and textbooks, counseling, and internet services.
Student Spotlights

Deborah Long (Osage, Cherokee)
Pawhuska, Oklahoma
General Liberal Arts
Pawnee Nation College Campus

Andrea Thomas (Umoⁿhoⁿ, Northern Ponca)
Sioux City, Iowa
General Science Studies
South Sioux City Campus

Cree Griffin (Umoⁿhoⁿ)
Walthill, Nebraska
General Liberal Arts
Macy Campus

2021 Graduation Snapshot
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.

Nebraska Indian Community College: Broadband and IT Needs

- Continued and ongoing operational and maintenance assistance: NICC needs assistance in completing the Tribal Broadband Wireless projects on the Omaha and the Santee Reservations. The college, in partnership with five K-12 schools, and two Tribal Councils, created and EBS system that is free of charge to the K-12 and NICC’s students within the college’s FCC license area. Completing the system will allow for no cost internet options well into the future for years and generations to come. Currently the college is in round 3 of an NTIA TCBP grant and are hopeful about the operations and maintenance that may be offered in the NTIA Connecting Communities project, however a more stable funding source for these institutions is needed to ensure the continued and expanded operations of the system.

- End user basic technology needs: The students in the lowest economic communities struggle with basic technology costs and the college needs assistance to continue the assistance.

- Assistance with Cybersecurity: Cybersecurity is a huge undertaking and the college simply cannot currently afford good cybersecurity for our internal systems and we struggle severely for the cybersecurity of the two EBS systems.
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.

Nebraska Indian Community College: Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation

NICC is seemingly in a constant state of construction. During the pandemic we have been successful at construction the shells for two welding facilities, an aquaponics greenhouse, and two solar arrays. Current projects include fitting out the welding facilities, creating a circular drive to alleviate congestion at the Macy Campus, and a third solar array. NICC is in need of a variety of areas as well that are not readily funded via other sources, including additional classrooms, dedicated lab spaces, additional counseling spaces, and administrative space. Without additional support the college may soon be forced to stall.