Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) and American Rescue Plan (ARP), the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) 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,” TCU’s need your continued support to address ongoing and increasing needs.

The COVID-19 relief funds continued to support our students that live on and off campus. Additional laptops were purchased for incoming students so they were able to continue their studies at home or in their dorm rooms.

In order to ensure social distancing was adhered to, COVID-19 funds were used for the following projects:

- Internet connectivity was established or increased in several areas across the campus to assist with socially distanced learning.
- Architectural plans were drawn up for expanding classroom spaces.
- Audio-visual systems were installed in existing classrooms so that students could see and hear the material in all areas of the room.
- Air handling systems were renovated and updated in several buildings, additional furniture was purchased so that students would not be in close quarters.
- IAIA encouraged all staff to receive vaccines and booster shots by offering gift cards and bonuses.

A total of $808,000 of CARES and Student HEERF funding was issued directly to students to help pay for COVID-19 related costs including food, housing, childcare, healthcare, and exceptional needs such as loss or reduction of employment and funds for the IAIA Community Pantry. IAIA also used institutional HEERF funds to assist students with tuition and student support in the amount of $152,897.
NEW STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM DEVELOPED DURING COVID-19

There is a high rate of suicidal ideation among students who access IAIA counseling services. The Native communities our students come from have been affected deeply by loss due to COVID-19—the current times are amplifying inequities and historical trauma. IAIA implemented a Suicide Prevention Training for the community and offered a $50 gift card incentive for faculty, students, and staff totaling $1,350.

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.

Pre-pandemic monthly internet costs and speeds (2019): $3,900 for 1,000 mb/sec

Projected monthly internet costs and speeds (2022): $4,500 for 2,000 mb/sec

INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN INDIAN ARTS: BROADBAND AND IT CHALLENGES

Internet access continues to be an issue for our remote students, and in response, we have supplemented the cost of the Internet for students with limited access. In addition, we have upgraded our Wi-Fi infrastructure on the IAIA campus and at our museum, the IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts (MoCNA).

- Wireless infrastructure at MoCNA has been upgraded to allow for better distance delivery of programming.
- Wi-Fi access is being improved at many key outdoor locations, throughout the IAIA campus, to better accommodate outdoor events and student work.
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 twenty-first century campuses.

INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN INDIAN ARTS: CONSTRUCTION, MAINTENANCE, REHABILITATION

During the fiscal year 2022–2023, we have worked on the following safety and health enhancements on the IAIA campus:

- All bathrooms on campus have been retrofitted to touch-less fixtures.
- Water bottle filling stations have been added to every building on campus.
- HVAC assessments are being performed on several of the largest buildings on campus. This will lead to the replacement or upgrading of units, improving airflow, and reliability.
- Storage units are being added to the campus, freeing up space in classrooms and studios, to allow for better distancing between students.
- The campus gallery has been reconfigured to increase usable square footage and allow for better distancing between patrons.
- Awnings will be added to several buildings and stand-alone shade structures are being added in several locations around the campus, to facilitate outdoor learning.
- A lighted pathway is being constructed between the main campus and the auxiliary Hogan building. This addition will improve its use as an instructional space through enhanced access and will add to the available square footage available for learning.
- Offices in the facilities building are being reconfigured to allow for greater separation, more efficient air handling, and increased working space.
- A hybrid, ADA-accessible van was purchased, to allow for increased distancing and ensure equal access for all students to testing sites and vaccination sites, in the local area.

Safety and health enhancements at the IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts:

- Windows will be replaced with new, more functional units, improving fresh airflow throughout the building.
- Offices are being reconfigured to create better separation and more effective air handling, for staff.
- The chiller unit within the Museum’s HVAC system is being replaced, to enhance the quality of air handling service to the building.
- The floors in several large working areas are being converted from carpet to hard surfaces, to enhance the ease and effectiveness of cleaning