Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) and American Rescue Plan (ARP), the COLLEGE OF THE MUSCOGEE NATION 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.

COLLEGE OF THE MUSCOGEE NATION: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

- Emergency Student Aid Total: $483712 (March 2020-April 2022/anticipated)
- IT Upgrades: Fiber optics installation throughout campus, staff professional development for student information system, laptops and hotspots provided to students, printers for faculty and staff.
- Safety/Sanitation: Masks provided, reduced class sizes, social distancing requirements, vaccination requirement for student housing and student trips, vaccination incentives provided.
- Campus Modifications: Plexiglass barriers in classrooms and offices, water dispensers and hand sanitizing stations located throughout campus, temperature taking stations.
- Professional Development: Achieve the Dream professional development series for online learning for faculty, Leadership and Change Management training.
During the past two years, COVID relief funding has been awarded to CMN to address economic needs relating to the campus. Generators and IT upgrades included installing fiber optics around campus to ensure uninterrupted online learning. Class sizes were reduced for social distancing and portable Plexiglas barriers were placed in each classroom and in all staff offices; Laptops and hotspots were provided to students as well as printers for faculty and staff. Upgrades were made to support distance learning platforms. Student support services included meals provided to all students and staff, virtual tutoring implemented, virtual wellness Wednesdays and mental health screenings. Financial aid support includes tuition balances paid for students enrolled during COVID, financial assistance with child care, CARES Emergency Aid funding, Oretv (Achieve) emergency aid, and internet stipends provided. Professional development to assist faculty in transitioning to distance learning was also provided. As an added financial support for loss of revenue, COVID funding was used to reimburse the bookstore, café, and housing.

COLLEGE OF THE MUSCOGEE NATION: TCU Student Highlight

Tevin Phillips, a recent graduate came to CMN in the fall of 2020. Tevin, who is Mvskoke Creek, is a first-generation college graduate and has been a successful student academically as well as participating in student organizations as an elected Vice President for the CMN Student Senate. In addition, he was chosen to participate in the legislative summit in Washington, D.C. and represented CMN with an excellent presentation. Tevin’s major is General Studies and has an interest in obtaining a degree in Culinary Arts when he transfers to another institution.

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 (2019)
and Speeds:
$1281

Current Monthly Internet Costs (2022)
and Speeds:
$20281
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.

COLLEGE OF THE MUSCOGEE NATION: Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation

During the spring rains the north part of campus tends to flood due to water coming from the east area outside the campus. In time, the College will need to address this problem due to the fact that the flooded area is not usable for current activities and future development. When the College develops additional degrees and increases its enrollment, expansion is needed for its café, bookstore, fitness center, and library. In addition, the College needs to complete its thoroughfares (streets and sidewalks) around campus to adequately address the increased traffic.