SINTE GLESKA UNIVERSITY: 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), Sinte Gleska University 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.

SINTE GLESKA UNIVERSITY: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES
• Emergency Student Aid Total: $10,879,595 (March 2020 – April 2022/anticipated)
• IT Upgrades: $384,873
• Safety/Sanitation: Mask and vaccine mandates for face-to-face classes, PPE resources made available
• Campus Modifications: limited number of students in classes, hybrid classes, and increased distance ed classes
• Professional Development: Instructors received training on using Google Classroom
• Inflation: supply & demand created an issue in delivery of goods, especially in our rural area; and significant cost increases

Narrative: For the past two years, COVID-19 monies have been used to support our students so they can continue with their education. SGU purchased laptops for all students and continue to do so for new students every semester. In addition, all students received a scholarship for tuition, fees, and books. Stipends are given to cover the cost of internet, mileage to class, and food stipends. Class size for face-to-face was reduced to allow for social distancing. Sanitizer, masks, cleaning wipes and air purifiers are available in all classrooms. The IT Department has made significant upgrades to support distance learning platforms. Professional development was offered to assist faculty in the transition to distance learning using Google Classroom.

SINTE GLESKA UNIVERSITY: TCU STUDENT HIGHLIGHT
Stephan LaPointe graduated from Sinte Gleska University in August of 2021 with a bachelor’s degree in Business Management with an emphasis in Accounting. During the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020, Stephan was enrolled as a full-time student at Sinte Gleska University. Students and instructors quickly had to transition to online for the completion of the Spring 2020 semester. Although the transition, at the end of the Spring semester, was a completely new situation, Stephan said his instructors at the Business Education department were able to adapt and ensure that students were able to get the best out of their classes even though the face to face had to be put to a halt. Stephan was able to continue his educational journey through the fall of 2020, spring of 2021, and summer of 2021 to obtain his degree. Stephan credits Sinte Gleska University saying they did a great job at transitioning into online and hybrid classes to ensure the safety of both students and faculty. Stephan said, “I believe the quality of education was not a hindrance during this transition. It was a new experience, but I adapted well with the help of my instructors and the college.” Stephan LaPointe’s long term career goal is to own a small business, particularly a computer/video gaming store, on the Rosebud Indian Reservation.
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.

SINTE GLESKA UNIVERSITY: Broadband and IT Challenges
- The Rosebud Sioux Tribe needs state-of-the-art cellular service and fiber-optic service in all 20 communities.
- While current and past funds have been used for student support, the Rosebud community needs affordable internet access.
- Current inflation pressures create a need for additional resources for computers for students. SGU provides a free, high-quality laptop for each new enrollee. Prices have increased 25% to 40% in the last 2 years.
- As more classes begin to return to in-person instruction, additional costs are incurred for student meals and travel.
- Current research indicates that our less-prepared students are likely to struggle with on-line instruction; this creates a greater need for funding tutors, counselors, and other support.

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.

SINTE GLESKA UNIVERSITY: Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation
Narrative: Lack of funding for construction continues to be an ongoing challenge for our campus which prevents us from addressing the need to build new facilities, renovate and maintain existing buildings, repair roads to campus, build more sidewalks. We have been able to replace windows in one building. We still need to replace old HVAC systems in some of the buildings. There is a great need for faculty and student housing. Recruitment is difficult to do since lack of housing on our reservation is almost non-existent. We need a center for wellness and mental health needs. The nursing program needs up to date labs, as well as, the environmental sciences classes.
- Faculty and student housing
- New facilities and renovations for existing buildings
- Wellness and health center