COLLEGE OF MENOMINEE NATION: 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), COLLEGE OF MENOMINEE 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 MENOMINEE NATION: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

- Over 1.5 million spent in direct student assistance in the form of tuition discount, attendance incentives, internet bills, food assistance
- 13 classrooms set up with Cisco Enterprise video conferencing to enable remote learning, network infrastructure upgrades to improve reliability of services, 100 laptops set up for students to loan
- Housekeeper hired, purchase of PPE and system developed for distribution of items
- Classrooms reconfigured, barriers installed, security and safety moved up on planning (keyless entry, security system installed, purchase of signage for all buildings, off-site storage purchased for over-flow items), receptionists hired for three main buildings
- CMN employees are continuing their transition into the virtual environment. Staff received training on Canvas, the official learning management system of CMN, Adjunct Certificate Training program for adjunct faculty, subscription to Academic Impressions for all employees.

For the past two years, COVID-19 relief funding has been used on our campuses in various ways as listed above. To assist our students; funding has been used to pay off student balances that were incurred since March 2020 totaling to date $27,149, pay internet bills for students, providing 50% off tuition estimated at $340,000. CMN has provided laptops, printers, hot spots, counseling services to all students, and incentives during the pandemic that include food and gas cards. Using funding, we redesigned our website to engage and support our students in a virtual environment. CMN is projecting spending funds this academic year on a student vaccine incentive, assisting the student food pantry on campus, food cards for students, academic tutors, and hiring an Indigenous Wellness Director to provide a holistic support system for students, staff, and faculty.

New Student Support Program Developed during COVID

Student COVID Relief Funding: CMN is using relief funds to assist student's current basic needs due to unforeseen circumstances during the pandemic. Students can submit eligible expenses including; child care, food/meals, gas, housing/rent, medical/dental expenses, personal automobile expenses, public transportation, and utilities. Students are eligible to receive up to $500. Four weeks into the semester, 15% of CMN's student population applied and received funding. This program was established to supplement the Emergency Aid through Project Success.
**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.

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<th>Pre-pandemic Monthly Internet Costs (2019) and Speeds:</th>
<th>Current Monthly Internet Costs (2022) and Speeds:</th>
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<td>$1,771 - 200mb</td>
<td>$2,391 - 1gb</td>
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**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.

**COLLEGE OF MENOMINEE NATION: Broadband and IT Challenges**

- Increased costs for infrastructure services
- Higher demand for staff time
- Cybersecurity improvements
- Supply chain impacting our ability to update classrooms for virtual learning

**COLLEGE OF MENOMINEE NATION: Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation**

Our two oldest buildings on our main campus in Keshena, WI were built within the first 8 years of operations with general needs met and retrofitted to meet regulations throughout the years. The remaining seven buildings on our main campus have larger maintenance needs that were put on hold and/or are planned in pieces due to budgetary and funding issues. Facilities maintenance has been based on general need of the year over the past 15 years. The lack of construction funds available to TCUs adds stress to overstressed systems. TCUs are constantly trying to find funding for repairs and upkeep of buildings. We have a satellite campus in Green Bay that is a leased space with very limited opportunity for growth and upgrades that truly fit the needs of our students and campus. If we had funding for true construction and maintenance the following needs could be met:

- Campus master plan
- Redesigned building for classrooms
- Roof repairs and on a regular schedule
- Flooring upgrades
- Lighting upgrades
- HVAC system upgrades
- Satellite campus building
- Garage for equipment storage
- Research building
- Technical trades building