

TRIBAL Colleges & Universities: *Educating, Engaging, Innovating, Sustaining, Honoring*



HINU women's basketball game. *Photo courtesy HINU.*

AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

*For more than four decades
AIHEC has been the
collective spirit and unifying
voice of TRIBAL Colleges
and Universities.*

AIHEC serves its network
of TCUs—a unique family
of tribally and federally
chartered institutions working
to strengthen tribal nations

and make a lasting difference in the lives of American Indians and Alaska
Natives—through public policy, advocacy, research, and program initiatives.

Our vision is strong sovereign nations through excellence in *TRIBAL* higher education.



Dr. Jeremy Guinn (SBC/UTTC) and Harriet Blackhoop (SBC) release snapping turtle. *Photo courtesy Jeremy Guinn.*

TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Over the past 45 years, Tribal Colleges and Universities have emerged onto the U.S. higher education landscape—nurtured by and in turn, nurturing, the land, language, culture, and people who created them. TCUs were established for two reasons: (1) the failure of the U.S. higher education system to address the needs of American Indians; and (2) the need to preserve our tribal culture, language, lands, and sovereignty—our past and our future. The goal: to build place-based higher education systems founded on tribal ways of knowing, traditional knowledge, and spirituality.

Located in some of the most impoverished areas of the country—seven of the 10 poorest U.S. counties have tribal colleges—TCUs are planting resilient seeds of hope; sustaining Native languages; and helping to rebuild tribal economies. Today, 37 TCUs operate more than 75 sites in 16 states and serve more than 160,000 American Indians and Alaska Natives in community-based programs each year.



SUSTAINING

TCUs are unique public institutions of higher education. Founded and chartered by AI/AN tribal governments, which hold special legal relationships with the federal government, actualized by more than 400 treaties, Supreme Court decisions, Congressional action, and the ceding of more than one billion acres of land. Despite the trust responsibility and treaty obligations, the TCUs' primary source of basic institutional operating funds, which comes from the federal government, has never been fully funded and funding from the USDA to the 34 TCU land-grant institutions lags very far behind that of state and historically black land-grants.

While the funding needs of TCUs are many, AIHEC is focusing its federal advocacy efforts on three priorities. (1) Honoring Treaties & Tribal Sovereignty: AIHEC is seeking that TCUs, and other tribal programs, be held harmless from Congressional across the board cuts to funding and further sequestration cuts; (2) Two-Part Plan for Equity: AIHEC is working to address the long-standing inequities in both TCU funding and participation in federal IHE programs, particularly in the land-grant system; (3) Uninterrupted Operations: AIHEC continues to advocate for the one-time payment necessary to transition basic operations grants of three TCUs to forward funded programs and increase basic operating funds for all TCUs.



TCU students gather for the annual Capitol Hill meetings in Washington, D.C. *Photo courtesy of AIHEC.*

EDUCATING

TCUs work tirelessly on all facets of tribal Nation Building, from helping to restore students' tribal identity and self-esteem through educational environments that are culturally-based and uniquely relevant to our students. They provide high quality education programs, workforce training in high demand fields critical to our reservation communities, and community education programs addressing local economic, public health and community development priorities.

TCUs are transforming our education systems—training early childhood educators, managing Head Start programs, rebuilding classrooms; reforming K-12 science and math programs and providing summer and Saturday enrichment alternatives; and preparing an American Indian K-12 teacher workforce. TCUs are growing a Native health care workforce—from behavioral health to emergency room nursing—providing services in our language and according to our customs. They also are providing education and training services to Native agricultural and land management practitioners.



Lakota language speakers at Oglala Lakota College. *Photo courtesy of Marilyn Pourier, OLC.*

Most important, TCUs are aggressively preserving and sustaining tribal languages. All TCUs focus on college- and community-based Native language instruction. Some are going further: Aaniiih Nakoda College and Oglala Lakota College operate their own immersion schools, on their campus, where children learn their Native language and culture in addition to typical academics. Sitting Bull College operates a Lakota language early childhood immersion program on their campus.

INNOVATING

Positioned to coordinate and conduct research that investigates Indian education issues systemically, TCUs represent an as yet untapped resource to the national educational research community. AIHEC is forming a community of transformative research practice through a dynamic multi-institutional network of TCU education practitioners and researchers working together to increase college access and completion for AI/ANs. Through the TCU improvement community, we are building action research teams that will work across TCUs to test evidence-based practices, make revisions based on TCU research, institutionalize them locally, and disseminate the practices to all TCUs. We are promoting a culture of innovation that will generate transferable intervention best practices in student success.

Through **AIHEC AIMS**, we collect qualitative and quantitative data annually, ensuring TCU accountability to tribes and funders. AIHEC AIMS has given us a longitudinal tool for measuring AI/AN higher education success in ways that are responsive to the tribal people and communities we serve.

AIHEC's **Indigenous Framework for Evaluation** synthesizes Indigenous ways of knowing and Western evaluation practice. AIHEC has developed a comprehensive training curriculum and manual: *Indigenous Evaluation Framework: Telling Our Story in Our Place and Time* that incorporates Indigenous epistemology and core tribal values into a framework that honors place, community, individual talents and tribal sovereignty while remaining consistent with Western evaluation practice.



Turtle Mountain Community College science education student Nicole Azure helping in the Native Ways of Knowing Program. Photo courtesy of Carmelita Lamb, TMCC.

ENGAGING

TCUs provide a social and cultural foundation for engaging AI/ANs in college access and completion through community-based research, wrap-around support, and social entrepreneurship for Nation building. TCUs work closely with tribes, communities, and schools to provide education and career pathways. For example:

Shaping Our Future: Part of AIHEC's effort to promote a culture of Native innovation and entrepreneurship, this initiative will support TCU students in developing forward-thinking business and community-based enterprise project ideas through business planning, project development training, support, and mentoring.

Problem-Based Learning: AIHEC is building a TCU community of practice focused on place- and problem-based learning (PBL) methods to improve student engagement. Funded by NSF, we provide training and access to experts to help TCU faculty incorporate PBL in their courses.

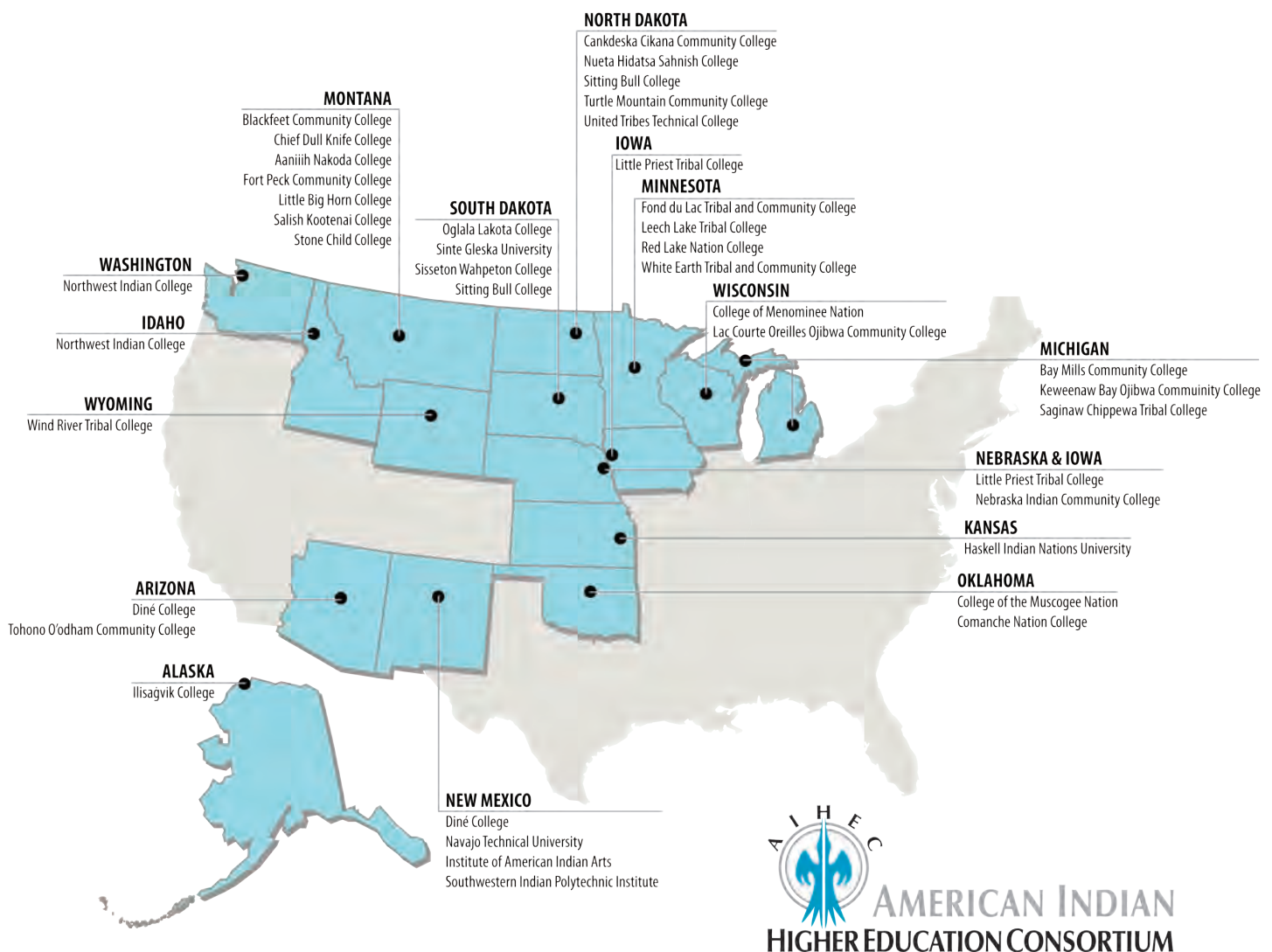
Student Success Initiative:

Through this effort, TCUs with strong intervention strategies serve as mentors to other TCUs. The goal is to help all TCUs develop environments that encourage all students to achieve their dreams.

School Enrichment & Dual-Credit: The BIE and AIHEC are partnering to help 20 TCUs impact AI/AN student success and school improvement through a range of evidence-based student enrichment activities for BIE school students. Additionally, nearly all TCUs have dual credit programs to help AI/ANs graduate high school and pursue higher education. Nearly all programs are free for students and high schools. TCUs offer this service because they know it is an effective way to keep our youth on a path to a better future.

TRIBAL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- 37 TCUs with more than 75 sites in the United States
- TCUs provide access to higher education to over 80 percent of Indian Country, serving more than 160,000 in academic and community-based programs annually
- All TCUs offer associate degree programs; 13 offer baccalaureate programs; five offer masters programs
- More than half of the federally recognized tribes are represented in TCU enrollments
- In 2014–2015, 78 percent of graduates earned degrees; 20 percent earned certificates
- 85 percent of TCU students receive federal financial aid



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