



The number of American Indian and Alaska Native students enrolled in colleges and universities and the number of postsecondary degrees awarded has more than doubled in the past 30 years. However, the Native high school dropout rate is not only one of the highest in the country, but is also above 50 percent in many of the states with high Native populations.

Education

“Education is the surest, most powerful path for breaking the cycle of poverty on tribal lands.”

– Secretary Arne Duncan, Remarks at the 2012 White House Tribal Nations Summit

America’s highest priority must be to provide all of our nation’s children with an excellent education, including American Indian and Alaska Native youth. Ensuring equal educational opportunities is not simply a matter of fairness, but even more importantly in today’s tough economic climate, it is an essential strategy for creating jobs and securing the nation’s future prosperity. As President Obama has stressed time and time again, improving American education is an “economic imperative.”

Research repeatedly demonstrates that investments in education contribute to economic growth, while also expanding opportunities for individual advancement.²³ For example, a 2007 Brookings Institution study revealed that investments in education and training programs provide a payoff between five and 15 percent per year compared to their upfront costs.²⁴ Likewise, cutting statewide public K-12 expenditures by just one percent would reduce a state’s employment rates by 0.7 percent in the short run and by 1.4 percent in the long run.²⁵

For Native nations, the stakes of strengthening education are just as high, if not higher. Education not only provides tribal economies with a more highly-skilled workforce, but also directly spurs economic development and job creation. Tribes need an educated citizenry to lead tribal governments, boost available human capital and thereby attract new businesses, reduce unemployment, stimulate reservation economies through direct spending, and launch tribal entrepreneurial ventures.

A 2011 study from the Alliance for Excellent Education indicates that improving the educational outcomes of American Indian and Alaska Native students would have tremendous economic impact. If just half of the 24,700 American Indian and Alaska Native students from the Class of 2010 who dropped out of high school had graduated, together these 12,350 new graduates would likely be earning an additional \$147 million each year, compared to what they will earn without a high school diploma.²⁶ These increased earnings would create a wave of additional benefits for tribal, national, and state economies, including:

- **Increased spending and investment:** New graduates' increased earnings, combined, would likely have allowed them to spend up to an additional \$107 million and invest an additional \$40 million during an average year.
- **Increased home and vehicle sales:** By the midpoint of their careers, these new graduates, combined, would likely have spent as much as \$387 million more on home purchases than they will spend without a diploma. In addition, they would likely have spent up to an additional \$14 million on vehicle purchases during an average year.²⁷

If just half of the 24,700 American Indian and Alaska Native [high school] students who dropped out from the Class of 2010 had graduated, together these 12,350 new graduates would likely be earning an additional \$147 million each year compared to what they will earn without a high school diploma. These increased earnings would create a wave of additional benefits for tribal, national, and state economies.

The profound value of education for tribal nations extends beyond just economics, however. Education drives personal advancement and wellness, which in turn improves social welfare and empowers communities—elements that are essential to protecting and advancing tribal sovereignty and maintaining tribes' cultural vitality.

Despite the enormous potential of education for transforming tribal communities, Native education is currently in a state of emergency. American Indian and Alaska Native students lag far behind their peers on every educational indicator, from academic achievement to high school and college graduation rates. For example, the 2011 National Indian Education Study found that Native students continue to score significantly lower than their peers in reading and math in grades four and eight. Only 18 percent of Native fourth graders and 22 percent of Native eighth graders scored proficient or advanced in reading, and only 22 percent of Native fourth graders and 17 percent of Native eighth graders scored proficient or advanced in math.²⁸ The crisis of Indian education is perhaps most apparent in the Native high school dropout rate, which is not only one of the highest in the country, but is also above 50 percent in many of the states with high Native populations.²⁹

To address this urgent situation and give tribal nations the vital foundation for economic success, the federal government must live up to its trust responsibility by providing adequate support for Native education. The requests included here detail the minimum funding needed to sustain a system that is currently struggling and underfunded.

Key Recommendations

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill

State-Tribal Education Partnership (STEP) Program

- Provide \$5 million for the State-Tribal Education Partnership Program.

Congress appropriated roughly \$2 million dollars for the STEP program to five participating tribes in FY 2012 and FY 2013 under the Tribal Education Department appropriations' line that is administered by the Department of Education. In order for this program to continue to succeed and thrive, it must receive its own line of appropriations in FY 2014. Collaboration between tribal education agencies and state educational agencies is crucial to developing the tribal capacity to assume the roles, responsibilities, and accountability of Native education departments and increasing self-governance over Native education.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill

Impact Aid

- Provide \$1.395 billion for Impact Aid, Title VIII funding under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Impact Aid provides direct payments to public school districts as reimbursement for the loss of traditional property taxes due to a federal presence or activity, including the existence of an Indian reservation. With nearly 93 percent of Native students enrolled in public schools, Impact Aid provides essential funding for schools serving Native students. Therefore, funding for Impact Aid must not be less than this requested amount. Furthermore, Impact Aid should be converted to a forward-funded program to eliminate the need for cost transfers and other funding issues at a later date.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill

Title VII (Indian Education Formula Grants)

- Provide \$198 million for Title VII funding under the No Child Left Behind Act.

This grant funding is designed to supplement the regular school program and assist Native students so they have the opportunity to achieve the same educational standards and attain parity with their non-Native peers. Title VII provides funds to school divisions to support American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students in meeting state standards. Furthermore, Title VII funds support early-childhood and family programs, academic enrichment programs, curriculum development, professional development, and culturally-related activities.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill

Alaska Native Education Equity Assistance Program

- Provide \$35 million for Title VII, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act.

This assistance program funds the development of curricula and education programs that address the unique educational needs of Alaska Native students, as well as the development and operation of student enrichment programs in science and mathematics. This funding is crucial to closing the gap between Alaska Native students and their non-Native peers. Other eligible activities include professional development for educators, activities carried out through Even Start programs and Head Start programs, family literacy services, and dropout prevention programs.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill

Native Hawaiian Education Program

- Provide \$35 million for Title VII, Part B of the No Child Left Behind Act.

This program funds the development of curricula and education programs that address the education needs of Native Hawaiian students to help bring equity to this Native population. Where Native Hawaiians once had a very high rate of literacy, today Native Hawaiian educational attainment lags behind the general population. The Native Hawaiian Education program empowers innovative culturally appropriate programs to enhance the quality of education for Native Hawaiians. When establishing the Native Hawaiian Education Program, Congress identified specific educational disparities and developed strategies to address them. New grantees in FY 2011 alone are estimated to provide educational programs to over 30,000 Native Hawaiian children and families. These programs strengthen the Native Hawaiian culture and improve educational attainment, both of which are correlated with positive economic outcomes.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill

Tribal Colleges and Universities: Supporting Financially Disadvantaged Students

- Provide \$60 million (\$30 million in discretionary funding and \$30 million in mandatory funding) for Title III-A grants under the Higher Education Act for Tribal Colleges and Universities.

Titles III and V of the Higher Education Act, known as Aid for Institutional Development programs, support institutions with a large proportion of financially disadvantaged students and low cost-per-student expenditures. Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) clearly fit this definition. The nation's 37 TCUs serve Native and non-Native students in some of the most impoverished areas in the nation. Congress recognized the TCUs as emergent institutions, and, as such, authorized a separate section of Title III (Part A, Sec. 316) specifically to address their needs. Additionally, a separate section (Sec. 317) was created to address similar needs of Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian institutions. Sixty million dollars should be provided (\$30 million discretionary/appropriations and \$30 million in mandatory funding under the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act) in FY 2014 to continue to fund grants to these vital institutions.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill

Tribal Colleges and Universities: Adult/Basic Education

- Provide \$8 million for American Indian Adult/Basic Education at tribal colleges and universities from existing funds appropriated for state block grant funding.

Despite an absence of dedicated funding, TCUs must find ways to continue to provide basic adult education classes for those Native students that the present K-12 Indian education system has failed. Before many individuals can even begin the coursework needed to learn a productive skill, they first must earn a GED or, in some cases, learn to read. At TCUs, the number of students in need of remedial education before embarking on their degree programs is substantial. There is a wide-ranging need for basic adult education and literacy programs and TCUs need adequate funding to support the ever-increasing demand for basic adult education and remediation program services.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill

Tribally Controlled Post-Secondary Career and Technical Institutions

- Provide \$8.2 million for tribally controlled post-secondary career and technical institutions program funds under Carl Perkins Technical and Career Education Act.

Section 117 of the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act authorizes funding for operations at tribally-controlled post-secondary career and technical institutions. Vocational education/training programs are very expensive to conduct, but are vital to preparing a future workforce that will operate safely and efficiently, contributing greatly to the global economy. Currently, two TCUs participate in this funding program: United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, North Dakota, and Navajo Technical College in Crownpoint, New Mexico. The TCUs urge Congress to appropriate \$8.2 million for Sec. 117 of the Act.

Shared Responsibility:

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill and Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

Tribal Education Departments

- Provide \$10 million (\$5 million through the Department of Education and \$5 million through the Department of the Interior) to fund Tribal Education Departments.

Five million dollars should be appropriated to the Department of Education, and \$5 million should be appropriated to the Department of the Interior to support tribal education departments (TEDs). This funding assists TEDs, which are uniquely situated at the local level to implement innovative education programs that improve Native education. Because they are administered by tribes, TEDs are best equipped to deliver education programs tailored to improve education outcomes for Native students. TEDs would use this much-needed funding to develop academic standards, assess student progress, and create math and science programs that require high academic standards for students in tribal, public, and Bureau of Indian Education schools.

Tribes exercising self-governance over their citizens' education have been very successful because they better understand the circumstances of their populations and can develop initiatives that meet local needs. Adequately funding TEDs would create the most return on federal dollars spent.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

School Construction and Repair

- Provide \$263.4 million for Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) school construction and repair.

This funding category includes school construction, facilities improvement and repair, and replacement school construction. Schools operating within the BIE system are woefully outdated and, in some cases, dangerous for students and staff. Currently more than 60 BIE schools are rated in "poor" condition, which puts Native students at an unfair disadvantage. Students cannot be expected to succeed in environments that are often dilapidated and unsafe. Further, moratoriums on new construction only cause backlogs of construction projects. The federal government must uphold its trust responsibility to Native education and fund construction and repair projects.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

Johnson O'Malley

- Provide \$36 million to the Johnson O'Malley program.

The Johnson O'Malley program has provided grants to supplement basic student needs since 1934. It is currently being used across the country in innovative ways to assist with the unique cultural and scholastic needs of Native students. However, current funding provides less than \$50 per student. These funds are often the only source through which Native students – including those in public schools – can engage in basic activities expected of all American students. Some examples include, but are not limited to, the acquisition of musical instruments for use in classrooms, essential school supplies, and educational field trips.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

Student Transportation

- Provide \$73 million for student transportation in the BIE system.

BIE schools incur significant costs in transporting Native students to and from school. These costs are considerably higher than most school systems due to the often-rural location of BIE facilities. Additionally, the poor road conditions that link the BIE-funded schools increase vehicle maintenance costs. These high costs often lead to funding shortfalls, which then must either go unpaid or funded by diverting funds from other education programs.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

Tribal Grant Support Costs

- Provide \$73 million for tribal grant support costs for tribally-operated schools.

Tribal Grant Support Costs fund the administrative costs of existing tribally-operated schools. The current funding levels only pays 65 percent of the current need and must not be reduced in the upcoming budget cycle. This funding also help tribes expand self-governance and tribal control over education programs by allocating monies for administrative costs such as accounting, payroll, and other legal requirements. Cuts must be avoided. Otherwise, schools must then divert critical teaching and learning funding to cover any shortfalls in operational costs.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

Facilities Operations

- Provide \$109 million for BIE facilities operations.

BIE schools use this funding for costs such as electricity, heating fuels, communications, vehicle rentals from the General Services Administration, custodial services, and other operating expenses. For years, schools have only received roughly 50 percent of funding needed for these expenses. This shortfall is unacceptable as costs continue to rise for vital services.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

Facilities Maintenance

- Provide \$76 million for BIE facilities maintenance.

BIE schools use this funding for the preventative and routine upkeep, as well as for unscheduled maintenance of school buildings, grounds, and utility systems. Underfunding of maintenance continues to be an issue as buildings are in poor conditions and cannot maintain proper standards.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

Indian School Equalization Formula (ISEF)

- Provide \$431 million for the Indian School Equalization Formula.

These funds provide the core budget account for BIE elementary and secondary schools by covering salaries for teachers, aides, principals, and other personnel. ISEF funds are often reallocated to cover the program cuts in other areas of education. ISEF must have adequate funding to ensure all program needs are fulfilled.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

Juvenile Detention Education

- Reinstates \$620,000 for juvenile detention education in BIA-funded facilities.

These critical funds were eliminated in FY 2012. This essential funding was used to provide educational services to detained and incarcerated youth at 24 BIA-funded juvenile detention facilities. One of the best methods to rehabilitate individuals is through education. Eliminating this program only exacerbates the issue and creates additional costs. Eliminating a program that was utilized to decrease the rate of repeat offenders does not save money and is short-sighted.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

Tribal Colleges and Universities' Institutional Operations

- Provide \$94.3 million for Titles I and II under the Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Assistance Act.

Title I: To fully fund Title I of the Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Assistance Act of 1978 (Tribal College Act), which provides day-to-day operating funds for 26 TCUs, would require \$77.3 million. Since the Act was first funded in 1981, the number of TCUs has more than quadrupled and enrollments have increased by more than 325 percent. Currently, Title I TCUs receive \$5,665 per Indian student toward their institutional operating budgets. Accounting for inflation, the program's funding level is more than \$1,500 less per Native student than it was under the program's initial FY 1981 appropriation, which was \$2,831 per Indian student. Despite the constraints of the current economy, Congress has an obligation to make these critical institutions whole rather than continuing to make hollow promises for the future.

Title II: Diné College has indicated a need for \$17 million to operate its multiple campuses and education sites located on the Navajo Nation in Arizona and New Mexico.

Five other TCUs receive institutional operating funds through the annual Department of the Interior Appropriations measure, under various separate authorities. To support the basic day-to-day operating budgets of these TCUs, we request the following:

- \$9 million for institutional operations of tribally-chartered career and technical institutions under Title V of the Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Assistance Act of 1978;
- \$9,369,000 for operations of the Institute of American Indian Arts in New Mexico under the American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Culture and Art Development Act of 1986;
- Adequate funds for continued and expanded operations of Haskell Indian Nations University in Kansas and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in New Mexico under the Snyder Act of 1921; and
- \$27.7 million for a one-time appropriation, equal to 75 percent of the current combined funding of the institutional operations grants of those TCUs not funded under Titles I or II of the Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Assistance Act of 1978, necessary to transition these programs to forward funding.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agriculture Appropriations Bill

1994 Land-Grant Institutions (TCUs)

In 1994, tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) achieved federal land-grant status through the passage of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act. Two decades later, the list of TCU land-grant institutions has increased to 32, with three more expected to be added imminently. However, TCUs are still not recognized or funded as full partners in the nation's land-grant system and as a result, their potential remains unrealized. With anticipated reductions in tribal funding, American Indian and Alaska Native students will inevitably have fewer sources for financial aid. Thus, basic levels of mandated funding to TCUs become that much more important to enable Native people to pursue higher education. Funding for all 32 of the 1994 institutions is less than the land-grant program funding available to a single 1862 land-grant institution. Appropriations at the requested levels for each of the five 1994 land-grant programs is a small but critical step in addressing disparities that exist in the current land-grant system.

1994 Extension Program

- *Provide \$30 million for the 1994 Extension Grants Program.*

The 1994 Extension Program is designed to complement, not duplicate, the Federally-Recognized Tribe Extension Program (FRTEP). Ironically, the 1994 Institutions – tribal colleges and universities – are the only members of the land grant system that are not eligible to compete for these grant dollars. The 1994 Extension Program activities include: outreach to at-risk youth; business skills development for local agriculture entrepreneurs; Native plant restoration and horticulture projects; environmental analysis and water quality projects; and nutrition projects aimed at addressing health disparities, such as high rates of diabetes among Native populations. Ten years ago, while the 1994 Extension Program suffered a 13 percent cut in appropriated funding, the 1862 and 1890 extension programs were reduced by just 0.59 percent. In the years since, the 1994 Extension Programs has been struggling to recover lost funds and opportunities. It is time that Congress adequately invests in the extension programs benefiting reservation communities.

1994 Institutions Research Grants

- *Provide \$15 million for the 1994 Research Grants Program.*

The 1994 Research Grants Program allows TCUs to partner with communities in research areas such as agriculture marketing, renewable energy, nutrition and health, Native plants and horticulture, water quality, and land management. These research areas are of increasing importance as tribal economies and tribes' efforts to address pressing challenges depend on access to quality data and evidence. These challenges include the disproportionate impacts of climate change on tribal lands and people, as well as the impact of poor economic conditions. TCUs need and deserve a level of funding that will increase their capacity for further developing and conducting research and to strengthen education and sustainable economic development important to their tribal communities.

Educational Equity Grant Program

- *Provide \$30 million in Educational Equity Grant Program funding for the 1994 land-grant institutions.*

The Education Equity Grant Program assists TCU land-grants to establish academic programs within the field of agriculture that explore areas such as natural resource management, nutrition, environmental science, horticulture, sustainable development, and forestry.

The funding requested will help in preparing to address issues of climate change and its impact on agriculture, ecosystems, and natural resources focusing on remote reservation communities. Additionally, this investment will support TCU efforts to provide increased nutrition education to their reservation communities, which experience diabetes and other health issues at rates far greater than the national average.

1994 Native American Institutions Endowment Fund

- *Provide an additional \$136 million payment into the corpus of the 1994 Institutions Native American Endowment Fund.*

The Native American Institutions Endowment Fund, managed by the US Treasury, provides funds to TCU land-grant institutions through dissemination of the annual interest yield. Although Congress has made regular contributions to the corpus of the endowment, the latest interest yield shared by the 32 eligible 1994 institutions amounted to just \$4.5 million. These funds assist in strengthening academic programs, including agriculture curricula development, faculty development, instructional delivery, and experiential learning. Funds are also used to enhance student recruitment and retention in the agricultural sciences, as well as to address the ongoing need for improved facilities at the 1994 land-grant institutions. The 1994 institutions request that a payment of \$136 million be made, which would essentially double the principal amount funded for the 1994 Native American Institutions Endowment. Since only the annual interest yield is distributed to the 1994 land-grant institutions, only the interest on the Fund – and not the appropriated payment amount – is scored as budget outlay, yet the additional interest available to the TCUs will provide resources for important investments in community-based programs.

Essential Community Facilities at Tribal Colleges and Universities Grant Program

- *Provide \$10 million for the TCU Essential Community Facilities Grant Program.*

The USDA-Rural Development program provides grants for Essential Community Facilities at TCUs and funds the ever-growing need for construction, improvement, and maintenance of TCU facilities, such as advanced science laboratories, computer labs, student housing, day care centers, and community service facilities. Although the situation has improved at many TCUs over the past several years, some institutions still operate partially in temporary and inadequate buildings. Few TCUs have dormitories, even fewer have student health centers, and only a handful of TCUs have full research laboratories. The 1994 land-grant institutions need a commitment of \$10 million each year for the next five fiscal years to support construction, improvement, and maintenance of TCU facilities.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Bill

Housing and Urban Development-University Partnership Program for Tribal Colleges and Universities

- *Provide \$5.5 million to the HUD-University Partnership Program for Tribal Colleges and Universities.*

Executive Order 13592, “Improving American Indian and Alaska Native Educational Opportunities and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities,” holds federal agencies accountable for developing plans to integrate TCUs into their programs. TCUs work with tribes and communities to address all aspects of reservation life, including the continuum of education, housing, economic development, health promotion, law enforcement training, and crime prevention. Likewise, federal agencies need to work with TCUs.

To achieve results, Congress needs to hold the Administration accountable for strengthening the TCUs, including their buildings, and routinely include TCUs as full partners in all existing and potential federal higher education programs. The HUD-TCU competitive grants program, administered by the Office of University Partnerships, is an excellent place to start. This competitive grants program has enabled TCUs to expand their roles and efficacy in addressing development and revitalization needs within their respective communities.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill

Head Start

- *Provide full funding for Head Start and Indian Head Start.*

Head Start has played and continues to play an instrumental role in Native education. This vital program combines education, health, and family services to model traditional Native education, which accounts for its success rate. However, current funding provides less for Native populations as inflation and fiscal constraints increase. It is now conventional wisdom that there is a return of at least \$7 for every single dollar invested in Head Start.³⁰ Therefore, Congress should fully fund Head Start and Indian Head Start to ensure this highly successful program serves more Native people.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill

Native Languages Preservation (Esther Martinez Program Grants)

- *Provide \$10 million for Native language preservation.*

Native language grant programs are essential to revitalizing Native languages and cultures, many of which are at risk of disappearing in the next decades. With adequate funding, Esther Martinez Program Grants support and strengthen Native American language immersion programs. In addition to protecting Native languages, these immersion programs have been shown to promote higher academic success for participating students in comparison to their Native peers who do not participate. This is critical for our Native youth, who have high school graduation rates far lower than their non-Native peers.