

**STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM**  
**SUBMITTED TO THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HHS, EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES**

March 30, 2006

**Summary of Requests:** Summarized below are the Fiscal Year 2007 (FY07) requests for the nation's 34 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), covering three areas within the Department of Education and one in the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families' Head Start Program.

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS:**

**A. Higher Education Act Programs:**

- **Strengthening Developing Institutions:** Section 316 of Title III Part A, specifically supports TCUs through two separate grant programs: a) basic development grants, and b) facilities/construction grants designed to address the critical facilities needs at TCUs. *We request that these programs be funded at \$32 million and that report language, included in prior years be restated clarifying that funds not needed to support continuation grants or new planning or implementation grants shall be available for facilities, renovation, and construction grants.*
- **Pell Grants:** We urge Congress to fund the Pell Grants Program at the highest possible level.

**B. Perkins Vocational Education Programs:** We support \$8.5 million for section 117 of the Perkins Act, and request language reaffirming that this program remains specific to the two Tribally Controlled Postsecondary Vocational Institutions: United Tribes Technical College and Crownpoint Institute of Technology. We also request that the language included since FY02 stating that Section 117 Perkins grantees need not utilize a restricted indirect cost rate, be reiterated. Additionally, we strongly urge that the Native American Vocational and Technical Education Program (NAVTEP - § 116) be preserved.

**C. Relevant Title IX Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Programs:**

- **American Indian Adult and Basic Education:** This program supports much needed adult education for American Indians, offered by tribal colleges and universities, Indian tribes, institutions, state and local education agencies, and other agencies. *We request that the Subcommittee fund this program for Indian Adult and Basic Education at a minimum of \$5 million.*
- **American Indian Teacher and Administrator Corps:** The American Indian Teacher Corps and the American Indian Administrator Corps offer professional development grants designed to increase the number of American Indian teachers and administrators serving their reservation communities. *We request that Congress support these programs at \$10 and \$5 million, respectively.*

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAM:**

**D. Tribal Colleges and Universities Head Start Partnership Program (DHHS-ACF):** Tribal Colleges and Universities are ideal partners to help achieve the goals of Head Start in Indian Country. The TCUs worked to meet the mandate that 50 percent of Head Start teachers earn an associate degree in Early Childhood Development or a related discipline. *We request that \$5 million be designated for the TCU-Head Start partnership program, to ensure the continuation of current TCU programs and the funds necessary for additional TCU partnership programs.*

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of this nation's 34 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), which comprise the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), thank you for the opportunity to share our Fiscal Year 2007 (FY07) funding requests for programs within the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Head Start program.

This statement will cover two areas: a) background on the tribal colleges, and b) justifications for our funding recommendations.

**I. Background on Tribal Colleges and Universities**

The Tribal College Movement began in 1968 with the establishment of Navajo Community College, now Diné College, in Tsaile, Arizona. Rapid growth of tribal colleges soon followed, primarily in the Northern Plains region. In 1972, the first six tribally controlled colleges established AIHEC to provide a support network for member institutions. Today, AIHEC represents 34 Tribal Colleges and Universities located in 13 states, which were begun specifically to serve the higher education needs of American Indians. Annually, these institutions serve upwards of 30,000 full-and part-time students from over 250 Federally- recognized tribes.

The vast majority of tribal colleges is accredited by independent, regional accreditation agencies and like all institutions of higher education, must undergo stringent performance reviews on a periodic basis to retain their accreditation status. In addition to college level programming, TCUs provide much needed high school completion (GED), basic remediation, job training, college preparatory courses, and adult education. Tribal colleges fulfill additional roles within their respective reservation communities functioning as community centers, libraries, tribal archives, career and business centers, economic development centers, public-meeting places, and child care centers. Each TCU is committed to improving the lives of its students through higher education and to moving American Indians toward self-sufficiency.

Tribal colleges provide access to higher education for American Indians and others living in some of the nation's most rural and economically depressed areas. These institutions, chartered by their respective tribal governments, were established in response to the recognition by tribal leaders that local, culturally based institutions are best suited to help American Indians succeed in higher education. TCUs combine traditional teachings with conventional postsecondary courses and curricula. They have developed innovative means to address the needs of tribal populations and are successful in overcoming long-standing barriers to higher education for American Indians. Since the first tribal college was established on the Navajo reservation, these vital institutions have come to represent the most significant development in the history of American Indian higher education, providing access to and promoting achievement among students who may otherwise never have known postsecondary education success.

Despite their remarkable accomplishments, tribal colleges remain the most poorly funded institutions of higher education in the country. Perennial inadequate funding remains the most significant barrier to their success. Funding for the institutional operating budgets of 25 reservation-based colleges is provided through

Title I of the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act (P.L. 95-471). Currently, the institutional operating budgets of these colleges are funded at \$4,563 per Indian student. Only enrolled members of a Federally recognized tribe may be counted as Indian student. In the 25 years since the Act was initially appropriated, these colleges are still receiving only about 75 percent of the authorized amount. While mainstream institutions have had a foundation of stable state tax-based support, TCUs must rely on annual Federal appropriations for their basic institutional operating funds. Because TCUs are located on Federal trust territories, states have no obligation to fund them even for the non-Indian state-resident students who account for approximately 20 percent of TCU enrollments. Yet, if these same students attended any other public institution in the state, the state would provide basic operating funds to the institution.

Inadequate funding has left many of our colleges with no choice but to continue to operate under severely distressed conditions. Although facilities initiatives of the last several years have resulted in widespread renovation and construction at TCUs, many colleges began in surplus trailers; cast-off buildings; and facilities with crumbling foundations, faulty wiring, and leaking roofs, and therefore still have a long way to go. Sustaining quality academic programs is a considerable challenge without a sustained source of facilities maintenance and construction funding on which to draw.

As a result of more than 200 years of Federal Indian policy—including policies of termination, assimilation and relocation—many reservation residents live in abject poverty comparable to that found in Third World nations. In large part, through the efforts of tribal colleges and universities, American Indian communities receive services they need to reestablish themselves as healthy, responsible, productive, and self-reliant.

## II. Justifications

### A. Higher Education Act

The Higher Education Act Amendments of 1998 created a separate section within Title III, Part A, specifically for the nation's Tribal Colleges and Universities (Section 316). Titles III and V programs support institutions that enroll large proportions of financially disadvantaged students and have low per-student expenditures. TCUs clearly fit this definition as they are among the most poorly funded institutions in America, yet they serve some of the most impoverished areas of the country. Despite a clear need of these truly developing institutions President's FY07 budget recommends level funding for this essential program. *We urge the Subcommittee to fund section 316 at \$32 million, an increase of \$8.2 million over FY06 and the President's request, and we ask that report language included in prior years be restated to clarify that funds not needed to support continuation grants or new planning or implementation grants be available for facilities renovation and construction grants.*

The importance of Pell grants to our students cannot be overstated. Department of Education figures show that the majority of tribal college students receive Pell grants, primarily because student income levels are so low and our students have far less access to other sources of aid than students at mainstream institutions. Within the Tribal College system, Pell grants are doing exactly what they were intended to do—they are serving the needs of the lowest income students by helping them gain access to higher education, an essential step toward becoming active, productive members of the workforce. *We urge Congress to fund this critical program at the highest possible level.*

## B. Carl D. Perkins Vocational & Applied Technology Education Act

**Tribally-Controlled Postsecondary Vocational Institutions:** Section 117 of the Perkins Act provides basic operating funds for two of our member institutions: United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, North Dakota, and Crownpoint Institute of Technology in Crownpoint, New Mexico. *We urge that Congress fund this program at \$8.5 million. Included in both the House and Senate reauthorization bills, which are being considered in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress is language waiving section 117 grantees from having to utilize a restricted indirect cost rate. Since the timeline for enactment of the reauthorizing legislation is uncertain, we ask that you reiterate the language that has been included in this appropriations measure since FY02 stating that Section 117 Perkins grantees need not utilize restricted indirect cost rate.*

The President's FY07 budget once again proposes the elimination of vocational education programs including the Native American Program (Sec. 116), which reserves 1.25% of appropriated funding to support Indian vocational programs. *We strongly urge Congress to restore and expand funding for vocational education including NAVTEP, which is vital to the survival of vocational education programs being offered at TCUs.*

## C. Greater Support of Indian Education Programs

**American Indian Adult and Basic Education:** This section supports adult education programs for American Indians offered by TCUs, state and local education agencies, Indian tribes, institutions, and agencies. Despite a lack of funding, TCUs must find a way to continue to provide basic adult education classes for those American Indians that the present K-12 Indian education system has failed. Before many individuals can even begin the course work needed to learn a productive skill, they first must earn a GED or, in some cases, learn to read. The number of students needing remedial educational programs before embarking on their degree programs is considerable at tribal colleges. There is a wide need for basic educational programs, and TCUs need funding to support these indispensable activities. *Tribal colleges respectfully request that Congress appropriate \$5 million in FY07 to meet the ever increasing demand for basic adult education and remediation program services.*

**American Indian Teacher Corps:** American Indians are severely under-represented in the teaching and school administrator ranks nationally. These competitive programs, aimed at producing new American Indian teachers and school administrators for schools serving American Indian students support the recruitment, training, and in-service professional development programs for Indians to become effective teachers and school administrators and in doing so serve as excellent role models for Indian children. We believe that the TCUs are the ideal catalysts for these initiatives because of our current work in this area and the existing articulation agreements TCUs hold with 4-year degree awarding institutions. *We request that Congress support these programs at \$10 million and \$5 million, respectively, to increase the number of qualified American Indian teachers and school administrators in Indian Country.*

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES/ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES/HEAD START

**Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU) Head Start Partnership Program:** The TCU/Head Start partnership has made a lasting investment in our Indian communities by creating and enhancing associate degree programs in Early Childhood Development and related fields. Graduates of these programs help meet the mandate that 50 percent of all program teachers earn an associate degree in Early Childhood

Development or a related discipline. More importantly, this program has afforded American Indian children Head Start programs of the highest quality. A clear impediment to the ongoing success of this partnership program is the erratic availability of discretionary funding made available for the TCU/Head Start partnership. Since FY99, the first year of the program, a total of just 15 tribal colleges have been able to participate in this valuable program. Some colleges were awarded 3-year grants, others 5-year grants, and in FY02 there were no new grants funded at all. In FY03, funding for eight new grants was made available, but in FY04, only two new awards could be made because of the lack of adequate funds. The President's FY07 budget includes a total request of \$6.8 billion for Head Start Programs. *We request Congress direct the Head Start Bureau to designate a minimum of \$5 million for the TCU/Head Start Partnership program, to ensure that this critical program can continue and expand so that all TCUs might participate in the TCU- Head Start partnership program.*

### III. Conclusion

Tribal colleges and universities are bringing higher education opportunities to thousands of American Indians. The modest Federal investment in the TCUs has paid great dividends in terms of employment, education, and economic development, and continuation of this investment makes sound moral and fiscal sense. Tribal colleges need your help if they are to sustain and grow their programs and achieve their missions.

Thank you again for this opportunity to present our funding recommendations. We respectfully ask the Members of this Subcommittee for their continued support of the nation's tribal colleges and universities and full consideration of their FY2007 appropriations needs and recommendations.