



INSTITUTE OF  
AMERICAN INDIAN ARTS

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES**

**TESTIMONY OF:  
LAWRENCE MIRABAL, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER  
INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE  
CULTURE AND ARTS DEVELOPMENT**

**March 17, 2016**

**Introduction**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and Subcommittee members, my name is Lawrence Mirabal, and I am the Chief Financial Officer for the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. I am grateful for the opportunity to present this testimony on behalf of the college: for clarification, our official name is the Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development (IAIA). IAIA was established in 1962 as the only Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school teaching arts and culture. IAIA is the birthplace of contemporary Native art.

In 1986, IAIA became an independent college chartered by the United States Congress to empower creativity in leadership in Native arts and culture. The enabling legislation states that Native arts and cultures are Indigenous to the United States and thus must be enthusiastically maintained and supported so that they are not lost for future generations. IAIA is only one of three schools in the United States chartered directly by the Congress. The other two are Gallaudet University and Howard University, located in the District of Columbia. The power and uniqueness of IAIA's mission is undeniable, and makes it readily apparent that the college truly is a national treasure.

IAIA's congressional non-profit charter encourages IAIA to raise funds from private sources while authorizing basic, core funding from the Congress. Over the course of 30 years, IAIA has taken this charge to raise private funds very seriously. In the past six fiscal years we have raised approximately \$58 million in funds from external sources—augmenting the \$61.4 million we have received in federal core funding. It is our intention to maintain, if not exceed, that level of external fund raising in the future. Building on its past fundraising success, IAIA has recently launched its second large-scale capital campaign. The campaign's focus is completing the construction of a new multi-purpose Fitness & Performing Arts Center, on the IAIA campus. The campaign will seek to raise \$4 million from private donors, to augment another \$5.5 million that will

be raised from federal agencies, the State of New Mexico, and other competitive grant sources. While promoting fitness and wellness for students, the new facility will also house the only program of its kind in the country, focusing on the performing arts from an indigenous perspective.

## **Program and Campus Development**

IAIA has evolved from a high school its early years to a college offering bachelor's programs in Studio Arts, Cinematic Arts and Technology, Creative Writing, Museum Studies and Indigenous Liberal Studies. In 2013, IAIA began offering its first graduate program, an MFA in Creative Writing. Most recently, IAIA has re-introduced its performing arts program. As the only curriculum in the country focusing on performing arts from an indigenous perspective, it has been met with a very positive response. IAIA currently serves more than 600 students representing over 70 tribal nations from across North America.

IAIA is unique in that it is accredited by two organizations – the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, and by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design. We are proud of our dual accreditation and work hard to maintain it.

## **FY 16 Budget**

I express appreciation to the Subcommittee for your strong, consistent support for our core funding request throughout the FY 2016 appropriations process. IAIA's FY 2016 appropriation of \$11,619,000 represents a \$150,000 increase in core operations funding over the amount received in FY 2015. This increase has allowed us to sustain and expand our successful Summer Bridge Program, preserve our recently restored counselor position, continue growing our MFA program, and offer a modest 1.3% cost of living increase to our valued employees.

In addition to the increase in base funding, the appropriation also included \$2M in forward funding for the first time in the college's history. Forward funding helps the college better align its funding with the increased expenses associated with ramping up for the academic year, which begins in August. Additionally, this forward funding amount provides a small measure of predictability, in the event of funding disruptions, such as government shutdowns or prolonged continuing resolutions.

## **FY 17 Budget Request**

On behalf of the IAIA faculty, staff and students, I request the Subcommittee's support for the Administration's FY '17 budget request of \$11,835,070 for IAIA. This budget request includes \$9,835,070 for core operations representing a small increase of \$216,070 over the amount enacted in FY 2016. The requested FY 2017 baseline federal funding will assist IAIA in addressing the following priorities:

- IAIA is in a period of unprecedented student body growth, with over 600 students enrolled for the spring 2016 semester. This is more than double the number of students at the college less than a decade ago. With enrollments generally decreasing at colleges across the country, IAIA continues to be a very attractive choice for students interested in a world-class contemporary Native arts education at a very reasonable cost.
- IAIA has added more than 75,000 square feet of operating space with three new campus buildings constructed in the last 6 years. Although these are green buildings (LEED designed), energy and maintenance costs have continued to increase.
- IAIA is committed to sustaining and expanding the recently implemented Summer Bridge program, maximizing use of IAIA's state-of-the-art facilities and equipment programs that provides a very unique college experience to high school seniors during the summer months.
- The performing arts program has been reintroduced after being eliminated in the 1990s due to deep cuts in IAIA's budget. Currently, the Chair of Performing Arts is the only full-time faculty member for this growing program and one additional faculty member is needed for the next fiscal year.
- Sustaining the recently restored counselor position in student support services is essential to maximizing our chances for student success.
- Adequately funding and expanding IAIA's first graduate program in Creative Writing continues to be a priority for the college. This program has proven to be extremely successful but will require additional funding to ensure long-term growth.
- Providing a meaningful faculty and staff cost-of-living salary adjustment is key to recruiting and retaining the best possible employees for IAIA. In addition, IAIA continues to absorb fixed cost increases associated with worker's comp, retirement, health insurance and unemployment benefits.

## **Forward Funding**

The Administration's request also includes an additional \$2M in forward funding for IAIA. Forward funding brings the college's funding cycle into closer alignment with the additional expenses that are incurred in ramping up for the beginning of the academic year. Furthermore, the uncertainty caused by prolonged continuing resolutions and federal government shutdowns can be partially mitigated by forward funding. Both scenarios can have a devastating effect on the morale of the faculty and staff, while seriously undermining opportunities for student success. It is difficult to operate a college when the funding level is not known until well into a given fiscal year.

IAIA is one of only three tribal colleges not receiving *full* forward funding. The Administration's request continues to move IAIA in that direction. The nation's other tribal colleges have received full forward funding (at least 75% of their yearly baseline funding) for the past three years. Forward funding has helped our sister tribal colleges (which are funded under different authorizing legislation from us) by providing greater predictability and timeliness in receiving their core funding and aligned their budgets with the academic calendar rather than the federal fiscal year. Forward funding certainly would have the same positive impacts for IAIA. As you know, forward funding is not new funding but is rather an advance of funding for the subsequent year.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, IAIA's top priority is to enhance our ability to accomplish our mission of empowering creativity and leadership in Native arts and cultures, through higher education, lifelong learning, and outreach. In order to continue this important work, I respectfully request that the Subcommittee act again in FY 2017 as you did in FY 2016 by supporting the Administration's request for IAIA of \$11,835,070 in the Independent Agencies title of your bill. This amount includes \$9,835,070 for core operations and \$2 million in forward funding, which will move IAIA closer to being on an equal footing with other tribal colleges and assist in stabilizing all aspects of our operations to better serve students. Again, we greatly appreciate your consideration.

This concludes my testimony. I again thank the Chairman and the Committee members for the opportunity to speak on behalf of IAIA. I also want to take this opportunity to invite you to visit us in Santa Fe to meet our creative and talented students and to tour our beautiful campus and state-of-the-art facilities. IAIA's 2016 commencement ceremonies are scheduled for 11:00 A.M., on Saturday, May 14<sup>th</sup>. On behalf of our graduating students, I want to extend an invitation to all of you to attend. Your presence would honor our graduates and greatly enhance this special day. I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you may have.