



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**

**February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

### **Introduction**

I am grateful for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Institute of American Indian Arts. IAIA was established in 1962 as the only B.I.A. boarding school teaching Native arts and culture. In 1986, IAIA became an independent college chartered by the United States Congress to empower creativity in leadership in Native arts and culture.

First and foremost, IAIA is a community. A community that embraces the past, enriches the present and creates the future while provoking thought and providing exceptional educational opportunities. Our college is one of only three higher-ed institutions in the United States chartered directly by Congress. The Institute of American Indian Arts is a national treasure and is where contemporary Native art was born.

### **Program Development**

IAIA offers bachelor's programs in Studio Arts, Cinematic Arts and Technology, Creative Writing, Museum Studies, Indigenous Liberal Studies, and Performing Arts, as well as a graduate degree in Creative Writing. Additionally, the college is very close to establishing a second graduate program, in Studio Arts. The college serves more than 500 students representing 34 states and 93 tribes from across North America.

Roughly 80% of IAIA's students are PELL eligible and many are first-generation attendees. These numbers translate into dreams fulfilled, new opportunities, and a generational shift for Native students and the communities that they come from. The impact and importance of the work being done at IAIA are undeniable.

## **FY 2021 Budget Request**

To ensure financial sustainability, the college continues to vigorously pursue revenue sources to augment its congressional funding. Evidence of this can be found in the college's operating budget. As of the most recent fiscal year, almost 30% of the budget came from non-appropriation sources.

The students, faculty, and staff of IAIA are deeply appreciative of this Subcommittee's strong record of support for the college. It is clear that the unique mission of the college is understood and valued by the members of this body. The college's 2021 budget request includes a modest increase of \$252,000 over the amount enacted in fiscal year 2020. The fiscal year 2021 budget funding request will assist IAIA in addressing several key priorities:

- Like many institutions around the country, the college is placing a renewed focus on student safety. The college's community is diverse and dedicated to providing an environment for learning, living, and working that's free from discrimination, harassment, misconduct, and retaliation. To ensure continuous improvement in this area, the college has established the position of "Coordinator of Title IX, Equity, and Inclusion" and will soon make a permanent hire to fill this role.
- IAIA will soon embark on the creation of a Native Arts Research Center on the college's campus, in Santa Fe, NM. This project will be partially funded by the college's partnership with the Mellon Foundation, with the college eventually absorbing ongoing, operational costs. The Research Center will coordinate the Institute's Archives and Museum Collections, Artist-in-Residence Programs, Museum Internships and establish a scholarly Fellowship to support research about contemporary Native American and Alaskan Native arts. The college anticipates that the Research Center would serve as a world-class destination for scholars throughout the country.
- Offering a competitive benefits package is essential for recruiting and retaining the most talented employees. The college continues to absorb fixed cost increases associated with health insurance, maintaining an equitable faculty rank and step schedule, and providing staff with competitive wages. Although IAIA works diligently to maximize the value received from its benefits offerings and has shifted to a self-insured model, the college continues to experience rising health care costs. It is essential that IAIA continues to offer a compensation package in line with competing employers in the regional marketplace, to attract and retain skilled individuals.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, IAIA's top priority is ensuring the success of our students, affording them the opportunity to achieve greatness and give back to their communities. This is how generational change is made and IAIA is very honored to be a key part of that process.

To continue this important work, we respectfully request that the Subcommittee act again in fiscal year 2021 as you did in fiscal year 2020, by supporting the Administration's request for the college, of \$10,710,000 in the Independent Agencies title of your bill. The students, faculty, and staff of IAIA greatly appreciate your consideration.