



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

**TESTIMONY OF:
LAWRENCE MIRABAL, VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS
INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE
CULTURE AND ARTS DEVELOPMENT**

March 9th, 2023

Introduction

I am grateful for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA). IAIA's story is one of perseverance, inspiration, and success, spanning over sixty years. Beginning in 1962 as a B.I.A. boarding school teaching Native arts and culture, IAIA became an independent college, chartered by the United States Congress, in 1986. The college's mission is to empower creativity and leadership in Indigenous arts and cultures through higher education, lifelong learning, and community engagement.

IAIA is a place where exceptional students, faculty, and staff gather to engage in creating world-class educational opportunities. On the IAIA campus, thoughtful dialogue happens, skills are built, and creativity flows. It is a place that embraces the past, enriches the present, and creates the future. Our college is one of only three higher-ed institutions in the United States chartered by the United State Congress. IAIA is the birthplace of contemporary Native art, and the college is truly a national treasure.

Program and student composition

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 graduate degrees in Creative Writing, Studio Arts, and Cultural Administration. The college is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and serves nearly a thousand students, representing 36 states, and 91 tribes from across North America, 80% of which are PELL eligible.

The college is changing the narrative around higher education in many Indigenous communities. First-generation degree-seeking students now see college as a real possibility. This is how a generational shift is accomplished and IAIA is at the forefront of this change.

Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request

This Subcommittee continues to be a valued partner in furthering the mission of the college and supporting higher education throughout Indigenous communities. The entire college community expresses their sincere gratitude for your strong record of support. IAIA has a rich history of growth and resiliency. To this end, the college works to ensure its long-term sustainability, by augmenting its Congressional appropriation with other revenue sources. These include auxiliary operations, private contributions, and other government funding sources. This diversified revenue stream demonstrates the active role that the college takes in ensuring its viability for generations to come.

The college's 2024 budget request includes a modest increase of \$500,000 from the amount enacted in fiscal year 2023. Providing funding at the requested level will assist IAIA in addressing several key priorities.

Facilities Operations & Capital Improvements

IAIA remains committed to reducing its carbon footprint. To further this effort, the college will introduce electric vehicles to its fleet in FY2024, as well as infrastructure to support them. Additionally, IAIA continues to be challenged by the ongoing effects of inflation on facilities operations. Expenses for utilities, property & liability insurance, fuel, cleaning supplies, building materials, janitorial services, security, and replacement components have all increased substantially. In many instances, costs for these essential items have risen by nearly 50%. Although the college is proactive in its efforts to maximize value and solicit competitive bids, prices have risen dramatically across the board.

College-Wide Fixed Costs

The college is dedicated to recruiting and retaining highly talented faculty and staff. With ongoing challenges still present in the labor market, it is more critical than ever that the college secure the necessary resources to remain competitive, by ensuring that faculty are properly compensated through an established rank and step schedule, and staff salaries keep pace with the cost of living. To this end, IAIA will seek to match the administration's proposed 5.4 cost of living increase. In addition to a comprehensive portfolio of benefits to protect the health and well-being of employees, IAIA also will continue to engage in other creative solutions to enhance employee experience, such as offering employee and dependent tuition waivers. The additional resources included in the FY 2024 budget are required to sustain each one of these strategies.

Cyber Security

IAIA continues to prioritize investments that bolster cyber security at the college. These efforts will focus on several specific areas, including hardware, software, assessment, and employee training. Specifically, the college has identified the purchase of a new firewall to replace existing hardware that has reached its end of life. We also plan to engage a contractor to conduct a comprehensive security assessment and cyber security training for employees. Keeping pace with the increased costs associated with a comprehensive suite of cyber-liability insurance coverage is also essential. This multi-faceted approach will significantly reduce the college's exposure to cyber breaching and associated liability, as well as targeted phishing and ransomware attacks.

Conclusion

Student success is always at the forefront at IAIA. The college has been presented with enormous challenges over the past three years. Through it all, students, faculty, and staff persisted and thrived. By rising to any challenge that presents itself, the college ensures that each student is given the opportunity to maximize their potential. This Subcommittee is a key partner in this endeavor. To continue this important work, we respectfully request the Subcommittee's support of the college's funding request of \$13,982,000 in the Independent Agencies title of your bill. On behalf of the IAIA students, faculty, and staff, I express gratitude for your consideration.