



**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**

May 8th, 2024

Introduction

I appreciate the opportunity to present testimony representing the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA). The narrative of IAIA is a testament to resilience, inspiration, and achievement, encompassing more than six decades. Initially established in 1962 as a BIA boarding school focusing on Indigenous arts and culture, IAIA evolved into an independent college, officially 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 the birthplace of contemporary Native art and holds a unique position as one of only three colleges in the United States chartered by Congress. At IAIA, meaningful dialogue occurs, skills are honed, and creativity flourishes. World-class educational experiences happen inside our studio and classroom walls. Outstanding students, faculty, and staff gather to propel student success forward. The college embraces its rich history while actively working to shape the future.

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 over 850 students, representing 38 states and 94 tribes from across North America, over 80% of which are PELL eligible.

IAIA is reshaping the narrative surrounding higher education within Indigenous communities. The college is instrumental in altering the perception of college as a tangible and achievable goal for first-generation degree-seeking students. By making higher education a reality, IAIA is a leader in effecting a generational shift, positioning itself at the forefront of this transformative change.

Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request

The entire college community is deeply grateful for your consistent and robust support. IAIA has a history marked by substantial growth and resilience. This Subcommittee remains a steadfast collaborator in advancing the college's mission and promoting higher education in Indigenous communities. The college's 2025 budget request includes a modest increase of \$500,000 from the amount enacted for fiscal year 2024. Funding at the requested level will support IAIA in effectively addressing several critical priorities.

College-Wide Fixed Costs

In its commitment to attracting and retaining exceptionally skilled faculty and staff, IAIA recognizes the ongoing challenges within the labor market. As these challenges persist, it has become essential for the college to secure the necessary resources to remain competitive. This includes ensuring proper compensation for faculty through a well-defined rank and step schedule and providing staff with a modest 2% cost of living adjustment. The resources sought in the FY 2025 budget are vital to these efforts.

Additionally, IAIA remains challenged by the persistent impacts of inflation on operations. Costs related to materials, essential contract services, and utilities continue to experience significant escalation. In many instances, costs associated with these essential goods and services are still seeing double-digit percentage growth. Continued support in this area will be necessary to sustain operations at their current level.

College Readiness

In line with IAIA's continuous dedication to student success, the college constantly works to identify opportunities for enhancing learning outcomes. The College Bridge Program at IAIA has demonstrated remarkable success in equipping incoming freshmen for college life, and the college's One-Up Program for English and math developmental students has shown impressive outcomes. Expanding both existing programs is crucial to the ongoing improvement of student success. Additionally, establishing an Early College dual-credit program for high school students is a priority for the college. Early College dual-credit initiatives have demonstrated their effectiveness in preparing students for higher education by establishing college-level study habits early on and offering opportunities to connect with other motivated learners. Securing funding for these initiatives in the FY 2025 budget will be essential to continue this work.

Conclusion

IAIA consistently prioritizes student success, placing it at the forefront of its mission. This commitment is evident in the numerous accomplished authors, studio artists, curators, and filmmakers who have proudly walked across our commencement stage with a diploma in hand. Many of whom are using the power of their degrees to improve their family's lives and uplift their home communities. This Subcommittee plays a pivotal role as a critical partner in sustaining this success. To advance this crucial work, we respectfully seek the Subcommittee's support for the college's funding request of \$13,982,000 in the Independent Agencies title of your bill. On behalf of IAIA students, faculty, and staff, we extend our sincere gratitude for your thoughtful consideration.