



**Statement of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC)**  
**Submitted to the U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples of the United States**  
**Infrastructure in Indigenous Communities: Priorities for American Jobs Plan**

May 5, 2021

On behalf of the nation's 37 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), which together compose the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on President Biden's American Jobs Plan in response to the hearing held on April 21, 2021.

On March 31, 2021, President Biden released a summary of the American Jobs Plan focused on upgrading and repairing America's physical infrastructure. The plan outlines several focus areas that should include major investments in TCUs. However, in order to fully realize the potential of this plan and its impact on tribal communities, it is imperative that lawmakers move to ensure TCUs are explicitly included in the plan and the legislation that will make it a reality. Our submission includes recommendations for additional policy and increased investments in digital infrastructure, facilities and maintenance, and research and development.

**Background: The Tribal College Movement**

The nation's 37 TCUs (35 accredited and two development/emerging institutions) operate more than 75 campuses and sites in 16 states. TCU geographic boundaries encompass 80 percent of American Indian reservations and federal Indian trust lands. American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) TCU students represent more than 230 federally recognized tribes and hail from more than 30 states. Nearly 80 percent of these students receive federal financial aid and nearly half are first generation students. In total, TCUs serve more than 160,000 AI/ANs and other rural residents each year through a wide variety of academic and community-based programs.

Prior to the onset of the pandemic, in early March 2020, and for decades, TCUs have produced an AI/AN workforce that includes Head Start teachers, elementary and secondary school teachers, agriculture and land management specialists, engineers, computer programmers, nurses, and more. TCUs were doing this work in an environment far more challenging than that faced by any other institution of higher education (IHE) in the U.S. – an environment that has only become more difficult. A lack of adequate operating support, financial and academic challenges, and food and housing insecurity all create a challenging dynamic that our institutions must work to overcome.

1. **Inadequate Operating Support:** On average, TCUs are the poorest institutions of higher education in the nation. Even in the best of times, TCUs operate with very lean budgets because operating funding, which comes from the federal government, is grossly inadequate to meet TCU needs. Most TCUs received \$8,303 per Indian Student for academic year 2020-2021, significantly below the authorized level of \$9,937 per Indian student.

TCUs receive little or no financial support from their tribal governments because the tribal governments that have chartered them are some of the poorest tribal governments in the nation. For those that do receive funding, it is often inconsistent and dependent on annual tribal revenues. For example, 16 of the 37 TCUs received about \$33 million in tribal support in Academic Year (AY) 2018-19; in AY 2017-18, TCUs received only \$31 million in tribal support (AIHEC AIMS). Additionally, because most TCUs are not part of state education systems, they do not receive state funding. The handful of TCUs that do receive limited state funding receive support only for the non-Native ("non-beneficiary") students enrolled in their school.

Although 28 TCUs have an endowment, most are extremely small. 27 TCU endowments range from \$10,000 to \$14.2 million, while one institution has an endowment just over \$50 million. Nationally, the median college or university endowment is \$65.1 million, while the median TCU endowment is only \$2.4 million. Despite funding challenges, TCUs are committed to their tribes and communities. TCUs are open door institutions, serving any student who is willing to commit to a semester of learning.

Because TCUs serve some of the poorest communities in the nation – communities suffering generational poverty and serious socio-economic challenges – TCUs charge very low tuition (approximately \$3,647 per year for a 4-year degree). Many TCUs provide books to students to keep costs down for students; and although 18 TCUs operate dorms and cafeterias, these are not money-making enterprises like they are at other colleges and universities. Still, many TCU students cannot afford to pay both tuition and room and board. In 2019, pre-pandemic, the average TCU student unmet need was more than \$10,000 per year, according to U.S. Department of Education statistics.

2. **Student Demographics – Financial & Academic Challenges:** More than half of TCU students are first-generation college students. One-third are single with children, and the vast majority live in multi-generational homes with deep family and community ties and responsibilities. Overwhelmingly, TCU students are poor, living well below the federal poverty line with an average annual income of less than \$20,000 per year. 86 percent of TCU students receive Pell grants.

Most students enroll at TCUs unprepared for post-secondary education and generally fall into one of two categories: those who began post-secondary education at a mainstream institution but were unable to complete their program; and those who dropped out of high school and came to the TCUs to earn a GED. (On some reservations, more than 50 percent of all AI/AN students drop out of high school, most in their senior year.) For both groups, our institutions represent hope: an opportunity to rebuild damaged self-esteem, find their identity, and eventually earn an affordable credential or degree that will lead to family sustaining wages. Many require developmental education prior to beginning an academic or career and technical program. About 60 percent of TCU students require developmental math, and more than 45 percent require developmental reading (AIHEC AIMS). To address these challenges to academic success, most TCUs now offer dual credit or early college programs for local high school students, and some are developing high school programming right at the TCUs, such as the Salish Kootenai College (SKC) STEM academy. At SKC STEM Academy, high school juniors and seniors spend mornings at their high school and afternoons at SKC, where they engage in experiential math and science classes and labs.

3. **Student Demographics – Food and Housing Insecurities:** In addition to being low-income, first generation, and academically under-prepared, TCU students – and faculty – face serious health and safety risks because of food and housing insecurity. A recent survey published<sup>1</sup> by the American Indian College Fund and the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University revealed that of the students surveyed, TCU students suffered food and housing insecurity and homelessness at much higher rates than other college students. Nearly 30 percent of the TCU student respondents reported being homeless at some point in the prior 12 months (compared to the national student average of 17 percent); 69 percent of the TCU student respondents said they faced housing insecurity in the prior 12 months (compared to the national student average of 46 percent); and almost 62 percent were food insecure in the prior 30 days (compared to the national student average of 39 percent). Yet, despite these challenges, TCU students reported greater academic success compared to students with similar demographics attending other colleges and universities.

## How Can the American Jobs Plan Help TCUs?

### Digital Infrastructure

Prior to the pandemic, AIHEC began documenting the unique broadband related challenges faced by our TCUs. Supported by a 2017 grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF), we were able to conduct an in-depth study of the cyberinfrastructure capacity and needs of our institutions. The study results revealed that **TCUs had the slowest Internet speeds, at the highest cost, of any college or university in the country**. Further, most of our students lacked reliable Internet connectivity at home. The study recommended a long-term goal to connect TCUs to

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<sup>1</sup> New Study Shows Hunger, Homelessness Hinder TCU Students (Press Release). American Indian College Fund. March 19, 2020. <https://collegefund.org/research/new-study-shows-hunger-homelessness-hinder-tcu-students/>

regional education and research Internet networks that crisscross this country and enable faculty and students at nearly all other U.S. IHEs to learn, work, and conduct research with one another. Unfortunately, as of summer 2020, only 10 TCUs were connected to these networks. Additionally, the study found that in 2015 the average Internet speeds for U.S. IHEs were 513 Mbps for two-year institutions and 3.5 Gbps for four-year institutions, yet, more than one-third of all TCUs (16) had Internet speeds at 100 Mbps or less – and four were at or below 50 Mbps. Overall, the average TCU Internet speed was a slow 375 Mbps. Making the problem even more challenging, the TCU IT equipment refresh rate is 8.3 years, while the industry standard practice is three to five years.

**Current TCU Connectivity Costs:** In addition to inadequate broadband speed and capacity, many TCUs are paying connectivity rates that are significantly higher than the national average. Due to the extremely high costs, TCUs simply cannot afford connectivity levels that are typical for two-year and four-year institutions. Exorbitant connectivity costs are common for TCUs and their students where monopoly or near monopoly power exists or where a small number of providers charge near-identical high rates, regardless of whether the providers are commercial providers or tribal providers.

- Average TCU Internet connectivity cost: \$40,000 per year
  - Maximum expenses for a single location: \$250,000 for per year for Iłisaǵvik College (Barrow, AK).
  - Maximum expense with satellite locations: \$367,000 for per year for Diné College (Tsaile, AZ), includes two satellite locations, as of March 2020.<sup>2</sup>
- Tohono O'odham Community College (Sells, AZ) pays \$70/Mbps per month, a monthly cost of \$3,500 for 50 Mbps service, which is 70 times the national average cost.
- The national average for 1 Gbps is \$1,000 per month (based on the rate of \$1/Mbps per month).

When examining TCU digital infrastructure, it is important to keep in mind that 32 TCUs are in very remote areas. For these TCUs, there is a lack of choice (competition) of Internet Service Providers (ISPs), which significantly drives up costs. This is the primary reason TCUs pay higher than average rates for their Internet service, particularly given the low speed.

Even TCUs with adequate Internet access on campus face problems delivering classes remotely to students across their reservations. At some TCUs, more than half of students lack consistent, reliable, and affordable Internet access at home<sup>3</sup> and many students lack the equipment (tablets, computers, laptops) necessary to engage in coursework and homework. Dr. Richard Littlebear, President of Chief Dull Knife College (CDKC), describes the problem: *"I can use my cell phone to make a call from Hawaii to Lame Deer, but I can't use my cell phone to call from Lame Deer to Busby – there is no cellular service and without cellular, there is no Internet."* Oahu, Hawaii is 3,300 miles from the Northern Cheyenne reservation in Montana. The distance between the reservation towns of Lame Deer and Busby is 16 miles. CDKC had to completely halt class in summer 2020 and fall 2020 due to the lack of Internet infrastructure on the reservation.

**AIHEC Recommendation – Establish a \$24 million TCU IT Service Fund:** In order to address these ongoing challenges, AIHEC recommends that the Administration and Congress work together to establish a permanent TCU IT Service Fund under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Rural Utilities Service, in either the Community Connect Fund or the Reconnect Program. Approximately \$24 million in TCU set-aside funding is needed for this program, based on AIHEC's extensive data informed analysis.

It is important to note that any program to provide tax credits to existing ISPs for providing free internet access to students provides little or no help in Indian Country because the IT infrastructure does not exist: 68 percent of those on rural Tribal lands lack access to fixed broadband, according to a 2016 Federal Communications Commission Broadband Progress Report.

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<sup>2</sup> Using federal COVID-19 relief funding, Diné College recently upgraded its broadband infrastructure to 3 Gbps. However, the cost for this access is not sustainable: Diné College now pays \$803,000 per year for 3 Gbps of access for its six campuses and two micro-sites, a figure that is 21.33 times the national average.

<sup>3</sup> According to a 2016 FCC Broadband Progress Report, 68 percent of those on rural Tribal lands lack access to fixed broadband.

Establishing specific funds for Land-grant institutions within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is not unusual. For example, in the last reauthorization of the Farm Bill, Congress established a permanent \$40 million scholarship fund for 1890 Land-grant institutions (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), and Congress annually funds a modest TCU (1994 Land-grant institution) community facilities construction set-aside program within the USDA-Rural Development Community Facilities program.

The American Jobs Plans addresses the issue of broadband accessibility by prioritizing high-speed broadband in unserved and underserved areas with a tribal set aside; and promoting affordable high quality, reliable internet by investing \$100 billion in this effort. AIHEC recommends that the Administration work with Congress to create TCU specific opportunities to address the ongoing broadband challenges faced by TCUs, tribal communities, and students.

### **Higher Education Facilities**

Aaron Sansosie is a veteran of the U.S. Army, father of four, and recent graduate of Navajo Technical University (NTU) in Crownpoint, New Mexico. Like many TCU students, Aaron set impressive educational goals – he earned a carpentry certificate then immediately started an associate’s program in complex building information modeling, completing both programs in less than two years. To achieve his goals, Aaron enrolled in 17 to 19 credits each semester at NTU, taking classes all morning, labs all afternoon, and online courses and studying in the evening. This would be a grueling schedule for any student, but this father of four did all of this while sleeping out of his truck. He is not alone. At NTU and many of our TCUs, many students often sleep in their vehicles to attend class, because TCUs often lack enough affordable student housing.

Aaron has since moved on to pursue other educational goals – he left NTU to enroll in a baccalaureate degree in architecture, because NTU does not have the resources to build out its program beyond the associate’s level. Student housing and limited advanced degree programs, particularly in high-wage, jobs-oriented career and technical fields, are just two of the many outstanding infrastructure needs on TCU campuses throughout Indian Country.

At present, TCUs and their chartering tribal governments must cobble together resources from several different public and private funding sources for new construction and rehabilitation projects. Federal programs tapped by TCUs include the U.S. Department of Education Title III grants for Tribal Colleges and Universities (Parts A and F, Section 316 of the Higher Education Act); USDA TCU Community Facilities Program (small grants of about \$120,000 per eligible TCU); USDA community facility loan programs; limited funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and private foundation and capital campaign funding. Virtually no construction funding for TCUs comes from the U.S. Department of the Interior, other than small amounts for Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute.

**AIHEC Recommendation – Establish a \$500 million TCU Construction Fund:** For TCUs to realize their goals of strengthening tribes as sovereign nations and building a 21<sup>st</sup> century AI/AN workforce, they must have the facilities and infrastructure capable of educating and training students in a safe environment. It simply cannot be done with leaking roofs and exposed and substandard electrical wiring; outdated computer labs; students sleeping in vehicles; and the slowest most expensive Internet access. Yet, that is what TCUs are asked to do. In order to solve these issues, we propose the establishment of a \$500 million TCU Construction Fund based on the following research:

- **AIHEC TCU Facilities Survey:** In 2018 AIHEC surveyed 23 TCUs, which revealed a list of chronic facilities-related needs, including student and faculty housing, classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. The 23 TCUs had an estimated total need of \$347.8 million in deferred maintenance and rehabilitation and a need of \$730 million to fully implement existing master plans. Extrapolating this to all 37 TCUs, the total *current* need is \$500 million for Deferred Maintenance and Rehabilitation and \$837 million for Completion of Master Plans. (see appendix: TCU Facilities Needs Survey July 2018). Additionally, the Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Assistance Act (TCCUAA P.L. 95-471) directs the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to conduct a study of the condition of existing facilities, examine facilities-related health and safety concerns, and identify the current and long-term infrastructure needs of all 37 TCUs. Unfortunately, this study has never been

completed, so we call on the BIA and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) to actually carry this out and provide an updated and thorough inventory of TCU facilities-related needs.

In addition to the TCU facilities study, a TCU construction and facilities program was authorized by law in 1978. After 43 years, Congress appropriated \$15 million in TCU facilities related funding to begin to address these issues. The BIA and BIE are hosting a tribal listening session this month to determine how to administer the \$15 million.

**AIHEC Recommendation – Create a TCU Operations and Maintenance Account:** In order to properly manage, fully use, and extend the lifespan of TCU facilities, AIHEC recommends the establishment of a TCU Facilities Operations and Maintenance Account. Currently, BIE K-12 schools receive operations and maintenance funding to address safety and health concerns, perform routine maintenance to optimize the lifecycle of facility-related systems, and protect land and property value. As we've outlined, TCUs are creatively addressing a myriad of needs with limited, thinly stretched budgets. The creation of a dedicated TCU Operations and Maintenance Account would allow TCUs to fully use current operational funding for "academic, educational, and administrative purposes" as outlined in the TCCUAA, while building more parity within the BIE K-20 system.

One way the American Jobs Plans focuses on education is by investing in higher education facilities. To begin to address historically neglected TCU infrastructure, AIHEC recommends that the Administration work with Congress to realize the transformative vision of TCUs by investing in TCU facilities through a dedicated construction fund and operations and maintenance fund.

### **Research and Development: Investments in NSF and TCUs**

The National Science Foundation-Tribal Colleges and Universities Program (NSF-TCUP), administered by the NSF Education and Human Resources Directorate, is a competitive grant program that enables TCUs and Alaska Native Serving and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions (AN/NHSIs) to develop and expand critically needed STEM education and research programs relevant to their Indigenous communities.

Since the program began in 2001, NSF-TCUP has become the primary federal program for building STEM programmatic and research capacity at TCUs. For example, NSF-TCUP funding supported Navajo Technical University (NTU) in the development of its electrical and industrial engineering programs, which received accreditation from the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET) in 2018. This marks a significant milestone, with NTU leading the way as the first TCU to receive ABET accreditation.

There are many success stories at the TCUs. In 2014, Cankdeska Cikana Community College (CCCC), Sitting Bull College, Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College, and Turtle Mountain Community College established an engineering education partnership with North Dakota State University (NDSU) through funding from NSF-TCUP's Pre-engineering Education Collaborative (PEEC). The TCUs and NDSU developed a formal curriculum and support system for students to obtain a bachelor's degree in engineering, beginning with pre-engineering coursework offered collaboratively by TCU and NDSU engineering faculty; then students transition to NDSU to complete their bachelor's degree. The first graduate of the program, Ryan Brown, was a pre-engineering student at CCCC who went on to earn his Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering at NDSU in 2018. Brown returned to the Spirit Lake Reservation and currently serves as a project manager for the Spirit Lake Tribal Planning Department.

Growing up in rural Montana, Cody Natoni Sifford (Diné) pursued a degree in environmental science at Salish Kootenai College (SKC) located in Pablo, Montana, participated in several internships with federal agencies, and completed a master's degree in forest resources at the University of Washington Seattle. Sifford has since returned to Montana to serve as an adjunct professor at SKC and works as a geographic information systems analyst for the Confederated Tribes of Salish and Kootenai forest department.

These success stories notwithstanding, AI/AN students are disadvantaged from pursuing STEM-centered careers from an early age. As mentioned earlier, AI/AN youth have the highest high school drop-out rate of any ethnic or racial group in the country. Those who do pursue postsecondary education often require developmental classes before taking on a full load of college-level courses. Placement tests administered at TCUs to first-time entering

students in academic year 2018-19 showed that 36 percent required remedial math. Our data indicates that while 51 percent will successfully complete the course, many will take more than one year to do so.

Through NSF-TCUP grants, TCUs and AN/NHs are actively working to address this problem by developing strong partnerships with their K-12 feeder schools to engage students in culturally appropriate STEM education and outreach programs. SKC, located on the Flathead Indian Reservation, created a two-year STEM Academy to prepare junior and senior high school students for college. Participating high school students engage in collaborative work with STEM researchers, conduct culturally relevant research, and take courses to earn college credit.

As stewards of the land, TCUs and tribal communities are leading the way in climate change research, mitigation, and adaptation. As featured in the *Tribal College Journal*<sup>4</sup>, students at Aaniiih Nakoda College (ANC) are determined to utilize their education to help combat the looming climate change crisis and the effects it will have on their Fort Belknap community. Children at ANC's White Clay Immersion School have built their own weather station and created an Aaniiih language book on climate change for elementary school children. Meanwhile, students in the college's new four-year degree program in Aaniiih Nakoda ecology are taking the *ʔisítáaʔ/peda* (fire) class, comparing burned and unburned areas on the Montana prairie with grasslands restoration and climate change in mind. Other students in environmental science are immersed in studying the buffalo pasture, measuring biomass, and carrying capacity as the effects of global temperature rise take hold.

Elsewhere on the Fort Belknap reservation, allied health and environmental science students are collecting mosquitoes during the summer months to test for the West Nile Virus and to predict outbreaks of the disease in their community, while ANC instructor Dan Kinsey is conducting a long-term monitoring study of organisms found in the Milk River, the community's drinking water source, to assess water health. And the new "Grow Our Own" nursing program is collaborating with the ANC farm to stress food security, nutrition, and the benefits of community members establishing their own gardens. All these initiatives are like streams that flow into a much larger river—a confluence that will be needed if we are to be proactive and adapt to climate change as Indigenous peoples the world over. As you can see from these examples, the NSF-TCUP is critical and could be greatly expanded with greater funding.

**AIHEC Recommendation – Increased and Distinct Institutional Research and Development Funding for TCUs:** Even with all the advances and successes, funding for the NSF-TCUP has been stagnant for years. Therefore, not all TCUs have had an opportunity to benefit. In addition to increased funding for the NSF-TCUP program, AIHEC recommends the program be restructured and expanded to increase participation from TCUs, Alaska Native Serving Institutions, and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions.

The American Jobs Plans recommends an investment of \$50 billion within the NSF to build upon existing programs. AIHEC strongly recommends a sizeable investment in NSF programming for TCUs to advance STEM research, aid in eliminating racial and gender inequities, and increase climate change adaptation on tribal lands. AIHEC also fully supports President Biden's call for targeted research investments for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), TCUs, and Minority Serving Institutions. Of the proposed \$10 billion research & development fund and \$15 billion Centers of Excellence fund, a distinct TCU set aside must be established to ensure TCU participation. Without a specific set aside, TCUs will be left out of these well-intentioned programs.

**AIHEC Recommendation – Establish a New TCU-Excellence in Research (TCU-EiR) Program:** AIHEC recommends the establishment of a TCU-EiR program, identical to the HBCU program, to support basic and applied research at TCUs, which will enable STEM faculty to develop research capacity at TCUs and conduct research. Such a program is desperately needed due to the need for tribally driven STEM research and the dearth of AI/ANs earning graduate degrees and PhDs, particularly in STEM. Without funding for TCU-specific capacity building, the number of AI/ANs with advanced degrees and entering the STEM research workforce will continue to lag far behind other populations. Just as a specific program was established for HBCUs, an identical program is needed for TCUs. In

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<sup>4</sup> Confluences for Climate Education: Aaniiih Nakoda College Addresses Our Changing Environment. *Tribal College Journal*. (February 21, 2021). <https://tribalcollegejournal.org/confluence-for-climate-education-aaniiih-nakoda-college-addresses-our-changing-environment/>

2015, AI/ANs made up 1.2 percent of the total U.S. population, but represented only 0.4 percent of all engineering Bachelor's degree recipients, 0.3 percent of the engineering workforce, and 0.1 percent of all engineering faculty.<sup>5</sup> Between 2001 and 2013, the yearly average number of AI/ANs earning PhDs in engineering – in the entire U.S. – was 10. About 75 Masters of Engineering degrees were awarded to AI/ANs during that same time period.<sup>6</sup> According to the 2019 NSF Report on Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering,<sup>7</sup> 104 AI/ANs earned PhDs in STEM fields in 2017, representing 0.26 percent of all STEM PhDs awarded in the US. Clearly, the need for this capacity building program is tremendous.

**AIHEC Recommendation – Establish Separate NSF Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions (AN/NHSIs) Programs:** Although the title of the NSF-TCUP program is TCU-specific, NSF also allows AN/NHSIs to compete for funding under NSF-TCUP. As currently administered, NSF-TCUP funding intended to address disparities in TCU STEM programming is instead being used by larger, state-supported institutions that are far from resource-challenged. We request that AN/NHSIs be removed from the NSF-TCU program and a separate program be established for these institutions. This would be consistent with programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education. The Strengthening TCUs program is authorized in Section 316 of the Higher Education Act (HEA); and the Strengthening AN/NHSIs program is authorized in HEA Section 317, and both are administered separately by the U.S. Department of Education.

### **Conclusion: American Jobs Plan TCU Investments Provide a Bright Future**

Over the past 50 years of the Tribal College Movement, TCUs have provided quality higher education to thousands of AI/ANs and other rural residents and continue to provide essential community programs and services to those who might otherwise not have access to such opportunities. The modest federal investment in TCUs during this time have paid great dividends in terms of employment, education, research, and economic development and have significantly reduced the costs of social programs, health care, and law enforcement. However, TCUs have been forced to operate on lean budgets year after year without any significant long-term federal investment in infrastructure and broadband support. Further, the global pandemic has exacerbated existing challenges and created new challenges for TCUs as they plan for an uncertain future. More than ever, TCUs need this Administration and Congress to ensure TCUs are distinctly supported and afforded new opportunities within the American Jobs Plan.

As President Biden said in his recent joint address to Congress:

“...We'll invest in Historical Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges, Minority-Serving Institutions. The reason is: They don't have the endowments, but their students are just as capable of learning about cybersecurity, just as capable of learning about metallurgy — all the things that are going on that provide those jobs of the future.”

We agree with President Biden, our students are just as capable as any student in the country or the world if given the proper support and investment. We appreciate the Subcommittee's past support of TCUs and your thoughtful consideration of our recommendations for the the American Jobs Plan. Thank you.

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<sup>5</sup> Bridging the Racial Gap in STEM Education. *National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering*. November 8, 2021.

<https://www.nacme.org/nacme-career-center/89-news/articles>.

<sup>6</sup> Sandia Indian Energy—Internship Program. May 2018.

[https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/energy/Tribal\\_Energy/Sandra\\_Begay\\_32545.pdf](https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/energy/Tribal_Energy/Sandra_Begay_32545.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> [Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering: 2019 | NSF - National Science Foundation](#)