

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES
Public Hearing on American Indian/Alaskan Native Programs**

Testimony of
**Angelique Albert, Executive Director
American Indian Graduate Center
May 9, 2018**

Good Afternoon Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member Betty McCollum, and the rest of the distinguished members of the Subcommittee. My name is Angelique Albert. I am member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of Northwest Montana. I have worked in Indian Country for over 20 years in various capacities. I am honored to present testimony to you today as the Executive Director of the American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC).

I am here today to request the restoration of and increased funding to the BIE's Special Higher Education Program (SHEP) and the Science Post Graduate Scholarship Fund (SPGSF). Both of these vitally important programs are currently administered by AIGC and were eliminated in the President's proposed FY 2019 budget.

American Indian Graduate Center is the oldest and largest provider of scholarships for American Indian and Alaska Native students nationally. We are approaching our 50th anniversary of providing scholarships to students in any field of study at any accredited college. Thanks to these two critical programs, we have been able to provide funding to approximately 13,000 students from over 400 Tribes in all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia.

In addition to the extensive reach these programs have had, let me take a moment to discuss the impact. Before these programs were implemented, we had a total of 30 Tribal medical doctors and 38 Tribal lawyers in the entire United States. The SHEP and SPGSF Programs have directly impacted these numbers, by funding over 1,200 medical students, and over 1,300 law students.

We are currently in our fourth year of administering the SPGSF Program. Data analytics of the first three years show an unprecedented graduation rate of 95%. This far exceeds the 41% national postsecondary graduation rate for American Indian students, as given by the National Center for Educational Statistics. Additionally, we are proud to highlight 66% of the scholars in this STEM program are female. This is also unprecedented. Women make up only 35% of all STEM degree holders in this country. Reports from the National Center for Educational Statistics show that female students receive fewer STEM degrees than males in every ethnic group.

Statistics and numbers are but one way of showing success. The true impact of these essential programs lay in the stories and lives of the 13,000 individuals touched. Dr. Rebecca St. Germaine, a member of the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe Nation, graduated from the University of Minnesota with a PhD in Social and Administrative Pharmacy. Her life was transformed by the SPGSF Program. This funding has empowered her to become Commissioner of Health and Human Services for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, overseeing three districts as well as urban offices.

Stories like Rebecca’s highlight the sound investment these programs make in developing the human capital in this country. These programs are a vital source of funding to many students who would otherwise not be able to afford higher education.

The SHEP and SPGSF Programs provide scholarship awards ranging from \$1,000 to \$30,000, with the average award being \$5,000. As tuition costs for graduate school at a public university averages in excess of \$30,000 per year, funding from these programs clearly do not eliminate a student’s obligation to pay for their own education. This funding generally reduces the burden of student debt they take on in the pursuit of their academic goals.

Lastly, I would like to note that an abrupt program elimination in FY 2019 is a serious concern for us, given the number of current students who are attending school and receiving fellowships through the programs who will suddenly be without any financial assistance.

I fully recognize the fiscal challenges that control the Subcommittee’s actions this year; however, I would like to respectfully request strong and continued funding for the Special High Education Program and Science Post Graduate Scholarship Fund, at or above the previously funded levels. This funding will ensure that American Indian and Alaska Native students are provided opportunities to attend quality higher educational institutions, fulfill their academic dreams, and contribute their expertise to our greater communities!

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our request.

Economic Impact of Continued Funding of SHEP and SPGSF

American Indian Graduate Center is proud to have utilized the funding from the SHEP and SPGSF Programs to provide scholarships to deserving students from over 400 Tribes in all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia. The funding allows students to attend any accredited college, including Tribal Colleges, Public Universities, and Private Universities. Two examples of these schools are Salish Kootenai College, a Tribal College in Montana and Harvard University, a private Ivy League University in Massachusetts. Economic impact studies at each of these institutions show a return on investment of 12.1% and 8% respectively. Additionally, the 2015 SKC Economic Impact Study highlights a cost- benefit ratio of 1:2.5 to taxpayer and 1:4.4 in social savings. As the study states, “This means that for every \$1 of public money invested in SKC, taxpayers receive a cumulative value of \$2.50 over the course of the students’ working lives. For every dollar of investment, society nationwide will receive a cumulative value of \$4.40 in benefits.”

This data indicates that reducing funding in the 2019 budget may have the opposite of the intended effect long term, resulting in greater demand for social services to address health, crime and unemployment.

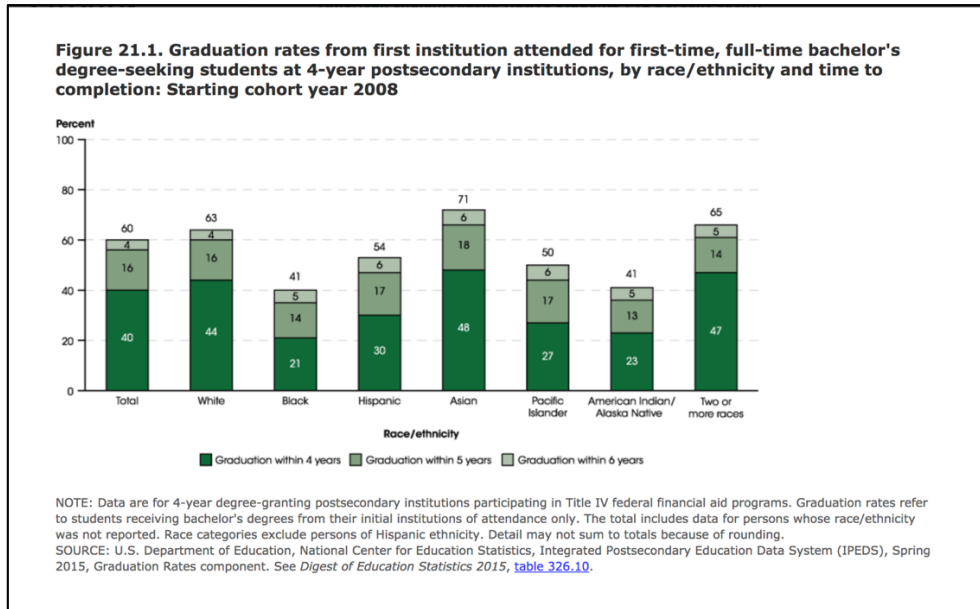
TABLE 3. SUMMARY OF INVESTMENT ANALYSIS RESULTS

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE	
\$43,419	Benefits (thousands)
\$16,573	Costs (thousands)
\$26,847	Net present value (thousands)
2.6	Benefit-cost ratio
12.1%	Rate of return
TAXPAYER PERSPECTIVE	
\$44,500	Benefits (thousands)
\$17,494	Costs (thousands)
\$27,006	Net present value (thousands)
2.5	Benefit-cost ratio
7.4%	Rate of return
SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE	
\$184,172	Benefits (thousands)
\$42,118	Costs (thousands)
\$142,054	Net present value (thousands)
4.4	Benefit-cost ratio
NA	Rate of return*

* The rate of return is not reported for the social perspective because the beneficiaries of the investment are not necessarily the same as the original investors.

SPGSF Graduation Rate

The SPGSF Program has an unprecedented graduation rate of 95%. This far exceeds the 41% national post-secondary graduation rate given for American Indian student this same year, as given by the National Center for Educational Statistics.



SPGSF 66% Female Participation Rate

The SPGSF Program has an unprecedented female participation rate of 66%. This far exceeds the 35% national numbers for all women in graduating with STEM degrees and 39% of American Indian women graduating with STEM degrees, as given by the National Centre for Educational Statistics.

