



INSTITUTE OF
AMERICAN INDIAN ARTS

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

**TESTIMONY OF:
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INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE
CULTURE AND ARTS DEVELOPMENT**

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Introduction

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and Subcommittee members. My name is Lawrence Mirabal and I am the Chief Financial Officer for the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. I am grateful for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the college. 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. IAIA is the birthplace of contemporary Native art.

The college's enabling legislation states that Native arts and cultures are Indigenous to the United States and thus must be enthusiastically maintained and supported so that they are not lost for future generations. Through the concept of art as a traditional path of expression, IAIA excels at skill building, provoking thought and providing exceptional educational opportunities. IAIA is a place that embraces the past, enriches the present and creates the future. IAIA is only one of three colleges in the United States chartered directly by the Congress. The power and uniqueness of IAIA's mission is undeniable and makes it clear that the college truly is a national treasure.

IAIA's congressional non-profit charter encourages the college to raise funds from private sources while authorizing basic, core funding from the Congress. Over the course of 30 years, IAIA has taken this charge to augment its congressional funding very seriously. Evidence of this can be found in the college's operating budget. As of the most recent fiscal year, over 29% of the budget came from non-appropriation sources. In addition, the college will continue to build on its past fundraising success, by launching a large-scale capital campaign this fall. The campaign's focus will be to increase the endowment and raise unrestricted funds for scholarships, as well as academic program support and expansion.

Program and Campus Development

IAIA evolved from a high school to a college offering bachelor's programs in Studio Arts, Cinematic Arts and Technology, Creative Writing, Museum Studies and Indigenous Liberal Studies. In 2013, IAIA launched its first graduate program, in Creative Writing. Recently, IAIA re-introduced its performing arts program, which focuses on performing arts from an indigenous perspective. The Performing Arts program occupies a newly constructed performing arts and fitness center on the IAIA campus; a 24,000 square foot state of the art facility that houses a blackbox theater, dance studios, fitness training space, and a gymnasium. The college serves more than 500 students representing over 92 tribes from across North America.

IAIA is unique in that it is accredited by two organizations – the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, and by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design. The college values the dual accreditation and works hard to maintain it.

Forward Funding

I express appreciation to the Subcommittee for providing forward funding for IAIA in FY 17, which has proved to be immensely beneficial to the college by eliminating the uncertainty caused by continuing resolutions and the threat of federal government shutdowns. Furthermore, aligning our fiscal year funding with the beginning of the academic year allows for planning and expenditure of funds to address the needs of our students, thereby promoting their success. Again, thank you for this positive change at IAIA that has made a tremendous difference in our ability to offer high quality programs at the college.

FY 19 Budget Request

We are appreciative of the Subcommittee's work and for your strong, consistent support of our core funding request throughout the appropriations process. On behalf of the IAIA faculty, staff and students, I request the Subcommittee's support for the Administration's FY '19 budget request of \$9,960,000 for IAIA. This budget request includes a slight increase of \$125,000 over the amount enacted in FY 2018. The requested FY 2019 baseline federal funding will assist IAIA in addressing the following priorities:

- IAIA continues to experience tremendous growth, with over 600 students enrolled at the beginning of the 2017-2018 academic year. This number represents an increase to enrollment of over 35% in just 5 short years. We believe this is not only due to the unique, world-class education being offered, but also because of the incredible value IAIA offers.

- Student success continues to be at the forefront of IAIA’s strategic planning. This is evident in several new initiatives that the college has introduced. First, the college has included all required textbooks into the cost of tuition. This means students have their books on the first day of class, increasing the odds of successfully completing that semester. Second, IAIA has begun to offer a “4 for 3” plan. Students that choose to participate in this plan commit to completing their undergrad degree in 4 years. If the student is successful in completing their degree on-time, the college issues a refund on all tuition charged for the student’s senior year. Finally, IAIA continues to expand the Summer Bridge program, maximizing use of IAIA’s state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, by allowing students to complete developmental courses outside of the traditional academic year. This helps ensure that students remain on schedule for a timely graduation.
- IAIA has experienced tremendous development in program offerings. Performing arts has been reintroduced after being eliminated in the 1990s due to deep cuts in IAIA’s budget. Additionally, the college’s first master’s level program in creative writing continues to thrive with sixty-five students earning an MFA since its launch in 2013. An MFA in Studio Arts is currently in the planning stages. This growth requires additional faculty to be added to serve these areas.
- The college has continued to complete the buildout of the campus, adding more than 100,000 square feet of operating space with several new campus buildings constructed in the last 8 years. Although these are very efficient green buildings (LEED designed), energy and maintenance cost increases are inevitable.
- The college is constantly looking for ways to rein in costs associated with employee benefits. To this end, IAIA has moved to a self-insured model for medical benefits and the administration routinely reviews proposals from other benefit providers to search for savings. Despite these efforts, however, benefit costs continue to rise. To attract and retain the best talent, it is essential that the college continue to offer a high-quality benefits program and competitive salaries.

Conclusion

In summary, IAIA’s top priority is to enhance our ability to accomplish our mission of empowering creativity and leadership in Native arts and cultures, through higher education, lifelong learning, and outreach. To continue this important work, I respectfully request that the Subcommittee act again in FY 2019 as you did in FY 2018, by supporting the Administration’s request for IAIA of \$9,960,000 in the Independent Agencies title of your bill. The students, faculty, and staff of IAIA greatly appreciate your consideration.