

**STATEMENT OF ANGELIQUE ALBERT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AMERICAN INDIAN GRADUATE CENTER**

**SUBMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

March 7, 2019

American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC) is the oldest and largest provider of scholarships for Native students nationally. This national nonprofit organization has provided financial support for American Indians and Alaskan Natives (AI/AN) seeking higher education and supported them in attaining graduate and professional degrees for 50 years. Additionally, AIGC has expanded services to students pursuing undergraduate degrees for the past 20 years. The testimony shared today will provide funding recommendations for two programs administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in the Department of Interior: Special Higher Education Program (SHEP) and Science Post Graduate Scholarship Fund (SPGSF). The following is the recommended funding level for the two programs:

- \$3,400,000 to fund Special Higher Education Program (SHEP)
- \$3,200,000 to fund Science Post Graduate Scholarship Fund (SPGSF)

With every passing year, the value of higher education in the workplace increases, and those who do not have access to college and universities fall farther behind. This is especially true for American Indian and Alaska Native populations, who face unique challenges as they pursue post-secondary education. According to National Center on Educational Statistics, show AI/AN students attending college at lower rates than any other ethnic group. In 2016, the total college enrollment rate was higher for Asian young adults (58 percent) than for young adults who were of two or more races (42 percent), White (42 percent), Hispanic (39 percent), Black (36 percent), Pacific Islander (21 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native (19 percent). The 6-year graduation rates for AI/AN students pursuing a bachelor's degree at a 4-year granting institution is 39%.¹

When we look at the educational attainment of our AI/AN students the story is even more disturbing. The Center for Native American Youth reported the following educational attainment numbers for Native students in their 2018 State of the Native Youth Report: 84.5% (91.7% general population) high school degree or higher, 16.5% (41.6% general population) Associate Degree or higher, 10.2% (36.1% general population) Bachelor's Degree or higher, and 2.1% (9.2% general population) for master's degree or higher.¹¹ These numbers show a disturbing trend and disparity in Indian Country. When looking at the disparity of student entering post-secondary education, we see the largest disparity at 16.5% for Native students and 41.6% for the general population. The level of master's degree and higher are discouraging with a mere 2.1% of the American Indian and Alaskan Native population having the professional degrees needed to excel in critical industries across this nation.

In order for AI/AN students to have opportunities for higher education, congress must continue to invest in scholarship dollars to support students. One of the main obstacles to higher education for Native students is the financial support. The SHEP and SPGSF programs have proven to be programs that produce phenomenal results.

CONGRESS INVESTING IN RESULTS

With 50 years of experience in implementing the SHEP program and 5 years implementing the SPGSF program, American Indian Graduate Center has committed to consistent evaluation and analysis of these and all administered programs. Thanks to these two critical programs, we have been able to provide funding over 13,000 students from over 500 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. 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.

Results through Numbers

SHEP funding is primarily responsible for changing the landscape of Tribal lawyers and educators in this country. In 1969, the year AIGC was established, there were 38 Native lawyers and 15 Native doctoral students in total. Through the support of SHEP, AIGC has contributed to the over 1,300 law degrees and over 1700 PhD degrees for Native students.

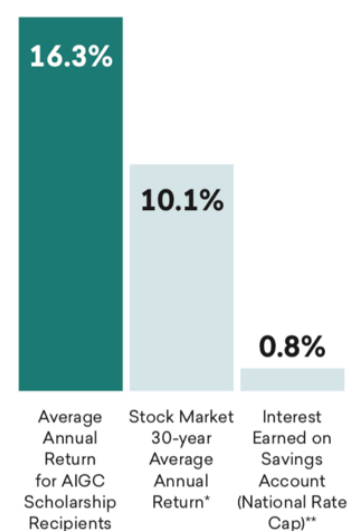
We are currently in our fifth year of administering the SPGSF Program. Data analytics of the first four years show an unprecedented graduation rate of 95%. This far exceeds the 39% national postsecondary graduation rate for American Indian students, as given earlier. Additionally, we are proud to highlight 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.

Results through Economic Impact

AIGC conducted an economic impact study in 2018. This study looked at a one-year sample of students to determine the economic and impact and return on investment of scholarship dollars. The following return on investment for the students, tax payers and society as a whole.

- The average annual return for AIGC scholarship recipients is 16.3%. This is an impressive return, especially when compared to the 30-year average 10.1% return to the U.S. stock market
- The average annual return on investment for taxpayers is 27.2%.
- For every dollar of this investment, society as a whole in the U.S. will receive a cumulative value of \$16.90 in benefits.
- The accumulated impact of the 2017 AIGC scholarship recipients who are currently employed in the U.S. workforce amounted to \$349.4 million in added income to the U.S. economy, which is equivalent to supporting 5,844 jobs.

FIGURE 3: Scholarship recipient rate of return

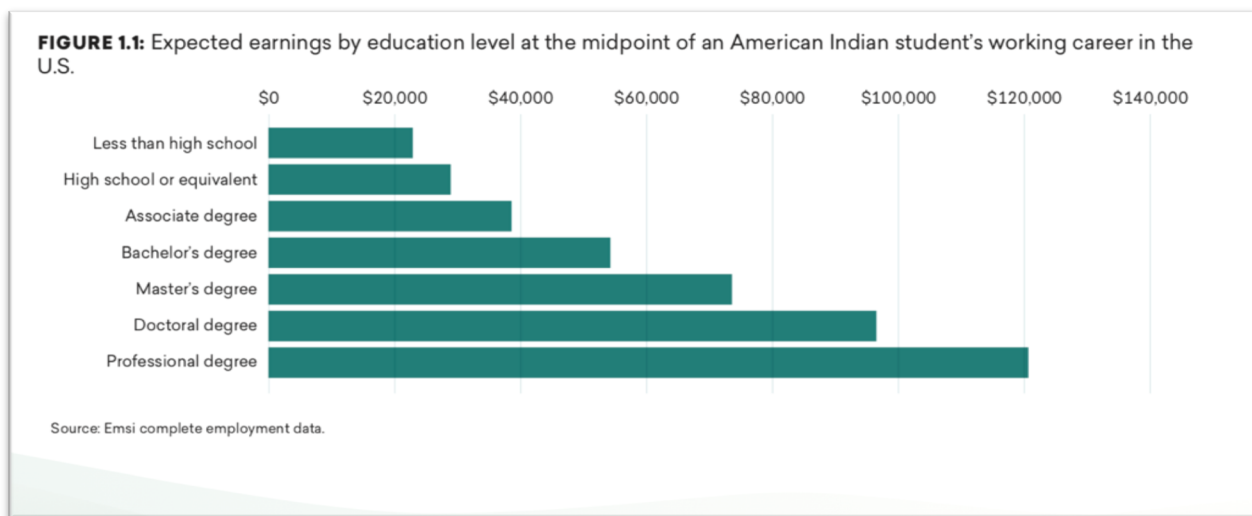


* Forbes' S&P 500, 1987-2016.

** FDIC.gov, 7-2017.

- Higher earnings of the 2017 scholarship recipients amount to a present value of \$449.9 million due to the increased lifetime earnings of recipients and associated increases in business output.

The benefits to taxpayer consist primarily of taxes that state and federal governments will collect from the added revenue created in the U.S. As the SHEP and SPGSF scholarships recipients earn more, they will make higher tax payments. Employers will also make higher tax payments as they increase their output and purchase more supplies and services. By the end of the working careers of this one-year sample, the state and federal governments will have collected a present value of \$26.6 million in added taxes. Benefits to taxpayers also consists of the savings generated by the improved lifestyles of the scholarship recipients and the proportionally reduced government expenditures. Education is statistically correlated with a variety of lifestyle changes that generate taxpayer’s savings across three main categories: 1) health, 2) crime, and 3) unemployment. ^{III}



Investing in our AI/AN students is clearly a fiscally grounded investment, as the above data shows. Investing for fiscal reasons is only half of the story, the true impact of these essential programs lay in the stories and lives of the individuals touched.

Impact through Students and Alumni

Thanks in part to SHEP and SPGSF funding, we are able to provide scholarships to 1,400 - 2,200 students pursuing professional, graduate, and undergraduate degrees annually. It is always inspiring to read the scholarship applications and learn of the resiliency of our students. To read scholarship applications about students who have gone from homeless to a college graduate, is immensely rewarding. To meet the many high-profile professionals across Indian Country, who attribute their success to the funding received through these programs is inspirational. SHEP and SPGSF funding has truly transformed the lives of so many in this country. We have alumni in corporate offices, nonprofit organization, philanthropic firms, educational institutions and industries to vast to list. We have graduates in congress and who testify to the Subcommittee annually.

Richard (Rick) B. Williams (Oglala Lakota/Northern Cheyenne) is a champion for American Indians in higher education. As a SHEP recipient, Rick received his master’s degree in Educational Administration,

with a post-secondary emphasis. He worked at the University of Colorado – Boulder for 17 years serving Native students and later went on to become the President and CEO of the American Indian College Fund and served in that capacity for 16 years. His life's work is a legacy of serving Native students. Rick credits his service and career to receiving SHEP funding, of which he says, "that single event has changed my life beyond all imagination". Stories like Rick's show the direct impact this program has and the positive ripples it creates within our communities.

Louis Pete, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, is studying at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio to becoming a mechanical and aerospace engineer. As an SPGSF scholars, this funding has directly impacted the trajectory of his future of which he states, "after I graduate from Case in 2021, I want to work for my tribe to help make the Navajo Nation more energy efficient and better for our future generations". Stories like Louis' highlight the benefits of investing in programs like SPGSF to serve as vehicles of change and help foster self-determination for Tribes.

These programs are a vital source of funding to many students who would otherwise not be able to afford higher education.

Additionally, I would like to note that an abrupt program elimination in FY 2020 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.

AIGC has an immense amount of gratitude for the Subcommittee's past support of the SHEP and SPGSF programs. We also 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 the recommended 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.

^I. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2019). *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2018* (p. vi).

^{II}. Center for Native American Youth at the Aspen Institute (2018). 2018 State of Native Youth Report Generation Indigenous (p 35).

^{III}. Emsi Economic Modeling (2018). *Analysis of the Economic Impact and Return on Investment of the American Indian Graduate Center - The Economic Value of Scholarships Provided by the American Indian Graduate Center*. (p. 4-5, 9,19-20)