

UNITED TRIBES TECHNICAL COLLEGE
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Testimony for the House and Senate Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittees on FY 2020 Indian Affairs Budget
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My name is Leander McDonald. I am enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Dakota Nation and a proud descendant of the Sahnish, Hidatsa, and Hunkpapa, people. I am President for United Tribes Technical College located in Bismarck, North Dakota. We are thankful for the opportunity to present and thankful for your efforts for passing the FY2019 Budget as we now prepare for FY2020.

The funding requests of UTTC for FY 2020 Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)/Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) are:

- *\$10 million for the line item, Tribal Technical Colleges, which compares to the FY 2019 enacted level of \$7.5 million; and.*
- *Establishment of a tribally administered Northern Plains law enforcement-training center at UTTC.*

United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) is celebrating fifty years of educational service, twenty-five years as a 1994 Land Grant institution, and thirty-seven years of accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission. The legacy of workforce development and employment training continues through the offering of three certificates, five associate of applied science, nine associate of science, and four bachelor of science degrees. The ongoing mission and vision are to train American Indian students with vocations that will provide them with the skills they need to take care of themselves and their families while they contribute to their nations and society.

BIE funds are central to the viability of UTTC's core postsecondary career and technical education programs and the overall mission as a tribal college and university (TCU). We serve some of the most impoverished high-risk Indian students from throughout the Nation. Despite such challenges, we have consistently had excellent retention and placement rates. We are proud of our role in providing training and education that recognizes the continuum of educational need for the student whether they are enrolled in a sixteen-week certificate, or a four-year baccalaureate, program of study.

The provision for the majority of our programs of study are based on workforce data from the North Dakota Workforce Development Council, the United Tribes of North Dakota, and the Tribal Nations located within the Great Plains Region. Regardless of where they reside, the overall goal is to graduate our students with the skills necessary for them to be employed with a salary that provides a living wage for jobs that are readily available in or near their communities.

UTTC is one of the only intertribal TCUs in the nation. We are governed by the five tribes located wholly or in part in the State of North Dakota. We are not part of the North Dakota

University System and we do not have a tax base; however, we do receive limited state-appropriated funds for non-Native students. The federal BIE appropriations UTTC receives are critical to the postsecondary education of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students, representing forty-eight Nations (2017), to obtain the skills necessary to become employed.

Base Funding. UTTC administers our BIE funding under an Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act agreement, and has done so for forty-two years. The UTTC portion of the Tribal Technical Colleges line item should be \$6.8 million based on a \$10 million appropriation. Acquisition of additional base funding is critical to our struggle to maintain course offerings and services to provide educational services at the same level as our state counterparts. The following examples provide some successful areas of study directed at addressing workforce shortage areas.

The North Dakota tribes initially established UTTC to address the need for a trained workforce on the North Dakota reservations. This facet remains true today as 89% of our students are enrolled in certificate and associate degree programs of study. The remaining 11% are enrolled in the baccalaureate programs offerings. For example, our most popular certificate programs are the sixteen-week Heavy Equipment Operator Program and the nine-month Welding Technology Certificate.

The most popular Bachelor of Science degrees are the Business Administration and Criminal Justice programs of study. These programs are set up as a 2 + 2 program with the associates' degrees setting the foundation for a bachelor's degree. This approach allows the student the option to seek employment at the completion of a two-year program or to continue for a bachelor's degree. A significant need for administrators, human resource managers, and law enforcement officers continues to exist throughout North Dakota and the Great Plains Regions among tribal and non-tribal communities.

Funding for United Tribes Technical College is a good investment. We have:

- An unduplicated count of 525 students in 2017-18. There were 494 undergraduate degree-seeking students, 4 non-degree seeking students, and 27 dual credit high school students enrolled. There were 1,531 continuing education students for a total student count of 2,056 for 2017-18.
- Our students are very low income. Approximately 84% (407) of the 494 degree seeking undergraduate students at UTTC received Pell grants for the 2017-18 academic year.
- From 2017 – 2018, UTTC had a fall to fall retention rate of 51.4% and a 2017 fall to spring semester persistence rate of 74.7%.
- Using the North Dakota state longitudinal data system, which tracks graduates who gain employment within North Dakota, 56 of the 87 graduates were employed in North Dakota for a placement rate of 64%. (*Note, this number does not include those who may have been employed outside of North Dakota.*)
- The fall graduates from December 2017 who were employed in North Dakota earned an average of \$7,414 in the third quarter after they graduated, which averages about \$29,656 annually. In addition, 38 of the students who graduated continued their education.
- A projected return on federal investment of 20-1 (2005 study).

- Higher Learning Commission Accreditation through 2021. A campus site visit held in April 2017 indicated we have a firm foundation for furthering efforts as a data driven institution.
- Campus services include: a Child Development Center, family literacy program, wellness center, area transportation, K-7 BIE-funded elementary school, tutoring, counseling, family and single student housing, and campus security.
- A critical role in the regional economy. A North Dakota State University study reports that the five tribal colleges in North Dakota made a direct and secondary economic contribution to the state of \$192,911,000 in 2016 and UTTC had a \$59.6 million dollar direct and secondary economic impact on the Bismarck/Mandan communities for the same period.

A Northern Plains Indian Law Enforcement Academy. UTTC is well positioned to provide both basic and supplemental law enforcement training. An academy at UTTC would allow tribal people in the Great Plains and other nearby regions a more affordable choice for training locations while minimizing the distance and long separation of trainees from their families. Given our established Criminal Justice program, our location and our campus resources, we propose the establishment of a Northern Plains Indian Law Enforcement Academy.

We ask that you direct the Secretary of Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to work with the Northern Plains tribes and others on the timely development of a plan for the establishment of an academy to better serve the tribes residing in the Northern tier of the United States. The Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association (GPTCA) via Resolution 5-1-20-16 requests that the Secretary of Interior and the BIA consult with the tribes on the details of a plan for establishment of the Academy.

The opioid, methamphetamine, and heroin epidemic continues to impact all tribal communities for our region. We are thankful for the recent support of Savannah's Act as the development, sharing, and training for the use of state and national databases are critical to addressing human trafficking and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. The issues demonstrate the significant need for collaborative training initiatives and support the development of partnerships between tribal, state and federal training initiatives regarding criminal justice and similar programs of study.

In short, the BIA should be utilizing and enhancing the resources of UTTC to make a real difference in the law enforcement capability in Indian Country. We can offer college credit to trainees, and our facilities include the use of a state-of-the-art crime scene simulator. Maintaining safe communities is a critical component of economic development for our Tribal Nations, and local control of law enforcement training resources is a key part of that effort.

We know members of this Subcommittee have made a point to visit places in Indian Country and we would love to be able to arrange for you to visit United Tribes Technical College. Thank you for your consideration of our requests. *Hecetu yedo.* (It is so)