



Written Presentation of Dr. Elmer J. Guy
New Mexico Tribal College Consortium
Legislative Priorities
Before the
New Mexico Legislative Finance
Subcommittee B
Santa Fe, New Mexico
September 23, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon, Madam Chair, and Members of the Legislative Finance Committee. Thank you for providing the New Mexico Tribal College Consortium an opportunity to present before you. I am representing the New Mexico Tribal College Consortium, which includes four tribal colleges located in New Mexico. The Navajo Technical University (NTU) is a higher education institution focusing on STEM degrees and vocational education programs. Diné College is the first tribally chartered and operated college and operates as a liberal arts college. The Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) is Congressionally---chartered with a focus on the creative arts. The Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) is operated by the Bureau of Indian Education and concentrates on vocational, technical, and the liberal arts.

Thank you for the support we have received from the State of New Mexico for our capital projects, dual credit programs, and our students' access to both the New Mexico

Legislative Lottery and Opportunity Scholarship Programs. We are profoundly grateful for these positive developments, especially during the pandemic that has increased the need for scholarships. Scholarships help our students stay in college and graduate. More than 80% of our students are eligible for federal financial aid, but that aid doesn't cover everything. A high percentage are first generation college students with limited financial resources. We do not participate in the Federal Student Loan Program because our goal is for students to graduate debt-free. Sixty-three New Mexico high schools are currently participating in tribal college dual credit programs.

We also want to express appreciation to the Governor, Department of Health, and the Higher Education Department for their guidance in assisting us to navigate through this pandemic, which has disproportionately impacted our Native communities. Last year the classes that all our tribal colleges offered were approved by the Higher Education Department, ensuring that our highest priority was the safety of our campus communities while continuing to focus on student success. Accordingly, a high percentage the fall semester classes were offered exclusively online.

One of the lessons learned from this experience, however, is that online education cannot substitute for in-class instruction. The spotty nature of connectivity is a major issue, and large numbers of students simply are not as successful at online classes as they are at in-class instruction. We are grateful to our faculty members for their quick pivot to online instruction and sacrificing most of their summer break to ready their courses for a more refined and robust online delivery, but we are also grateful that the state's pandemic response has made in-class instruction possible this year. Our campuses are participating in COVID-19 safe practices and ensuring our faculty, staff, and students are vaccinated. All of this has resulted in few cases of COVID on our campuses.

New Mexico has, through the New Mexico Department of Higher Education and the legislature, long sought to increase the number of Native Americans earning post-secondary degrees. In the past the participation rate of Native Americans in college

and university programs has been lower than for any other demographic group. That is no longer true. The TCUs, combined with the rest of New Mexico's higher education institutions, now enroll a similar percentage of American Indians into colleges and universities at the associate degree level to other New Mexico populations. In the past few years the tribal colleges have started to work on increasing the number of New Mexico Native Americans in baccalaureate degree programs and, we believe, with the help of this legislature through capital appropriations and support for scholarships and dual credit programs, the state can look forward to the day when New Mexico leads the United States in Native American population rates for enrollment in and graduation from baccalaureate degree programs.

This year Navajo Technical University, Diné College, and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute are submitting capital requests to the legislature. The Institute of American Indian Arts is not submitting a request this year. The requests are as follows:

Navajo Technical University's request is for funding to construct an engineering building on campus. NTU has the only ABET accredited engineering programs among the TCUs in the United States. ABET accreditation is the world's gold standard for engineering degree programs. American Indian representation in engineering fields is a mere fraction of other underrepresented minorities. While only 1 percent of the U.S. population is American Indian, and 1.8 percent of the entire workforce is represented by engineers, less than half a percent of the engineering workforce is represented by American Indians. NTU offers Industrial, Electrical, Mechanical, Chemical, and Environmental Engineering degrees and is planning a master's degree in engineering. The proposal is for construction of a two story, 12,500 ft. facility. NTU is requesting \$6.3 million from capital outlay funding. The project will be phased over two years. NTU will be using its own resources to partially cover the \$16 million of the project cost.

The capital projects priority for Diné College is the Administrative building. The total cost for the Administrative building phase 1 is \$1.4 Million, which is being requested from capital outlay this year. A future Phase 2 project will follow this building phase.

The Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) is requesting \$2,165,000 in Capital Outlay projects funding for four projects to assist with replacements of waterline and roofing systems, all critical projects to improve an aging physical plant. The four projects are: Building 105 Business Education waterline replacement (\$480,000) and Building 106 waterline replacement (\$350,000) to assess, plan, design and replace the waterline systems; Building 100 Science & Technology roofing replacement (\$800,000) and Building 109 Cafeteria/Culinary roofing replacement (\$535,000) to assess, plan, design and replace the roofing systems. The total cost of the proposed projects is \$2,165,000.

In addition to these capital outlay requests the four tribal colleges are interested in legislative appropriated funds such as Broadband, Early Childhood culturally linguistically relevant curriculum development funding, and Native Teacher Preparation Training that will supplement existing programs. Especially important is broadband funding. The pandemic revealed just how poor broadband connectivity is for all of New Mexico's tribal communities. The tribal colleges have, as a group, expertise in all the elements that go into increasing such connectivity to rural and isolated communities. Therefore, they are hoping to use that expertise to help New Mexico improve broadband connectivity for education and economic development purposes for its tribal communities.

Representatives of the tribal colleges are present to answer questions.