



Written Presentation of Dr. Robert Martin
New Mexico Tribal College Consortium
Legislative Priorities
Before the
New Mexico Legislative Finance
Committee
Santa Fe, New Mexico
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Good Afternoon Mr. Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and Members of the Legislative Finance Committee. I am Robert Martin, president of the Institute of American Indian Arts. Thank you for the opportunity to present before you. I am representing the New Mexico Tribal College Consortium, which includes the four tribal colleges located in New Mexico. Diné College is the first tribally chartered and operated college in the United States and operates as a four-year liberal arts college. The Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) is Congressionally-chartered with a focus on the creative arts at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Navajo Technical University (NTU) focuses on STEM degrees and vocational education programs, including master's degrees. The Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) is operated by the Bureau of Indian Education and offers two-year degrees in vocational, technical and liberal arts fields.

Thank you for the support we have received from the State of New Mexico. You have provided critical resources for our capital projects, high school dual credit programs, and our students' access to both the New Mexico Legislative Lottery and Opportunity Scholarship

Programs. We are profoundly grateful especially for the scholarships since the pandemic has increased the need for extra student support. Scholarships help our students stay in college and graduate. More than 80% of our students are eligible for federal financial aid, but not everything is covered. A high percentage of our students are first generation with limited financial resources. We do not participate in the Federal Student Loan Program because our goal is for students to graduate debt-free.

Arcelia Teller, Navajo Studio Arts major, says “I’m grateful for the New Mexico Lottery Scholarship providing me with funds to continue pursuing my goal of becoming a professional artist through my studies and work. It’s great to know that we, as students, have the support from New Mexico and it gives us an opportunity to change and improve our communities for future generations to come”. Miguel Valencia, Navajo film major, also says “the Opportunity and Lottery scholarships provided me with the chance to attend college, to learn and succeed that I would not have had otherwise. Thank you!”

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

Since a number of courses require hands-on learning, certain classes must be held on campus and in person. For example, at IAIA, advanced studio arts, cinematic arts and performing arts classes, representing approximately 20 percent of our class offerings, were held in person on campus for the first eight weeks of the semester so that students would have access to studios and specialized equipment. The second eight weeks was exclusively

online. Of course, to mitigate risk we implemented Covid-19 safe practices of requiring face masks, social distancing and other PPE. As a result, we have had very few positive cases on our campuses.

We also reduced tuition and fees, provided laptops, reimbursed students for internet connectivity and data plans for cell phones, and provided emergency financial aid assistance to pay for rent, food, gas cards and vehicle repairs. As a result, our enrollments and withdrawals rates were similar to last year's fall semester.

The following are the tribal college capital outlay project funding requests:

Navajo Technical University (NTU)

NTU requests \$400,000.00 to upgrade their Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Systems. A challenge during the Covid-19 crisis is determining the ways to keep the air free of the air-borne virus. NTU is concerned with air quality in its eleven mobile classrooms. They are more than 20 years old and still use the original swamp coolers. Nearly all the swamp coolers are inadequate and work sporadically. They have limited ability to circulate the air adequately, especially in an extremely closed environment.

The HVAC systems need upgrading to address air impurities and air quality and are a major safety concern. The proposed project will replace existing units with more efficient air conditioning and purifying units with the ability to better circulate the air in the mobile classrooms. As the pandemic grows in scope and seriousness, infections are rising for the age groups that encompass our student body. Improving air circulation and purification, along with Covid – 19 safe practices, will assist us in successfully maintaining in-person classes.

Online learning does not meet the needs of the majority of Navajo and Zuni students. Connectivity throughout this region is spotty at best. Even professors at NTU are being forced to go outside and climb to the summit of high hills or mountains to secure enough connectivity to successfully teach online. If NTU cannot continue in-person classes, the

concern is that students will simply not enroll and stop-out. Research has shown that interruptions in a students' progress toward their degrees tend to adversely affect graduation rates. Funding for this project will assist NTU in maintaining its enrollment and permit the university to continue addressing the educational needs of its students and the Navajo Nation.

The Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI)

SIPI is requesting \$960,536 in Capital Outlay project funding from the State of New Mexico to assist with upgrades and replacements of building systems. The total cost of the proposed project is \$1,024,536 with SIPI providing funding from other sources of \$64,000.

The requested project funding is for Building 105 Business Education HVAC Improvements (\$960,536) to design and renovate the total replacement of the ceiling system and lighting as well constructing a complete return air duct system and air devices.

Diné College

Diné College requests \$1,100,000 to construct an agricultural multipurpose center at the campus demonstration farm located at Diné College's Shiprock branch campus on the Navajo Nation in San Juan county. The mission of the center will be to promote agriculture-based entrepreneurship and encourage healthy eating by reintroducing students and the community to modern practices in small-scale agriculture production.

Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA)

IAIA requests \$700,000 to establish a Native Research Center for Contemporary Arts on the IAIA campus. During the last legislative session, we had originally requested \$1.5 million to plan, design, renovate, construct and equip the Research Center for Contemporary Native Arts on our campus, which was recommended by NMHED. It was reduced to \$700,000 because the project was misunderstood to be a request for our museum, which it is not. The Research Center will be located on our campus and will support the education of current and future students in Studio Arts, Museum Studies, and Native Art History programs – and

also will assist in building IAIA's capacity to offer graduate programs in Studio Arts and Museum Studies -- and a BFA in Native American Arts History. In fact, our newest MFA in Studio Arts is now accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.

Students completing these programs will be trained for career fields in which Natives are underrepresented: professional artists, museum administrators and curators, archivists, and professors in higher education. A major objective of the Research Center is to increase opportunities for Natives within the field of contemporary Native arts.

Last year's request of \$700,000 was included in the recently passed General Obligation Bond C. We are requesting an additional \$700,000 in capital project funding that would bring the two-year total in state funding to \$1.4 million. The total estimated costs for the project are \$3.8 million; we have raised the additional \$2.4 million from private and federal sources. We have a successful track of record of leveraging state dollars with funding from other sources and completing projects on time and under budget.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for providing time for the Consortium to present our priorities for the upcoming legislative session. We also express gratitude to Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez and her staff for their support of the tribal colleges. We deeply appreciate the regular meetings with the staff and participating in the Department's Capital Projects Hearings, Articulation and Transfer and Common Course Numbering Committees, and the State-wide Strategic Plan. Again, we thank the LFC for your support. Each tribal college extends a standing invitation to visit our campuses. Representatives from the tribal colleges are available to answer any of your questions.