

UNITED STATES SENATE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

OVERSIGHT HEARING ON INDIAN EDUCATION

TESTIMONY OF DAVID M. GIPP

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**SUMMARY OF NEEDS AND FEDERAL APPROPRIATION
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
OF AMERICAN INDIANS AND ALASKA NATIVES
INCLUDING TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

Background

New Opportunities and Funding Disparities

Chairman McCain, Vice Chairman Dorgan, members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, Tribal leaders and distinguished guests, thank you for inviting me to testify today about the needs of Indian Country with regard to higher education.

My name is David M. Gipp. I am an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. I have been privileged to work with and for the Indian higher education community for almost 35 years. A few years after graduating from the University of North Dakota, I became the first executive director of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), the organization representing the nation's tribally controlled colleges and universities. In 1977 I became the President of United Tribes Technical College (UTTC), which I have served ever since in that capacity. Throughout my tenure with UTTC, I have remained active with AIHEC, serving more than once as President of its Board of Directors, and have assisted AIHEC and Tribal colleges with development and passage of such measures as the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act of 1978 and the Equity in Educational Land Grant Status Act of 1994. My

testimony, therefore, is on behalf of Tribal Colleges and Universities and AIHEC, higher education for American Indians and Alaska Natives, and UTTC.

You have asked me to comment briefly about the needs of higher education for American Indians and Alaska Natives. My message is simple: culturally appropriate higher education for Indian people works and is deserving of the support of Congress and the Executive Branch. Indian people today want quality, culturally appropriate, higher education as never before. Indian students are enrolling in and graduating from Tribal colleges, obtaining four year degrees and going on to receive graduate degrees in record numbers at many institutions of higher education.

Further, an investment in higher education pays big dividends, not just to the student, but also to our entire nation. A student who enrolls and graduates from United Tribes Technical College earns 20 times the amount invested by the federal government in that student's education during the student's lifetime. A copy of our most recent Return on Investment study is being provided to members of the Committee separately. Graduates are also returning in record numbers to their Tribal Nations to assist in developing tribal economies and improving the life of their people.

However, we still have a long way to go. The 2000 Census reports 11.5% of American Indians and Alaska Natives have a bachelor's degree. This compares with the 24.4 percent who are college graduates in the entire United States population. With the increasing population of American Indians and Alaska Natives and the continuing needs of that population, we must improve this percentage. More than 50% of our American Indian and Alaska Native population is under the age of 25. In North Dakota, the Indian population is the fastest growing segment of our state population. These young people will need more scholarships, facilities, faculty and newly developed curricula to meet their needs in the 21st century. There are many other statistics relating to Indian education contained in the report entitled "Status and Trends in the Education of American Indians and Alaska Natives", (NCES 2005-108) issued in August, 2005 by the Department of Education through the National Center for Education Statistics. I encourage the Committee to consider this report carefully.

The obligation of the United States to provide higher education for the indigenous population of the United States is deeply rooted in our history. Along with other colonial documents, the Charter of Harvard University, issued in 1650 by the colonial government of Massachusetts, mentions "Indian youth" among those who are to be educated there. Throughout the existence of the United States, many Indian treaties made it plain that education was a key promise made to our ancestors. These promises have been set down in statutes, such as the Indian Education Act (P.L. 100-297); the TCCCU Act mentioned above (Pub. L. 95-471; 25 U.S.C. Sections 1801 et seq.), the Tribally Controlled Schools Act of 1988 (25 U.S.C. Sections 2501 et seq.); the Higher Education Tribal Grant Authorization Act (P.L. 102-525 -- Title XIII, 25 U.S.C. Section 3301 et seq.); throughout the various Education Acts passed by Congress; and in many places in the Higher Education Act of 1965, the reauthorization of which is still pending in this session of Congress. Significant conferences, such as the White House

Conference on Indian Education in 1992, have emphasized the need for higher education for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Higher education is therefore not just another program. It is a fundamental obligation of our federal government to American Indians and Alaska Natives, rooted in our treaties and statutes. Providing higher education, and in fact, education in general, fulfills the moral and legal obligation of the United States to assist its indigenous population to recover from centuries of warfare and destruction, the failed policies of previous centuries.

In today's world, American Indian and Alaska Native students want and need the tools and the resources to address their needs. Moreover, these skills are vitally necessary to allow Tribal nations to rebuild their economies, long neglected and underserved by the United States. The skills learned in higher education help build infrastructure and establish vital tribal government services, as well as improve local economies and business institutions. In addition, they can also contribute greatly to our society as a whole. American Indian and Alaska Native citizens have a rich, diverse, culture and important knowledge to contribute to our educational development as a nation.

One of the keys to progress in higher education for American Indians and Alaska Natives is that of research. More of our Tribal colleges than ever are engaging in research about Indian people and issues that affect Indian people. For once, after more than five centuries of study of us by non-Indians, we are setting the protocols and establishing the methodologies for conducting this research by ourselves. At United Tribes, for example, we have several programs to study indigenous foods. We are developing nutritional diets to help our citizens combat record rates of diabetes and other diseases previously unknown to us – diseases caused in part by the introduction of non-traditional foods into our diets.

But it costs money to allow our schools to continue to expand, to conduct vital research and to obtain quality higher education costs money. At present, our Tribal colleges receive less than half the amount per student received by other public community colleges of similar size and scope. What makes this so difficult is that not only is our student population growing, but the Tribes that charter and support Tribal colleges do not have a property tax base from which further support can be obtained. Tribal colleges, including United Tribes Technical College, are mostly dependent on the Federal government for student support, as the students served come from the poorest, most under- and unemployed populations in the United States. Despite this, the base BIA funding for UTTC and Crownpoint Institute of Technology was again cut out of the President's proposed BIA budget for FY 2007. I am confident this committee will help correct this oversight.

United Tribes Technical College

I would like to point out some additional information about United Tribes Technical College. Attached is the appropriations testimony we submitted to this Committee

earlier this year, which contains a lot of information about our student and family services and which provides details about our funding needs.

UTTC is planning carefully to provide innovative and economically relevant programs and curricula that will provide Tribal members with training in a wide variety of disciplines, qualifying them for the jobs that are needed in the 21st century. But this will not happen without better facilities, more instructors, improved curricula and dependable support. This requires additional resources.

Our plans call for growth to meet the demand. We have more than doubled our student count within the past three years. Within five years from now, we will likely have over 2,000 students. Within 10 years, we hope to be able to accommodate over 6,000 students on our new campus.

Of course, we are seeking funds from a wide variety of sources for our ambitious goals: from foundations, Tribes, individuals and corporations. But, like other Tribal colleges, we still need federal funding. We have a small endowment (less than \$150,000), but, as you know, the development of a substantial and effective endowment takes time, expertise, and the generosity of many to establish. We have real and immediate needs. The buildings on our UTTC campus, for example, are over 100 years old and in need of significant repair and renovation. We need funds to put infrastructure in place for our new campus.

In a larger sense, Congress needs to revitalize its efforts to assist in vocational and technical career training for Indian and Alaska Native youth, which is discussed further below. Despite the return on investment for federal funds spent on technical education and career training, appropriations for this purpose, including those in the BIA budget, have decreased in the last 25 years.

Perhaps the thinking is that such an investment can be better done by the private sector. The fact is, however, that the training provided by United Tribes Technical College, with its emphasis on educating the entire family with a wide variety of services, cannot be duplicated in the private sector. It is our learning environment which helps the vast majority of our students to complete their schooling and to go on to good jobs or for further higher education. We are constantly working to increase our private contributions and to increase our small endowment fund. We hope these efforts can eventually supplement and even supplant some federal funds in the future, but in the meantime, we need federal support for our efforts.

UTTC has always valued programs such as work-study and the Workforce Investment Act training programs that provide important work experience for our students. Recently, we have begun to supplement these programs with our own work program, entitled "Leadership Through Experience", modeled after the requirements of "work colleges" such as Berea College in Berea, Kentucky. Funds for the "work colleges", where every student is required to be employed in school-sponsored work programs while attending college, are authorized by Congress as a special part of the overall

Federal work-study grant programs (Section 448 of the Higher Education Act, 42 U.S.C. Section 2756b).

The value of the “work college” program is that each student gains valuable, relevant experience in the workplace, including leadership skills and increased self-esteem. Many of our students have not had previous work experience, and our work program allows them to demonstrate to future employers that they can be relied on in the workplace. UTTC has not had any lack of applicants for our program, and we would like to expand it to include all of our students.

As a result of our experience, UTTC requests this Committee to consider legislation that would add a separate section for Tribal colleges (including UTTC and Crownpoint) in the “work college” program, and that would separately authorize additional funding for this purpose. Initial funding could be granted on a pilot project basis, to allow Tribal colleges to further develop this important concept.

Our other Tribal colleges have much the same needs as United Tribes. They need better facilities, more housing, more instructors and more financial aid for their students. Their student population, like the student population at United Tribes, is growing. American Indians and Alaska Natives are interested in and desire higher education but do not always have the means to pay for it. That is where the Federal government can, and should step in to assist; there are simply not enough private sources to provide enough funding for all who want to improve themselves through higher education.

There are many benefits to providing higher education to American Indians and Alaska Natives, aside from fulfilling historical obligations. Instead of drawing welfare assistance, American Indian and Alaska Native graduates of institutions of higher education are contributing to the economy of the United States. Crime and suicide and unemployment rates go down, instead of up. Health is improved because of better earning power and better diets. The intellectual capacity and collective knowledge and wisdom of the United States are increased. The United States benefits enormously from this kind of social investment.

Specific Higher Education Needs for American Indians and Alaska Natives

Further recommendations and additional background about funding for Tribal colleges are provided further in this testimony. Below are some key issues, all equally important, regarding higher education for American Indians and Alaska Natives for this Committee to consider.

- 1) **Tribal Colleges and Universities Need Institutional Stability.** We cannot any longer be subject to yearly changes in budget priorities that have plagued our efforts to improve educational programs in the recent past. It is simply unfair to students not to know whether funding will be available year-to-year.

Congress also needs to reexamine and revitalize its commitment to vocational education, now often called “technical and career training”, for American Indians and Alaska Natives. Funding for this purpose is authorized, in part, under 25 U.S.C. Sections 309 et seq. However, the authorization for funding under this section has not increased since 1968. This is unacceptable. Technical and career training funds allow Tribal citizens to help their communities to grow and prosper. They provide individuals tools to work with new technologies and to become part of a 21st century workforce, creating an incentive for businesses and industries to invest in Indian country. This not only aids Indian country, it assists the regions and states within which our Tribal Nations exist.

Institutional development grants for Tribal colleges under Title III of the Higher Education Act can also help promote institutional stability. Among other things, these grants assist Tribal colleges to develop alternative sources of funding and to focus on new curricula and techniques of education. This helps Tribal colleges become more relevant for their students in a constantly changing national economy. Title III of the Higher Education Act deserves additional funding for all Tribal colleges who need this kind of assistance.

- 2) **Tribal colleges need the best technology possible.** Technology is a window to the future. While cooperative arrangements with the private sector can provide for some of our needs, we need the commitment of the federal government that we will not be left out as technology advances. Tribal higher education institutions and Tribal citizens are certainly as important as other institutions of higher education and their students. As stated before, these efforts can produce great payoffs for our nation. We cannot continue to have our educational needs neglected by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Federal government in general.
- 3) **Facilities improvements.** Tribal colleges need the best facilities possible. Construction funds for basic educational needs, such as science buildings, residence halls and family quarters, among others facilities, have lagged far behind student growth. Sadly, we have not seen any fundamental commitment to meet these needs at Tribal colleges and universities from the present administration. While the private sector can assist with a part of those needs, the needs of growing population and desire for higher education must be met and the resources provided so that our students are not left out and do not lag behind.
- 4) **Fulfill President’s Executive Orders.** As do many other Indian educators and Tribal leaders, I remain committed to assisting the executive branch to carry out the President’s Executive Orders on Tribal colleges and universities, issued first by President Clinton in 1996 (EO 13021), and re-issued by President Bush in 2002 (EO 13270), along with the more recent Executive Order issued in 2004 on Indian Education generally (EO 13336). We need to

know that the executive branch is equally committed to fulfilling the initiatives stated in these Executive Orders.

Under EO 13270, for example, all executive branch agencies were to develop a plan for cooperating with Tribal colleges and universities. I have not seen those plans, as of yet.

Under EO 13336, the Executive Order on Indian Education, a Presidential task force on education in Indian country was supposed to be formed more than two years ago. Although attempts have been made to bring this to the attention of Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, as of late February, our national Indian education organizations had not received any communication back about carrying out this important effort.

We also bring to your attention that the Executive Order on Indian Education calls for a multi-year study of American Indian and Alaska Native education with the purpose of improving Native students' ability to meet the standards of the No Child Left Behind Act. Under the Order, the study agenda is to include, but not be limited to:

- Compilation of comprehensive data on academic achievement and progress of Native students
- Identification and dissemination of research-based practices and "what works" in raising academic achievement and, in particular, reading achievement of Native students
- Impact and role of Native language and culture on the development of educational strategies to improve academic development
- Efforts to strengthen early childhood education so that Native students enter school ready to learn
- Efforts to increase high school graduation rates and develop pathways to college and the workplace for Native students.

These are important goals, and fulfillment of the Executive Orders can go a long way to improving the percentage of our American Indian and Alaska Native citizens who are college graduates. We appreciate any efforts this Committee can make to ensure that the initiatives of the Executive Orders move forward in a timely manner. These efforts will improve the quality of education generally, as well as higher education, and make it more likely that American Indians and Alaska Natives will be able to benefit from higher education.

- 5) **Full funding for student scholarship programs.** We remain concerned that the present administration does not fully support the financial assistance and scholarship programs, such as Pell grants, that so many of our students need for their education. As we have found at United Tribes, the investment in education of our students is returned to the national economy many times

over. We understand that other priorities exist, such as the war in Iraq. But the needs of Indian country cannot be allowed to be deferred, especially when we know that Indian people volunteer for the military at a rate higher than any other racial group in the United States.

- 6) **Full funding for Tribal elementary and high schools.** We must work to make sure that elementary and secondary schools and public schools serving American Indian and Alaska Native students are providing them with the training and tools they need to be successful in tribal and non-tribal postsecondary educational institutions. We know that our students need remedial help to succeed in our Tribal colleges because they did not receive the kind of education they have a right to expect at the elementary and secondary levels. We realize this is not solely a federal responsibility. But we do know that every Tribal college expends significant resources assisting incoming students to reach the level where they can begin postsecondary education. Primary and secondary schools must have the resources to do a better job to prepare students for college.
- 7) **Full funding for other programs assisting American Indians and Alaska Natives in higher education.** We also continue to be concerned about making sure that Tribal citizens are successful in non-Indian institutions of higher instruction. For example, I am a 1972 charter delegate and present Chairman of the Board of the Indians Into Medicine program (InMed) at the University of North Dakota. Yet, I understand that funding for that program is in jeopardy. Our program has assisted more than 60% of all Indian medical doctors in the United States to receive their degrees. This program must not be allowed to be discontinued, it is too vital a resource for Indian people throughout the United States. The death rate of our American Indian population from preventable and treatable diseases is unacceptably high.
- 8) **Reauthorize the Higher Education Act – funding for student services.** We must make sure that the Higher Education Act reauthorization effort goes forward as quickly as possible, and that the needs of Indian students are fully recognized and provided for in that Act. A key area in this regard is student services, commonly called TRIO, provided under Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2, of the Higher Education Act. This collection of very successful programs has never been adequately funded, and thus seeking funding for TRIO programs has become a highly competitive grant process.

The services that can be provided with TRIO program funds are vital for the success of students, who lack the funds to pay for these services themselves. These services include such things as counseling, tutoring, college preparation courses, academic assessments for course placement, and academic advising. These services are highly successful and often make the difference between a student graduating from a two-year institution and

possibly moving on to further their education, or dropping out of school altogether.

UTTC has not received TRIO funding for two years in a row, although we need those funds to address the needs of a growing college age population. The needs of all of the Tribal colleges in this area should be met.

- 9) **Expand opportunities for research by Tribal colleges.** Tribal colleges should be offered the opportunity to have funds set aside for vital research that benefits us that is conducted through grants made available through many different departments and agencies of the Federal government. This effort was highlighted as a specific goal of the President's Executive Order on Tribal Colleges and Universities issued in 2002 (EO 13270).

We need to develop more of our own scholars and professionals, including teachers, engineers, scientists, doctors and other professionals that will assist our communities to grow and prosper. AIHEC will soon be recommending legislation to provide set-asides for Tribal Colleges and Universities throughout the research programs funded through the Department of Health and Human Services. We urge your support for this legislative effort.

These are some of the issues that face higher education for American Indians and Alaska Natives today. The American Indian Higher Education Consortium has developed a set of specific recommendations for Tribal colleges for this upcoming fiscal year (FY 2007) and beyond, and their concerns, and some background about Tribal colleges, are stated in this testimony to indicate what they consider their most important needs and to provide further background regarding the points listed above.

Tribal Colleges and Universities

In 1972, six tribally controlled colleges established the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) to provide a support network for member institutions. Today, AIHEC represents 34 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) in 13 states, created specifically to serve the higher education needs of American Indians. Annually, they serve students from over 250 Federally recognized tribes.

The vast majority of TCUs are accredited by regional accreditation agencies and like all institutions of higher education, must undergo stringent performance reviews on a periodic basis to retain their accreditation status. In addition to college level programming, TCUs provide much needed high school completion (GED), basic remediation, job training, college preparatory courses, and adult basic education. Tribal colleges fulfill additional roles within their respective communities functioning as community centers, libraries, tribal archives, career and business centers, economic development centers, public meeting places, and childcare centers. An underlying goal of TCUs is to improve the lives of students through higher education and to move American Indians toward self sufficiency.

Title I of the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act – or “Tribal College Act” authorizes funding for the basic institutional operating budget of one qualifying institution per Federally recognized tribe based on a full-time American Indian student enrollment formula. The Tribal College Act was first funded in 1981. Today, 25 years later and notwithstanding an increase of \$2.5 million in FY06, these colleges are operating at \$4,563 per full-time Indian student count (ISC), approximately 75 percent of their Congressionally authorized funding level of \$6,000 per ISC. If the TCUs were to be fully funded at \$6,000 per ISC today, when you consider inflation, they would not even have the same buying power as their initial FY1981 appropriations, which was \$2,831 per ISC. While funding for the six TCUs’ not funded under Title I of the Tribal College Act is not enrollment driven and therefore the disparity of funding is not as easily illustrated, they too suffer from a chronic lack of adequate institutional operations funding. This is not simply a matter of appropriations falling short of an authorization; it effectively impedes all tribal colleges from having the necessary resources to grow their programs in response to the changing needs of their students and the communities they serve.

AIHEC’S FY 2007 APPROPRIATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

Department of the Interior: The tribal colleges funded under the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act, respectfully request a total appropriation of \$69.4 million for the programs authorized under the Act. The first priority within this request is for increased funding for the day-to-day operations of institutions funded under Titles I & II of the Act. Specifically, tribal colleges seek \$66.9 million; of which, \$49.2 million would be for Title I grants (funding 24 TCUs) and \$17.7 to fund Title II (Diné College). This request is an increase of \$7 million for Title I grants and a \$6.3 million increase for Diné College, over FY06 levels and a total of \$12.7 million over the President’s FY07 budget request for institutional operations funding under the Act. Additionally, \$500,000 is requested for the technical assistance contract under Sec. 105 of the Act, this is equal to the FY06 appropriation and the President’s request. These funds will help address ever emerging technical assistance needs and to fund data collection and analysis necessary to comply with the Congressional requests for additional information on TCU funding and operations. Additionally, \$2 million is sought for Title III of the Act, which helps tribal colleges to build endowments. The President’s FY07 budget request eliminates this program.

Also eliminated in the President’s FY07 budget request, despite unwavering Congressional support, is funding for the tribally controlled postsecondary vocational institutions: United Tribes Technical College, in Bismarck, ND and Crownpoint Institute of Technology, in Crownpoint, NM. AIHEC fully supports the requests of these two vital institutions for FY07 Interior Department funding: \$4.5 million for United Tribes Technical College; and \$2.5 million for Crownpoint Institute of Technology.

AIHEC's membership also includes three other TCUs funded under separate authorities funded under Interior Appropriations, namely: Haskell Indian Nations University;

Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute; and The Institute of American Indian Arts. AIHEC supports the independently submitted requests for institutional operations funding of these institutions.

LABOR-HHS, EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS:

Department of Education

1) HEA Title III Part A, § 316: The Higher Education Act Amendments of 1998 created a separate section within Title III, Part A, specifically for the nation's Tribal Colleges and Universities (Section 316). Titles III and V programs support institutions that enroll large proportions of financially disadvantaged students and have low per student expenditures. TCUs clearly fit this definition as they are among the most poorly funded institutions in America, yet they serve some of the most impoverished areas of the country. Despite a clear need of these truly developing institutions President's FY07 budget recommends level funding for this essential program. The tribal colleges request Title III section 316 be funded at \$32 million, an increase of \$8.2 million over FY06 and the President's request, and further ask that report language that has been included in prior years, be restated to clarify that funds in excess of those needed to support continuation grants or new planning or implementation grants be available for one-year facilities renovation and construction grants as has been the practice since FY 2001.

2) Carl D. Perkins Vocational & Applied Technology Education Act - Tribally-Controlled Postsecondary Vocational Institutions: Section 117 of the Perkins Act provides basic operating funds for two AIHEC member institutions: United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, North Dakota, and Crownpoint Institute of Technology in Crownpoint, New Mexico. AIHEC urges Congress to fund this program at \$8.5 million. Included in both the House and Senate reauthorization bills, which are being considered in the 109th Congress is language waiving section 117 grantees from having to utilize a restricted indirect cost rate. Since the timeline for enactment of the reauthorizing legislation is uncertain, we ask that Congress reiterate the language that has been included in Labor-HHS appropriations measures since FY02 stating that Section 117 Perkins grantees need not utilize restricted indirect cost rate.

The President's FY07 budget once again proposes the elimination of vocational education programs including the Native American Program (Sec. 116), which reserves 1.25% of appropriated funding to support Indian vocational programs. The tribal colleges strongly urge Congress to restore and expand funding for vocational education including NAVTEP, which is vital to the survival of vocational education programs being offered at tribal colleges and universities.

3) AMERICAN INDIAN ADULT AND BASIC EDUCATION: This section supports adult education programs for American Indians offered by TCUs, state

and local education agencies, Indian tribes, institutions, and agencies. Despite a lack of funding, TCUs must find a way to continue to provide basic adult education classes for those American Indians that the present K-12 Indian education system has failed. Before many individuals can even begin the course work needed to learn a productive skill, they first must earn a GED or, in some cases, learn to read. The number of students needing remedial educational programs before embarking on their degree programs is considerable at tribal colleges. There is a wide need for basic educational programs and TCUs need funding to support these indispensable activities.

Tribal colleges respectfully request that Congress appropriate \$5 million in FY07 to meet the ever increasing demand for basic adult education and remediation program services.

AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS:

Department of Agriculture: The 1994 Tribal College Land Grant Institutions respectfully request the following funding levels for FY07 for the 1994 Institutions' land grant programs established within the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) and Rural Development mission areas. In CSREES, tribal colleges recommend: a \$12 million payment into the Native American endowment fund; \$3.1 million for the higher education equity grants; \$5 million for the 1994 institutions' competitive extension grants program; \$3 million for the 1994 Institutions' competitive research grants program; and in Rural Development Rural Community Advancement Program (RCAP), that \$5 million be provided for each of the next five fiscal years for the tribal college community facilities grants program. RCAP grants help to address the critical facilities and infrastructure needs at tribal colleges that impede their ability to participate fully as land grant partners. The RCAP program requires a minimum 25 percent non-Federal match. Tribal colleges are chartered by their respective tribes, which enjoy a government-to-government relationship with the Federal government. Due to this relationship, tribal colleges have very limited access to non-Federal dollars making non-Federal matching requirements a significant barrier to competing for these much-needed funds. The 2002 Farm Security and Rural Investment Act, (Public Law 107-171) included language limiting the non-Federal match requirement for the Rural Cooperative Development Grants to no more than 5 percent in the case of a 1994 institution. The 1994 Institutions wish to have this same language apply to the RCAP community facilities grants for tribal colleges, which would open the door to more 1994 Institutions to be able to compete for these critical dollars.

Conclusions

Tribal colleges and universities provide quality higher education to thousands of American Indians who might otherwise not have access to such opportunities. The modest Federal investment in the tribal colleges and universities alone has paid and will continue to pay great dividends in terms of employment, education, and economic development. Continuation of this federal investment in American Indian and Alaska

Native youth makes sound moral and fiscal sense. Tribal colleges need your help if they are to sustain and grow their programs and achieve their missions.

I cannot emphasize enough how important higher education is to all American Indians and Alaska Natives, regardless of where they are educated. Not only does higher education work to improve the lives of Indian people, it also makes it possible for Tribal sovereignty to work, as studies by the Harvard Project on Economic Development in Indian Country have shown. I ask that you give your utmost attention to this issue. Highly educated American Indian and Alaska Native citizens have always been, and should continue to be, a vital part of the human resources of this great nation.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, and members of the Committee, thank you for your outstanding efforts on behalf of all American Indians and Alaska Natives. We appreciate your willingness to listen to our concerns, and the support you have given us to date. Thank you.