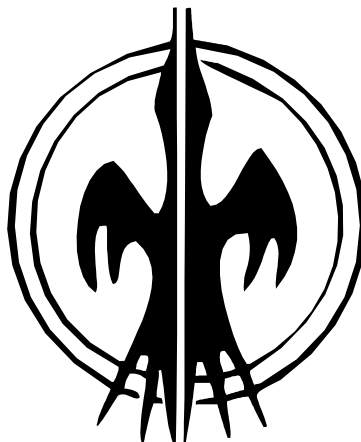

ISSUES FOR FURTHER EXAMINATION



There are many issues that Tribal Colleges will need to address in the future in order to maintain quality higher education for their students. Many of these are closely linked with financing problems, and can only be resolved by increasing core operational funds. They generally fall into two categories: 1) aspects of the institutions themselves, such as faculty and facilities; and 2) broader policies affecting the institutions, including the growth of distance learning and recent changes in welfare laws.

Faculty and Staff

Despite the success of Tribal Colleges in recruiting a comparatively large proportion of American Indian faculty, recruiting and retaining faculty to teach at Tribal Colleges remains a problem. One reason for this difficulty is the geographic isolation of the colleges; an-

other is the fact that representation of American Indians among faculty throughout the United States remains disproportionately small, effectively limiting the supply of such faculty to the colleges. Because accrediting agencies have placed increasing emphasis on academic credentials, Tribal Colleges have frequently turned to non-Indian instructors who have Ph.D.s (Tierney, 1992). Nonetheless, the colleges hope that many of their former students will return as faculty members—in fact, several of the college presidents (who also frequently teach) attended Tribal Colleges.

Average faculty salaries are low—\$23,964 for full-time faculty on nine- or ten-month contracts in 1996-97.¹ In comparison, the average salary was \$49,855 at all public institutions in the United States, and \$43,730 at public two-year institutions (NCES, 1990-1997).

Staff at the Tribal Colleges face similar challenges of low salaries, geographic isolation, and frequently a lack of training. As a result, high staff turnover remains a problem for the colleges.

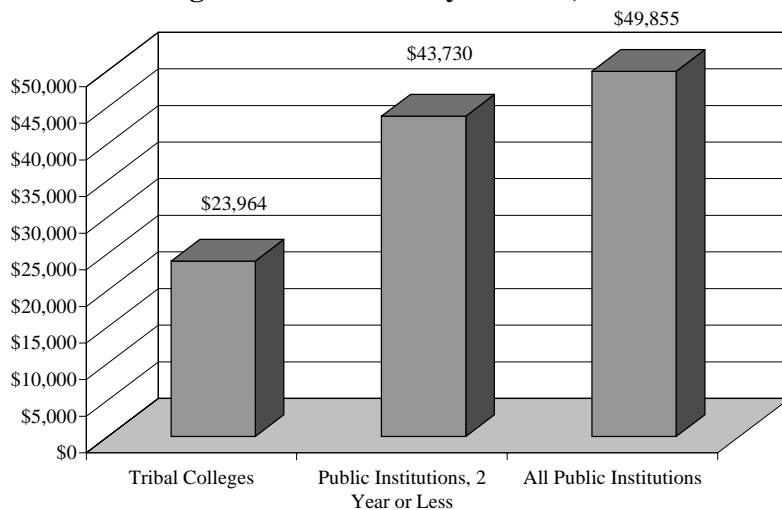
Maintenance and construction of facilities

The quality and number of facilities continue to present a problem for Tribal Colleges, most of which have decentralized, ad hoc campuses. Many of the colleges operate in abandoned or donated buildings, in which hazards such as leaking roofs and crumbling foundations abound. Frequently, the colleges do not even have blueprints for some of their buildings, which adds to renovation costs. Although many of the colleges have identified facility maintenance and construction as a high priority, most of them choose to put available money into instruction and related expenses instead (AIHEC, 1998a).

Thirteen of the Tribal Colleges report that they need to increase the number of campus classrooms, at an estimated cost of more than \$18 million. Other facilities that are needed include science and math laboratories, library buildings, community centers, and child care facilities (AIHEC, 1998a).

Although the TCCUAA has a provision for facilities renovation that is authorized at \$1.8 million, it has not been funded to date, and the core operational funding under Titles I and II cannot be used for new construction. Some colleges, such as the College of the Menominee Nation, have received government or private grants to build state-of-the-art facilities. Others such as Salish Kootenai College and Stone Child College have relied on students enrolled in their building trades programs to construct new facilities.

Average Full-Time Faculty Salaries, 1996-97



Technology/distance learning

Tribal Colleges frequently use distance learning to encourage access and retention. Such methods also allow them to offer courses at many satellite locations, within the reservation or on other reservations in the state. All of the colleges participate in a network that allows them to increase the number of courses they offer by using satellite technology to downlink them from other sites (AIHEC, 1998b). In addition, several colleges offer

Note: Includes only faculty on 9- to 10- month contracts. Tribal College figure was calculated for the 14 tribally controlled colleges that reported to IPEDS.
 Source: NCES, 1990-1997.

courses from state universities through teledistance. For example, Crownpoint Institute of Technology is becoming the hub for the Navajo Nation Area-Wide Network, and is developing plans for interactive distance learning through cooperation with Northern Arizona University. Sitting Bull College has installed an interactive telecommunications network that allows students to take classes at many colleges and universities in North Dakota via two-way video (American Indian College Fund, 1996).

In addition, many of the colleges have identified expanding technology and purchasing equipment as a high priority for the future. Although some colleges have been able to take advantage of grants to improve technology—funds through a Title III Strengthening Institutions grant allowed Sisseton Wahpeton Community College to upgrade computers, access the Internet, and wire the library with fiber-optics—most do not have money available to invest in such purposes (American Indian College Fund, 1996).

Welfare reform

The recently enacted welfare reform legislation, with its stricter work and job training requirements, is expected to have significant effects on the Tribal Colleges. With extremely high unemployment rates on the reservations, increasing numbers of welfare recipients are turning to the colleges for remedial education and job training activities.

Under the new welfare provisions, American Indian

applicants will be referred to either the tribal jobs program, a state jobs program (if one is available), or the local community college or tribal college. In most cases, the recipient must be employed within 24 months of applying. Individuals who are disqualified will have to apply for General Assistance, another Indian welfare program administered through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. However, the amount of money available for General Assistance has been steadily declining on tribal college reservations (Shanley, 1997). Given the relatively high numbers of welfare recipients that currently live on the reservations, this process will greatly impact local communities and the colleges that serve them. Other potential problems include shortages of facilities and instructors; insufficient time to bring people through remediation and instill job skills; inadequate day care facilities; and the lack of employment opportunities on the reservations (Shanley, 1997).

It seems clear that both states and tribes will look toward the colleges to train Indians and non-Indians on the reservation. Thus, the most obvious impact is likely to be increasing enrollments at most of the colleges. Most of the welfare recipients served by the colleges will need basic adult education and GED programs. However, TCCUAA funding is based on the number of American Indian students, who must meet certain basic literacy requirements; the colleges do not receive federal funds for non-Indians or for remedial and GED programs. Therefore, the colleges will have less money per student to spend on instruction and other services.

1 Calculated for the 14 tribally controlled colleges that reported to IPEDS.