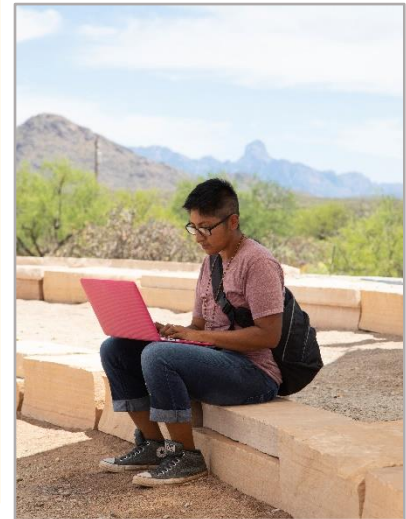


**Request: \$40 Million TCU IT Service Fund:
USDA – Rural Utility Service**

The ongoing pandemic has exacerbated the digital divide and underscored the lack of broadband access across Indian Country. To address these deficiencies that could leave Indian Country – and AI/AN students – behind the rest of the U.S. for generations, Congress must act to establish a *permanent TCU IT Service Fund within the USDA-Rural Utilities Service*. An annual \$40 million set-aside for TCUs, which are 1994 land-grant institutions served by USDA, would help cover rapidly increasing network, connectivity, and equipment costs, maintenance, infrastructure expansion, and IT staffing.

Congress recognized this need in the pandemic and attempted to provide support to TCUs by including them in the new NTIA Tribal Connectivity Broadband program. Unfortunately, due to the NTIA’s design of the program, to date, not even one TCU has been awarded direct grants.



*Tohono O’odham Community College
Student (Sells, AZ)*

- TCUs have more expensive and, on average, much slower internet connectivity than other U.S. institutions of higher education. **Iłisaǵvik College, has the *most expensive and slowest* Internet connectivity in the entire U.S. higher education system.**
- Any program to provide tax credits to existing internet service providers for providing free internet access to students provides little to no help in Indian Country, because the IT infrastructure does not exist.

- 68% of Americans on rural Tribal lands lack access to fixed broadband, according to a 2016 FCC Broadband Progress Report.
- 32 TCUs are located in rural or remote areas. For these TCUs, lack of choice of internet service providers exists, driving up costs.
- 31 of 35 accredited TCUs serve as community libraries.
- At some TCUs, more than half the students have NO internet access at home, making online education impossible at present.

	TCUs	2-year IHEs	4-year IHEs
Average Internet Connectivity	461 MBPS Max: 1.060 MBPS Lowest: 10 MPBS	513 MPBS	3.5 GBPS
Average Hardware Refresh Cycle	8.29 years	3-5 years	
Annual TCU Internet Costs	\$40,000 - \$250,000/year Highest in Nation: \$250,000/year: Diné College		



Outdated buildings such as these Cold War-era Quonset huts at Iłisaǵvik College (Barrow, AK) are common at many TCUs.

**Request: \$3.2 billion for TCU Facilities
DOI – Bureau of Indian Education**

- TCU completion of master plans: **\$2.7 billion** (total)
- TCU deferred maintenance/rehabilitation: **\$400 million** (total)
- TCU operation and maintenance: **\$20 million** (annual, recurring)

New \$15 million BIE TCU Facilities Improvement & Repair Fund:

Congress provided new funding in FY 2021 to begin addressing facilities needs at all 35 accredited TCUs. However, without greater investment TCUs will be forced to pull funding from academic operating budgets for facilities repairs, and upkeep costs, robbing funds from student support, curriculum development, libraries, and more.

Request \$3.2 billion for TCU Facilities: A July 2021 AIHEC survey of TCUs revealed many chronic, unmet facilities and infrastructure needs, including lack of student and faculty housing, inadequate classroom space, insufficient libraries, and outdated laboratories. AIHEC strongly urges Congress to fund dedicated TCU facilities programs through DOI-BIE to modernize current facilities and build safer 21st century campuses.