

Addressing of the COVID-19 Pandemic by Tribal Colleges

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Definition and number of U.S. tribal colleges

- Broadly defined here to be institutions of higher education whose student bodies are, in fact and by intent, primarily indigenous people of the U.S.
 - Most have connections to a specific tribe, though serving the broader American Indian/Alaskan Native communities
 - Two exceptions, generally considered tribal colleges but federal schools without a specific tribal connection: Haskell Indian Nations University (Lawrence, KS), Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (Albuquerque)
 - One other exception: Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College (Cloquet, MN), considered a tribal college due to its founding by the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, but now part of the Minnesota State Colleges and University System with enrollment only about 16% American Indian, with the majority (about 62%) white
 - Also often mentioned in conversations about tribal colleges, but not actually tribal colleges, and not discussed here: Native American-Serving Non-Tribal Institutions (NASNTIs); e.g., Fort Lewis College (Durango, CO) is an important example
- Close to 40

What follows in this 10 minute presentation (technology willing!)

- *NOT* a look at all of the 20 remaining slides! They contain, primarily, detailed data collected from 32 of the tribal colleges, for those who might want to bore into this more deeply, as well as a (slightly) more complete list of institutions I prepared for a paper about sustainability at the colleges, to appear this year.
- A quick look at a few typical examples (highlighted in yellow)
- Some summary conclusions garnered from the overall data

Summary of some general points

- With almost no exceptions, transition was made from classroom to remote education in the March 15–April 6 timeframe (usually, but not always exclusively, online).
- With almost no exceptions, summer sessions were also to be 100% online (though Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College in North Dakota canceled theirs), and fall sessions were “wait and see”; with no exceptions in the 32 institutions sampled, traditional graduation ceremonies were not held, being delayed until fall or replaced by video ceremonies (though at least one institution, Red Lake Nation College, had a drive-in graduation ceremony).
- Online platform varied; Zoom was a favorite, with Canvas being another common choice, and Brightspace, Jenzabar, and Schoology made appearances. Some institutions made no attempt at standardization.
- Some institutions, but not all, made a particular effort to help students learn how to deal with remote learning.
- Incomplete/withdrawal policies and access to pass/fail grading options frequently relaxed.
- TCUs with relatively large residential student populations (e.g., Diné College) usually had to make provision for “stayover” students, and some entirely commuter schools still had to make provision for making sure students were getting fed. Access for funding to get back home and food along the way were sometimes available.
- Some TCUs closed their campuses completely to all but essential staff (but usually not to faculty and instructors), and some continued to provide essential services (e.g., library, computer lab access, tutoring) to students. Continuing traditional provision of community services has been a problem.
- Colleges almost always had access to CARES Act funding; many sought additional supplemental funding, grant or, e.g., GoFundMe.
- If for the most part this sounds like what most other institutions have had to put up with, as a fiscally impactful but not existential matter, well....

Excerpt from a March 24 message from the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC)

With the spread of COVID-19, TCUs and TCU students are faced with tremendous, disruptive change. AIHEC states that it is imperative that we secure TCU campuses, move to online learning, and create safe spaces and opportunities to learn at a distance. Yet TCUs have the worst internet access, at the highest average cost, when compared to all other colleges and universities in the United States. TCUs educate more enrolled American Indians and Alaska Natives than any other postsecondary education institutions in the U.S.—and our students need and deserve equitable resources.

Many TCUs have little or no existing online teaching capability, and nearly all lack a consistent IT infrastructure. AIHEC estimates that \$140 million is needed to help update outdated IT infrastructure, implement the learning management systems needed to teach online, secure professional development for TCU faculty (some of whom have never taught online), and, most important, install community-based internet access points on our rural and remote Indian reservations where reliable internet access and equipment are nonexistent.

Pandemic impact status of U.S. tribal colleges as of June 1, 2020, where information is available at college websites and from other online sources

Alaska

- Iñisagvik College, Barrow: Campus completely closed to public in March, students and tutoring transitioned to telework to complete term, apparently Zoom, limited operations (e.g., library) through summer with all else canceled, fall plans not yet apparent.

Arizona

- Diné College, Tsaile (the first tribal college, est. 1969, serving both commuter and residential populations): Classes transitioned to online instruction March 23. (Summer session will also be entirely online, and it appears that no decision has yet been made about online vs. on-campus classes for fall.) Many students do not have laptops, and those were provided to ones who needed them. Residence halls closed in late March; students who are homeless or have no way to get home not required to leave. Received \$1,346,931 in funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, at least 50% of which must be used for direct support of students. Seeking donations for an additional \$100,000 emergency fund for students in dire need due to pandemic. ([next example](#))
- Tohono O'odham Community College: Classes transitioned to online instruction March 30 via Canvas and Zoom, except for culinary classes and agriculture courses involving outdoor work. An attempt was made to keep campus computer and wi-fi access available, and access to other campus facilities open for gatherings not to exceed 10 persons; success not known. Residence halls remained open for students with no other options.

Michigan

- Bay Mills Community College, Brimley: Closed in midsemester until April 6, then resumed online. Received \$222,497 from Higher Education Relief Fund under CARES Act, of which half is designated to provide emergency financial aid to students impacted by disruption of semester; remainder may also go to students. Summer classes online only, intention is to conduct fall classes as scheduled.
- Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College, Baraga: Sometime in March all education was moved online. Graduation rescheduled, summer courses all online.
- Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College: On-campus instruction terminated March 24 and facilities closed to students and public; classes continued online. Graduation ceremonies rescheduled. \$41,956 from CARES Act used for student aid.

Minnesota

- Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Cloquet: Classes transitioned to online delivery starting April 6 (with the computer lab remaining open to students but nothing else), and staff urged to work from home. CARES Act funding available to students eligible for support.
- Leech Lake Tribal College, Cass Lake: Classes transitioned to online delivery on March 30, which in their case was fairly straightforward due to good computer and instructional infrastructure, and practice gained from frequent severe winter weather.
- Red Lake Nation College, Red Lake: Transitioned to online class delivery March 16. As with Leech Lake Tribal College, **well practiced in holding online classes** due to frequent severe winter weather. Held a drive-in graduation ceremony.
- White Earth Tribal and Community College, Mahnomen: Transitioned to online class delivery on March 30, and requested and received a quick grant from the Northwest Minnesota Foundation to assist needy students with the required technology. Also received a \$52,600 CARES Act grant with half devoted to student aid, and a supplemental grant from the American Indian College Fund to help out students not eligible for other support. (next example)

Montana

- **Blackfeet Community College, Browning:** Transitioned to online instruction on March 30, but emphasized it would remain open and operational, with faculty and staff continuing their regular scheduled work hours. Donations were solicited specifically to build care packages for community elders, demonstrating in one way the community role played by this college.
- **Chief Dull Knife College, Lame Deer:** College closed March 18–April 1 to evaluate situation, then continued classes at some date in the future, but with the college itself remaining closed (with the exception of its math lab) until May 18. Students were given extra time to finish classes.
- **Fort Peck Community College, Poplar:** Transitioned to remote learning, apparently on April 6, with \$37,380 of CARES Act funding disbursed to 134 students.
- **Salish Kootenai College, Pablo:** SKC is to be congratulated on their comprehensive and transparent description of how they are addressing the pandemic. The college transitioned to online education on March 30 via the Schoology Learning Management System with the physical campus closed (and extended pass/fail grading options for all courses), but had critical student services still available. A COVID-19 Emergency Remote Teaching Page was set up to provide resources, strategies, and tools for remote teaching, and also maintained web information pages for students detailing how to handle time management, study space, video tools, and other academic support elements for remote learning. Emergency funding was available for students financially impacted by the disruption. The SKC president, Sandra Boham, wrote frank but supportive messages not minimizing the stress the disruption would cause. ([return](#))

Nebraska

- Little Priest Tribal College, Winnebago: Announced on April 2 that the remainder of the spring term would be taught completely online, apparently via Zoom and Canvas with syllabus modifications (and modified incomplete/withdrawal policies), and the physical campus closed. Laptops were provided for instructors and students in need, and instructor training for the new environment also provided. Commencement postponed, and summer term also scheduled to be online.
- Nebraska Indian Community College, Macy: From a link on the college home page to online classes available for students, it appears that the college may have transitioned to online education, and the college did receive CARES Act funding for students, but no other information related to the college's response to the pandemic could be found at the NICC site or elsewhere online.

New Mexico

- Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe: Campus and its Museum of Contemporary Native Arts closed March 18 with transition to online learning, and remained so through May 18. Student learning impacted by low quality or complete lack of Internet connectivity, and financial burdens on students highlighted in message from IAIA president. Laptops lent to students and other relevant expenses covered, in part through a \$171,000 CARES Act grant. Commencement postponed until end of first week of fall classes (August 22), in person but with backup plans for a virtual ceremony.
- Navajo Technical University, Crownpoint: Transition to online instruction via Zoom starting April 6; training for students provided. Except for persons designated essential, employees to continue conducting their jobs via telework. Essential student services maintained including online tutoring, and cafeteria remained open so students and employees could get fed, but only takeout meals provided. Access to campus continued for students and employees.
- Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, Albuquerque: SIPI transitioned to 100% online coursework on March 30, through Brightspace and Zoom. Laptops and wi-fi hotspot technology provided to students who requested them; priority given to students scheduled to graduate in 2020. Residential halls closed March 23, with staff making sure that students had a safe place to go and transportation requirements (gas cards, air- and bus-fare, etc.) to get there, as well as gift cards for meals during travel. Commencement postponed. CARES Act funding provided for qualifying students.

North Dakota

- Cankdeska Cikana Community College, Fort Totten: There is evidence that classes were transitioned to online delivery, probably in March, though that seems not to be stated definitely at the CCCC website or elsewhere online. \$108,484, apparently from a CARES Act grant has been disbursed to qualifying students in need of support due to pandemic disruption. The Bureau of Indian Education supplied another \$250,670. A moving online video graduation ceremony was held. Summer classes are online.
- Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College, New Town: Classes went online on March 30, via Zoom and other means. CARES Act and American Indian College Fund monies (amount unspecified) were provided to cover funds for students impacted by the pandemic disruption, as well as \$270,040 from the Bureau of Indian Education. Summer session was canceled.
- Sitting Bull College, Fort Yates: All courses went online on March 25, after which date only employees were allowed on campus (with exceptions to be detailed below). Faculty were not required to be present after that date, but could if they wished. Though not generally allowed on campus, students did have access to one computer lab, 8 hours per week, in recognition of the possibility that they had no other access to computers, but access was generally by appointment only and only for doing course work. Support for students for learning to learn online was made available. \$124,650 in CARES Act funds were disbursed to eligible students on May 6. Students who were staying in campus housing were allowed to continue doing so.
- Turtle Mountain Community College, Belcourt: (Full disclosure: The author of this presentation was an adjunct mathematics faculty member at TMCC for most summers in the 1990s.) A detailed timeline for transition to online classes began March 16, with all course delivery online as of March 30. TMCC received \$473,968 from the CARES Act, and another \$1,157,000 from the Bureau of Indian Education, to help with the pandemic disruption.
- United Tribes Technical College, Bismarck: All courses were moved online on March 23, and remained that way for the rest of the term. Spring commencement was canceled, and summer session classes were scheduled to be offered only online. Students were encouraged to stay away from campus, although those with housing and dining contracts were allowed to be present. UTTC was to be the site for the NJCAA Division II Women's Basketball Tournament, but this was canceled. At the time of this writing, it was expected that fall classes would be regular classroom offerings, possibly with some exceptions. \$169,976 of CARES Act funds were received, of which at least 50% are going to direct student support.

Oklahoma

- College of the Muscogee Nation, Okmulgee: Instruction was transitioned to Brightspace on March 23 and students were asked not to be on campus, though (1) instructors mailed hard copies of assignments to student home addresses if they did not have Internet access; (2) the library, with computer access, remained open with limited hours, and later by appointment only; and (3) students with campus housing contracts were allowed to stay in that housing. Commencement was postponed, and the summer trimester will also be online. CMN did receive CARES Act funds for student support, though the amount was not specified.
- Pawnee Nation College, Pawnee: It is stated at the PNC website that they have transitioned to online course delivery March 21 via Moodle, but the college website raises some concerns, particularly in having no posted course schedules past fall 2019, hence information from this site was not considered for this presentation.

South Dakota

- Oglala Lakota College, Kyle: Almost all courses were transitioned to online delivery on March 23 via Zoom, Moodle, Jenzabar, and other platforms, with access to buildings by students only when necessary to have computer access due to lack of other options. Support for students not used to online learning has been provided. Community activities using college facilities were also curtailed. The library and bookstore remained accessible, but only to OLC students. The CARES Act provided \$648,798 in emergency funding.
- Sinte Gleska University, Mission: Face-to-face instruction ended March 27, with classes continued online via platforms such as Google Classroom, Course Sites (a free version of Blackboard), and Zoom, as well as documents just transmitted via email. (For students without computer access, a service involving van drivers picking up packets was available where feasible.) The library and bookstore were open to students only as needed, which apparently means by appointment, while all facilities were closed to the public. SGU received \$385,959 from the CARES Act, with at least half to go directly to students.
- Sisseton Wahpeton College, Sisseton: Transitioned to online course delivery for the remainder of the year on March 17. Students with no Internet access off campus were to contact the IT folks to see what could be done temporarily to accommodate them, and if nearby could possibly be allowed into university facilities to use computers. The library was closed, and graduation ceremonies were canceled. CARES Act funds in the amount of \$157,620 were available to the college, with at least 50% to go directly to students.

Washington State

- Northwest Indian College, Bellingham: On March 16, all classes were moved online for the remainder of the winter quarter. Dorm students were asked to stay on campus, and meals for students proceeded as scheduled. \$403,967 was obtained from the CARES Act, of which at least half was to be spent directly on eligible students.

Wisconsin

- College of Menominee Nation, Keshena: All courses were switched to online delivery on March 16, to remain so for the rest of the spring semester. Students without computer access at home could check out a laptop. Access to campus was restricted to persons with essential functions, which included faculty and instructors. Students were given access to limited facilities. The allocation document for the CARES Act does not show any allocation to the college.
- Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Community College, Hayward: On March 17, the college transitioned to online learning via Canvas and Zoom, with paper packets to be provided to students without access to the Internet at home, though the college hoped to be able to provide laptops to students who had access to some sort of Internet access off-site. However, labs were to continue on campus with students and faculty required to wear personal protective gear provided by the college. Access to student support services continued via phone and email. The CARES Act provided an atypically small amount of funding to this tribal college, \$31,226 with at least 50% to go directly to eligible students.



More Nearly Complete List of U.S. Tribal Colleges

From R. Megginson, *Sustainability education at U.S. and Canadian tribal colleges: Its goals and implementations, and the role of mathematics*, to appear 2020 (submitted 2016). Reasons for the few omissions are described in that paper.

Note: Canadian tribal colleges are also included in the cited publication because it is a common belief among the indigenous peoples of North America, particularly the Akwesasne Mohawk whose reserve/reservation is split by the Canadian/U.S. border, that those lines are artificial modern barriers.

Tribal college/university	Location of main campus	Web home page	Sustainability courses offered	Sustainability degree programs	Focus	Mathematics required	Most advanced mathematics course at institution	Comments
United States								
Alaska								
Iñisagvik College	Barrow	http://www.ilisagvik.edu/	1		Sustainable northern shelter construction			This was a one-time offering, but sustainable architecture may be an institutional interest.
Arizona								
Diné College	Tsaile	http://www.dinecollege.edu/	yes	AS	Environmental science, preparatory for transfer in resource management, wildlife management, and other sustainability degree programs	Precalculus	Ordinary differential equations, linear algebra	Much emphasis on sustainability in food production, traditional food production, and development, with a strong emphasis on the Navajo Nation.
Tohono O'odham Community College	Sells	http://www.tocc.edu/	yes	AS	Implicit component of Tohono O'odham Agriculture and Natural Resources concentration	Calculus I	At least Calculus III	
Kansas								
Haskell Indian Nations University	Lawrence	http://www.haskell.edu/	yes	BS	Environmental science concentrations include sustainability as a core concept	College algebra	Linear algebra, differential equations	

Tribal college/university	Location of main campus	Web home page	Sustainability courses offered	Sustainability degree programs	Focus	Mathematics required	Most advanced mathematics course at institution	Comments
Michigan								
Bay Mills Community College	Brimley	http://www.bmcc.edu/	1		Natural resource management, emphasizing forests		Analytic trigonometry	
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College	Baraga	http://www.kbocc.org/	yes		Some environmental science courses have a partial emphasis on sustainable management of tribal forest and water resources.	College algebra		
Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College	Mount Pleasant	http://www.sagchip.edu/	2		Sustainability issues are addressed in a basic introductory environmental science course, plus another Native American environmental issues course.			
Minnesota								
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College	Cloquet	http://fdltcc.edu/	yes	AS	Environmental science; strong emphasis on sustainability	College algebra	Calculus II	
Leech Lake Tribal College	Cass Lake	http://lltc.edu/	yes	AS	Earth system science and forest ecology concentrations with some emphasis on sustainability	College algebra	Calculus II	

Tribal college/university	Location of main campus	Web home page	Sustainability courses offered	Sustainability degree programs	Focus	Mathematics required	Most advanced mathematics course at institution	Comments
Minnesota (contd.)								
Red Lake Nation College	Red Lake	http://www.rlnc.education/	yes	AS	Environmental science; some sustainability content	Concepts in mathematics	College algebra	Scheduled to start in fall 2018
White Earth Tribal and Community College	Mahnomen	http://www.wetcc.edu/	yes	AA	Environmental science; some sustainability content		College algebra	A bit thin on sustainability, but some is there
Montana								
Aaniih Nakoda College	Harlem	http://www.ancollege.edu/	yes	AS	Environmental science	College algebra	Calculus	
Blackfeet Community College	Browning	http://bfcc.edu/	yes	AS	With careful course selection, an AS in General Studies - Math & Science can get at least a minor focus on sustainability	Probability & linear math	Calculus II	
Chief Dull Knife College	Lame Deer	http://www.cdnc.edu/	4		Sustainable forest and soil management, social issues, issues with mining		Calculus II	
Fort Peck Community College	Poplar	http://www.fpcc.edu/	yes	AS	Environmental science	College algebra	Differential equations	
Little Big Horn College	Crow Agency	http://www.lbhc.edu/	yes	AS	Two concentrations, Natural Resrcs/Env Science and Tribal Natural Resrcs/Env Science	Precalculus or introductory statistics	Calculus II	

Tribal college/university	Location of main campus	Web home page	Sustainability courses offered	Sustainability degree programs	Focus	Mathematics required	Most advanced mathematics course at institution	Comments
Montana (contd.)								
Salish Kootenai College	Pablo	http://www.skcc.edu	yes	AS, BS	Multiple degrees emphasizing sustainability, e.g., in wildlife and fisheries, forestry, hydrology	Calculus II for BS	Calculus III, Mathematical Modeling	
Stone Child College	Box Elder	http://www.stonechild.edu/	yes	AA	Water quality	College algebra	Calculus II	
Nebraska								
Little Priest Tribal College	Winnebago	http://www.littlepriest.edu/	yes	AS	Indigenous science, with sustainability an emphasis	College algebra	College algebra	
Nebraska Indian Community College	Macy	http://www.thenicc.edu/	yes	AS	General Science/Natural Resources emphasis has a strong focus on sustainable management of forests, range, soil and water, and wildlife.	Calculus I	Calculus I	
New Mexico								
Institute of American Indian Arts	Santa Fe	https://iaia.edu/	1		One course, Sustainability, Innovation & Entrepreneurship, focuses on sustainable business practices for competitive advantage.			

Tribal college/university	Location of main campus	Web home page	Sustainability courses offered	Sustainability degree programs	Focus	Mathematics required	Most advanced mathematics course at Institution	Comments
New Mexico (contd.)								
Navajo Technical University	Crownpoint	http://www.navajotech.edu/	yes	1yr cert, AAS, BS	Environmental science and natural resources	For BS: Precalculus	Differential equations, linear algebra, numerical analysis	The institution's mission statement emphasizes "environmental preservation and sustainable economic development."
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	Albuquerque	http://www.sipi.edu/	yes	AAS	Environmental science, natural resources management, some emphasis on soils	College algebra, plus trigonometry or statistics	Calculus II	SIPI's strategic goals include "to better support the sustainability of tribes' fundamental needs."
North Dakota								
Cankdeska Cikana Community College	Fort Totten	http://www.littlehoop.edu/	yes	AS	Environmental science, natural resources management	Intermediate algebra for environmental science, college algebra for natural resources management	Differential equations	
Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College	New Town	http://nhsc.edu/	yes	AS, AAS, BS	Environmental science	AS, BS: College algebra; AAS: any mathematics course	Differential equations	
Sitting Bull College	Fort Yates	https://sittingbull.edu/	yes	AS, BS, MS	Environmental science	AS: Intermediate algebra; BS, MS: College algebra	Differential equations	

Tribal college/university	Location of main campus	Web home page	Sustainability courses offered	Sustainability degree programs	Focus	Mathematics required	Most advanced mathematics course at Institution	Comments
North Dakota (contd.)								
Turtle Mountain Community College	Belcourt	http://www.tm.edu/	yes	AS	Pre-environmental science; not as structured as most, but a sustainability emphasis can be designed into a program of study.	College algebra	Differential equations	
United Tribes Technical College	Bismarck	http://www.uttc.edu/	yes	AAS, BS	Environmental science; not as focused on sustainability as most ES programs, but it is present in the core.	AAS: College algebra; BS: Calculus I	Calculus III	
Oklahoma								
College of the Muscogee Nation	Okmulgee	http://www.mvsktc.org/	no					
Comanche Nation College	Lawton	http://cnc.cc.ok.us/	no					Sustainability is one topic among many in a Social Problems course
Pawnee Nation College	Pawnee	http://pawneenationcollege.org/	no					
South Dakota								
Oglala Lakota College	Kyle	http://www.olec.edu/	yes	BS	Natural science, conservation biology track; emphasis in earth science track	Trigonometry	Calculus III, linear algebra	

Tribal college/university	Location of main campus	Web home page	Sustainability courses offered	Sustainability degree programs	Focus	Mathematics required	Most advanced mathematics course at institution	Comments
South Dakota (contd.)								
Sinte Gleska University	Mission	http://www.sintegleska.edu/	yes	AS, BS	Environmental science	AS: College algebra; BS: College algebra, statistics	Partial differential equations	
Sisseton Wahpeton College	Sisseton	http://www.swc.tc/	yes	AA	Sustainable environmental studies	Intermediate algebra	Trigonometry	
Washington								
Northwest Indian College	Bellingham	http://www.nwic.edu/	yes	AS, BS	Native environmental science	College algebra	Calculus III	Sustainability less evident than in many other environmental science courses, particularly in AS program. It is likely embedded in seminars and internship in BS program.
Wisconsin								
College of Menominee Nation	Keshena	http://www.menominee.edu/	yes	AAS	Sustainable development	College algebra foundations	Differential equations with linear algebra	
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Community College	Hayward	http://www.lco.edu/	yes	AAS	Several natural resource management curricula	Intermediate algebra	Calculus I with analytic geometry	