



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 21-096

Dear Colleague Letter: TCUP STEM Innovative Faculty Support

June 14, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

Native populations have been disproportionately impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic¹, including significant negative impacts on tribal colleges and universities² (TCUs). Campus closures, loss of in-person instruction, and lack of distance learning infrastructure, such as reliable, affordable internet access, have had a deleterious effect on student engagement and enrollment, particularly in geographically isolated communities. Enrollment at some TCUs has declined dramatically³, leading to potential loss of both programs and faculty. The potential loss of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs and STEM faculty could have dire consequences, affecting community growth and development, local workforce preparation, overall STEM educational capacity, and ultimately, TCU accreditation.

To address this developing situation, the National Science Foundation (NSF) encourages proposals to provide STEM faculty support for activities deemed essential to mitigate against the impact of the pandemic on student achievement in STEM courses or programs of study. Through this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL), support can be requested for current full-time STEM faculty members at a TCUP-eligible institution of higher education through a RAPID Response Research (RAPID) proposal. Proposals should specify the service or professional development in which faculty will engage to maintain the viability of the institution's STEM programming in the face of pandemic-induced enrollment decline. Potential activities may include incorporation of novel on-line or in-person instructional methodologies, or mechanisms to allow students to receive STEM instruction with little or no disruption. RAPID funding may be requested to reimburse the salary and fringe benefits for an identified STEM faculty member, as well as costs for current or planned professional development. Successful proposals should specify the courses for which the faculty member is responsible. Limited support may be available for associated STEM program costs, such as necessary laboratory supplies. NSF anticipates supporting approximately twenty RAPID proposals, subject to availability of funds. Each proposal may request support for one faculty member. Eligible

institutions may submit up to two proposals in response to this DCL, with each proposal requesting support for one TCUP STEM faculty member. Proposers are asked to document overall student enrollment data for the current year and for the prior two years in order to demonstrate enrollment declines. Proposers are encouraged to consult program officials (listed below) with questions on enrollment data. Support is limited to \$200,000 per faculty member. RAPID awards are non-transferrable.

HOW TO RESPOND TO THIS DCL:

Organizations eligible to submit proposals in response to this DCL are Tribal Colleges and Universities, Alaska Native-serving institutions and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions, as specified below. Executive Order 13021 defines Tribal Colleges and Universities ("tribal colleges") as those institutions cited in section 532 of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 301 note), and other institutions that qualify for funding under the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978, (25 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.), as well as Navajo Community College as authorized in the Navajo Community College Assistance Act of 1978, Public Law 95-471, Title II (25 U.S.C. 640a note). The term "Alaska Native-serving institution" means an institution of higher education that is an eligible institution under section 1058(b) of the Higher Education Act; and that, at the time of submission, has an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 20 percent Alaska Native students. The term "Native Hawaiian-serving institution" means an institution of higher education that is an eligible institution under section 1058(b) of the Higher Education Act; has a Carnegie classification of baccalaureate or associate's college; and has, at the time of submission, an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 10 percent Native Hawaiian students. Eligibility may be verified by consulting the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) or other certified federal government data sources.

Proposers must follow the guidance and instructions for the preparation of RAPID proposals provided in Chapter II.E of the *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG)*.

In advance of submitting a proposal in response to this DCL, interested proposers are required to discuss their project ideas with cognizant program directors in the TCUP program, and obtain approval for submission of each proposal.

Proposals responsive to this DCL will be accepted at any time through January 31, 2022. Proposals may not receive funding until after October 1, 2021.

The proposal title should begin with "RAPID: TCUP STEM Faculty Support."

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Sincerely,

Karen A. Marrongelle
Assistant Director
Directorate for Education & Human Resources

REFERENCES

- 1 CDC; https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6934e1.htm?s_cid=mm6934e1_w
- 2 <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/10/06/tribal-colleges-are-innovating-fall-will-still-need-long-term-support>
- 3 <https://nscresearchcenter.org/stay-informed/>