



MEMO

TOPIC: Central Wyoming College Financial Support to Tribal Students

TO: Select Committee on Tribal Relations

FROM: Brad Tyndall, Ph.D., President of Central Wyoming College

DATE: August 2, 2024

Dear Member of the Select Committee:

CWC was founded in 1966 and statutorily serves Fremont, Hot Springs and Teton counties. We are proud to say that the Wind River Indian Reservation (WRIR), with members of the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes, is at the heart of the service area and at the heart of CWC's Fremont County Community College district. American Indians make up a large percentage, around 20%, of Fremont County's approximate 40,000 residents (US Census Bureau). In terms of CWC's credit offerings, American Indians make up roughly 15%. (The exact percentage is not known since some students choose not to provide ethnographic information or select "multiple races".) This percentage is even greater among our Bachelor of Applied Science students. **CWC is home to 54% of the AI/AN students at Wyoming community colleges.**

Please find below answers to the questions posed from the committee:

- **How much it would cost to provide 100% tuition waivers for all currently enrolled Native students.**
- **Does the college have any endowments for Native students and how much are these endowments?**

CWC is very interested in advancing access and providing greater opportunities for our American Indian students to achieve their higher education goals.

TUITION

In 2024 Spring, CWC had 249 students identify as Native American. Their tuition (not including fees) is roughly just over \$240,000. In Fall 2023, it was nearly \$250,000. **Including summer, it is estimated that the annual tuition at CWC for Native American students is approximately \$500,000.** *Note: Native American status is self-reported.*

UNMET NEED

Meeting the financial needs of tribal students must include the associated factors that often derail educational goals such as transportation, housing, and food. These are built into the federal cost of attendance established annually (**attached**). These costs are on top of the direct charges such as tuition and fees.

In 2023 Fall, 173 Native American students received financial aid. The chart below highlights the gap between their unmet need and that of other CWC students. Students with other avenues of funding (such as family support) can manage with some unmet need. Those without are left struggling to cover basic living expenses.

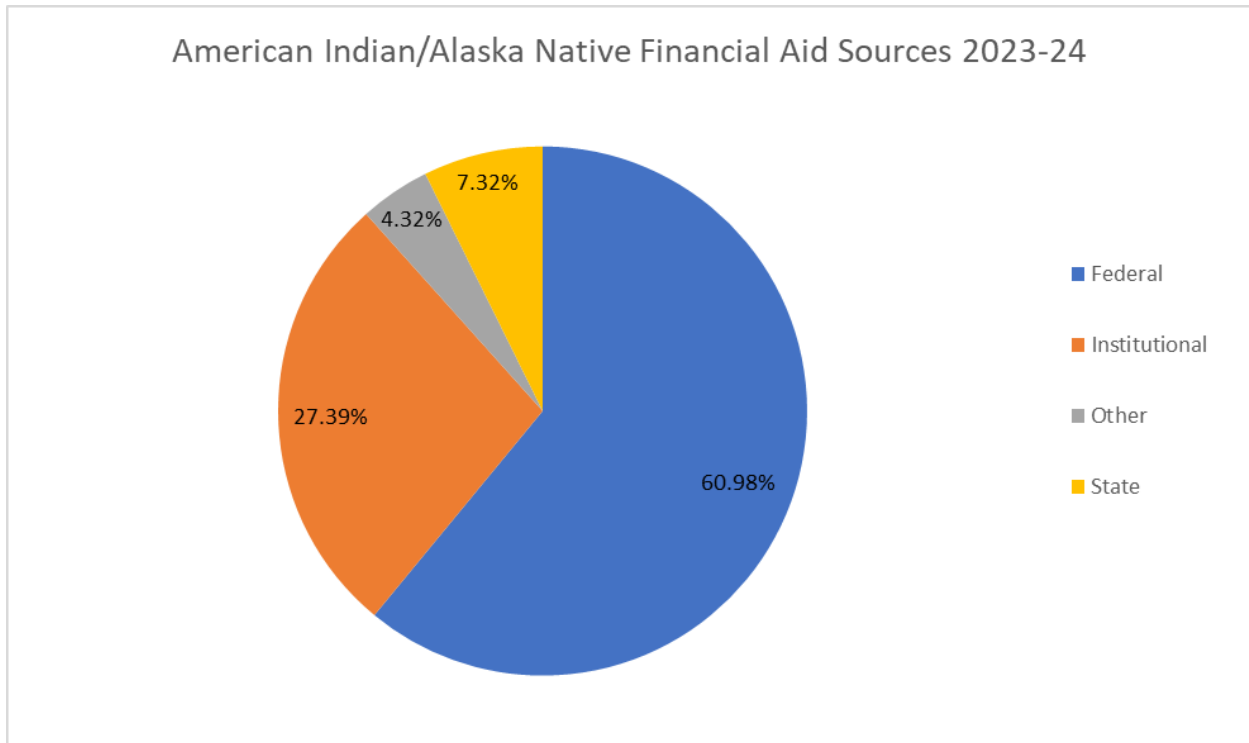
American Indian/Alaska Unmet Need Breakdown	American Indian/Alaska Native Students		All Other Students	
\$1 - \$4,999	57	32.95%	144	19.67%
\$5,000 to \$9,999	38	21.97%	102	13.93%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	20	11.56%	55	7.51%
\$15,000 to \$19,999	10	5.78%	17	2.32%
\$20,000 to \$24,999	2	1.16%	7	0.96%
\$25,000 to \$29,999	0	0.00%	1	0.14%
Need Met or Exceeded	33	19.07%	186	25.41%

EXISTING SUPPORTS

Central Wyoming College provides a variety of financial supports for our Native students. Below are some that typically are awarded to CWC American Indian students either because of geographic or political criteria (not race). In FY25 they amount to a total of **\$29,011**.

- St. David's Episcopal Church Endowment
- Frank & Cynthia McCarthy Endowment
- Mike Bair Memorial Endowment
- Ann King Scholarship Endowment
- Alexandra Fuller Endowment
- Wind River Tribal Endowment
- Aldinger Memorial Fund

In total, CWC donor scholarship funds for FY25 total \$681,956 and these are available to all students, including American Indian students, who meet donor requirements (such as being enrolled in the preferred academic program). These funds are included in the institutional sources illustrated below.



Please note that the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights has made it clear colleges and universities are prohibited from race-conscious scholarship distribution. They are responsible for enforcing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d, and its implementing regulation, 34 C.F.R. Part 100. Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin by recipients of Federal financial assistance.

In addition we have some endowments that provide emergency funding for students, one of which is focused on students from Wind River. This year those funds amount to \$3,624. We also have funding from private donors in support of the Institute of Tribal Learning. That funding this year is \$56,157.

CONSIDERATIONS

As shown above, and compared to the total costs of attendance in the attachment, the portion of funding for American Indian students coming from the state of Wyoming is low. To ensure a greater portion of financial aid goes to meeting the hidden costs of education, we encourage the state to cover these (first-dollar) tuition costs for the Wyoming residents enrolled in a federally-

recognized tribe so that other available scholarship funds can be used to cover some of the total cost of attendance.

To cover these Native American students who attend any Wyoming community college, including CWC, an annual distribution of approximately \$970,000 would be needed to cover tuition costs (\$500,000 for CWC's 54% of Native American Students; \$470,000 for the other community colleges. Covering fees would make these costs somewhat higher.) Because the colleges do not have these funds, we would hope this would be covered by the State of Wyoming. **If a State endowment were desired to cover this full cost, \$21.6 million yielding at 4.5% would be needed.**

Similar tuition assistance for Native American students at the University of Wyoming should also be considered. CWC and UW are having ongoing discussions on how to provide more comprehensive financial and wrap-around services to better support the State's Native American students. For example, we are discussing possible co-enrollment, co-advising, joint-cohort and other collaborative models.

Tuition assistance will help Wyoming address critical issues facing our American Indian population.

- Underrepresented in higher education
 - Among American Indian or Alaskan Native residents aged 25 or over, only 15.4% had earned a bachelor's degree or higher. This rate is up from 13.4% in 2010, but falls short of the national rate of 32.9%.
 - Since Fall 2010, Native American enrollment has declined from 196,000 to 123,000, a 37% decrease.
 - In 2020, 22% of the 18–24-year-old Native American population were enrolled in college compared to 40% of the overall U.S. population.
[*Native American Students in Higher Education Factsheet*](#)
- Poverty
 - Nationally, 28.4% of Natives live below the poverty level, double the national average. As of December 2021, Native Americans had an unemployment rate of 7.9 percent, much higher than the national rate of 3.9 percent.
[*SUPPORTING NATIVE STUDENTS HIGHER EDUCATION ISSUE BRIEF*](#)
- Overrepresented in prison system
 - *American Indians and Crime* found that American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) were incarcerated at a rate 38% higher than the national average and were overrepresented in the prison population in 19 states compared to any other race and ethnicity. [*Overincarceration of Native Americans*](#)
 - In Wyoming, Native Americans are 2% of the population but 10% of the prison population. [*Wyoming Incarceration Trends*](#)