



UNITED TRIBES
TECHNICAL COLLEGE

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January 20, 2025

**Senate Appropriations
Education and Environment Division
600 East Boulevard
Bismarck, ND 58505**

RE: Support for an increase in non-beneficiary funding in SB 2003

Introduction:

Good afternoon, Chair Sorvaag and members of the Appropriations Education and Environment Committee. My name is Dr. Leander McDonald, I am an enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Tribe and a proud descendant of the Sahnish, Hidatsa, and Hunkpapa people. I serve as the President of United Tribes Technical College (UTTC), which is a member of the North Dakota Tribal College System (NDTCS).

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the vital role United Tribes Technical College plays in supporting native and non-native students across North Dakota. I am here to express strong support for increasing non-beneficiary funding for tribal colleges and universities (TCU). This funding assists in ensuring that we can continue to provide high-quality education to all students, including those who are not members of federally recognized tribes but seek educational opportunities at our institutions.

Institution Overview:

At United Tribes Technical College, we are deeply committed to providing quality education, preserving Native culture and traditions, and fostering economic development in the communities we serve. Our community is located here in Bismarck with 70% of our enrollment being North Dakota citizens. Our institution offers a variety of tailored programs to meet the unique needs of our students such as vocational training and certificate programs in key fields such as welding, heavy equipment, commercial driver's license (CDL), and pre-engineering, to associate and baccalaureate degrees in fields such as business, criminal justice, education and environmental sciences.

Impact on Students and Communities:

Our students come from diverse backgrounds, with many facing unique challenges, including socioeconomic barriers, geographical isolation, and limited access to resources. Despite these challenges, our graduates go on to make meaningful contributions to their communities.

One such example is Rollie Knight, Mandan Hidatsa Arikara Nation, UTTC Bachelors, and University of Mary Master's, in Business Administration, graduate and now a UTTC faculty member.

***Rollie Knight** – The impact of the business administration program here at United Tribes Technical College has been significant to my growth, not only in my work life but also in my personal development. Before attending college here at UTTC, I wanted to help people; one avenue I could take is to become an instructor. I also knew that I could only teach with an education, regardless of my background in business. So, that is when I began my academic journey here at UTTC. While acquiring my education, I have picked up on writing, communication, business law, economics, and*

“Leadership begins here”

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management of accounting, marketing, advertising, human resources, and business operations. These are all skills that have contributed to workforce readiness. Regarding personal development, my communication with others has improved. My ability to simplify matters so that things become more easily understandable for others is beneficial and increases my ability to lead.

Business from a Native American standpoint is not entirely the same as any other standpoint. There are certain aspects to consider that differ from any other community. The curriculum at UTTC delved into these aspects of business and gave me a more profound and unique understanding of business from the Native perspective.

My view of goal setting correlates with a person's confidence level. For example, if a person has a low expectation of themselves, that equals a low-end result. Goal-setting also coincides with a person's self-worth. It is essential to value the skills you have obtained through education to determine better which direction you want to take your career.

Aside from faculty support and encouragement, these are all reasons I became an instructor at UTTC.

Funding and Support Needs:

Specifically, we are requesting the non-beneficiary funds be increased from \$1.4 to \$1.6 million, which will help us address student recruitment, retention, and completion. The financial support provided by the state is essential for our non-beneficiary and all our students' continued success. Increased funding allows us to provide support systems for non-native students such as tuition support, student health services, career development resources, as well as enhanced infrastructure improvement.

Challenges and Solutions:

Like many tribal colleges, we face challenges such as aging facilities, limited access to technology, and the need for culturally relevant curriculum. However, with increased state support, we can implement solutions that will not only address these challenges but also ensure that our students are well-prepared for the workforce and for leadership roles within their communities.

Closing Statement:

In closing, I would like to reiterate the importance of investing in tribal colleges and universities. For UTTC, the return on investment is \$3.30 for every dollar invested with a total economic impact for FY22-23 of \$39.9 million or 537 jobs supported. Our institutions are not just places of learning; they are pillars of our communities, preserving culture, driving economic growth, and creating opportunities for future generations. We greatly appreciate your consideration of our funding request and your ongoing support.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Leander R. McDonald, PhD
President
United Tribes Technical College