

## Tribal Land Grant Colleges

A nearly two-year campaign by the 29 tribal colleges that comprise the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) was brought to a successful outcome in October 1994, when Congress passed legislation granting them land-grant status. In November, the board of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, which had strongly endorsed the campaign, voted to admit AIHEC as a system member of the association with one representative as a member of NASULGC's Council of Presidents. In January 1995, AIHEC became the newest member of NASULGC, the nation's oldest higher education association.

Land-grant status was conferred on the 29 Native American colleges in 1994 as a provision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act. The bill also authorized a \$23 million endowment for them, to be built up over five years. The colleges were to receive interest payments from the endowment each year.

In addition, the legislation authorized a \$1.7 million challenge grant program for higher education programs in agriculture and natural resources, much like the successful program at the 1890 colleges, and \$50,000 per school for higher education in agriculture and natural resources (similar to the original Morrill-Nelson funds).

The legislation also provided \$5 million to go to the Cooperative Extension Service of the 1862 land-grant institutions in states that also have tribal colleges. The 1862 institutions were to cooperate with the tribal colleges in setting up joint agricultural extension programs focused on the needs of the Native American institutions, as identified by the tribal colleges.

The 29 1994 colleges named in the bill comprise all of the American Indian tribal colleges in the nation. Of these, 24 are tribally controlled colleges, two are tribally controlled vocational/technical colleges, two are owned and operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and one is federally chartered.

The 29 American tribal colleges are located on or near reservations. Most are two-year colleges and technical schools, but three are four-year institutions, and one offers a master's degree. Located in twelve states, the schools are the most important provider of higher education opportunities for Native Americans, serving 14,000 students (almost 10,000 FTE). They have been notably successful in retaining students and sending them on to four-year colleges and universities. They also provide a variety of community services, such as family counseling, alcohol and drug abuse programs, job training and economic development.