



SINTE GLESKA UNIVERSITY

SICANGU LAKOTA OYATE

PO Box 105

Mission, SD 57555-0105

Telephone (605) 856-8100

ESTABLISHED DECEMBER 1970

ACCREDITED BY THE
THE HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION 1983
RECOGNIZED AS A
1994 TRIBAL LAND GRANT INSTITUTION

June 21st 2022

Dr. Janet Yellen,
Secretary of US Department of Treasury
Washington, DC

On behalf of our students, faculty, staff, and board we want to thank you for coming to experience all the remarkable things happening at Sinte Gleska University. Sinte Gleska University (SGU) is one of the oldest Tribal Colleges. It was chartered in 1971 and is fully accredited at the associate, bachelor and master degree levels through the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the same accrediting agency used by all South Dakota Board of Regents Universities. Over the past fifty years, SGU has grown from a vision of providing higher education to students across the 2,500 square mile Rosebud Reservation to include support of our relatives at Lower Brule Community College and Ihanktonwan College on the Yankton Reservation.

Since its inception, Sinte Gleska University has built on the strength of Lakota cultural values, history and language as the foundation of the institution. The success of our University, and the success of other Tribal Colleges around the continent, is the understanding that tribal students are successful in learning environments that are based on traditional practices, understanding and teaching learning methodologies. Students at SGU achieve beyond typical university students as they receive additional credits in Lakota studies. Even though these extra course requirements result in students taking longer to complete a degree, students have overwhelmingly supported the need to study, experience and immerse themselves in understanding of their history and culture. It is one of the things that makes learning at a tribal university unique.

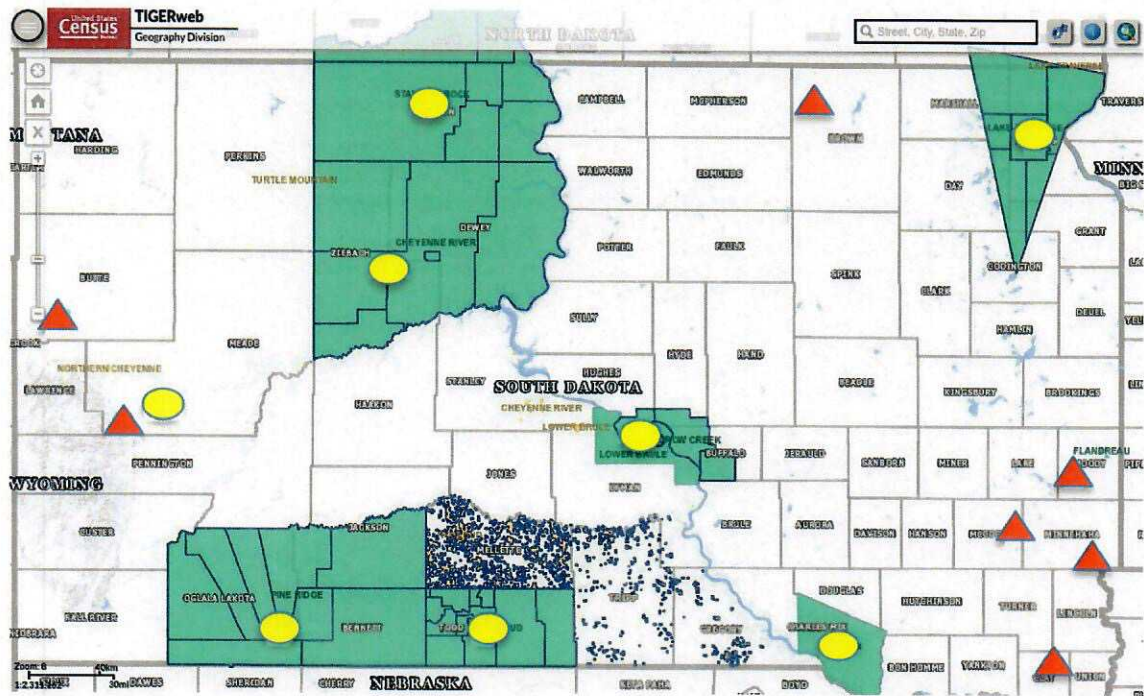
Secondly, Sinte Gleska University and other tribal colleges and universities came into existence just prior to, and when, President Nixon announced the tribal self-determination act message to Indian Country. Several congressional legislations on Indian Education acts were enacted. Sinte Gleska University founders saw the institution as the body to provide leadership for the redefining and restructuring the Indian education as to its ownership of Indian Education by tribal nations. This was to be achieved through tribal accreditation based upon tribal spirituality, self-determination, sovereignty and values.

The story of Sinte Gleska University is one of resilience and adaptation. Our students live in the most economically, disadvantaged counties in the United States, but despite the challenges, continue to reach and grow in both their own personal development but as importantly, the development of their communities. Sinte Gleska University provides a critical support to the hundreds of students each year who seek to improve their lives through lifelong

Wahohpi ungluwasakapi kte hecel Oyate ki Wolakota gluha tokatakiya yuha unyapi kte
Reinforcing our Foundation for our people to go Forward in the Lakota Way of Life

learning. Be it career development, academic progress or cultural growth, students continue to rely on Sinte Gleska University and Sinte Gleska University continues to evolve to meet the changing needs of our Tribe.

In 1999, the South Dakota Board of Regents reported that there were 656 Native students in spread across the seven regents institutions and that by 2019 that number had dropped to 584 students. As the map below shows, the center of the state is home to the bulk of the Native American population while the Board of Regents institutions are clustered in the eastern and western borders of the State. The four tribal colleges in South Dakota serve over 3,000 students each year, yet receive no funding from the State. It is important to note that the University of South Dakota was founded in 1862, five years prior to the founding of Howard University, yet the State of South Dakota has failed to address the academic needs of the Native communities in its boundaries.



● Tribal Colleges and Universities. ▲ Board of Regents

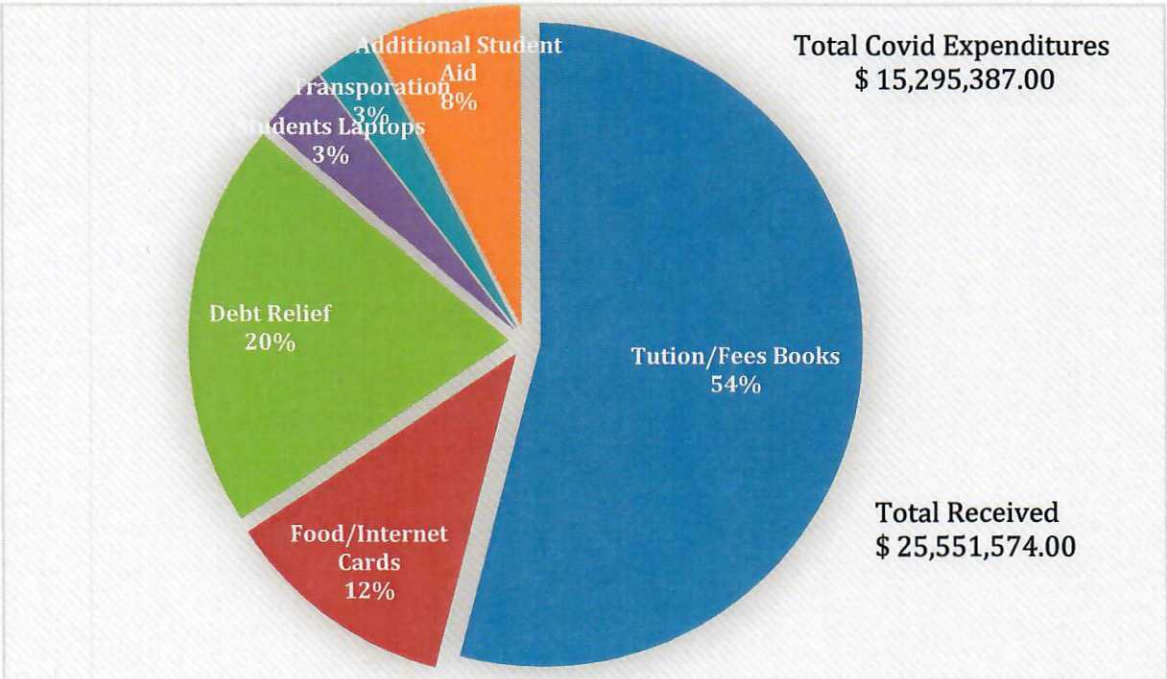
Each year as many as 1,500 students attend Sinte Gleska University. Unlike state universities, Sinte Gleska does not have a tax base to fund students. Federal funding for Tribal Nations is obligated through federal Indian treaties, legislation and executive orders in exchange for ancestral Indian lands. The inequity and limited availability of federal funding has restricted most Tribal governments from supporting the needs of TCUs. Tribal funding for most Tribal Colleges is minimal at best.

This financial assistance is provided through legislation called “The Tribal Colleges and University Assistance Act of 1978.” This legislation took six (6) years for Congressional Passage. Sinte Gleska University receives approximately \$8,200.00 per full-time equivalent student (FTE) with open enrollment. This is significantly less than Nebraska, which provides

\$10,485.00 or Wyoming that provides \$21,802.00 per FTE. The US Department of Education 2021 budget request for Howard University was submitted at \$25,844.00 per student, three times the appropriation for Tribal students. Equitable funding based on TCUs future growth would open the doors for new academic programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, student services, and a supported infrastructure. At one time tribal colleges and universities operated on an annual appropriation of seventeen-hundred (\$1700) per student.

Perceived as younger institutions among non-tribal higher education systems, TCUs engage in long-range strategic planning, understanding that TCUs must work to acquire funding and support from public and private sectors. Many have established development offices and institutional advancement efforts to raise funds and resources for the future. There is growing awareness that inequitable funding levels of TCUs when compared with 1862 land grant institutions and historical black colleges & universities (HBCUs) leaves TCUs in jeopardy to sustain the work into the next generation.

SGU has spent 59% of the COVID funds we received directly on students. Beginning in March of 2020, laptops were purchased to allow students to finish the Spring 2020 semester, instead of closing the university. Staff and students had to adapt to online teaching for the remainder of the semester using Google Meet. The following Fall 2020 semester, we offered a combination of online and some face-to-face classes. Free laptops were given to new students, in addition to scholarships for free tuition and fees. Pre-pandemic, SGU had always provided free transportation, and free lunch to our students. Since we were a closed campus and couldn't provide these services, we offered monthly food cards to assist with groceries. Internet was a necessity for the online coursework, so monthly internet funds were given to all students.



Additional Covid-19 related funds have been used for faculty support. There are some remaining funds that have been budgeted into the 2022-23 academic year for ongoing support of both students and faculty.

Although Covid-19 related funding has provided an opportunity to support students in many positive ways, the ongoing situation at Sinte Gleska University remains the same. Maintaining infrastructure, ongoing telecommunication costs, creating space for growth of new programs is an on-going challenge. The University has been fortunate to receive periodic grants to build facilities and create programs, but sustaining those facilities and programs beyond the cyclical nature of grants is problematic.

Workforce and community development are strong pillars toward achieving tribal self-sufficiency based on tribal needs. These have been key objectives of the University since its inception. However, American Indian communities continue to be characterized with these populations represented at the lower levels of most socioeconomic federal government standards. This situation has not changed for nearly 200 years despite federal treaties and legislation obligated to Tribal needs and efforts.

There are on-going efforts to develop and sustain an efficient tribal workforce. SGU offers workforce training through its career-technical education (CTE) program funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant. The level of funding is inadequate for both the Tribe, SGU and local area high schools serving a membership of at least 30,000+ U.S. Tribal citizens.

There is a need for long-term support, planning and implementation of tribal efforts similar to the programs of past federal workforce initiatives. This need became more apparent with the impact of the COVID pandemic and the dire need for this country's infrastructure including the Rosebud Sioux reservation to be addressed.

Sinte Gleska University has had a dramatic impact on the overall reservation workforce. Many SGU alumni are working in the social system, but the real challenge is to build a dynamic for-profit sector of the tribal economy. Unlike other universities that might partner with local businesses to provide students with internships and a pathway to work success, Sinte Gleska University, like most TCUs, are also involved in business development. Tribal communities and programs need skilled workers in critical areas such a technology, land and water management, construction trades (e.g., housing), business incubators, renewable energy, and general tribal business support. Partnerships with local and off-reservation businesses will be important to all stakeholders with a common goal for sustainable economic development.

We want to thank you for your visit to Sinte Gleska University. We recognize the important role you play in the Biden Administration and spending time with us is appreciated. Often those who do come visit us ask the question: what do you need me to do? We like to give a response, what can you do when you get home tomorrow. Here is our list of what we would like your support on tomorrow when you return to Washington, DC.

- Work with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) to increase the annual appropriation to Tribal Colleges and Universities. We would like to request an increase to at least \$12,000 per FTE.
- Make changes to the Universal Services grant process (E-RATE) to allow TCUs to receive discounts in the same way our K-12 schools receive on-going Internet supports. Because of the federal treaty obligations toward education, the on-going support of network infrastructure is appropriate specifically for TCUs.
- Provide direct assistance to TCUs in planning and accessing Build Back Better Funds to strengthen and maintain infrastructure, including direct funding for Master Plan development, facilities infrastructure, and ongoing technology upgrades.
- Create a support structure to partner with TCUs in the development of businesses and career preparation. This should include assistance and funding in strengthening intellectual capital of the multiplier effect of Higher Education on Reservation and Off-Reservation communities.
- Financial and professional assistance in collaborating with Sinte Gleska University, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and the larger Sicangu Oyate (our people) in the creation of a strategic plan of action, based on the past fifty years of work at SGU, that will lead us into the next fifty years for our future generations.

Thank you (Pilamayan yelo) for your visit.



Lionel R. Bordeaux, President
Sinte Gleska University
Lionel.Bordeaux@sintegleska.edu

For immediate assistance call Ted Hamilton, Executive VP at: (605) 856-8224