



Written Presentation of Dr. Robert Martin
New Mexico Tribal College Consortium
Fiscal Year 2026 State of New Mexico Legislative
Priorities
Before the
New Mexico Legislative Finance
Committee
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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chair and esteemed members of the Legislative Finance Committee, thank you for granting the New Mexico Tribal College Consortium the opportunity to present our legislative priorities. It is my privilege to represent the Consortium, which includes the four tribal colleges located within the state of New Mexico. Diné College is the first tribally chartered and operated college and operates as a liberal arts college. The Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) is Congressionally chartered, focusing on fine arts. The Navajo Technical University (NTU) offers STEM degrees and vocational education programs. The federal government's Bureau of Indian Education operates the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) to provide vocational, technical, and liberal arts educational programs.

We appreciate your ongoing support of our capital outlay projects, dual-credit programs, and the New Mexico Legislative Lottery and Opportunity Scholarship Programs. These

initiatives significantly enhance the educational opportunities available to students across New Mexico.

The Consortium's priorities are outlined below, including individual capital outlay funding requests from each tribal college. All funding requests are supported by the Higher Education Department.

NEW MEXICO TRIBAL COLLEGE CONSORTIUM PRIORITIES

High School Dual Credit Reimbursement Funding

The tribal colleges in New Mexico are committed to building strong partnerships with local high schools to increase graduation rates and create clear pathways to college for Native American students. As many Native American undergraduates are first-generation college students, the opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school is transformative. It not only encourages higher enrollment of Native students in postsecondary institutions but also enhances their success in college, as evidenced by improved retention, persistence, and graduation rates.

The tribal colleges currently serve more than 1,000 students enrolled in high school dual credit programs through partnerships with over 35 school districts, Bureau of Indian Education Schools, and Independent Charter Schools. We expect the enrollment to grow exponentially in the foreseeable future. Moreover, SIPI will launch its dual credit program in January 2025. As this is SIPI's first time participating in the dual credit program, increased levels of support will be needed.

To sustain and expand this vital initiative, we are grateful for representative Anthony Allison's support and NMHED's recommended \$600,000 in recurring funding for the Tribal College High School Dual Credit program. While we are grateful for this support, it is essential to highlight that increased funding will be required to meet the rising demand for dual credit enrollments across our tribal colleges.

CAPTIAL PROJECT FUNDING REQUEST SUPPORTED BY NMHED

The Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute and Institute of American Indian Arts

SIPI and IAIA express gratitude to the State of New Mexico for its continued support and partnership in advancing higher education initiatives. SIPI and IAIA are not requesting Capital Outlay project funding for the upcoming budget cycle. Our current focus is on completing ongoing construction project initiatives to ensure the success of our strategic priorities. We deeply value the State's contributions to our growth and look forward to continued support in the future.

Navajo Technical University

The New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED) recommends \$5.2 million in capital outlay funding to support NTU campus security, academic growth and infrastructure renewal. The recommended funding requests are listed below:

- Infrastructure Improvement - \$2.5 million
To plan, design, construct, and equip pedestrian safety improvements at the main campus in McKinley County.
- Academic Building Supplemental Funding – \$1.5 million
To plan, design, construct, furnish, and equip new academic building at the main campus in McKinley County, which will meet growing educational needs in an enhanced learning environment.
- Student Services Building Demolition Funding Amount: \$1,200,000
To plan, design, abate, and demolish the Student Services building at the main campus in McKinley County, which is outdated and potentially unsafe.

Diné College

The Shiprock Agriculture Multipurpose Center (AMC) - \$5 million

The NMHED recommends funding \$5 Million of the \$7.2 Million total cost for this construction project during this budget request cycle. On July 19, 2024, Diné College broke ground on the construction of the Shiprock Agriculture Multipurpose Center as

part of its Architecture & Engineering and Phase I construction. With the \$5 Million, Diné College will continue its phase II construction of the building. The Shiprock AMC will be constructed on a 300-acre lot and serve as the main building site for academic and community agriculture classes and training.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for allowing the Consortium to present our priorities for the upcoming legislative session. We thank the Higher Education Department Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez for her support and contributions to the tribal colleges. Secretary Rodriguez has fostered open communication and provided critical assistance, enabling New Mexico's tribal colleges to strengthen higher education opportunities for students across the state. We invite you to visit our campuses to see first-hand the positive impact this committee's work has had.