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NAVAJO TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

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July 26, 2024

Honorable Wonda Johnson, Chair
Honorable Members of the Indian Affairs Committee
New Mexico State Legislature
411 S Capitol Street
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

RE: Briefing on Navajo Technical University's 2025 New Mexico Legislative Priorities and Initiatives

Chair Johnson and Members of the New Mexico Indian Affairs Committee:

On behalf of the Navajo Technical University (NTU) community, welcome to our campus and providing us an opportunity to host the Indian Affairs Committee. I would like to personally thank you for your hard work and strong support of NTU. With your leadership and strong support, NTU continues to move forward in becoming an integral part of the New Mexico higher education community.

This past year, NTU, along with our sister Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), worked on several legislative initiatives. The legislature increased dual credit funding for TCUs by \$200,000. The increase in funding ensures that New Mexico TCUs will serve more students with additional dual credit offerings. Dual Credit is an important pathway to higher education. I would like to thank Rep. Allison for his leadership on this issue.

With respect to capital outlay funding, for NTU specifically, the legislature appropriated \$950,000 to demolish our old academic building. The building was originally student housing that was converted to an academic building. In addition, the legislature appropriated \$1 millions for architecture and engineering plus site preparation for a School of Education building. The New Mexico capital outlay funding is an important source of funding to improve our campus.

This briefing provides you with background on Navajo Technical University's 2025 New Mexico legislative priorities and initiatives.

- 1. Early Childhood Education Program Funding at New Mexico TCUs.** In February 2020, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham signed House Bill 83 into law. The bill created the Early Childhood Trust Fund. The Fund was launched with a general appropriation of \$320 million with distribution from the trust fund beginning in 2022. Unfortunately, House Bill 83 did not include the New Mexico TCUs.

New Mexico is home to four Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs): Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI), Institute of American Indian Art (IAIA), Dine College (DC) and Navajo Technical University (NTU) and soon to be A:shiwí College. Except for IAIA, each TCU has early childhood teacher preparation programs. The collective aspiration is to offer early childhood programs designed to address the unique challenges faced by American Indian and Alaskan Native students in higher education.

Access to the Early Childhood Trust Fund is an important resource to achieve the TCUs goal of providing students with access to a high-quality, culturally responsive education by providing opportunities to earn degrees near home. For TCUs, funding from the Fund will provide infrastructure support for a teaching lab; ongoing technical support with respect to funding opportunities (grant writers & proposal reviewers); and a Curriculum Center for Indigenous Resources and Materials (in the Tribal Remedy Framework document).

Request: NTU request your support for a legislative fix to include the New Mexico TCUs as eligible entities for funding from the Early Childhood Trust Fund.

2. **INDIAN EDUCATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER.** In December 2022, Tribal Leaders across New Mexico convened with Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and her education cabinet to discuss pressing issues pertaining to Indian education during the Government-to-Government Indian Education Summit. During the summit, the Tribal leadership identified the need for Indian education technical assistance centers to build capacity and provide general support. During the 2023 legislative session, the New Mexico legislature enacted House Bill 280 (HB280) – Tribal Education Technical Assistance Centers. HB 280 established two Tribal Education Technical Assistance Centers to work in partnership with Tribal governments, local education agencies, schools, early childhood programs, state agencies and more to improve Indian education and Native American student success from early childhood through higher education. Eligible institutions included Tribal New Mexico TCUs, American Indian programs at New Mexico public higher education institutions, and tribally controlled institutions and entities with demonstrated experience and knowledge of working with Native American students and federally recognized Indian Tribes, Nations and Pueblos located wholly or partially in New Mexico. On December 1, 2023, the New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED) NMHED release a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Tribal Education TAC centers. NTU was the eligible entity to submit a proposal. Subsequently, the NMHED did not make a selection. NTU was informed that the RFP would be reissued.

Request. NTU requests the Indian Affairs Committee to inquire on the status of the funding of the Indian Education Technical Assistance Center and direct the NMHED to complete the RFP process.

3. **2025 CAPITAL OUTLAY PROJECTS.** NTU has submitted four projects to the NMHED Capital Outlay Committee for funding consideration. Below is summary of each funding request.

Trades Building | Project Estimated cost \$16 million. The funding will be used to develop a dedicated space for the Welding Program. The welding program space was carved out of a non-technical space. The electrical system was upgraded to support the electrical load for the students using MIG welding machine and a high voltage transformer was placed in the classroom. This is a temporary fix and needs to be addressed to meet safety standards and ensure a proper training facility is provided.

Pedestrian Safety Improvements | \$5 Million. The funding will be used to improve hard surfaces (particularly asphalt repairs) and comply with American Disability Act (ADA) safety improvements at the Crownpoint campus. This will improve campus roads, parking lots, sidewalks, and entrances.

Academic Building Supplemental Funding | \$ 1.5 Million. In 2018, through the New Mexico higher education capital outlay program, NTU received \$3.7 million to construct a new academic building. The total cost of the building was \$12 million with NTU covering \$8 million. The building is nearing completion;

however, with the onset of COVID-pandemic, construction and material cost increased substantially. The funding would cover these additional costs.

Student Services Building Demo | \$ 1.7 Million. The Pete V. Domenici Student Services building is over 25 years old, and the maintenance and operation of the facility has become untenable. This coupled with NTU's exceptional growth, NTU planning for a one-stop student services center which will be serve our students and support efficient college operations.

Request: NTU respectfully your support of our 2025 Capital Outlay Projects.

4. **PROPOSED TRIBAL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITIES FUNDING.** NTU is taking the lead on preparing a legislative proposal to provide annual operation funding of \$3 million a year to each of the New Mexico TCUs. New Mexico TCUs are important part of the New Mexico Higher Education pipeline. While our student population is primarily Navajo and native students, NTU and our sister TCUs, provide access to higher education on tribal lands where other public institutions do not. The New Mexico TCUs provide academic programs that are tailored to our student population. It is important to understand, Navajo and native students are New Mexico citizens, many of whom transfer to New Mexico institutions of higher education, and build their lives and careers in the state, all too often off the tribal homelands.

Request: NTU respectfully your guidance and support and guidance on developing a viable legislative proposal that we may present to the legislature this coming year.

NTU provides a unique balance between science and technology on the one hand, and culture and tradition on the other. Much of what guides NTU's success is our mission and our identity rooted in the Diné Philosophy of Education. I respectfully request your support and assistance with our New Mexico legislative priorities and initiatives. Your leadership is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, I can be reached at eguy@navajotech.edu. You may also contact Mr. Daryl R. Begay, NTU's Government Relations Officer, Mr. Daryl R. Begay, at daryl.begay@navajotech.edu or at 323-806-0955 (mobile). 'Ahxéhee' (Thank you).

Respectfully,



Elmer Guy, Ph.D.
President