

### **Connors State College (OK) \$799,930.00**

Connors State College (CSC or Connors), and Easter Oklahoma State College (EOSC or Eastern) are two public community colleges serving a southeastern region of Oklahoma that overlaps two large tribal lands – Cherokee and Choctaw, Creek and Muskogee. Together the institutions serve more than 3,000 students, of which 37% are Native American and 61% are low-income. The CSC and EOSC combined service area encompasses 19 counties, 28% of all service area residents are Native American. Disadvantaged characteristics are accentuated among this population with 21.9% living in poverty compared to 18.1% of all Native Americans in Oklahoma and 21.4% across the United States.

Connor and Eastern share challenges associated with student success resulting in fall-to-fall persistence rates of less than 50% and three-year graduation rates averaging 30%. In recent years, both Colleges have witnessed an increasing level of disconnectedness among their students, with far too many failing to engage with faculty and staff, postponing decisions on course of study or career plans, and many grappling with socio-emotional challenges. The institutions conducted a comprehensive analysis of institutional weaknesses that are contributing (at most) or failing to alleviate (at best) this negative trend. The results of this analysis lead us to the development of this cooperative project as a means to address our ever-growing challenges. CSC and EOSC submit this Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution (NASNTI) cooperative grant application as a means to provide our students with the guidance and support they so desperately need. We propose to implement a Guided Pathways framework developed by Community College Research Center (CCRC) and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) that is focused on improving students' abilities to 1) Connect, 2) Enter, 3) Progress, and 4) Succeed. Our project, titled A Collaborative Equity-Mindedness Approach to Guided Pathways to Success, includes the following initiatives:

➤ Onboarding to Degree Completion: Over the course of five years, CSC and EOSC will develop a Guided Pathways Center and Career Services Center at each institution and implement a Guided Pathways Coaching process to guide students from first enrollment, through selection of a course of study, and persistence to degree completion. To accomplish this, partner institutions will develop a set of Onboarding activities for first

time students (self-assessment tools, guided pathways resource toolkit, and individualized guided pathways plans). Industry professionals will collaborate with CSC and EOOSC to engage students in focused career exploration within the fields of STEM, Agriculture Sciences, Health/Social Sciences, and Business/Technical Programs.

➤ Strengthening the Pathways: CSC and EOOSC will develop and implement comprehensive Career Services and Mental Health Interventions for students and provide professional development for faculty and staff focused on creating a Culturally Competent Trauma-Informed teaching and learning environment.

The proposed project responds to both 2023 Competitive Preference Priorities, the entire focus of this project is a direct correlation to the focus of the stated priorities.

Federal funding request: \$3,999,677 over five years.

### **Carl Albert State College (OK) \$799,994.00**

Carl Albert State College (CASC) and Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College (NEO)—both two-year, public, open-door Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions—propose a cooperative Title III NASNTI project.

Lead institution CASC is located in Poteau, OK (pop. 8,866), with a branch campus in Sallisaw, OK (pop. 8,476). The two-county, 2,223 square mile service area (pop. 91,686, 24.5% Native American) is near the heart of the Cherokee and Choctaw Nations; Native Americans comprised 38% of Fall 2021 enrollment. CASC offers degrees in 28 programs.

Partner institution NEO is located in Miami, OK (pop. 13,176), in the northeastern corner of state. NEO's 2,040 square-mile, three-county service area (pop. 88,298, 30% Native American), is home to ten tribal jurisdictions. In Fall 2021, Native Americans represented 29% of enrollment. NEO offers degrees and certificates in 38 transfer and occupational programs.

In response to the COVID pandemic, partner institutions expanded online, hybrid, and Zoom videoconferencing-enabled instruction. Since 2020, the number of virtual course sections has increased by 52% at CASC and by 78% at NEO. Students continue to embrace virtual offerings, and we are proud of our responses to their need for flexible postsecondary options.

However, both colleges' virtual campus students struggle to persist in and complete postsecondary degrees. Of first-time, full-time students enrolled at CASC in Fall 2021, 43% were retained to Fall 2022. NEO's retention rate for the same period was 57%. Completion rates are also low. Of first-time, full-time student enrolling at CASC in 2018, 33% had graduated three years later; three year graduation for first-time, full-time students enrolling at NEO in 2019 was just 22%. Contributing to these rates are partner institutions' inadequate support systems for the predominantly "new majority" students enrolling in virtual campus courses. These students grapple with host of factors—such as economic insecurity; extracurricular commitments, and physical/mental health challenges—that undermine success, retention, and completion.

Gaps and weaknesses impacting both partners' virtual campus support include the inability to invest in professional development in best practices for virtual support. Nor has either partner had the capacity to provide adequate faculty/staff training in use of its Learning Management System (LMS), Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and, for NEO, its Customer Resource

Management (CRM) system to drive data-informed support/instruction. Insufficient professional development facilities at each college further impede training in data-informed practices.

To support its Native American and low income students, CASC and NEO propose

Supporting the New Majority, a project with two initiatives to strengthen institutional capacity to provide data-driven and culturally-responsive support for virtual campus students:

Initiative 1 – Strengthen Faculty and Staff Capacity to use Data to Support Virtual Campus

Student Success: The partners will work together to strengthen faculty and staff capacity to use LMS, ERP, and CRM data to support best practices for virtual campus instruction and support.

Initiative 2 – Strengthen Institutional Capacity to Support Virtual Campus Student Success:

Each partner will embed student support—a Support Team at CASC and Support Networks at NEO—within high-demand, high-risk virtual courses. The partners will collaborate on shared training for support staff in cultural responsiveness and best practices for virtual student support.

To support faculty/staff training and collaboration as well as virtual campus support pilots, an Online Resource Center will be established and equipped at CASC and a Faculty and Staff Resource Center will be established and equipped at NEO.

The proposed project addresses Competitive Preference Priorities for the 2023 NASNTI competition. Five-year budget request: \$3,999,313 (CASC \$2,250,001, NEO \$1,749,312).

**University of Science and Arts (OK) \$380,847.00**

USAO is a public, four-year liberal arts university located in south-central Oklahoma. USAO currently holds the maximum 10-year accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association. USAO offers Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees. Dr. John Feaver is the President of the university. Our fall 2022 FTE enrollment was 824.

Activity: The proposed activity, New Pathways to Success, has three components: establishing financial literacy education, improving disability services, and establishing an experiential learning program. The financial literacy education component includes individualized financial planning and coaching for cohorts of historically underserved students, a campus wide workshop series to address timely and relevant financial planning skills for college students, a workshop series which addresses culturally relevant financial literacy for Native American students, a peer mentoring pilot program, and the integration of financial and economic literacy topics in existing courses. The disability services component includes enhancement of current USAO policies and procedures addressing the needs of students with disabilities, the development and pilot of selfadvocacy

training for incoming freshman, the development and pilot of a student support group and a Student Advisory Board, and the development and implementation of faculty professional development to increase knowledge and skills in meeting the academic needs of students with disabilities. The experiential learning component includes the development of community partnerships with local/regional employers, tribal governments, community organizations, and others so that USAO student will have experiential learning opportunities in internships, capstone projects, community-based study, and service learning. These opportunities will be integrated in existing courses in collaboration with current faculty. In addition, this component includes the development and pilot of a career opportunities fair and a career opportunities workshop for students who are Native American or low-income and have disabilities.

Purpose: This project will improve USAO's capacity to increase the retention, success, and graduation of Native American and low-income students by establishing financial literacy education, improving disability services, and establishing an experiential learning program. As part of this project, faculty and staff will participate in professional development leading to

greater understanding and improved instructional methods for Native American and low-income students, including those with disabilities. This project will increase USAO capacity to offer high-quality student support services. This proposal addresses both Competitive Preference Priorities for the competition.

Funds requested for the five-year project: \$1,995,172

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**Northeastern State University (OK) \$599,866.00**

Northeastern State University's proposes will be housed on the main campus in Tahlequah, OK. The proposed project seeks to expand the reach of services to American Indian and low-income students, improve the

efficiency of the delivery of services, and expanding the Native language revitalization efforts of the Cherokee and Indigenous Studies program.

The NASNTI project is essential to improving the institution's capacity to improve the retention and graduation rates of American Indian students. It addresses the following legislatively allowable activities: (2) Renovation and improvement in classroom, library, and other instructional facilities; (3) support of faculty exchanges and development and faculty fellowships; curriculum development and academic instruction; (6) funds and administrative management; and (7) the joint use of facilities such as laboratories and libraries.

The proposed project addresses both Competitive Preference Priority 1 and 2, as well as the Invitational Priority. The primary objectives focus on: the development of a cultural and life skills lab on campus; expanding and improving delivery of services to students using campuswide software; providing professional development for faculty and staff; and finally, expanding Cherokee language courses and providing immersion-style language learning opportunities. Ultimately, the goal of the project is to increase the retention and graduation rates of American Indian and low-income students. This will be accomplished by fostering a sense of community and belonging among American Indian students; addressing the financial constraints of the institution by investing in software designed to improve services; improving students' career readiness and ultimate career success; and supporting Cherokee language and culture preservation efforts.

## **Northeastern State University (OK) \$800,000.00**

Northeastern State University and Tulsa Community College request funding for a Cooperative NASNTI project to strengthen their Smart Choice Transfer Pathway for Native American and low-income students. NSU and TCC are both located in northeastern Oklahoma adjacent to the Cherokee and Seminole reservations. NSU serves a student population that is 35% Native American and 90% low-income and TCC serves a student population that is 7% Native American. NSU and TCC established a formalized transfer degree program partnership yet are experiencing a decline in students who are successfully transferring from TCC to NSU. Additionally, despite a large population of Native Americans in the region (more than 150,000), Native American college-going rates remain low.

Through this project, NSU and TCC will implement the following interventions to improve Native American and low-income student enrollment, retention, graduation, and transfer. TCC will implement a robust precollegiate outreach program through a High School Transitions Coach to encourage students to enter college, along with a Benefits Navigator and Financial Aid Specialist to ensure students have the necessary resources in place to achieve success in higher education. NSU will hire two Student Engagement Transfer Coordinators to provide support to students in the transfer pipeline and customized programming to help them make a smooth transition, including a summer bridge program, SOAR orientation, and ongoing transfer student engagement programming. NSU will also renovate student engagement spaces to increase visibility of Native American culture and heritage throughout their three campuses.

By the end of this five-year project, NSU and TCC expect to achieve the following outcomes related to Native American and low-income students: 5% increase in college admissions; 10% reduction in students who are admitted but do not enroll; 5% improvement in fall-to-fall retention; 10% increase in students who transfer from TCC to NSU; 20 events to celebrate Native American culture and heritage; and three renovated spaces to support student learning and improve sense of belonging and campus engagement. Project includes the following evidence-based interventions: student coaching, transition support to prevent summer melt, summer bridge, social class intervention, and campus spaces that support positive Native American identity development.





### **University of New Mexico Gallup (NM) \$552,742.00**

The University of New Mexico – Gallup (UNMG) branch, is a two-year, public Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution located in Gallup, NM. Situated in McKinley County, the branch serves the northwest region of New Mexico and is in close proximity to the Navajo and Zuni reservations serving a student population that is 76% Native American. The service area struggles with a 30% poverty rate, a low level (12%) of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher, and a high school drop-out rate of 21%. Eighty-two percent of first year students at UNMG obtain federal grants, while 60% receive state aid. Significant transportation, housing and food insecurities, in addition to health disparities impact students and community residents. By meeting UNMG’s mission to “prepare people to achieve their educational and professional goals in a context of respect for the traditions and values of the many groups it serves”, UNMG can bring about positive change for students and the community. To bring about this change, UNMG proposes the Native American Student Success Initiative (NASSI) Project. Through this Department of Education, NASNTI (Native American Serving Nontribal Institution) grant totaling \$2,938,736 over a five-year period, UNMG will achieve the following project goals:

- Implementation of a Native American Student Success Center that serves as a cultural and college resource providing comprehensive college and community resources for Native American students.
- Implementation of training for staff in the areas of advisement, financial aid and academic support that relates to recruitment and retention of Native American students.
- Implementation of training for faculty related to retention of Native American students.
- Augmentation of student services to include a case manager knowledgeable in Native American social services and increasing academic advisors.
- Implementation of Learning Communities, based on areas of interest, to advance students’ sense of engagement and belonging.
- Planning and implementation of a Native American Cultural Center on campus.

Goal activities will lay the groundwork for a Native American Student Success Initiative that strengthens Native American cultural awareness among students, faculty and staff, and engages Native American students to promote student belonging and connectedness, including family

events, enrichment programs, peer mentoring and special-focus classes such as financial literacy. The strategies listed here address Competitive Priority 1, Priority 2 and the invitational priority. A grant from NASNTI will provide the seed funding to implement necessary institutional change that will be self-sustaining.

### **Fort Lewis College (CO) \$686,521.00**

As Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institutions, San Juan College (SJC) and Fort Lewis College (FLC) are proud to serve as the leading community college and four-year public college serving the rural southwestern Four Corners region that connects New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and Utah. The two colleges border the Navajo, Ute Mountain Ute, Southern Ute, Jicarilla Apache, and Hopi Nations, and share a commitment to expanding the educational aspirations and increasing the educational attainment of Native American students. SJC is located in Farmington, NM and FLC is about sixty miles north in Durango, CO. FLC and SJC have the unique opportunity to transform pathways from high school to work for underserved students in the region. The Pathways for Opportunity, Wellbeing, Equity and Relationships (POWER) Project will create culturally responsive cohorts to leverage strengths in student communities and foster social, academic, and identity-safe belonging. FLC and SJC will develop innovative curricular and cocurricular structures empower students to explore careers paths that align with their values and develop skills to contribute to their communities. Mentors will guide underserved students at every stage of their academic journey so they can access networks of holistic support. The POWER Project will be supported by these four integrated initiatives.

#### POWER Project Initiatives:

- Initiative # 1. Design innovative curricular and co-curricular structures to support student success and increase access and completion for all learners;
- Initiative # 2. Expand and innovate culturally responsive models of mentorship with a focus on belonging and inclusion (CPP 1);
- Initiative # 3. Develop an expanded career pathway to guide students from high school to work (CPP 2); and
- Initiative # 4. Create structures for first-year and transfer student cohorts (CPP 1).

Enacting the set of four integrated academic success initiatives outlined above will result in measurable outcomes that will achieve FLC's and SJC's retention, graduation, equity, and access goals.

These structures that emphasize belonging and wellbeing directly address the needs of NA students at SJC and FLC. Achieving the goals of the project will generate approximately \$400,000 in

additional annual tuition income by year 5 of the project, creating a strong fiscal foundation upon which further institutional improvements can be pursued.