



STRENGTHENING RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES

INNOVATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The logo for the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB) is displayed in white text on a dark blue background. The letters are bold and sans-serif.



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INTRODUCTION


Community colleges across the country are plagued with tight budgets- caused in part by state disinvestment and chronic federal underfunding. For rural community colleges, these challenges are even more acute, as their needs are greater and the costs of providing services higher. The COVID-19 pandemic has only deepened the prosperity gap between rural and non-rural communities, and it has left rural community colleges struggling to dig their students out of an ever-deepening ditch.

Prior to COVID-19, household incomes in rural areas were close to 20% lower than those in non-rural areas. This gap has widened significantly since the onset of the pandemic, which has had an outsized impact on small businesses, agriculture and other industries that are ubiquitous in rural communities.¹ In the late fall and winter of 2020, COVID cases in non-metropolitan areas far exceeded cases in cities,² and when infected, rural communities have worse health outcomes.³ Rural populations tend to be older, and they are more likely to have underlying health conditions. At the same time, they are less likely to be insured, and less likely to have easy access to hospitals or other options for care.⁴ Although telehealth has emerged as a promising workaround for healthcare shortages, this too proves difficult to implement in rural areas, which are less likely to have access to high-speed Internet.⁵ Vaccine distribution is lagging in rural areas, and as the rollout continues it is anticipated that this challenge will persist, as retail pharmacies (which are rare in rural areas) are expected to play a larger role in future distribution. The endemic poverty, poor health outcomes, and lack of services already causing devastation in rural communities have been compounded by the pandemic, and have taken their toll on rural community colleges and those they serve.



Students sit socially distanced and masked at Lake Tahoe Community College in California

- 1 Rural Education. USDA Economic Research Service. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/employment-education/rural-education>
- 2 Leatherby, L. (2020, October 22). The Worst Virus Outbreaks in the U.S. Are Now in Rural Areas. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/10/22/us/covid-rural-us.html>
- 3 Rural Communities. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/other-at-risk-populations/rural-communities.html>
- 4 Zaller, N. D., & Pro, G. (2020, November 10). Is low mask wearing in rural areas due to poor health messaging? <https://www.statnews.com/2020/11/11/low-mask-wearing-rural-communities-poor-health-messaging/>
- 5 Broadband Loan and Grant Programs in the USDA's Rural Utilities Service (CRS Report No. RL33816). <https://fas.org/spp/crs/misc/RL33816.pdf>



For community colleges, the public health crisis comes hand in hand with an enrollment crisis. As the world moved online, rural colleges struggled to reach and retain students with no access to the Internet or to personal computers necessary to do coursework. Rural community colleges also reported trouble recruiting new students, as their pre-pandemic recruitment relied on taking advantage of in-person venues such as local clubs, churches, and high school football games. Without local television or radio stations, and with in-person events cancelled, many rural colleges have been left with few methods to promote their services. While in much of the country the community college sector struggles with the stigma of being associated with sub-par education, or being a “back-up choice,” rural community colleges must overcome an additional obstacle, not of convincing students to enroll in a *community* college, but to enroll in college at all. Rural students are more likely than their urban and suburban peers to be first-generation,⁶ and may see the prospect of immediate employment as more appealing and less stigmatized than attending college. There is a strong perception in many rural communities that college is for “others.”⁷ Young people in rural communities, especially young men⁸, feel obligated to support themselves immediately after high school. Attending college often is seen as a barrier to working full time, and those going to school may be seen as selfish, a burden to their families, or shirking real responsibility.⁹

In many rural communities, awareness of the value that community college can provide is low. A 2016 study by the Pew Research Center found that the less education one has the less likely one is to believe in the need for additional education to develop skills throughout one’s career.¹⁰ 45% of adults in the labor force with a high school degree believe additional training will be necessary, compared to 57% with an associate degree and 63% with a bachelor’s degree. And in rural areas, the perception that a college education can provide those skills is lower than in urban and suburban ones.¹¹ Going to college can also be associated with leaving the community, a decision that carries with it its own set of economic and social implications. Rural community colleges can mitigate some of this by providing flexible education opportunities for rural students without going far from home.

6 Pappano, L. (2017, January 31). Colleges Discover the Rural Student. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/31/education/edlife/colleges-discover-rural-student.html>

7 Pappano, L. (2017, January 31). Colleges Discover the Rural Student. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/31/education/edlife/colleges-discover-rural-student.html>

8 Bray, J., Beer, A., and Calloway, M. (2019). The rural male in higher education: How community colleges can improve education and economic outcomes for rural men. Washington, DC., Association of Community College Trustees.

9 Original analysis from ACCT interviews

10 The State of American Jobs (2016, October 6). Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2016/10/06/the-state-of-american-jobs/>

11 Jon Marcus, M. K. (2017, September 27). Why Rural Students Are So Unlikely to Attend College. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/09/the-rural-higher-education-crisis/541188/>

The exact number of rural community colleges in the United States varies based on who is counting. According to the Department of Education, there are 260 rural community colleges in the United States.¹² The Rural Community College Alliance (RCCA) puts the number between 600 and 800.¹³ This wide disparity can be attributed in part to disagreements over the definition of rural. At the federal level, there are more than a dozen different definitions of rurality,¹⁴ based on a variety of factors, from population density to geographic isolation, to socioeconomic indicators. The wide variety of definitions is in many ways appropriate, as it underscores the fact that rural America is not a monolith; however, the different standards complicate assessing rural community college needs. In addition to this complication, the Department of Education definition does not take into account branch campuses when counting rural community college, as RCCA does, nor does it take into account institutions that might serve primarily rural students but are located in a non-rural area.



Young learners at Palo Verde College in California

Despite their heterogeneity, communities that are designated as rural, or that self-identify as rural, face common challenges. Chief among these are inadequate broadband connectivity, lacking public transportation, and limited access to affordable high-quality childcare. Rural community colleges also struggle to fill faculty and staff positions, and many rural college leaders find that their concerns are not always reflected in national discourse on postsecondary issues. While the current public health crisis has increased attention to many of the issues in rural areas, it has also increased the severity of those challenges. But small and struggling needn't be the only narrative.

12 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

13 The Rural Community College Alliance. <https://ruralcalliance.org>

14 The federal definition of 'rural' - times 15. (2013, June 08). https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/the-federal-definition-of-rural-times-15/2013/06/08/a39e46a8-cd4a-11e2-ac03-178510c9cc0a_story.html



Clockwise: Eastern Iowa Community College Culinary program; Annual Native American Heritage month performance at Mendocino College in California; Art gallery at Taft College in California; Student basketball game at United Tribes Technical College in North Dakota

Despite the myriad difficulties they face, rural community colleges excel at providing wraparound services, not only to their students, but to their entire communities. In addition to providing high-quality education and workforce training, rural community colleges are often a gathering hub and the cultural center of their communities. Many rural campuses feature museums and art galleries, draw large crowds for their sporting events, and host community events. Rural community colleges are often a community’s primary or sole provider of essential resources, such as mental health counseling, food banks, Internet access, and transportation. According to research from the North Carolina Small Business Development Fund,¹⁵ education is one of the most important factors in promoting rural economic development. As rural economies transition away from resource based industries such as farming and mining, rural community colleges are uniquely positioned to address the reskilling necessary. Providing open access to both education and support services, rural community colleges play a key role in the success of both rural workforce development and of the overall success of rural communities.

To better understand the role that community colleges play in supporting the vitality of rural communities, from October 2019 to December 2020 ACCT visited rural campuses and conducted interviews virtually and in person with over 500 individuals across five states: California, Kentucky, Iowa, North Carolina, and Texas. Although no tribal colleges are located in any of the five states studied, ACCT also met with six tribal college presidents from North Dakota and Montana to learn the ways in which experiences of tribal colleges are both unique and similar to those of rural community colleges. ACCT interviewed college trustees, presidents, faculty and staff from 70 colleges and met with individuals representing 86 different organizations in a diverse range of sectors, from broadband advocacy to workforce investment boards, to food banks and local and state education agencies. ACCT also interviewed 44 state legislators and met with governors’ and lieutenant governors’ offices in each state.

During these conversations, the most frequently cited challenges were access to high-speed Internet, funding inequities, and meeting students’ basic needs particularly in mental health. This report will analyze these three challenges, highlight programs in each state that are working to overcome these challenges, and offer policy recommendations to bolster the solutions colleges know work in the interest of ensuring viability and vitality of the nation’s rural community colleges for the future. As is described below, communities that were able to overcome these barriers leveraged local leadership, listened to community needs, and relied on cross-sector collaboration to facilitate student-focused programming.

15 McCall, Jamie. 2021. “Assessing the Evidence: Five Complimentary Strategies for Promoting Economic Development in Rural NC – Education, Workforce Development, Infrastructure, Healthcare, and Leadership.” Carolina Small Business Development Fund. Raleigh, NC. <https://doi.org/10.46712/rural.economic.development>

CHALLENGE 1: BROADBAND INTERNET

Alethea Stubbe, President of Northwest Iowa Community College, told ACCT that she feels lucky to have good broadband coverage on campus. The coverage extends to the parking lot, where students frequently come and park to work on assignments because they do not have access to high-speed Internet at home. Without access to the Internet at home, many students struggle to complete homework or access online learning materials - and lack of access to high-speed Internet is as much a problem for faculty as it is for students. Iowa is not alone in this; rural Americans across the country are 15 times more likely to lack broadband access than those living in urban or suburban areas.¹⁶ Since the onset of the pandemic, campuses across the country have scrambled to find options for online learning in broadband deserts, as in-person learning became unsafe and, in most places, unlawful. Cankdeska Cikana Community College in North Dakota and Navajo Technical College in New Mexico began “homework-express” programs that deliver physical copies of assignments to students, and North Carolina placed Wi-Fi hotspots in 280 school buses and parked them in underserved areas.¹⁷ These innovative techniques are crucial to help students stay connected, but they are a temporary fix to a problem that requires a permanent solution.




Courtney Hale/Getty Images, courtesy of Seldin/Haring-Smith Foundation

Bridging the digital divide is no easy feat. Laying fiber is both logistically challenging and expensive. Fiber optic cable costs about \$20,000 per mile, and expensive per-mileage coverage becomes difficult to justify in rural areas where the population density is low.¹⁸ In many places, the infrastructure needed is wholly unavailable, with private Internet service providers unwilling to provide service to those low population density areas, or to those residing in mountainous or otherwise “hard terrain” areas. In places like these where residents are unserved or underserved, communities rely on satellite coverage (weather permitting), and struggle with chronically low bandwidth. Even defining what it means to have broadband access is contentious. The official FCC broadband definition is a minimum of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload; however, this level of coverage is insufficient to support online learning. At a rate of 25/3, slow download times and difficulty streaming video are likely, especially if multiple users need access simultaneously. Moreover, even for low-quality Internet, rural residents often pay premium prices due to the lack of available service providers. While some federal grant programs exist to support connecting rural communities, they often fall short of their goal.

16 Broadband Loan and Grant Programs in the USDA's Rural Utilities Service (CRS Report No. RL33816). <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL33816.pdf>

17 NC Gov. Cooper: School Buses to Serve as Wi-Fi Hot Spots for Remote Learning. (2020, May 06). <https://governor.nc.gov/news/school-buses-serve-wi-fi-hot-spots-remote-learning>

18 Perrin, A. (2020, August 21). Digital gap between rural and nonrural America persists. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/31/digital-gap-between-rural-and-nonrural-america-persists/>



Josh Byrnes, a member of the Iowa Utilities Board and former member of the Iowa State Board of Education, told ACCT that as part of the USDA Reconnect Program, his community won a grant to lay fiber, but the grant was not enough to connect the entire community. To connect the rest of the community, Byrnes applied for another grant, this time through the FCC, but was rejected on the basis of his previous receipt of the USDA award. In some instances, satellite providers, who may be unable to provide high-quality service, apply for grants without community buy in, and in doing so simultaneously fail to provide communities with high-quality service, and preclude the communities from eligibility for future federal grant dollars.

This strain, exacerbated by the pandemic, has forced policymakers to recognize past failures and address the significant and urgent need for investment, or else to watch as entire communities fall further behind in health outcomes, educational attainment, and economic prosperity. In rural broadband policy conversations, many believe in the necessity of government intervention in the manner of rural electrification of the 1930s. Despite the popularity of this idea, some state legislative bodies stand in the way of making this a reality.

At the time of writing, 22 states have substantive legal roadblocks that make it very difficult — if not impossible — for a public option for Internet services.¹⁹ Of the five states highlighted in this report, California and Kentucky are the only ones where local governments are legally able to fund broadband infrastructure projects. On the other side of the spectrum are North Carolina, and Iowa, where telecommunications companies have secured the exclusive right to serve residents. In Texas the situation is murky, as municipalities are prevented from providing telecommunications services, but broadband is not defined as a telecommunication service under Texas statute.

For the millions of Americans who stand to benefit from a public Internet option, this relief can only come through state governmental intervention, as the FCC has no jurisdiction “to preempt state law over these types of bureaucratic obstacles to municipal broadband.”²⁰

19 Chamberlain, Kendra (2020, December 15). Municipal Broadband Is Roadblocked Or Outlawed In 22 States. Retrieved from <https://broadbandnow.com/report/municipal-broadband-roadblocks/>

20 Chamberlain, Kendra (2020, December 15). Municipal Broadband Is Roadblocked Or Outlawed In 22 States. Retrieved from <https://broadbandnow.com/report/municipal-broadband-roadblocks/>

CHALLENGE 2: FUNDING

Rural community colleges are currently tasked with stretching finite dollars to ever-increasing needs. Their demonstrated ability to do so has accorded them labels such as “nimble,” “innovative,” and “scrappy,” but as President Lindon of Hazard Community and Technical College in Kentucky told ACCT, “We’re tired of being scrappy, we want investment in the good work we’re already doing.”²¹ For decades, rural Americans have stated that they feel left behind, as policymakers at every level of government have focused on more densely populated areas with greater numbers of constituents. However, the impact of rural voters in recent national elections has thrown a spotlight on rural America,²² one that has burned brighter since the beginning of the pandemic. While this spotlight has illuminated a great propensity to fix the problems facing rural America, funding and follow-through are still lacking.

Local

At the local level, rural colleges encounter funding difficulties in part due to their small and shrinking populations. With declining population, comes a declining tax base, and many rural colleges have trouble levying taxes in the first place, as many rural areas include non-taxable properties, such as state and national parks, or other federal lands.

State

Community colleges, regardless of rurality, are chronically underfunded relative to four-year public institutions. On average, four year public institutions receive almost double the state funding community colleges receive.²³ While rural colleges, on average, receive similar funding levels to their urban and suburban peers, the costs of providing service are much higher (as can be seen in the graph on the following page).²⁴ Rural community colleges also have a higher burden of care with regard to student basic support services, as they are often the only provider. Instructional costs can also be higher due to expensive equipment, such as high-tech nursing dummies and medical simulation equipment, a staple of rural college nursing programs that often do not have nearby hospitals to partner with for training.



Students in Eastern Iowa Community College’s nursing program

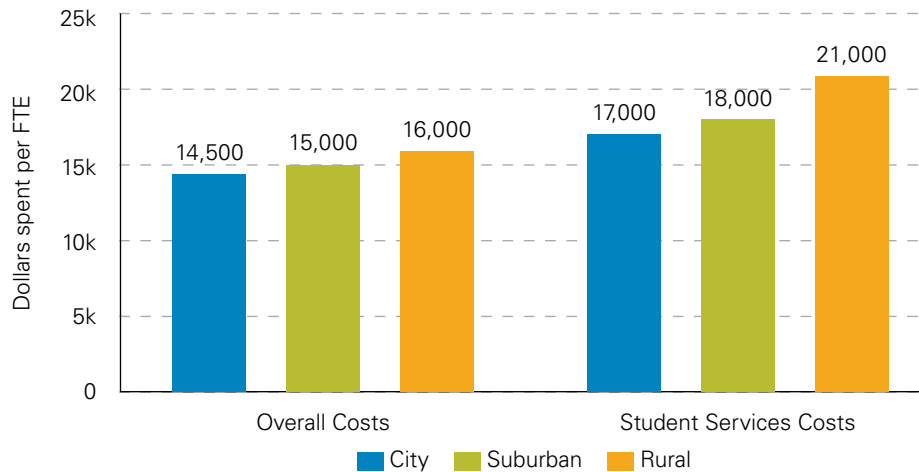
21 Interview with ACCT 2020

22 Monnat, S. M., & Brown, D. L. (2017, October). More than a Rural Revolt: Landscapes of Despair and the 2016 Presidential Election. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5734668/#R14>

23 Original ACCT analysis of data from the Integrated Postsecondary Data Systems

24 Original ACCT analysis of data from the Integrated Postsecondary Data Systems

Community College Expenditures by Urbanicity



TRIBAL COLLEGES

Inequities in funding for tribal colleges exist at every level. State governments are not required to provide any funding for tribal colleges, and tribal colleges face difficulties in establishing local funding sources as tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) often are located on reservations, which prevents them from levying local taxes. The majority of TCU revenue comes from federal funding, through the Tribally Controlled College or University Act (TCCUA). Outside of TCCUA funding, TCUs also receive a limited amount of funding allocated to public land grant institutions. TCCUA funding is sourced from four different funding streams within the TCCUA, amounting to a total authorization of \$8,000 per tribally enrolled full time equivalent (FTE) student. Although the total FTE allocation has been at \$8,000 since 2011, actual appropriations did not reach this number until the 2022 fiscal year. This funding level also remains far below the level of support other public institutions receive. This is the amount allocated per tribally enrolled FTE student; through the TCCUA, TCUs do not receive an allocation for students who are enrolled at their institutions but are not enrolled members of a federally recognized tribe. On average, the percentage of students attending TCUs who are not enrolled tribal members is 15% and is as high as 46% at some institutions. So not only are tribal colleges receiving appropriations below authorized amount for their Native American students, but they are also not receiving any funding for the 15%-46% of students attending that are not enrolled tribal members.

FEDERAL

Although the Department of Education boasts an Office of Rural Education, they do not appropriate funds for rural community colleges or other rural postsecondary institutions. However, the Department of Education and a number of other agencies offer grant and loan programs uniquely targeted to rural communities, and ones that are open more broadly but that benefit rural community colleges. A recent study from the Brookings Institution identified over 400 federal grant and loan programs that are either exclusively available to rural institutions, or that rural institutions are eligible to apply for across ten different agencies.²⁵

However, the existence of this funding does not necessarily mean it is readily available to rural community colleges. The variety of definitions of rural was noted as a pain point for many institutions, with one California community college sharing that they qualified for some federal programs and not others based on varying definitions of rurality. For programs that are not rural specific, it is difficult for rural colleges to qualify due to eligibility requirements that often put larger communities and institutions at an advantage. Even for rural-specific programs, some federal dollars go unspent as rural and tribal colleges do not always have the staff capacity to identify and complete the grant applications or to fulfil the compliance requirements that come along with winning funding.

There are also programs that were created with the intention of providing funding for rural colleges but that have never received appropriations. Title VIII of the Higher Education Act (HEA) includes a number of programs that were authorized but never received appropriations such as part Q, which was intended to create rural development grants. Lacking any congressional champions, the majority of programs in Title VIII have never received funding.

25 Giesmar, Natalie and Pipa, Tony. (2020). Reimagining rural policy: Organizing federal assistance to maximize rural prosperity.

CHALLENGE 3: STUDENT BASIC NEEDS — MENTAL HEALTH

Disparities in mental health between rural and non-rural communities predated the pandemic and are likely to outlast it as well. The pandemic has very notably worsened the situation. A December 2020 study undertaken by the American Farm Bureau Federation found that two-thirds of rural adults say they are experiencing more mental health challenges than they were a year ago.²⁶

Even before the pandemic, the data related to mental health both at community colleges and in rural areas was dire. Circumstances for rural students specifically are understudied but piecing together data from rural communities and from the student experience with mental health overall paint a picture. Among all college students in the U.S., one in four has a diagnosable illness, 40% do not seek help and over 80% report feeling overwhelmed by their responsibilities.²⁷ Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students. A 2016 study supported by ACCT found that less than half of community college students who were experiencing mental health needs were receiving supportive services.²⁸ Coupled with the data on the situation in rural America, it is clear that rural community colleges are facing a crisis. The gap in suicide rates between rural and non-rural areas has been growing steadily for decades,²⁹ and prevalence of depression,³⁰ anxiety, and mood disorders is higher in rural than in urban areas.³¹ Compounding this problem, 65% of non-metropolitan counties do not have a single psychiatrist, and 47% do not have a single psychologist.³²

M. Thomas Perkins, a trustee at Western Nebraska Community College, and former director of a rural mental health center, told ACCT that he found it difficult to recruit mental health practitioners to his practice. Even when practitioners are available, stigma, privacy, and cost commonly complicate seeking diagnosis and treatment. 48% of rural adults believe that people in their local community attach stigma to mental illness,³³ and overcoming this stigma, and privacy concerns, may be difficult in rural communities where populations are small, and anonymity is near impossible. Many rural colleges whose board members and staffs we interviewed were eager to provide mental health services, as provider options in their communities were limited or nonexistent, but had trouble creating sustainable programs with minimal funding.

One rural college president shared that despite finding an opportunity to fund a mental health counselor on campus, they were undecided about whether to pursue the opportunity because the funding would only make the program viable for one semester, “I don’t want to initiate a service for students when it will have to go away later.”³⁴

26 Impacts of COVID19 on Rural Mental Health. (2020) American Farm Bureau Federation
https://www.fb.org/files/Impacts_of_COVID-19_on_Rural_Mental_Health_1.6.21.pdf

27 Impacts of COVID19 on Rural Mental Health. (2020) American Farm Bureau Federation. https://www.fb.org/files/Impacts_of_COVID-19_on_Rural_Mental_Health_1.6.21.pdf

28 ACCT 117th Congress Legislative Agenda https://www.acct.org/files/ACCT8151%20%28Joint%20Legislative%20Agenda%20Online%29v1%20%281%29_0.pdf

29 Suicide in Rural America. (2018, January 12). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/ruralhealth/Suicide.html>

30 Probst, JC; Laditka, SB; Moore, CG; Harun, N; Powell, MP; Baxley, EG; Rural-urban differences in depression prevalence: Implications for family medicine. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17009190/>

31 Bachrach, L. et al (1977, January 01). Mood and Anxiety Disorders Among Rural, Urban, and Metropolitan Residents in the United States. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1023342307323>

32 Rural Mental Health Challenges and Hope for the Future. National Rural Health Association.

<https://www.ruralhealthweb.org/blogs/ruralhealthvoices/april-2020/rural-mental-health-challenges-and-hope-for-the-fu>

33 Impacts of COVID19 on Rural Mental Health. (2020) American Farm Bureau Federation.
https://www.fb.org/files/Impacts_of_COVID-19_on_Rural_Mental_Health_1.6.21.pdf

34 ACCT interview August 28th 2020

In support of this report, Perkins researched the availability of mental health resources at rural community colleges. Taking a random sample of 10% of colleges defined by the Carnegie Foundation as “rural-serving small colleges,”³⁵ Perkins examined their websites to assess the accessibility of their mental health resources. Perkins organized his findings into four categories, from sites that listed no information at all to those that provided detailed information and 24-hour hotlines for emergencies.

SERVICES AVAILABLE ON WEBSITE	NUMBER OF COLLEGES (55)
1. No services listed	10
2. Counseling services identified, but no counselor information or contact information available.	7
3. Counseling services identified with counselor’s contact information	24
4. Counseling services identified with counselor’s contact information and 24 hour emergency mental health resources.	14

Thirty percent (30%) of institutions offered little or no information on their websites. All colleges in categories three and four also noted that their services were free of charge for students, something that was missing from category two sites. And while many institutions did offer information on their websites, it was not easy to find, which is a concern given how essential timing is when it comes to addressing mental health crises.

35 Carnegie Foundations definition of small and rural community colleges, “rural-serving small colleges” with full year headcount enrollment below 2,500.

KENTUCKY

Hazard Community and Technical College (HCTC) located in Perry County, Kentucky, is part of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System which enrolls around 100,000 students a year, over 75% of whom receive financial aid. HCTC's service area includes some of the highest-poverty counties in the state, and the counties with the worst health outcomes. Two-thirds of Perry County residents have not completed any education past high school, but Jennifer Lindon, president of HCTC, sees this as an opportunity.

To reach the residents of Perry County, and make college accessible to working adults and student parents, the college created the Tuesday Night Live program (TNL). Tuesday Night Live is a holistic student success program that offers flexible hybrid courses, activities for children, free meals, tutoring and expanded hours for student services. Students enrolled in Tuesday Night Live take courses

online that meet in-person just once a week, on Tuesday nights. The program is designed to allow students to take a full 12-credit course load over two eight-week sessions. On Tuesdays, when students come to campus for class, they are encouraged to bring their children along with them. While parents are in class, children assist with healthy meal preparation. The meal is served family style, and in addition to students and their children, HCTC leadership and representatives from other community organizations regularly attend. During meals, faculty or volunteers make presentations on soft skills and share information about resources for students. After dinner while parents continue classes, receive tutoring, or meet with student services, their children participate in STEM activities and receive homework help. Making meals a community event destigmatizes family's food insecurity. Allowing students to bring their children to campus, helps expose the next generation to what is available at their local college, and build confidence from a young age that college can be a place for them.

The program is made possible with support from partnerships within and outside of the college. Faculty from HCTC run the children's activities, and meals are regularly sponsored by community organizations like the local rotary club.

[The Tuesday Night Live program has changed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it continues. Children's activities have been modified, and food is no longer served family style](#)

In spring of 2018, 88 students were enrolled in at least one Tuesday Night Live class. Seventy-two percent (72%) of full-time students who enrolled in at least one TNL class passed all their courses. The program is funded through a combination of grant funding and community sponsorship and is relatively low cost. The total cost of the program over three semesters (spring 2018, fall 2018 and spring 2019) was \$45,000, including all personnel, supplies, equipment, and marketing.



Participants in Hazard Community and Technical College's Tuesday Night Live Program

NORTH CAROLINA

Each year, the North Carolina Department of Commerce ranks counties in the state based on economic well-being and assigns each a “tier” designation accordingly. Tier designations are 1-3, with tier 1 being most economically distressed, and 3 being the least. Forty counties are assigned to tier 1, 40 to tier 2, and 20 to tier 3 according to a calculation that takes into consideration unemployment, median household income, population growth, and property tax base. This ranking determines what types of funding and grant dollars each county will be eligible for during that year. Thirty-seven out of the 40 counties designated as highly distressed for 2021 are rural counties.³⁶

In Beaufort, North Carolina, a tier 2 county, most students in the district are first-generation, and 70% of students attending Beaufort County Community College (BCCC) receive Pell grants. BCCC serves a four-county, 2,100 square mile service area in the rural coastal region of eastern North Carolina where school districts experience significant difficulty attracting and retaining teachers, especially in STEM disciplines, special education, and in middle and high school grades. Students in Beaufort and the other counties that BCCC serves are often unable to afford living away from home in a four-year college environment for the time required to obtain a teacher education degree, even though they want to teach in their home region. To better serve these students and address the teacher shortage, in the fall of 2020, Beaufort launched two new teacher-preparation associate degrees — one in arts and humanities and one in science and math — that will enable local students to obtain 14 semester hours of teacher education coursework that will automatically transfer into teacher education programs in any one of the 16 universities in the UNC system.

In collaboration with the University of North Carolina System and the North Carolina Community College System, BCCC is one of the first community colleges in the state to develop transfer programs in teacher preparation.

Students who complete the associate degree programs in teacher preparation transfer into university with guaranteed junior status. These associate degrees save significant tuition and fees for students who wish to come back to eastern North Carolina to teach after completing their baccalaureate degree, thereby greatly increasing the number of applicants for vacancies in local school districts.

Partnerships and articulation agreements such as these that provide opportunities to educate in place and encourage students to stay in or return to their communities can be valuable tools in mitigating population loss, combatting brain drain, and promoting educational attainment in rural communities.



Masked students work in the library at Beaufort County Community College in North Carolina.

36 Original ACCT analysis, using the North Carolina Rural Center’s definition of rural county <https://www.ncruralcenter.org/about-us/>

IOWA

Prior to the emergence of COVID-19, Iowa faced unemployment so low that one of the most common issues interviewees cited was that there were more jobs than people to fill them. Rural community colleges in Iowa were often unable to fill faculty positions, particularly in fields such as IT and nursing, where there was competition not only from their more urban peers, but also from the private sector as well. Private sector poaching also impacts students, with many students offered high-paying jobs in manufacturing before completion of their degrees, negatively impacting graduation rates at small rural colleges.

The Elevate Iowa program emerged to meet some of these workforce needs, and to raise the profile of advanced manufacturing jobs. The Elevate Iowa Campaign is a partnership program between the Iowa Advanced Manufacturing Consortium and all 15 of Iowa's community colleges. Each community college contributes \$10,000 a year, which is matched by the Iowa Association of Business and Industry (IABI). The program has also received a Trade



Indian Hills Community College Aviation Program in Iowa

Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, and partners with The Manufacturing Institute's "Dream It. Do It." program, an initiative that works to change perceptions around careers in advanced manufacturing.³⁷ Federal funding allowed Iowa community colleges to build capacity, develop state-wide curriculum, and purchase equipment to be able to offer advanced manufacturing degrees and certificates. Working with the IABI and other community partners including private businesses ensure that the curriculum and programming met community workforce needs. Welding was one of the primary needs identified, in addition to industrial maintenance, machining, industrial automation, and robotics. The Elevate Iowa program provides students with scholarships to make this training affordable and puts them in touch with pathway navigators who can help connect them to resources to tackle issues both in and outside of the classroom when needed. The Elevate Iowa program also partners with local school districts to help students and families understand that community college education can put them on a path to a rewarding and stable career.



Student welder at Eastern Iowa Community College

Zoë Thornton, a faculty member at Iowa State University and co-coordinator of the Leadership Institute for a New Century, a program that develops emerging leaders at community colleges, said, "...rural life is not successful unless you can partner with your neighbors, and community colleges are the epicenter of these partnerships." Thornton is not alone in this belief, as 87% of interviewees in Iowa mentioned partnership between the community college and another entity as being part of the solution, and broader research shows that rural social capital is one of the most important components of thriving communities.³⁸

37 Elevate Advanced Manufacturing <https://www.elevateiowa.com>

38 Lang, R., & Fink, M. (2019). Rural social entrepreneurship: The role of social capital within and across institutional levels. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 70, 155-168. doi:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.03.012

CALIFORNIA

In 2018, the chief executive officers of the California Community Colleges (CCC) established the Affordability, Food & Housing Access Taskforce to address issues throughout the system regarding students' basic needs. The task force elevated research from the Hope Center for College, Community & Justice, the U.S. Government Accountability Office and others in the field and made recommendations to address pervasive issues around housing and food insecurity. While grant aid at California community colleges is generous, it covers only about one-third of the total cost of attendance, and 43% of the cost of being a CCC student is housing.³⁹

For the past two years, Imperial Valley College (IVC) President Martha Garcia, has been working to eradicate housing insecurity on her campus. Two-hundred ten (210) of Imperial Valley College's approximately 7,000 students self-identified as homeless in 2020. Of the 210, 149 are below the age of 25, and 29% have children under the age of 18 or other adult family members who reside with them. In collaboration with the City of El Centro and the Imperial Valley College Foundation, IVC is creating housing communities to support these students.



Tiny homes under construction at Imperial Valley College's Lotus Living community.

One of these communities, Lotus Living Rise Above, is a tiny homes project that will provide housing for up to 26 students who self-identify as homeless, prioritizing former foster care youth. To help fund the tiny homes project, Imperial Valley partnered with the city of El Centro, and on behalf of IVC, the city applied to Homekey, a program administered by the California Department of Housing and Community Development that provides \$600 million in grant funding annually to local public entities to provide homes for homeless or housing insecure individuals. The Homekey program funding comes primarily from the state's direct allocation of Coronavirus Relief Funds.

Initially the plan was for Lotus Living to have multiple different types of units, some that could accommodate students living with children or other family members, and others in a more traditional "dorm style" that would accommodate multiple students. As a result of the pandemic, plans have changed and now each of the 26 units will accommodate one student to ensure student safety.

The partnerships Imperial Valley College has established with both the city and their foundation are critical to the project's success. In addition to working with the city to procure grant funding, the ownership of the project is in the hands of the city (which has already established a 55-year lease with the foundation) meaning that construction of the tiny home project is exempt from the onerous and costly zoning regulations that often make new construction cost prohibitive for California community colleges. Buildings and infrastructure projects that are owned by the college are subject to regulations of the Division of the State Architect, an organization that regulates construction and provides oversight to all K-12, community college, and other state-owned construction.

The college is also working on a certificate program that will enable student residents to eventually be qualified to manage building operations. In the meantime, the foundation is responsible for providing both on- and offsite case management, as well as providing other services to students at Lotus Living. To build a sense of community and affordably manage the tiny homes, students in the tiny homes will be required to complete ten community service hours of maintenance on the premises per month. Moving forward, the next focus of the project will be to build an onsite community center including a computer lab, community kitchen, and space for local organizations to come in and provide workshops and services for student residents.

39 Affordability Factsheet. Community College League of California. https://cclleague.org/sites/default/files/images/affordabilityfactsheet_0.pdf

TEXAS

Roscoe, Texas, population 1,500, is home to one of the world's largest wind farms. Roscoe is also home to the state's first early college high school. Roscoe Collegiate Independent School District enrolls 2,300 students from five counties in their unique P-20 school system, offering education from early childhood through postsecondary. Fifty-two percent (52%) of students enrolled at Roscoe Collegiate are from families experiencing poverty.⁴⁰ The system is based on a model of early intervention, starting with early childhood Montessori programs, and ensuring that students are college ready by grade nine using AVID (advancement via individual determination — a college-readiness curriculum). One hundred percent (100%) of the 2018 cohort graduated from Roscoe Collegiate with an associate degree. Students studying at Roscoe Collegiate earn their associate degree from Western Texas College (a rural community college) at no cost. Superintendent Kim Alexander, Ed.D., says that his ultimate goal is to keep students enrolled in Roscoe Collegiate through completion of their bachelor's degree and into graduate school with no debt. This is made possible by articulation agreements and partnerships with Western Texas College, Texas Tech University, Angelo State University, and Texas A&M University.



Caleb Reed (left) and Arthur Pope at the EduDrone facility in Roscoe, Texas.



(From left) Braxton Parrot, Tait Fullwood and Arthur Pope at the first annual Blackland's Drone Race in Roscoe, Texas.

Alexander credits the program's success in part to mindset and expectations. From the very first day, students at Roscoe Collegiate come in with the knowledge that completing college is part of the regular curriculum and students receive the regular and consistent support needed from staff to feel confident that they are college material. Roscoe Collegiate ISD also provides career exploration and workforce training while students are in high school. These programs include their "edu-vet" veterinary science tech certificate program, "edu-drone" unmanned aerial vehicle flight technology and pilot training program, and an "edu-maker" program that partners students with a 3-D printing company, among others. This workforce training is mutually beneficial, providing students with career exploration and providing local employers with a skilled workforce that can help break students out of intergenerational poverty and promote rural economic development.

The innovative system model was created through a public private partnership with Educate Texas, an educational initiative created by the Communities Foundation of Texas.

40 Small Town, Big Dreams. <https://www.raiseyourhandtexas.org/stories/roscoe-isd>

TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Tribal colleges were created to serve the needs of Native Americans, and to create an education system that allowed for self-determination through tribal governance. Tribal colleges are unique in that a principal feature in their mission is preserving their cultural identity and indigenous languages.

Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) are chartered and controlled by tribal governments, and many are located within reservations. There are 37 tribal colleges and universities across the country with a total of 75 campuses; all campuses offer associate degree programs and many offer bachelor's and master's degree programs, as well. Of the 37 main campuses, 32 are located in rural areas.⁴¹ Students enrolled in TCUs represent more than 250 federally recognized tribes.⁴² A majority (68%) of Americans on rural Tribal lands lack access to broadband.⁴³

Tribal colleges provide education to thousands of Native American students every year, offering educational opportunities and experiences that can be gained nowhere else. Investments in TCUs have a strong economic return, estimated at a \$5 return for every \$1 invested,⁴⁴ but economic benefits are only a small part of the picture. Twyla Baker, president of Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College in North Dakota, describes TCUs as the “heartbeat” of the community. In addition to the critical role TCUs play in educating Native Americans, they also play a critical role in passing on cultural knowledge, language and traditions, and in developing the next generation of Native American leaders. Rural and tribal communities share concerns about “brain drain,” especially of their young populations. Tribal colleges are a key feature in stanching this outflow by providing education in place and instilling in their students the values of their community and the importance of their heritage. This can be seen empirically in the case of tribal colleges. Most (74%) TCU alumni are primarily employed in areas related to American Indian communities or tribal lands.⁴⁵



Freshman picking corn during orientation at Cankdeska Cikana Community College in North Dakota.

41 American Indian Higher Education Consortium, Tribal Colleges and Universities. <https://www.aihec.org>

42 American Indian Higher Education Consortium, Tribal Colleges and Universities. <http://www.aihec.org/who-we-serve/TCUmap.cfm>

43 2016 Broadband Progress Report. (2016, January 29). Federal Communications Commission. <https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/reports/broadband-progress-reports/2016-broadband-progress-report>

44 American Indian Higher Education Consortium, Tribal Colleges and Universities. <http://www.aihec.org>

45 Larimore, J. A., & McClellan, G. S. (2005). American Indian student retention in U.S. postsecondary education. *New Directions for Student Services* (no. 109), 17-32.

The level of student support provided by TCUs is unmatched. In the largest survey ever conducted of TCU graduates in 2019, Gallup and the American Indian College Fund compared TCU graduates to college graduates nationally, American Indian and Alaska Native graduates attending an institution other than a TCU, and to alumni of other minority-serving institutions.⁴⁶ The survey found that TCU alumni are substantially more likely than their peers to report that they felt supported during their studies, meaning that someone at the institution encouraged them academically, cared about them as a person, and/or made them feel excited about learning. Forty-three percent (43%) of TCU alumni surveyed reported experiencing all three forms of support throughout their studies, relative to only 18% of college graduates nationally.

It is important that students have this support: 66% of TCU students are first-generation college students, and 80% of TCU students are eligible for federal financial aid.⁴⁷ The median household income for TCU students is \$23,208, which is 8% below the national poverty line, and 63% below the median household income nationwide.⁴⁸ Tribal college leaders trying to recruit new students must also overcome the suspicions and stigma associated with attending college. Students may be skeptical of colleges, even those under tribal leadership, given that Western learning structures have historically been associated with attempts to eradicate tribal culture and are tied to the broader history of colonization and the government-sponsored genocide of Native Americans.

Native American populations have been hit harder by the pandemic than any other racial or ethnic group in the United States. Native American individuals are 3.5 times more likely to contract COVID relative to White individuals,⁴⁹ and four times as likely to be hospitalized. The mortality rate for Native American individuals is on average 2.6 times higher than that of Whites; however, disparities among certain age categories are even greater. Among Native American individuals 20–29 years old, for example, the mortality rate is more than 10 times higher than for White individuals of the same age.⁵⁰ Students and TCU communities are coping with compounded traumas in addition to dealing with the deaths of family members and loved ones, they are unable to grieve together or to participate in traditional rituals due to safety concerns. Tribal health services are working hard to provide care, but they were not prepared for anything on the magnitude of COVID-19, and the presence of pre-existing conditions in tribal communities is high. The Indian Health Service has a limited quantity of tests available, and in many communities are still only testing symptomatic cases, which also makes it hard to safely re-open college campuses. Physical and mental health concerns of Native American people have been greatly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and these effects extend to higher education.



Students at United Tribes Technical College in North Dakota.


46 American Indian College Fund, Gallup. Alumni of Tribal Colleges and Universities Better Serve Their Communities.

47 American Indian College Fund, Gallup. Alumni of Tribal Colleges and Universities Better Serve Their Communities.

48 American Indian Higher Education Consortium, Tribal Colleges and Universities. <https://www.aihec.org>

49 COVID-19 Mortality Among American Indian and Alaska Native Persons - 14 States, January–June 2020. (2021, January 07). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6949a3.htm>

50 COVID-19 Mortality Among American Indian and Alaska Native Persons - 14 States, January–June 2020. (2021, January 07). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6949a3.htm>



“Students are surviving a pandemic,” Baker says. “That is the priority for them right now.”⁵¹ As a result, academics have dropped significantly down on their priority list, especially for those who are care takers for their own parents or children, and for those who are worried about their own health. For Native American students, the focus has always been on survival, and it has been an uphill battle for college leaders to convince students to prioritize education when they are already trying to cope with endemic poverty and intergenerational trauma, and now on top of that a pandemic with a disproportionately high mortality rate among their communities. Tribal college presidents interviewed all agreed that given what students are going through, enrollment numbers and other traditional metrics of success cannot be the measure by which tribal colleges are evaluated. Tribal colleges have implemented a variety of techniques to support students holistically who are dealing with these overwhelming obstacles.

Candeska Cikana Community College (CCCC) reconciled outstanding student debt for all students who earned a “C” or higher in their courses. While this was effective at retaining some who may have otherwise not returned to class, CCCC found this incentive to be insufficient, as students are dealing with more than just financial barriers.

Mental health, food insecurity, access to Internet and to health care are just a few of the barriers that have grown higher for students since the pandemic began. CCCC has provided over 70 families in the community with food and supplies, and both CCCC and Navajo Technical College partnered with transportation programs to run a homework express program, picking up and delivering assignments to students and families without consistent broadband access. Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College recently purchased Kognito mental health care software to expand services, and CCCC has put a licensed clinical psychologist on retainer to be available to students, faculty, and staff as well as to the families that are a part of the Head Start program they have on campus. Little Big Horn College President David Yarlott, shared that the college is doing what it can to make keeping up with schoolwork as easy as possible, including providing students with laptops, socially distanced access to the campus computer labs in reservable blocks, and brainstorming with faculty on ways to keep students engaged. These thoughtfully created wraparound services help relieve some of the burden Native students are shouldering and allow them to move towards healing, and reprioritizing academics.

Hope glimmers too in the vaccine rollout. Two of the tribal colleges interviewed, Navajo Technical College and Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College, serve as facilities for COVID-19 vaccine storage. Science departments on the two campuses have freezers capable of reaching the below freezing temperatures necessary to store the vaccine. The Indian Health Services system is far ahead of overall national rollout for vaccination. There are over 500 federally recognized tribes nationwide, and while distribution is not uniform throughout, many tribes are reporting early successes. As of February 8th, 2021, one in three people in Navajo Nation has received at least one dose of the vaccine, and Cherokee Nation has vaccinated approximately 15% of the population living on the tribe’s reservation in Oklahoma.⁵² If there is an available supply, it is likely that these strides will be unbroken, as American Indians report a much higher willingness to get vaccinated relative to the rest of the country. In a nationwide survey conducted in December of 2020, only 49% of those surveyed reported that they intended to get the vaccine.⁵³ A report published in January of 2021 from the Urban Indian Health Institute found that 75% of American Indians and Alaska Natives surveyed were willing to get the vaccine,⁵⁴ many citing community responsibility and cultural preservation as important factors in their decision.

The social fabric of Native communities is strongly knit, and TCU presidents remarked that maintaining this fabric was the most meaningful and effective way to help their communities through the pandemic. Creating COVID-19-safe food and toy distribution centers in parking lots, holding virtual community events, staying connected via social media, and constantly sharing ideas and responsibilities have allowed TCUs to keep their communities resilient through this harrowing period.

51 ACCT interview 12/22/2020

52 Kaur, H. (2021, February 09). Tribal health providers have figured out the key to Covid-19 vaccine success. Here’s their secret. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/09/us/tribal-health-providers-covid-vaccine-trnd/index.html>

53 Miller, S. G. (2021, February 09). More Americans say they’re willing to get the Covid vaccine, CDC report finds. <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/more-americans-say-they-re-willing-get-covid-vaccine-cdc-n1257152>

54 Strengthening Vaccine Efforts in Indian Country. (2021, January 29). <https://www.uihi.org/projects/strengthening-vaccine-efforts-in-indian-country/>

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no singular challenge facing rural community colleges, and there can be no singular solution. The problems facing rural community colleges are multifaceted and systemic, and the solutions to overcome them may not be easy to implement quickly. However, acknowledging that systemic change does not happen overnight should not diminish the value of or dissuade those working towards incremental change. The obstacles facing rural community colleges are interconnected and investing in one can have a domino effect that begins to knock down others.

Broadband is not the quintessential element to create a flourishing rural community college, but changes to state and federal law that allow investments in broadband can lessen the need for expanded transportation systems to get students on campus and can improve student physical and mental health through increased access to telemedicine. At the campus level, programs like Tuesday Night Live also demonstrate that there are some affordable programs that can tackle multiple issues simultaneously.

Despite the ability of rural and tribal colleges to meet student needs with limited means, the current chaotic patchwork of existing federal programs supplemented by unpredictable infusions of cash from various private and public sources are inadequate to support institutions that are often the only lifeline for their communities. Future investments and policies must be structured in a way that promote college sustainability and long-term community vitality. These investments and policies should be modeled on what rural and tribal colleges already know to work. State and federal programs should bolster this work by helping to develop new and support existing partnerships, focus on student and community needs, and leverage local leadership, particularly tribal and rural community college leaders.

1. Partnership (Campus-Based and Local Solutions)

- a. Between and within community colleges** — At colleges with low enrollment, it may not be practical to offer a huge variety of programs. Rural and tribal colleges can work with nearby institutions to determine competitive advantages and try to avoid offering competing programming. Kentucky’s Tuesday Night Live also highlights the importance of working across departments within the college to create high-quality student support programs.
- b. Between community colleges and other education institutions** — Rural colleges can work with local school districts to build a stronger pipeline to postsecondary education, and articulation agreements with four-year institutions, such as those in Texas and North Carolina, can be great opportunities to offer “education in place” and prevent brain drain.
- c. Between community colleges, private business, and other community institutions** — Working with local industry, or with companies from outside the community (as the Elevate Iowa program does), can be a great way to help students find jobs and support rural economic development.
- d. Between states** — many rural communities exist along state borders and may be nearer to opportunities across state lines rather than within state borders. Allowing flexibility and creating reciprocal agreements so that students can pursue internship and apprenticeship opportunities across state lines will benefit all parties.

2. Student basic needs

- a. Fund new initiatives** at the state and federal levels to support the basic needs of students for food, housing, transportation, childcare, health care and/or technology. The reservation, priority and equitable distribution of this funding should include a provision for rural community colleges.
- b. Strengthen existing programs** such as Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to better serve students at rural or tribal colleges.

3. Broadband

- a. Redefine broadband as a public utility.** The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) currently defines Internet as an information service rather than a telecommunication utility. While the FCC cannot overrule state laws blocking municipal broadband, reclassifying broadband as a telecommunication utility would allow the FCC to determine which type of providers can and cannot provide service, would create a formal public complaint system, and could even influence pricing.

- b. Legalize municipal broadband** removing state laws that prevent public investment in broadband can make broadband both more accessible and more affordable. States without municipal broadband restrictions have lower prices.⁵⁵
- c. Expand the FCC’s E-Rate Program.** The federal e-rate program provides funding to secondary schools and libraries to discount the cost of providing Internet service anywhere from 20–90%. Current program eligibility should be expanded to include rural and tribal community colleges, as well as private homes in rural communities and on reservations.

4. Redefine and Revamp Rural Support

- a. Simplify federal grant applications.** Create a task force comprised of agency leaders assigned to partner with rural community organizations to help them gain access to federal resources. Once established, this task force should partner with rural community colleges, who have the capacity to support their communities, but often do not have grant writers or other resources necessary to navigate federal grant applications.
- b. Create a “Rural-Serving Institution” (RSI) designation** using the Department of Education’s current definition of rural as a baseline and reclassifying “town” designated institutions as rural. The updated definition should also include branch campuses. The “rural-serving” designation would also act to reinforce serving rural students be a key component of institutional mission.
- c. Create a “Rural-Serving Institution” (RSI) eligibility waiver.** Given that no one definition will perfectly capture all rural and rural-serving institutions, allow institutions that do not meet RSI qualifications to submit eligibility waivers for consideration. This process could be similar to the procedure for Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) or other institutions seeking designations under Titles III, V or VII. Institutions that do not qualify based on IPEDS data can submit a waiver detailing information about enrollment and other factors that explain their qualification for the designation. This is necessary because many institutions that primarily serve students from rural areas are located in non-rural areas. Establishing exclusive funding for RSIs and creating a limited definition (while allowing those who do not qualify to submit waivers) will allow for flexibility while preserving the notion that rural institutions deserve separate funding streams.

5. Tribal Colleges and Universities — While TCUs can benefit from many of the recommendations proposed above, they have unique governance and funding structures and a unique history and therefore also require policies and support specific to their institutions.

- a. Federal Funding —** Funds should be appropriated for students enrolled in TCUs who are not enrolled tribal members, and per-FTE appropriations should be increased so that federal TCU funding is more on par with the federal funding levels received by other Minority-Serving Institutions.
- b. State Funding —** While TCUs are often located on reservations, TCU students, faculty and staff are still state citizens, and TCUs are a critical resource to the states where they are located, which should be recognized with state funding support.
- c. Additional Recommendations —** As this report was broadly focused on rural institutions, and tribal colleges operate in a very particular context, more recommendations specific to TCUs can be found in the American Indian Higher Education Consortium’s policy agenda.⁵⁶

55 Chamberlain, Kendra (2020, December 15). Municipal Broadband Is Roadblocked Or Outlawed In 22 States. Retrieved from <https://broadbandnow.com/report/municipal-broadband-roadblocks/>

56 What We Do: AIHEC’s Legislative and Funding Priorities. <http://www.aihec.org/what-we-do/legPriorities.html>



