



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

To: House Committee on Natural Resources Republican Members
From: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Staff,
Michelle Lane (Michelle.Lane@mail.house.gov) and Andrew Bambrick
(Andrew.Bambrick@mail.house.gov) x5-0500
Date: Monday, June 23, 2025
Subject: Oversight Hearing titled “*Enhancing Educational Outcomes in Indian Country: Postsecondary Education at the Bureau of Indian Education*”

The House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development, will hold a joint oversight hearing titled “*Enhancing Educational Outcomes in Indian Country: Postsecondary Education at the Bureau of Indian Education*” on **Tuesday, June 24, 2025, at 10:30 am in 1334 Longworth House Office Building.**

Member offices are requested to notify Jace McNaught (Jace.McNaught@mail.house.gov) by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, June 23, if their Member intends to participate in the hearing.

I. KEY MESSAGES

- The Bureau of Indian Education’s (BIE) two postsecondary institutions, Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU) and the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI), have long suffered from an absence of oversight and accountability, resulting in rampant criminal and civil wrongdoing, plummeting graduation rates, and deteriorating facilities.
- Despite clear cries for justice from tribal students, the Biden administration, even under the leadership of the first Native American Secretary of the Interior, failed to heed these calls for help at both HINU and SIPI.
- Appalled by such leadership failures, the House Committee on Natural Resources (the Committee) and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce (collectively, the Committees) launched an ongoing investigation of HINU and SIPI, which has uncovered evidence of serious dysfunction. This includes a stunning lack of background checks for university personnel, which enabled an individual, who was later convicted of serious felonies, including attempted homicide, to serve as a member of the Board of Regents.
- Following the Biden administration’s failure to protect students at HINU and SIPI and its continuous stonewalling of the Committees’ efforts to investigate mismanagement and misconduct at BIE schools, the Committees look forward to working with the Trump administration to tackle the ongoing problems, revitalize these institutions, and provide a best-in-class education for tribal students.

II. WITNESS

- **Mr. Scott Davis**, Senior Advisor to the Secretary, exercising the delegated authority of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.

III. BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) manages two postsecondary schools, Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU) and the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI).¹ HINU is a four-year tribal university located in Lawrence, Kansas.² The university sits on 320 acres and has 41 buildings on its campus, 12 of which are listed as U.S. National Historic Landmarks.³ SIPI is a two-year college⁴ focused on vocational and technical education in STEM programs.⁵ The college is located in Albuquerque, New Mexico, sits on approximately 164 acres, and has 12 research and teaching laboratories, 10 classrooms, two distance learning rooms, a 500-seat auditorium, and several faculty offices and conference rooms on its grounds.⁶

HINU was established by the United States Army in 1884 and was an elementary and high school until 1965.⁷ It evolved into a 2-year junior college and, eventually, into a 4-year institution in 1993.⁸ The university serves approximately 900 Native students, offering nine associate and four bachelor's degree programs in a broad range of studies, spanning the arts and sciences.⁹ Only Native American Indian and Alaskan Natives of federally recognized tribes are eligible to attend. While HINU is a tuition-free university, some costs, such as housing and materials, are borne by students.¹⁰

SIPI, a two-year college established in 1971, offers a range of certificates, associate degrees, and transfer programs in various fields. It works closely with several Native American tribes and communities across the United States and collaborates with tribal organizations to develop relevant curricula. The institution serves over 400 Native students,¹¹ and like HINU, is also a tuition-free university. Similarly, students will incur costs for housing and materials.

HINU and SIPI are directly operated by BIE.¹² The two universities receive direct appropriations through the BIE budget, their employees are federal employees, and their operations are

¹ See *Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute*, BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION, <https://www.bie.edu/leadership/SIPI>; *Haskell Indian Nations University*, BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION, <https://www.bie.edu/leadership/haskell>.

² See Cassandra Dortch, *Postsecondary Education of Native Americans*, CONG. RSCH. SERV. (June 25, 2024), <https://www.crs.gov/reports/pdf/IF10554/IF10554.pdf>.

³ See *Haskell Indian Nations University: Priorities for the 118th Congress*, Haskell Indian Nations University (Feb. 2024), https://webassets.aihec.org/Policy-Advocacy/118th2ndCongress/KS_HINU%20Impact%20Sheet%202024.pdf.

⁴ See Cassandra Dortch, *Postsecondary Education of Native Americans*, CONG. RSCH. SERV. (June 25, 2024), <https://www.crs.gov/reports/pdf/IF10554/IF10554.pdf>.

⁵ See *Our History*, SOUTHWESTERN INDIAN POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE, <https://www.sipi.edu/apps/pages/history>.

⁶ See *TCU Roster and Profiles*, AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM, <https://www.aihec.org/tcu-roster-and-profiles-2/>.

⁷ See *Haskell History*, HASKELL INDIAN NATIONS UNIVERSITY, <https://haskell.edu/about/history/>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ See *Cost to Attend Haskell*, HASKELL INDIAN NATIONS UNIVERSITY, <https://haskell.edu/admissions/cost-to-attend-haskell/>.

¹¹ See *Our History*, SOUTHWESTERN INDIAN POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE, <https://www.sipi.edu/apps/pages/history>.

¹² Bureau of Indian Education, U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR, <https://www.bie.edu/topic-page/bureau-indian-education>.

governed by federal law and U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) policy.¹³ Both schools have Boards of Regents.¹⁴ The HINU Board of Regents includes 15 members, with 13 nominated by tribes or inter-tribal organizations, and the remaining two representing alumni and students.¹⁵ SIPI's Board of Regents includes 11 members, appointed by the tribes and organizations it serves, plus the SIPI Student Government President and President Emeritus.¹⁶ Although both Boards offer input and provide advice, neither holds governing authority over the institutions. Rather, the presidents of HINU and SIPI are appointed by BIE and DOI and report to federal agency officials.¹⁷

Key federal statutes define the authorities and structures of HINU and SIPI. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934,¹⁸ the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975,¹⁹ and the Education Amendments of 1978²⁰ collectively restructured Indian education under BIA and BIE, strengthening Indian school boards and creating a direct line between educational leadership and the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. The HINU and SIPI Administrative Systems Act of 1998 grants both institutions limited administrative flexibility, allowing them to waive or modify certain federal personnel rules, an authority not typically available to other federal agencies.²¹

Although both universities have long reported issues with deferred maintenance and deteriorating infrastructure,²² HINU has a lengthy history of operational mismanagement, including criminal misconduct.²³ In July 2024, the House Committees on Natural Resources and Education and the Workforce held a joint hearing highlighting the Biden administration's failure to protect students at HINU.²⁴ Throughout the Committees' ongoing investigation, the Biden administration repeatedly stonewalled Congressional and community efforts to address mismanagement, waste, fraud, and abuse at HINU and SIPI.

¹³ See *Budget Justifications*, Bureau of Indian Education (Fiscal Year 2024), https://www.bie.edu/sites/default/files/documents/BIE%20FY%202024_0.pdf.

¹⁴ See *Board of Regents*, HASKELL INDIAN NATIONS UNIVERSITY, <https://haskell.edu/about/board-of-regents/>; *SIPI Board of Regents*, SOUTHWESTERN INDIAN POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE, <https://www.sipi.edu/apps/pages/BOR>.

¹⁵ See *Board of Regents*, HASKELL INDIAN NATIONS UNIVERSITY, <https://haskell.edu/about/board-of-regents/>.

¹⁶ See *SIPI Board of Regents*, SOUTHWESTERN INDIAN POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE, <https://www.sipi.edu/apps/pages/BOR>.

¹⁷ See *Dr. Tamarah Pfeiffer selected as president of Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute*, INDIAN AFFAIRS (Mar. 1, 2023), <https://www.bia.gov/news/dr-tamarah-pfeiffer-selected-president-southwestern-indian-polytechnic-institute>; *Haskell Indian Nations University announces new president*, INDIAN AFFAIRS (May 23, 2023), <https://www.bia.gov/news/haskell-indian-nations-university-announces-new-president>.

¹⁸ See Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, Pub. L. No. 73-383 (1934).

¹⁹ See Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, Pub. L. No. 93-638 (1975).

²⁰ See Education Amendments of 1978, Pub. L. No. 95-561 (1978).

²¹ See Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute Administrative Systems Act of 1998, Pub. L. No. 105-337 (1998).

²² See *BIE - Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) TCU Ongoing Challenges During COVID-19 Pandemic*, AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM (Feb. 2021), https://webassets.aihec.org/Policy-Avocacy/ImpactsCOVID19onTCUS/SIPI_Pandemic%20Challenges%20Sheet_117th%20Congress.FINAL.pdf.

²³ See *Leaving Indian Children Behind: Reviewing the State of BIE Schools*, Oversight Hearing before the Subcomm. on Oversight and Investigations of the H. Comm. on Natural Resources, 119th Cong. (Feb. 12, 2025) (questions from Rep. Gosar), <https://www.congress.gov/119/meeting/house/117846/documents/HHRG-119-II15-20250212-SD006.pdf>.

²⁴ See *Investigating how the Biden Administration Ignored Cries for Help from Students at Haskell Indian Nations University*, Oversight Hearing before the Subcomm. on Oversight and Investigations of the H. Comm. on Natural Resources, 118th Cong. (2024) (hearing memorandum), [hearing memo -- sub on oi joint edw ov hrg on hassell univ 07.23.24 v.2.pdf](https://www.congress.gov/118/meeting/house/117846/documents/HHRG-118-II15-20240723-SD006.pdf).

Understanding Differences Between BIE-Operated and Tribally Chartered Colleges and Universities

HINU and SIPI are the only two post-secondary institutions directly operated by BIE.²⁵ Unlike traditional Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), neither holds a tribal charter or independent legal identity beyond its status as a federal institution.²⁶

As of 2022, there are 35 TCUs operating across 13 states.²⁷ Of those, 17 are public four-year institutions, 13 are public two-year institutions, 4 are private nonprofit four-year institutions, and 1 is a private nonprofit two-year institution.²⁸ TCUs are chartered by tribes, operate under tribal law, and are accredited by regional accreditation bodies.²⁹ These schools are governed by Boards of Trustees or Regents and enjoy substantial institutional autonomy, similar to a traditional public or private college or university.³⁰ TCU presidents are hired by the Board of Trustees or Regents, and faculty and staff are employed directly by the institution.³¹ Although they must comply with federal law when using federal funds, TCUs are not bound by federal civil service or procurement rules.³²

TCUs receive federal funding through Title III of the Higher Education Act,³³ the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006,³⁴ and, most significantly, the Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Assistance Act of 1978 (TCCUAA).³⁵ TCCUAA provides formula grants based on Indian student enrollment.³⁶ TCUs are also designated as 1994 Land-Grant Institutions, giving them access to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funding.³⁷ Despite limited resources, in 2023, the average net price for students to attend a TCU was approximately \$8,100, and the graduation rate was 21.1 percent.³⁸ Federal oversight of TCUs is primarily financial; BIE is responsible for ensuring grant compliance but does not oversee

²⁵ See *Tribally Controlled Schools*, BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION, <https://www.bie.edu/topic-page/tribally-controlled-schools>.

²⁶ See *Budget Justifications*, U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR (Fiscal Year 2024), https://www.bie.edu/sites/default/files/documents/BIE%20FY%202024_0.pdf.

²⁷ *Tribal Colleges and Universities*, POSTSECONDARY NATIONAL POLICY INSTITUTE (May 2024), https://pnpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/TCU_FactSheet_May24.pdf.

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ See *Tribal Colleges & Universities*, AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM, <https://www.aihec.org/tribal-colleges-universities>.

³⁰ Wayne J. Stein, *Tribal Colleges: 1968-1998*, in *NEXT STEPS: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE TO ADVANCE INDIAN EDUCATION* (Karen Gayton Swisher & John W. Tippeconnic III eds., 1999), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED427902.pdf>.

³¹ *Id.*

³² See 25 U.S.C. §5324; see also Marial J. Murray, Cassandra Dortch, and Elayne J. Heisler, *Tribal Self-Determination Authorities: Overview and Issues for Congress*, CONG. RSCH. SERV. (Jan. 10, 2025), <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48256>.

³³ See Eligibility Designations and Applications for Waiving Eligibility Requirements; Programs Under Parts A and F of Title III and Programs Under Title V of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as Amended (HEA), 90 Fed. Reg. 11408 (Mar. 6, 2025), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/03/06/2025-03573/eligibility-designations-and-applications-for-waiving-eligibility-requirements-programs-under-parts>.

³⁴ See Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006, Pub. L. No. 109–270 (2006).

³⁵ See 25 U.S.C. Ch. 20.

³⁶ See 25 U.S.C. § 1808.

³⁷ *1994 Land-grant Colleges and Universities Map*, U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE, <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/1994-land-grant-colleges-universities-map>.

³⁸ *Tribal Colleges*, DATAUSA, <https://datausa.io/profile/university/tribal-colleges-33>.

academic or personnel matters.³⁹ TCUs are accredited by regional bodies and are directly accountable to their chartering tribes.⁴⁰

Like TCUs, both HINU and SIPI are designated as 1994 Land-Grant Institutions, which provides them with some federal support through USDA programs.⁴¹ However, unlike tribally-chartered TCUs, HINU and SIPI do not receive formula block grant funding through the TCCUAA.⁴²

IV. ONGOING ISSUES AT HINU AND SIPI

For years, both HINU and SIPI have faced allegations of pervasive misconduct and mismanagement on their campuses, including allegations of financial malfeasance, sexual assaults, nepotism, coverups, and retaliation against students and employees.

Board of Regents and Background Checks

During the Committee's July 2024 hearing, former HINU President Dr. Ronald Graham testified that, when he began his service in May 2020, legally required background checks for the HINU Board of Regents members had not been performed in at least 10 years.⁴³ Dr. Graham specified that, subsequently, three Board members failed their background checks and one was identified as a violent felon⁴⁴ who had previously been convicted of assaulting a pregnant woman in 1999, as well as burglary, battery, and disorderly conduct.⁴⁵ In January 2025, an ex-HINU Board of Regents member and former chairman of the Kickapoo Tribal Council was banished from his tribe after he pleaded guilty to attempted homicide, arson, larceny, and other charges.⁴⁶ The same individual was later charged with sexual exploitation of a minor, receiving and producing child pornography, assault, and enticing a prostitute.⁴⁷ DOI's Office of Inspector General (OIG) has released several reports highlighting the university's failure to comply with background check requirements,⁴⁸ with one 2020 report finding that five related OIG recommendations were ignored.⁴⁹ On December 20, 2024, the Committee sent a letter to BIA and BIE highlighting these

³⁹ See *Budget Justifications*, U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR (Fiscal Year 2024), https://www.bie.edu/sites/default/files/documents/BIE%20FY%202024_0.pdf.

⁴⁰ See 25 C.F.R. Part 41 (2025).

⁴¹ Eleni G. Bickell, *1994 Land-Grant Universities: Background and Selected Issues*, CONG. RSCH. SERV. (Jan. 2022), [IF12009.4.pdf](https://www.congress.gov/117/1-2022/rsr/reports/484411/IF12009.4.pdf).

⁴² See 25 U.S.C. §§ 1802-15.

⁴³ See *Investigating how the Biden Administration Ignored Cries for Help from Students at Haskell Indian Nations University*, Oversight Hearing before the Subcomm. on Oversight and Investigations of the H. Comm. on Natural Resources, 118th Cong. (2024) (statement of Dr. Ronald Graham, former President, Haskell Indian Nations University), https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/testimony_grahamhaskell.pdf.

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ See *Oneida Nation Vice-Chair BRANDON YELLOWBIRD STEVENS – VIOLENT FELON Who ATTACKED An 8-MONTH PREGNANT NATIVE WOMAN Yet Remains On Haskell Indian Nations University Board of Regents Due to NEPOTISM & NO BACKGROUND CHECKS*, ONEDIAEYE (June 12, 2025), <https://oneidaeye.com/2013/09/06/haskell-board-of-rejects/>.

⁴⁶ See *Ex-Haskell regent and former Kickapoo Tribal Council chairman banished from tribe, must forfeit property*, LAWRENCE JOURNAL-WORLD (Jan. 11, 2025), <https://www2.ljworld.com/news/public-safety/2025/jan/11/ex-haskell-regent-and-former-kickapoo-tribal-council-chairman-banished-from-tribe-among-other-punishment/>.

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ See *The Bureau of Indian Education is Not Ensuring that Background Checks at Indian Education Facilities are Complete*, U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL (Feb. 2018), https://www.doioig.gov/sites/default/files/2021-migration/FinalEvaluation_BIEBackgroundChecks_Public.pdf; *Bureau of Indian Education Background Investigations of Indian Education Employees*, U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL (Sept. 26, 2011).

⁴⁹ See *The Bureau of Indian Education is Not Ensuring that Background Checks at Indian Education Facilities are Complete*, U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL (Feb. 2018), https://www.doioig.gov/sites/default/files/2021-migration/FinalEvaluation_BIEBackgroundChecks_Public.pdf.

reports and inquiring as to whether BIE had finally implemented DOI OIG's findings.⁵⁰ The Biden administration ignored the Committee's letter.

Reports of Criminal and Civil Misconduct

In 2022, BIE investigated assertions of misconduct at HINU reported by both students and faculty. BIE's investigation concluded with the Haskell Indian Nations University – Administrative Investigation Report (BIE Report), which detailed serious widespread allegations of sexual assault, harassment, bullying, nepotism, theft, retaliation, waste, fraud, and abuse.⁵¹ The BIE report also showed that HINU has a history of failing to report sexual assault, as faculty members repeatedly disregard allegations, not providing sufficient care and support for survivors, and failing to notify law enforcement.⁵²

The BIE Report was only published after pressure from students and outside stakeholder groups. In January 2023, HINU student-athletes from the cross country running team sent a letter to then-Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland formally requesting its release.⁵³ In April 2023, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) submitted a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to BIE, requesting the public release of the BIE Report.⁵⁴ Four HINU students who were interviewed as part of BIE's investigation also filed FOIA requests in September of 2023.⁵⁵ After being legally compelled to comply with the FOIA requests, BIE released a 528-page redacted report.⁵⁶ However, the report released by BIE was not the one requested by PEER or the HINU students. Shortly thereafter, PEER filed suit to force BIE to produce the correct BIE Report, which was released with heavy redactions in November 2023.⁵⁷

On July 2, 2024, the House Committees on Natural Resources and Education and the Workforce sent a letter to BIE Director Tony Dearman seeking documents and information related to the BIE report.⁵⁸ DOI refused to produce the BIE Report, insisting that it could only be reviewed *in camera* at DOI. Staff from the Committees reviewed the materials DOI provided on August 1 and August 13, 2024. The Committees' *in camera* review confirmed that the information contained in the documents is material to the investigation. For example, Committee staff observed significant differences between the draft and finalized BIE report, including potential deletion of critical details and improper redactions.⁵⁹

The BIE Report describes an unacceptable response to students reporting sexual assault, as faculty members repeatedly disregarded allegations, did not provide sufficient care and support

⁵⁰ See Letter from Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, H. Comm. on Natural Resources, et. al, to the Honorable Bryan Newland and Tony Dearman (Dec. 20, 2024).

⁵¹ See *Haskell Indian Nations University – Administrative Investigation Report*, U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR (2023).

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ See Letter from Haskell Indian Nations University Students, Cross Country Running Team, to the Honorable Deb Haaland, Secretary, Dept. of the Interior (Jan. 16, 2023) (on file with the Committee on Natural Resources).

⁵⁴ See Jeff Ruch and Laura Dumais, *Report on Abuse of Indian Students Finally Surfaces: Lawsuit Pried Haskell School Probe Out of Bureau of Indian Education*, PUBLIC EMPLOYEES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY (April 22, 2024), <https://peer.org/report-on-abuse-of-indian-students-finally-surfaces/>.

⁵⁵ *Id.*

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ See Letter from Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, H. Comm. on Natural Resources, et. al, to Tony Dearman (July 2, 2024).

⁵⁹ The Committees do not dispute the legitimacy of redacting students' personally identifiable information but note that some language unredacted for the Committee's review that originally claimed to contain personally identifiable information did not.

for survivors, and failed to notify law enforcement.⁶⁰ For example, a student who reported sexual abuse on more than 30 occasions was ignored by HINU staff.⁶¹ The same student publicly asserted that her attacker was not removed from campus, and the attacker allegedly committed another assault.⁶² Rather than support the student, HINU staff tormented her in retaliation for speaking out about her experience. The student was eventually suspended from HINU due to falling grades. Additionally, the student's coach, to whom she had also reported the assault, was fired, again in apparent retaliation.⁶³

On November 2, 2018, DOI OIG released a summary of an investigation into SIPI for misconduct and mismanagement. The investigation reviewed allegations that a SIPI manager engaged in sexual misconduct and harassment of an employee.⁶⁴ The subsequent DOI OIG investigation noted that neither BIE nor SIPI have a policy prohibiting sexual relationships between faculty and students.⁶⁵ As of June 23, 2025, SIPI has not published a policy regarding sexual relationships between faculty and students.⁶⁶ Additionally, OIG found that SIPI failed to complete performance appraisals for all employees but had instead set up an appraisal process that allowed managers to determine ratings-based cash awards for themselves.⁶⁷

On May 5, 2025, DOI OIG released a report titled "Summary: BIE Employee Sexually Harassed Students on the Haskell Indian Nations University Women's Basketball Team."⁶⁸ This report, which was referred to the BIE Director and the Kansas State Board of Healing Arts for any action they may deem appropriate, found that an employee made cruel jokes and sexual comments and had nonconsensual contact with a student, which deterred other students from joining the team.⁶⁹

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ See Austin Hornbostel, *Haskell student speaks out about alleged sexual abuse on campus, says she has reported what she's experienced 'over 30 times'*, LAWRENCE JOURNAL-WORLD (Sep. 21, 2023), <https://www2.ljworld.com/news/2023/sep/21/haskell-student-speaks-out-about-alleged-systematic-sexual-abuse-on-campus-says-she-has-reported-what-shes-experienced-over-30-times/>.

⁶² *Id.*

⁶³ See U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, INVESTIGATIVE REPORT OF MISCONDUCT ALLEGATIONS AT HASKELL INDIAN NATIONS UNIVERSITY (2018). This report did not sustain every allegation but highlighted serious issues dating back to at least 2014. For example, Haskell officials underreported crime statistics and failed to follow the university's own guidelines for addressing misconduct complaints as serious as sexual assault. The report also highlighted instances of bullying, intimidation, and nepotism.

⁶⁴ See Report Number: 16-0807 Summary: Investigation of Misconduct and Mismanagement at Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, U.S DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR (Nov. 2, 2018), https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/documents/reports/2018-12/InvestigativeSummary_BIESIPI.pdf.

⁶⁵ See Summary: Investigation of Misconduct and Mismanagement at Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, U.S DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR (Nov. 2, 2018), https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/documents/reports/2018-12/InvestigativeSummary_BIESIPI.pdf.

⁶⁶ See Handbook, Policies & Procedures, SOUTHWESTERN INDIAN POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE, https://www.sipi.edu/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=4044877&type=d; See Campus Safety, SOUTHWESTERN INDIAN POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE, <https://www.sipi.edu/apps/pages/campusafety>.

⁶⁷ See Report Number: 16-0807 Summary: Investigation of Misconduct and Mismanagement at Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, U.S DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR (Nov. 2, 2018), https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/documents/reports/2018-12/InvestigativeSummary_BIESIPI.pdf.

⁶⁸ See Report No.: Report Number: 24-0513, Summary: BIE Employee Sexually Harassed Students on the Haskell Indian Nations University Women's Basketball Team, DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL (May 5, 2025), https://www.doioig.gov/sites/default/files/2021-migration/Summary_BIE%20Employee%20Sexually%20Harassed%20Students%20on%20the%20Haskell%20Indian%20Nation%20University%20Women%27s%20Basketball%20Team.pdf.

⁶⁹ *Id.*

Deferred Maintenance and Infrastructure

Both HINU and SIPI face crumbling infrastructure due to a backlog of deferred maintenance. During the Committee's February 2025 hearing,⁷⁰ Committee Members highlighted the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) and DOI OIG's findings that BIE is unable to effectively manage its deferred maintenance backlog.⁷¹ In January 2021, the Indian Affairs (IA) Office of Facilities, Property and Safety Management (OFPSM) released a Facility Condition Index (FCI) for HINU and SIPI.⁷² OFPSM gave both institutions of higher learning "poor" ratings due to mounting deferred maintenance backlogs.

Internal BIA reports, state funding requests, and public documents from HINU and SIPI themselves further show the abysmal conditions on campus caused by the deferred maintenance backlog. In 2023, BIA prepared a Facility Condition Assessment report (2023 FCA report) on the conditions at HINU.⁷³ Of the 36 buildings analyzed, 27 were found to be in severe condition and in need of immediate replacement.⁷⁴ These buildings include Tecumseh Hall, which is used for physical education and office space, which has a maintenance backlog valued at \$1,451,704.00 for projects like replacing the front stairs of the building and the wood flooring. Similarly, Pocahontas Hall Dormitory has a maintenance backlog valued at \$5,020,562 for projects like fixing paint peeling on the basement walls and replacing the 100-gallon Boiler Feedwater Tank.⁷⁵ From this report alone, the total maintenance backlog for HINU is valued at \$49,913,134, and the replacement costs total \$222,456,142.⁷⁶

The facility conditions at SIPI closely mirror those at HINU. In 2022, Secretary of the New Mexico Higher Education Department Stephanie M. Rodriguez presented the Capital Outlay Funding Recommendations for Higher Education. According to this letter, SIPI requested \$1,492,565 to help plan, design, construct, and equip campus safety improvements.⁷⁷ SIPI's 2024 priorities outlined plans for addressing its deferred maintenance backlog. Proposed projects included fixing 50-year-old water piping, replacing the HVAC system, and fixing or entirely reconstructing student housing buildings.⁷⁸ It is unclear if these projects were completed.

⁷⁰ See *Leaving Indian Children Behind: Reviewing the State of BIE Schools*, Oversight Hearing before the Subcomm. on Oversight and Investigations of the H. Comm. on Natural Resources, 119th Cong. (Feb. 12, 2025) (hearing memorandum), [hearing memo -- sub on oi ov hrg on deferred maintenance bie 02.12.25.pdf](#).

⁷¹ See Report No.: 2022-CR-036, *Indian Affairs Is Unable To Effectively Manage Deferred Maintenance of School Facilities*, DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL (Mar. 2024), https://www.doiig.gov/sites/default/files/2021-migration/FinalEvaluationReport_BIEDeferredMaintenance_Public.pdf; *Deferred Maintenance and Repairs*, FEDERAL ACCOUNTING STANDARDS ADVISORY BOARD (Apr. 25, 2012), http://files.fasab.gov/pdf/files/original_sffas_42.pdf; See Report No.: GAO-24-106495, *Deferred Maintenance: Agencies Generally Followed Leading Practices in Selections but Faced Challenges*, U.S. GOVT. ACCOUNTABILITY OFF. (Jan. 2024), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/d24106495.pdf>; See, Report No.: GAO-22-106104, *High-Risk: Bureau of Indian Education Has Addressed Some Management Weaknesses, but Additional Work Is Needed on Others*, U.S. GOVT. ACCOUNTABILITY OFF. (June 28, 2022), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-106104.pdf>.

⁷² See FY 2020 Fourth Quarter Reporting Period – BIE School Locations (Non-Quarters) Facility Condition Index (FCI) - "Poor" Condition, INDIAN AFFAIRS (Jan. 2021), https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/assets/as-ia/ofpsm/dfmc/FY_2020_Q4_FCI_Report_Poor_FIRB_01_28_21_Sec508.pdf.

⁷³ See Akana and Cardno, *Facility Condition Assessment Report for IE055 - Haskell Indian Nations University*, U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR (Jan. 31, 2023).

⁷⁴ *Id.*

⁷⁵ *Id.*

⁷⁶ *Id.*

⁷⁷ Letter from Stephanie M. Rodriguez, Secretary, New Mexico Higher Education Department, to Deborah K. Romero, Secretary, New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration (Sept. 16, 2022).

⁷⁸ See *Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute Priorities for the 118th Congress*, SOUTHWESTERN INDIAN POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE (Feb. 2024), <https://webassets.aihec.org/Policy-Avocacy/118th2ndCongress/SIPI%20IMPACT%20SHEET%202024.pdf>.

To track deferred maintenance requests, IA uses a facilities-management system called Maximo.⁷⁹ This system is used to verify accuracy and to help calculate the FCI rating of facilities.⁸⁰ Maximo was first adopted by DOI in 1999.⁸¹ Despite its availability, BIA was slow to adopt Maximo and only began using the software in 2005, with BIE adopting it even later.⁸² According to Cecilia Fire Thunder of the Oglala Lakota nation Education Coalition, “[e]ight years ago, the BIE transition from their previous system, FIMIS, to Maximo without advanced notice.”⁸³ Tribal community stakeholders and BIE employees have repeatedly stated that Maximo fails to keep accurate and consistent data, and many schools remain without access to the system.⁸⁴ Work orders in Maximo cannot be closed until funding has been received. For example, Navajo Preparatory Academy’s Head of School, Shawna Allison Becenti, highlighted that schools must keep work orders open until funding has been received and processed.⁸⁵ These practices resulted in BIE simply deleting over 14,000 work orders because of how long they had been open.⁸⁶

Graduation, Accreditation, and Retention Issues

Both HINU and SIPI suffer from low graduation rates and accreditation problems. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the HINU graduation rate in 2023 was 43 percent,⁸⁷ while SIPI’s stood at 9 percent.⁸⁸ These numbers include all full-time, first-time degree, or certificate-seeking undergraduate students.

Adding to its troubles, HINU continues to struggle with retaining a president. On May 23, 2025, President Frank Arpan resigned from his role at HINU,⁸⁹ becoming the ninth president to resign in an eight-year period.⁹⁰ Three days before President Arpan resigned, HINU announced a

⁷⁹ See *IA Facilities Management System*, INDIAN AFFAIRS, <https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/ofpsm/dfmc/iafms>.

⁸⁰ <https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/assets/as-ia/ofpsm/DM%20Work%20Order%20Approval%20%28Gatekeeper%29%20Process%20508%20Compliant.pdf>

⁸¹ See *Annual Report on Performance and Accountability*, U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR (Fiscal Year 2024), https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/par04_entire.pdf#:~:text=maintenance%20activities,in%20various%20stages%20of%20implementation

⁸² See Report No.:GAO-06-314, *Indian Irrigation Projects: Numerous Issues Need to Be Addressed to Improve Project Management and Financial Sustainability*, U.S. GOVT. ACCOUNTABILITY OFF. (Feb. 2006), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-06-314.pdf#:~:text=To%20improve%20the%20accuracy%20of,deferred%20maintenance%20cost%20estimate%20for>.

⁸³ See *Leaving Indian Children Behind: Reviewing the State of BIE Schools*, oversight hearing before the Subcomm. on Oversight and Investigations, 119th Cong. Serial No. 119–7 (Feb. 12, 2025).

⁸⁴ See *Leaving Indian Children Behind: Reviewing the State of BIE Schools*, Oversight Hearing before the Subcomm. on Oversight and Investigations of the H. Comm. on Natural Resources, 119th Cong. (Feb. 12, 2025).

⁸⁵ *Id.*

⁸⁶ *Id.*

⁸⁷ See *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Data Feedback Report on Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, KS*, INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION SCIENCES (2024),

<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/dfr/2024/ReportHTML.aspx?unitId=155140>.

⁸⁸ See *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Data Feedback Report on Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico*, INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION SCIENCES (2024),

<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/dfr/2024/ReportHTML.aspx?unitId=188216>.

⁸⁹ See *Haskell Indian Nations University’s president has resigned, according to multiple sources*, LAWRENCE JOURNAL-WORLD (May 23, 2025), <https://www2.ljworld.com/news/general-news/2025/may/23/haskell-indian-nations-university-president-has-resigned-according-to-multiple-sources/>.

⁹⁰ See Max McCoy, *Report reveals ‘dysfunction’ at Haskell University. We owe the past — and future — much more*, KANSAS REFLECTOR (Apr. 28, 2024), <https://kansasreflector.com/2024/04/28/report-reveals-dysfunction-at-haskell-university-we-owe-the-past-and-future-much-more/>.

change in its accreditation rating from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).⁹¹ HINU's was changed to "Continued Accreditation with Monitoring."⁹² This status indicates that there are concerns regarding the institution's ongoing compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation or other HLC requirements.⁹³

Similarly, SIPI has a history of accreditation issues. In 2010, HLC withdrew SIPI's accreditation due to insufficient progress in addressing testing and record-keeping issues that had previously been identified by the HLC.⁹⁴ However, by 2014 SIPI was awarded an initial accreditation⁹⁵ and, in 2018, HLC reaffirmed SIPI's accreditation.⁹⁶

Oversight of BIE: Opportunities and Proposals for Reform at HINU and SIPI

Given the worrisome conditions at HINU and SIPI, the need for robust oversight of these institutions has never been more apparent. Under the Biden administration, which appointed the first native Secretary of the Interior, who spoke at a HINU graduation ceremony in 2022,⁹⁷ the misconduct continued to go unchecked.⁹⁸ Under the Biden administration, BIA and BIE repeatedly failed to adequately oversee these institutions of higher learning.⁹⁹ As such, Congress has stepped in to exercise its oversight authority over BIE schools.¹⁰⁰

⁹¹ Stacey Saldanha-Olson, *What we know about resignation of Haskell University President Francis Arpan*, THE TOPEKA CAPITAL-JOURNAL (May 23, 2025), <https://www.cjonline.com/story/news/education/2025/05/23/did-the-haskell-university-president-resign-heres-what-we-know/83819206007/>.

⁹² *Id.*

⁹³ *Monitoring*, HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION, <https://www.hlcommission.org/accreditation/cycles-and-processes/monitoring/>.

⁹⁴ See *HLC Downgrades SIPI's Accreditation to Candidate*, TRIBAL COLLEGE: JOURNAL OF AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION, Volume 22, No. 2 - Winter 2010, (Nov. 15, 2010) <https://tribalcollegejournal.org/hlc-downgrades-sipis-accreditation-to-candidate/>; See *Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute loses its accreditation*, Indianz.com (July 15, 2010), <https://indianz.com/News/2010/020737.asp>. 15, 2010) <https://tribalcollegejournal.org/hlc-downgrades-sipis-accreditation-to-candidate/>; See *Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute loses its accreditation*, Indianz.com (July 15, 2010), <https://indianz.com/News/2010/020737.asp>.

⁹⁵ See *IPI Awarded "Initial Accreditation" Status By The Higher Learning Commission*, U.S DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS (Mar. 12, 2014), <https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/opa/online-press-release/sipi-awarded-initial-accreditation-status-higher-learning-commission>

⁹⁶ See *Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute Receives Reaffirmation of Accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission*, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY – INDIAN AFFAIRS, (Mar. 27, 2018), <https://4.files.edl.io/7029/01/14/23/201947-d3cffe7-5754-4e84-a805-5de4dd286776.pdf>.

⁹⁷ See Andrea Albright, Haaland, national leaders stress importance of history and representation during Haskell commencement ceremony, THE LAWRENCE TIMES (May 13, 2025), <https://lawrencekstimes.com/2022/05/13/haskell-graduation-2022/>.

⁹⁸ See Jenna Kunze, *Scathing Investigation Reveals Years of Ignored Sexual Assault, Mismanagement at Haskell Indian Nations University*, NATIVE NEWS ONLINE (May 14, 2025), <https://nativenewsonline.net/education/scathing-investigation-reveals-years-of-ignored-sexual-assault-mismanagement-at-haskell-indian-nations-university>.

⁹⁹ See Report No.: 17-0074, *Investigative Report of Misconduct Allegations at Haskell Indian Nations University*, U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL (Nov. 16, 2018), https://www.doioig.gov/sites/default/files/2021-migration/WebRedacted_HaskellUniveristy.pdf; See Report No.: GAO-06-314, *Indian Irrigation Projects: Numerous Issues Need to Be Addressed to Improve Project Management and Financial Sustainability*, U.S. GOVT. ACCOUNTABILITY OFF. (Feb. 2006), [https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-06-314.pdf#:~:text=To%20improve%20the%20accuracy%20of,deferred%20maintenance%20cost%20estimate%20for](https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-06-314.pdf#:~:text=To%20improve%20the%20accuracy%20of,deferred%20maintenance%20cost%20estimate%20for;); See *Leaving Indian Children Behind: Reviewing the State of BIE Schools*, oversight hearing before the Subcomm. on Oversight and Investigations, 119th Cong. Serial No. 119-7 (Feb. 12, 2025); See *Investigating how the Biden Administration Ignored Cries for Help from Students at Haskell Indian Nations University*, Oversight Hearing before the Subcomm. on Oversight and Investigations of the H. Comm. on Natural Resources, 118th Cong. (2024) (hearing memorandum), [hearing memo -- sub on oi joint edw ov hrg on haskell univ 07.23.24 v.2.pdf](#).

¹⁰⁰ See, e.g., Sara Weissman, *Republicans Demand Information About Alleged Misconduct at Haskell Indian Nations University*, INSIDE HIGHER ED (July 11, 2024), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/institutions/minority-serving-institutions/2024/07/11/haskell-indian-nations-university-report>; Letter from Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, H. Comm. on Natural Resources, et. al, to the Honorable Bryan Newland and Tony Dearman (Dec. 20, 2024); Letter from Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, H. Comm. on Natural Resources, et. al, to Tony Dearman (July 2, 2024); *Leaving Indian Children*

Great American Outdoors Act Reauthorization

To address the learning environment conditions at HINU and SIPI, the deferred maintenance backlog must be reduced. Congress appropriated funds under the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) to address the deferred maintenance backlog on federal lands. Specifically, GAOA established a mandatory fund, the “National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund” (LRF), to tackle deferred maintenance. BIE receives a five-percent share of the amounts deposited in the LRF each year (\$95 million).¹⁰¹ This fund is set to expire at the end of FY 2025.¹⁰² In its FY 2026 Budget proposal, DOI seeks to reauthorize the LRF funding at its current level and length of \$1.9 billion annually for 5 years.¹⁰³ Upon reviewing the allocated LRF funds to date, it does not appear that the BIE has chosen any projects for postsecondary schools; it is allocating all projects for elementary and secondary schools at this time.¹⁰⁴ It is unclear how, or if, this policy will change moving forward.

This LRF is intended to help federal agencies address the growing deferred maintenance backlog. During a hearing before the House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, Secretary Burgum stated that addressing the conditions of BIE schools and deferred maintenance could include state and tribal partnerships at the local level or through “private capital, state funding, or federal investment.”¹⁰⁵

Legislative Proposals

Representative Tracey Mann and Senator Jerry Moran of Kansas have been working to introduce legislation that would grant HINU a congressional charter.¹⁰⁶ Under a charter system, HINU would be removed from BIE’s control, and management would be given to a Board of Regents whose members are nominated by tribal communities.¹⁰⁷ With this new structure, HINU administration and staff would no longer be government employees, but would instead be employed directly by the university.¹⁰⁸ About this proposal, Representative Mann stated, “the U.S. Department of Interior and the Bureau of Indian Education has mismanaged the university,

Behind: Reviewing the State of BIE Schools, oversight hearing before the Subcomm. on Oversight and Investigations, 119th Cong. (Feb. 12, 2025), (hearing memorandum), [hearing memo -- sub on oi ov hrg on deferred maintenance bie 02.12.25.pdf](#).

¹⁰¹ See Report No.:GAO-24-106495, *Deferred Maintenance: Agencies Generally Followed Leading Practices in Selections but Faced Challenges*, U.S. GOVT. ACCOUNTABILITY OFF. (Jan. 2024), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/d24106495.pdf>.

¹⁰² See Great American Outdoors Act, Pub. L. No. 116-152 (Aug. 4, 2020).

¹⁰³ *Fiscal Year 2026 The Interior Budget in Brief*, U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR (May 2025),

https://www.doi.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2025-06/fy26bibentire-book508060125_0.pdf.

¹⁰⁴ See Great American Outdoors Act, BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION, <https://www.bie.edu/gaoa/Great-American-Outdoors-Act>.

¹⁰⁵ See *Budget Hearing – Department of the Interior*, budget hearing before the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Committee on Appropriations, 119th Cong. (May 20, 2025), https://appropriations.house.gov/schedule/hearings/budget-hearing-department-interior?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=5/19/25%20%20AM:&utm_term=Punchbowl%20AM%20and%20Active%20Subscribers%20from%20Memberful%20Combined.

¹⁰⁶ See Rep. Mann, Sen. Moran Request Feedback on Legislation to Charter Haskell Indian Nations University, REP. TRACEY MANN (Dec. 23, 2024), <https://mann.house.gov/media/press-releases/rep-mann-sen-moran-request-feedback-legislation-charter-haskell-indian-nations>.

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*

¹⁰⁸ See Matthew Kelly and Daniel Desrochers, *Kansas lawmakers move to pull Haskell Indian Nations University from federal control*, KANSAS CITY STAR (Dec. 23, 2024), <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/kansas-lawmakers-move-to-pull-haskell-indian-nations-university-from-federal-control/ar-AAIwnppf>.

failed to comply with federal oversight, and turned a blind eye to misconduct that has been detrimental to Haskell students.”¹⁰⁹

V. CONCLUSION

BIE has long been unable to effectively manage tribal students’ education, failing even to provide the most basic of conditions: a safe learning environment. BIE’s postsecondary institutions, HINU and SIPI, face staggering deferred maintenance backlogs and crumbling infrastructure that leave students without campus housing, classrooms in which to study, and sporting venues in which to recreate alongside peers. Worse yet, the mismanagement of these places of higher education extends far beyond deferred maintenance, further endangering students with sexual assault and retaliation within the universities that are supposed to keep them safe as they learn and grow. After years of the Biden administration failing to address the issues facing tribal students, the Committee looks forward to continuing to work with the Trump administration’s DOI to ensure that Indian students receive a quality education in the quality environment that they deserve.

¹⁰⁹ See Rep. Mann, Sen. Moran Request Feedback on Legislation to Charter Haskell Indian Nations University, REP. TRACEY MANN (Dec. 23, 2024) <https://mann.house.gov/media/press-releases/rep-mann-sen-moran-request-feedback-legislation-charter-haskell-indian-nations>.