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1994 Land-Grant Universities: Background and Selected Issues

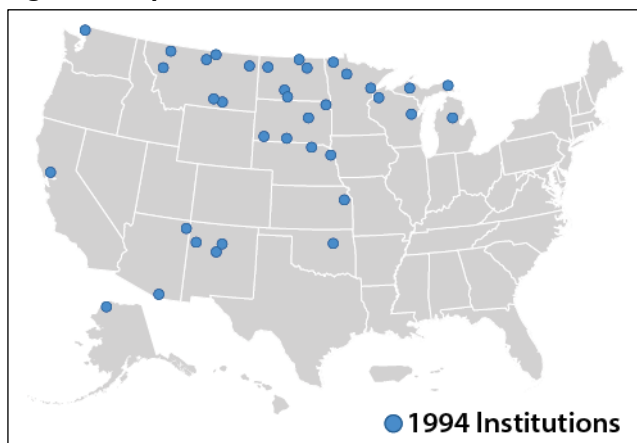
The *1994 Institutions* are the Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) that belong to the U.S. land-grant university (LGU) system. As such, they receive federal funds for agricultural research, education, and extension through programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Congress supports the 1994 Institutions and other LGUs through appropriations, legislation, and oversight.

Background

The LGU system—comprising the *1862 Institutions* (57 original LGUs), *1890 Institutions* (19 historically Black LGUs), and *1994 Institutions* (35 Tribal LGUs)—is a partnership between the federal government and the states, with a threefold mission of teaching, research, and extension. LGUs are present in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and six U.S. territories. They originally focused on agriculture and the mechanical arts and now engage in a variety of academic disciplines.

The Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-382, Title V, Part C; 7 U.S.C. §301 note) added TCUs to the LGU system. This legislation and subsequent amendments name 36 1994 Institutions (**Figure 1**), of which 35 are currently accredited, to be considered LGUs established in accordance with the Morrill Act of 1862 (7 U.S.C. §301 et seq.) except for how they are funded. In lieu of grants of land or land scrip that the 1862 Institutions received, annual appropriations endow and maintain the 1994 Institutions. The 1994 Institutions Endowment Fund was created in the U.S. Treasury, and interest payments are distributed annually on a formula basis. The 1994 Institutions are founded and chartered by American Indian tribes and predominantly enroll Native students. All 1994 Institutions offer associate's degrees, 14 offer bachelor's degrees, and 5 offer master's degrees.

Figure 1. Map of 1994 Institutions



Source: Map created by CRS.

Grant Programs

NIFA administers federal funds for LGUs through two primary grant types. NIFA distributes *capacity grants*, also known as formula funds, among eligible institutions based on statutory formulas. Recipient institutions decide which of their own projects to support. NIFA awards *competitive grants* directly to specific projects proposed by eligible applicants and selected through a USDA peer-review process. Grants of either type may focus on agricultural research, education, extension, or some combination of the three (*integrated activities*). Certain grant programs are specific to particular LGU types, and others are open to a variety of applicants. The text box on the next page provides more information on USDA Tribal programs for LGUs, which include capacity and competitive grants.

USDA Initiative

In addition to grant programs created through legislation, USDA has managed the USDA/1994 Tribal Scholars Program as a departmental initiative since 2008. USDA partners with the 1994 Institutions to provide selected students of food, agriculture, and related disciplines with scholarships and temporary USDA employment, which may later convert to permanent employment. USDA agencies pay these students' tuition and fees.

Considerations for Congress

Federal support of the colleges and universities that comprise the LGU system has strengthened agricultural research, education, and extension. Some argue that differences in federal support for the 1862, 1890, and 1994 Institutions constitute inequities that Congress may consider addressing. It also could be argued that institutional differences—including numbers of students served, types of degrees awarded, and their missions—should factor into federal funding allocations and programmatic decisions affecting the LGU system. NIFA programs primarily support agriculture-related activities. LGUs derive additional financial support from other sources (e.g., other federal programs, endowments, student tuition).

Federal Appropriations

1994 Institutions receive fewer federal funds administered by NIFA—in total—than 1862 and 1890 Institutions, and they are ineligible for certain grant types available to 1862 and 1890 Institutions. Whereas the 1862 and 1890 Institutions receive federal *capacity funds* specific to agricultural research and extension (which brings research to the public through nonformal education activities), 1994 Institutions do not. Although 1994 Institutions have more limited enrollment and offer fewer postsecondary degrees than 1862 and 1890 Institutions (**Table 1**), some argue that funding for agricultural research and extension at the 1994 Institutions is insufficient and should be increased.

Table 1. Selected Aggregate Metrics by LGU Type

Metric	1862	1890	1994
Number of Institutions	57	19	35
Total Undergraduate Students	1,534,525	89,544	23,481
Total Graduate Students	446,014	14,734	273
Total Fed. Capacity Funding: Research, Extension Programs	\$574M	\$124M	—

Sources: 12-month (2019-2020) enrollment data from National Center for Education Statistics, *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System*. Funding totals from FY2020 appropriations (P.L. 116-94) include research and extension capacity programs (1862 Institutions: Hatch, Smith-Lever 3(b) and 3(c); 1890 Institutions: Evans-Allen, NARETPA Section 1444; 1994 Institutions: no comparable programs).

Notes: Student totals do not indicate the subset of students who are engaged in agricultural disciplines, making it difficult to compare overall support levels for these students. Access to funding sources other than NIFA capacity grants may vary by institution type.

1994 Institution Capacity and Competitive Funding

In contrast to the 1862 and 1890 Institutions, Congress has not established capacity grant programs specific to agricultural research and extension for 1994 Institutions. Capacity grants for 1994 Institutions consist of interest distributions from a general-purpose endowment fund that total about \$5.0 million annually for the 35 institutions and an education capacity grant program that received \$4.5 million in FY2021 appropriations.

Congress has authorized competitive grants for research, extension, and institutional capacity building at 1994 Institutions. Unlike many grant programs managed by NIFA, the Tribal College Research Grant Program requires 1994 Institutions to partner with other institution types (e.g., 1862 Institutions, 1890 Institutions, the USDA Agricultural Research Service) in order to be eligible for funding. The competitively awarded Tribal College Extension Grants Program provides funds for Tribal extension programs. The 1994 Institutional Capacity Building Grants program has not received appropriations.

Congress may choose to consider the amount and type of funding it provides to 1994 Institutions. Certain competitive grants are available only to applicants from 1994 Institutions, providing them with opportunities to fund research and extension projects. However, competitive grants do not provide the same financial predictability as capacity grants. This may inhibit the initiation or continuation of long-term research and extension projects relevant to 1994 Institutions and the populations they serve.

Institutional Eligibility for Tribal Grants Programs

Congress provides competitive grants available to all LGU types for extension and scholarship programs benefiting Native Americans through the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program and New Beginning for Tribal Students. Congress may choose to consider the roles of 1862, 1890, and 1994 Institutions in providing agricultural extension and postsecondary education services to Native Americans.

USDA Tribal Programs for LGUs

The Educational Equity in Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-382, Title V, Part C; 7 U.S.C. §301 note) and additional legislation authorize USDA grant programs for 1994 and other LGUs. Program descriptions, authorizations, and FY2021 appropriations (P.L. 116-260) are identified below.

Capacity Grants for 1994 Institutions

- The Tribal College Endowment Program provides 1994 LGUs with discretionary funds to support agriculture and the mechanical arts. This provision (P.L. 103-382, §533, as amended) authorizes “such sums as are necessary” for FY1996-FY2023. Appropriations fund the 1994 Institutions Endowment Fund, and interest is distributed annually according to a formula. Funds do not expire or require nonfederal matching. FY2021 appropriations: \$11.9 million; FY2020 interest distribution: \$5.0 million.
- Tribal Colleges Educational Equity grants support education at 1994 Institutions. This provision (P.L. 103-382, §534(a), as amended) authorizes appropriations of \$100,000 per 1994 Institution and does not require reauthorization. FY2021 appropriations: \$4.5 million.

Competitive Grants for 1994 Institutions

- The Tribal College Research Grant Program (7 U.S.C. §301 note) provides grants to 1994 Institutions for research in cooperation with certain institutions (e.g., 1862 and 1890 LGUs). This provision (P.L. 103-382, §536, as amended) authorizes such sums as are necessary for FY1999-FY2023. FY2021 appropriations: \$4.0 million.
- The Tribal College Extension Grants Program (7 U.S.C. §343(b)(3)) supports 1994 Institution extension activities. This provision (P.L. 103-382, §534(b)(1), as amended) authorizes such sums as are necessary and does not require reauthorization. Funds do not expire. FY2021 appropriations: \$8.5 million.
- 1994 Institutional Capacity Building Grants (7 U.S.C. §301 note) support constructing, remodeling, and acquiring facilities for agriculture and science instruction. These grants require nonfederal matching in amounts to be specified by USDA. This provision (P.L. 103-382, §535, as amended) authorizes such sums as are necessary for FY2002-FY2018. FY2021 appropriation: \$0.

Competitive Grants Available to All LGUs

- The Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (authorized under the more general 7 U.S.C. 343(d)) provides grants for extension programs on Indian reservations and Tribal jurisdictions. Requires 100% matching funds. FY2021 appropriations: \$89.9 million.
- New Beginning for Tribal Students (7 U.S.C. §3222e) provides grants to support Tribal students through recruiting, tuition, experiential learning, and student services. The 2018 farm bill (P.L. 115-334, §7120) established the program, authorizes \$5.0 million annually for FY2019-FY2023, and requires 100% matching funds. FY2021 appropriations: \$5.0 million.

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