

News & Highlights

**Announcing the American Indian Research and Education Initiative - A new pilot program to connect Department of Energy Resources with American Indian students**

July 25, 2011 - American Indian communities are uniquely situated in the matrix of energy production and energy use and efficiency. Tribal lands are often repositories of coal, oil, and uranium, and have tremendous untapped energy potential in wind, hydropower, and solar resources. However, Tribal Lands are also home to the highest rates for fuel and electricity, and have the highest percentage of un-electrified and un-weatherized homes.

These issues create significant need and significant opportunity to develop the energy literacy of future American Indian leaders by providing scientific and technological skills to help their communities manage their lands and develop energy resources.

That's why we began a unique partnership between the American Indian Higher Education Consortium and the American Indian Science and Engineering Society to bring science, technology, engineering, and mathematics researching and education funding to American Indian students at our Nation's Tribal Colleges and Universities and mainstream universities.

Through this pilot program, the resources of the Department of Energy – including technology, research, equipment, and staff – will be matched with the drive of American Indian students to assist Tribal communities in developing and managing energy resources. Over the next three years, the Department of Energy will provide a record-high amount of funding to students, faculty, and staff at Tribal Colleges and Universities and tribal students at mainstream universities.

Funds will be used to recruit American Indian students to join student/faculty teams that will engage in community energy projects on Tribal lands, with the mentorship and technological savvy of the Department's National Laboratories. A new two week Energy Science Institute will be formed to offer courses and workshops, and a mentor pool of National Laboratory personnel will be on hand to guide AIREI faculty and student participants on education, research, and career topics. Solicitation for Tribal Colleges and Universities and members of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society will be released mid-August, and the solicitation will be posted here when it is released. When the solicitation is released:

- o Six institutions (3 TCUs and 3 AISES institutions) are selected based on scientific merit, potential impact on Tribal lands or communities.

- o The Energy Science Institute is held at a National Lab at the beginning of the summer 2012 (and subsequent summers during the project period). Faculty/student teams' project plans are refined at this time.
- o Project teams spend remainder of the summer (and a portion of the academic year) working collaboratively on their respective projects, with a significant portion of the time on-site at the Tribal lands or communities.

We're calling this pilot program the American Indian Research and Education Initiative, and we hope it is just the start to a more integrated approach to connecting our Nation's American Indian students with the power of our National Laboratories and the resources of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) and the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), both of which have significant roles in promoting American Indian higher education and creating a life-long interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

- All three partners collaborate on developing solicitation, disseminating information about the project, and coordinating activities. They will also coordinate in compiling project data and other information necessary for DOE reporting requirements.
- AIHEC works closely with the TCUs, providing information about the opportunity, managing TCU awards/subcontracts.
- AISES works closely with their member institutions, providing information about the opportunity, managing AISES institution awards/subcontracts
- DOE/National Labs provides science and engineering co-principal investigators/mentors to the TCU/AISES project teams, hosts the Energy Institute, provides technology transfer resources as appropriate.

Pursuant to the Executive Order on 13270, the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities (WHITCU) has committed to exploring expansion of the AIREI model to incorporate science resources from other agencies such as NASA, the Department of Interior, and the Department of Defense.