



DEC 30 2008

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of the
Assistant Secretary
for Civil Rights

1400 Independence
Avenue SW

Washington, DC
20250

Ms. Margaret Malanoski
USDA Desk Officer
Office of Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, N.W, Room 10202
New Executive Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Ms. Malanoski:

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights' 1994 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) Program plans to launch a new scholarship program by January 2009. This new initiative is titled the 1994 Tribal Scholars Program and is targeted to students at the Nation's thirty-two 1994 Land-Grant Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs).

We are requesting your assistance in obtaining emergency approval for the Program's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) application by January 12, 2009. This approval will enable USDA to move forward in soliciting entering freshmen students at the thirty-two 1994 TCUs in time to register for the Fall semester, which varies among the TCUs. In order to meet these time frames, students must submit their application packages to USDA by February 1, 2009.

The 60-Day Federal Register Notice has been prepared and is submitted to be published in the Federal Register by December 31, 2008.

The purpose of the USDA/1994 Tribal Scholars Program is:

- to strengthen the partnership between USDA and the 1994 Land-Grant TCUs;
- to increase the number of students studying agriculture, food, and natural resources sciences; and
- to offer career opportunities to the USDA/1994 Tribal Scholars at USDA to increase USDA workforce diversity.

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The USDA/1994 Program works in close partnership with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), a non-profit organization chartered in 1973 to advocate for, provide technical assistance to, and explore opportunities between TCUs and Federal agencies to build educational excellence at these unique institutions. In 2007, the USDA/AIHEC Leadership Group, made up of USDA officials and TCU Presidents, formed a working group to develop the draft 1994 Tribal Scholars Program Application.

This scholarship program will serve as a major human capital initiative of USDA and the 1994 Land-Grant Institutions to award scholarships to students to attend one of the thirty-two 1994 TCUs.

The USDA/AIHEC Leadership Group advocated, since the early 1990s, for a permanent USDA/1994 Tribal Scholars Program. The AIHEC and TCUs have long awaited such a program. The ability to implement the USDA/1994 Tribal Scholars Program will have a far-reaching positive impact on our partnership with the 1994 Land-Grant Institutions, the American Indian/Alaska Native community, and USDA workforce diversity initiatives. The 1994 TCUs perform a unique role in providing education to many non-traditional and first generation, college bound and underserved individuals and communities in remote areas of the United States.

If you have any questions, please contact Lawrence Shorty, Director of the USDA 1994 Program Office, at (202) 720-7265 or by e-mail to Lawrence.Shorty@usda.gov

Sincerely,



Margo M. McKay
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

Enclosures