Biden Administration Announces More Than $10 Million in Grants to Expand High-Speed Internet to Minority-Serving Colleges and Universities

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WASHINGTON – The Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced today it has awarded the first five grants as part of the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program (CMC). These grants, totaling $10,642,577.03, will be used to fund internet access, equipment, and to hire and train information technology personnel. Deputy Secretary of Commerce Don Graves announced the grants at an event in New York with Mercy College, one of the first grant recipients.

Today's awardees include Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) across the United States. More information about the awardees and grants is provided in the table below and on InternetForAll.Gov.

The CMC program is part of the Biden-Harris Administration's Internet for All initiative that will connect everyone in America with affordable, reliable high-speed internet. This program specifically directs $268 million from the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 for expanding high-speed internet access and connectivity to eligible colleges and universities.

"America's minority serving college and universities are bedrock learning centers that have too often been left behind when it comes to accessing affordable high-speed internet," said Deputy Secretary of Commerce Don Graves. "The Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program enables these institutions to be a resource for access, digital skills training, and workforce development programs for students and the community to help level the economic playing field."

"If we charge forward into the digital age without making efforts to increase internet access, we will be leaving low-income communities and communities of color behind. We cannot, and will not, let this happen. The Commerce Department, along with many others, are doing incredible work every day to promote digital equity in marginalized communities on the state and local level. I'm so proud to be part of that effort to deliver essential funding for Mercy College so they can ensure all of their students have internet access," said Rep. Mondaire Jones (NY-17).

NTIA thoroughly and objectively reviewed applications using a three-stage process: Initial Administrative and Eligibility Review of Complete Application Packets, Merit Review, and Programmatic Review. Reviewers evaluated applications according to the criteria set forth in Section V of the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

NTIA is continuing to review the more than 200 applications received during the application window, which closed December 1, 2021. Additional awards will be announced on a rolling basis as they go through NTIA's review process. The final allocation of the $268 million in grant funds will satisfy the requirements, that at least 40% of funds are distributed to qualifying HBCUs and at least 20% is distributed to applicants that provide high-speed internet access service and/or eligible equipment to their students.

President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, provides a historic $65 billion investment to expand high-speed internet in communities across the U.S. NTIA recently launched a series of new high-speed internet grant programs funded by the law that will build high-speed internet infrastructure across the country, create more low-cost high-speed internet service options, and address the digital equity and inclusion needs in our communities.

For more information on the Biden-Harris Administration's high-speed internet programs, please visit InternetforAll.gov.

Dine College	$2,925,627.00	Classroom Technology Upgrades; Community Technology Hub/Upgrade; Workforce Training/Economic Growth; Digital Literacy Skills; Internships/ Apprenticeships	Dine College's CONNECT NAVAJO project aims to improve educational and economic opportunity on the Navajo Nation by improving internet access, providing more hardware, and investing in IT staff. This project will ensure that the Diné people can continue to reside in their homes on Navajo Nation and benefit from access to technology that helps them earn academic credentials and enter economically rewarding and personally fulfilling careers.
Drake State Community and Technical College	$2,413,182.20	Classroom Technology Upgrades; Internships/ Apprenticeships; Community Technology Hub/ Upgrade; Workforce Training/ Economic Growth; Digital Literacy Skills	The Drake State Community and Technical College's Connecting Minority Communities project aims to eliminate historical inequities related to broadband and computer access within the anchor communities in and around Madison County, Alabama. The proposed program will provide access to laptops with broadband access, home broadband access for anchor community members, streamline access to Drake State's student support resources and online courses, and democratize access to postsecondary education and careers in computer science information systems, cyber security, and cyber defense. With this grant funding, Drake will have the necessary resources to support students'

			potential and ambition to earn an Associate's degree, and for those who desire it, the opportunity to earn an online bachelor's degree in information technology management or micro-credentials in industry-recognized computer science information certificates.
Mercy College	$2,620,940.00	Classroom Technology Upgrades; Community Technology Hub/Upgrade; Cybersecurity; Internships/ Apprenticeships; Workforce Training/ Economic Growth	Mercy College's Connected, Credentialed and Ready (CCAR) project aims to improve student outcomes by expanding broadband internet access, connectivity, and digital inclusion that will facilitate educational instruction and learning, including through remote instruction. CCAR aims to expand student access to technology and build digital skills and IT workforce capacity that will provide ongoing and sustainable benefits to our students and the surrounding anchor communities.
Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology	$754,970.22	Workforce Training/ Economic Growth	Through the Student Success and Increasing Minority Workforce Participation Program, Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology (OSUIT) aims to be a proactive participant within its community to decrease the digital divide and enhance access to broadband services as well as increase the talent pipeline for Oklahoma's telecommunications industry. It will address two critical issues being faced by Oklahoma's rural communities: (1) The availability of broadband services in Oklahoma's low-income communities, and 2) A lack of skilled workers and high-quality training programs available for Fiber Technicians in Oklahoma's low-income, rural communities.

Tohono O'odham Community College	$1,927,857.61	Digital Literacy Skills; Workforce Training/ Economic Growth; Community Technology Hub/Upgrade	The Tohono O'odham Community College (TOCC) Hewel Wepegi Macidag kc, wog - 'Learning the Internet Road' is designed to directly address the lack of broadband access, connectivity, adoption and equity at the college and in the surrounding anchor communities on Tohono O'odham Nation (TON). The overarching goal of the program is to support economic development on the Tohono O'odham Nation through digital workforce development, community connectivity improvement, and computer literacy enhancement