

Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver Program

The state universities of Michigan are fully supportive of partnering with state government to enhance college access for economically disadvantaged populations. One such population is Native Americans. Recognizing this, the Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver (ITW) program was enacted in the 1970s, pursuant to a 1934 executive agreement the state of Michigan entered into with the federal government to provide free public education for Native students. The ITW provides Michigan residents who are at least one-quarter Native American and are certified members of a United States tribe free tuition at all of the state's 15 public universities and 28 community colleges. Over time, the state's funding of the program has not kept pace with increases in student enrollment and institutional costs. In 2017, actual costs for the program exceeded the state's allocation by \$6.8 million, leaving the institutions to cover the balance of this state-mandated program.¹ In order for Michigan to live up to its agreement to provide social mobility to Native Americans through access to postsecondary education, the state should lift the unfair burden placed upon the universities by this state-mandated program.

Policy Action:

- Advocate for the state to fully fund its mandated Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver program.

¹ Background on Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver Program available via: *Fiscal Year 2016-17 Higher Education Appropriations Report: A Report to the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Higher Education*. Prepared by Bill Bowerman, Senate Fiscal Agency and Marilyn Peterson, House Fiscal Agency (October 2016); and *State Notes: Topics of Legislative Interest—North American Indian Tuition Program* (Winter 2015), by Bill Bowerman, Senate Fiscal Agency; and data from HEIDI.