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Report to Congressional Requesters

September 2003

DISTANCE EDUCATION

More Data Could Improve Education's Ability to Track Technology at Minority Serving Institutions

GAO-03-900

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Abbreviations

IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
NPSAS	National Postsecondary Education Data System
PEQIS	Postsecondary Education Quick Information System

GAO
Accountability * Integrity * Reliability

United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

September 12, 2003

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate

The Honorable George Miller
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
House of Representatives

The Honorable Rubén Hinojosa
House of Representatives

The Honorable Major Owens
House of Representatives

For over 100 years, the Congress has recognized that some postsecondary institutions have roles to play in providing minority students with help in attaining their educational goals and developing skills necessary to move into all facets of the American economy. In the 2000-01 school year, 465 schools, or about 7 percent of postsecondary institutions in the United States,[1] served about 35 percent of all Black, American Indian, and Hispanic students. These schools have special designation under federal law as Minority Serving Institutions.[2]

Like other postsecondary institutions, over the last decade, Minority Serving Institutions have faced the challenge of trying to keep pace with rapidly changing technology usage in education. Part of keeping pace with technology involves using it in traditional classroom education, but one growing area—distance education—has commanded particular attention. As defined in federal law, distance education is, "an educational process

[1]These include institutions in territories of the United States, such as Puerto Rico and Guam, that are authorized to distribute federal student financial aid.

[2]The three main types of Minority Serving Institutions are Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges, and Hispanic Serving Institutions. Other types of Minority Serving Institutions include Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian serving institutions.

that is characterized by the separation, in time or place, between instructor and student."[3] Some examples of course delivery methods include the Internet, videoconferencing, and videocassettes. Distance education offers opportunities for students to take classes without considering where they live or when classes may be available. In the 1999-2000 school year, about one in every 13 postsecondary students enrolled in at least 1 distance education course, and the Department of Education (Education) estimates that the number of students involved in distance education has tripled in just 4 years. For the most part, students taking distance education courses can qualify for student financial aid in the same way as students taking traditional courses. As the largest provider of student financial aid to postsecondary students (an estimated $60 billion in fiscal year 2003), the federal government has a substantial interest in distance education. Under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, the federal government provides grants, loans, and work-study wages for millions of students each year.

The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, provides specific federal support for Minority Serving Institutions through Titles III and V. In 2002, grants funded under these two titles provided over $300 million for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges to improve their academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability. Technology is one of the many purposes to which these grants can be applied. As the Congress prepares to reauthorize the act, you asked us to examine several issues related to Minority Serving Institutions and technology—and particularly to distance education. We focused our work on determining (1) whether the use of distance education varies between Minority Serving Institutions and non-Minority Serving Institutions; (2) what factors Minority Serving Institutions consider when deciding whether to offer distance education; and (3) what steps Education could take, if any, to improve its monitoring of technological progress, including distance education, at Minority Serving Institutions under Titles III and V. In September 2002, we testified on some of these issues before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.[4] Additionally, you asked us to look at the quality of distance education and examine any statutory and regulatory

[3]20 U.S.C. 1093(h).

[4]U.S. General Accounting Office, *Distance Education: Growth in Distance Education Programs and Implications for Federal Education Policy*, GAO-02-1125T (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 26, 2002).

issues related to distance education. We plan to issue a report on those topics later this year.

Our findings are based on questionnaires that were developed and sent to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges. Seventy-eight percent, 75 percent, and 82 percent of the schools responded, respectively. We compared the results of our survey with Education's July 2003 report entitled *Distance Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Education Institutions: 2000-2001*. This survey was sent to over 1,600 2-year and 4-year degree granting institutions that were eligible for federal student aid programs and provided information on distance education offerings by these schools. However, the data from our survey and the survey conducted by Education are not completely comparable because they cover two different time periods. We also analyzed two databases produced by Education's National Center for Education Statistics. We analyzed data from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS)[5] to examine the characteristics of postsecondary students, including those who attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions, involved in distance education programs. We analyzed data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)[6] to examine the characteristics of postsecondary institutions. Additionally, we conducted site visits to selected schools drawn from these three types of Minority Serving Institutions. We interviewed Education officials involved in programs aimed at improving the quality of education at Minority Serving Institutions. Finally, we interviewed numerous experts on distance education. A more detailed discussion of our scope and methodology is included in appendix I. We performed our work between October 2002 and September 2003 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

[5]NPSAS is a nationwide survey conducted every 3 to 4 years that collects demographic information on postsecondary students, as well as information on how postsecondary students fund their education. NPSAS randomly samples about 19 million students attending over 6,000 institutions eligible for the federal student aid programs. The most recent NPSAS covers the 1999-2000 school year.

[6]IPEDS is a system of surveys designed to collect data from all primary providers of postsecondary education. These surveys collect institution-level data in such areas as enrollments, program completions, faculty, staff, and finances. Data are collected annually from approximately 9,600 postsecondary institutions, including over 6,000 institutions eligible for the federal student aid programs.

Results in Brief

There are some variations in the use of distance education at Minority Serving Institutions compared to other schools. It is difficult to generalize across the Minority Serving Institutions, but available data indicate that while Minority Serving Institutions tend to offer at least one distance education course at the same rate as other schools, they differ in how many courses are offered and which students take the courses. Overall, the percentage of schools offering at least one distance education course in the 2002-03 school year was 56 percent for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 63 percent for Hispanic Serving Institutions, and 63 percent for Tribal Colleges, based on data from our questionnaire. Similarly, 56 percent of 2- and 4-year schools across the country offered at least one distance education course in the 2000-01 school year, according to a separate survey conducted by Education. Minority Serving Institutions also tended to mirror other schools in that larger schools were more likely to offer distance education than smaller schools, and public schools were more likely to offer distance education than private schools. Tribal Colleges were an exception; all of them were small, but the percentage of schools offering distance education courses was relatively high compared to other smaller schools. The greater use of distance education among Tribal Colleges may reflect their need to serve students who often live in remote areas. In two respects, however, the use of distance education at Minority Serving Institutions differed from other schools. First, of those institutions offering at least one distance education course, Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges generally offered fewer distance education courses—a characteristic that may reflect the smaller size of these two types of institutions compared to other schools. Second, to the extent that data are available, they indicate that minority students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions participate in distance education to a somewhat lower degree than other students. For example, in the 1999-2000 school year, fewer undergraduates at Historically Black Colleges and Universities took distance education courses than students at non-Minority Serving Institutions—6 percent v. 8.4 percent of undergraduates—a condition that may reflect the fact that these schools offer fewer distance education courses. Also, at Hispanic Serving Institutions, Hispanic students had lower rates of participation in distance education than non-Hispanic students attending these schools. These differences were statistically significant.

Minority Serving Institutions take into account two key factors in deciding whether to offer distance education, according to our questionnaire responses. One is their preferred teaching method. About half of Historically Black Colleges and Universities that currently do not offer

distance education to undergraduates indicated that a primary reason for not offering distance education was that they prefer teaching in the classroom. For example, even though Howard University, a Historically Black University in Washington, D.C., has substantial technology such as multimedia rooms and sophisticated network capabilities, the school does not offer distance education courses for undergraduates and has no plans to do so because it prefers teaching undergraduates in the classroom. The second factor reported by schools as a reason for not providing distance education was limited resources for technology. Some Minority Serving Institutions said they wanted to offer more distance education but had limited technology to do so. For example, officials from the 10 Tribal Colleges that do not offer any distance education indicated that improvements in technology would be helpful. Officials at one Tribal College told us that some residents of reservations tend to be place-bound because of tribal and familial responsibilities; distance education would be one of the few realistic postsecondary options for this population, if technology were available. Technological limitations for Tribal Colleges involve a lack of resources to purchase needed technologies and difficulties in accessing technology, such as high-speed Internet, due to the rural and remote location of many reservations. All three types of schools identified the lack of resources—for investment in technology and for technology support staff—as particular limitations. In addition, from a broader context, Minority Serving Institutions reported that they view distance education as just one of many goals for technology—with varying degrees of priority depending on the college. In response to our survey, officials from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions more frequently indicated, for example, that relative to goals such as increasing the use of technology in the classroom, distance education ranks lower. At these schools, training faculty in the use of technology and improving the use of information technology in the classroom are higher priorities than distance education. By contrast, officials at Tribal Colleges more frequently placed distance education as a higher priority, reflecting their struggle to provide educational opportunities to populations across large geographic areas. However, they too identified other goals related to technology as important.

Education could improve its monitoring of technological progress—including distance education—at Minority Serving Institutions under Titles III and V by collecting more data on technology, including baseline data, at these institutions. Education is taking steps to monitor the extent to which its grant programs are improving the use of technology by Minority Serving Institutions, but it has opportunities to track the expanding use of technology—including distance education—by capturing information in a

more complete fashion across the three major types of Minority Serving Institutions. While Education's tracking system appears to include sufficient information on technology at Hispanic Serving Institutions, it contains less information on the usage of grant funds for technology improvements for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges. Additionally, although Education has set a goal of improving technology capacity at Minority Serving Institutions, it has not established a baseline against which progress can be measured. If Education is to be successful in measuring progress in this area, it may need to take a more proactive role in modifying existing research efforts to include information on the extent to which technology, including such basic information as student access to computers, is available at all schools. Having such information would provide policymakers and program managers an improved basis for making budget and program decisions.

In this report, we are making recommendations to the Secretary of Education to (1) direct managers of the Title III and V programs to broaden their tracking systems so that they are applied in a more complete manner to the different types of Minority Serving Institutions and (2) study the feasibility of adding questions on distance education and information technology to existing research efforts carried out by Education.

We provided Education with a draft of this report for its review and comment. In commenting on our draft report, Education generally agreed with our findings and recommendations. Education's written comments are in appendix V.

Background

In general, Minority Serving Institutions vary in size and scope and serve a high percentage of minority students, many of whom are financially disadvantaged. In size, for example, they range from Texas College, a Historically Black College with about 100 students, to Miami-Dade Community College, a Hispanic Serving Institution with more than 46,000 students. In scope, they range from schools with certificate or 2-year degree programs to universities with an extensive array of graduate and professional degree programs. Table 1 briefly compares the three types of Minority Serving Institutions in terms of their number, type, and size. Appendixes II to IV provide additional information about the three types of institutions.

Table 1: Selected Characteristics of Minority Serving Institutions

Characteristics	Type of Institution		
	Historically Black Colleges and Universities	Hispanic Serving Institutions	Tribal Colleges
Number of schools[a]	102	334	29
Percent of each type of institution			
Public	50	45	100
Private nonprofit	50	23	0
Private for-profit	0	32	0
Average number of students per institution	2,685	5,141	467
Number of students served in 2000-01	274,000	1.7 million	13,500

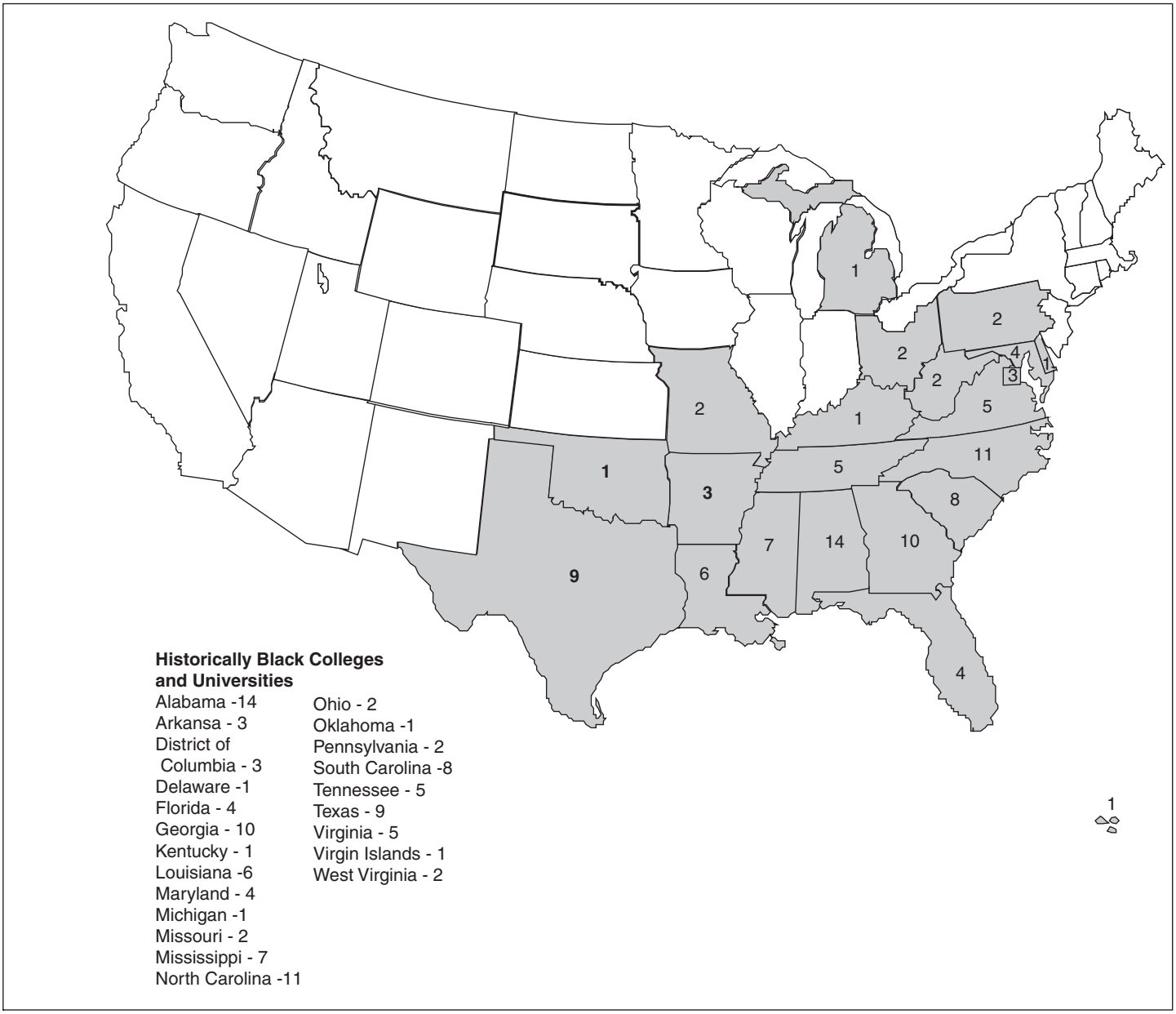
Source: Department of Education and GAO analysis of IPEDS for the 2000-01 school year.

[a]This figure represents the number of schools eligible for the federal student aid programs in the 2000-01 school year based on our analysis of IPEDS.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Historically Black Colleges and Universities are the oldest of the Minority Serving Institutions. While the first Historically Black University, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, was founded in 1837, most of the colleges and universities were founded between 1865 and 1890. In the 2000-01 school year, there were 102 Historically Black Colleges and Universities that were eligible for federal student aid programs, including Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana; Howard University in Washington, D.C.; and Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. Our analysis of the 2000-01 IPEDS, shows that while Historically Black Colleges and Universities represented 2 percent of all public and nonprofit postsecondary institutions, they enrolled about 14 percent (223,359) of Black non-Hispanic students in the United States. In all, the schools were in 20 states, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands (see fig. 1). About 85 percent of the students enrolled at these institutions were black Americans. Their students and parents have lower incomes, on average, than students and parents at non-Minority Serving Institutions.

Figure 1: Distribution of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, by State



Source: GAO analysis of IPEDS data.

Hispanic Serving Institutions

Hispanic Serving Institutions were recognized as such under the 1992 amendments to the Higher Education Act[7] and some of the schools first received funding through the Higher Education Act in 1995. Under the definition established by the Congress, a Hispanic Serving Institution must have a student body that is at least 25 percent Hispanic, and at least half of the Hispanic students must be low-income. In the 2000-01 school year, there were 334 Hispanic Serving Institutions, including Long Beach City College in California; the University of Miami in Florida; and the University of New Mexico. Our analysis of the 2000-01 IPEDS shows that while Hispanic Serving Institutions represented only 5 percent of all postsecondary institutions, they enrolled 48 percent (798,489) of all Hispanic students. These schools were located in 14 states and Puerto Rico (see fig. 2). About 51 percent of the students enrolled at these institutions are Hispanic. Compared to the two other major categories of Minority Serving Institutions, Hispanic Serving Institutions are generally larger and have more racial diversity in their student body. They are also the only type to include private for-profit schools, such as ITT Technical Colleges. Their students and parents have lower incomes, on average, than students and parents at non-Minority Serving Institutions.

[7]Pub. L. No. 102-325, § 302(d) (1992).

Figure 2: Distribution of Hispanic Serving Institutions, by State

Source: GAO analysis of IPEDS data.

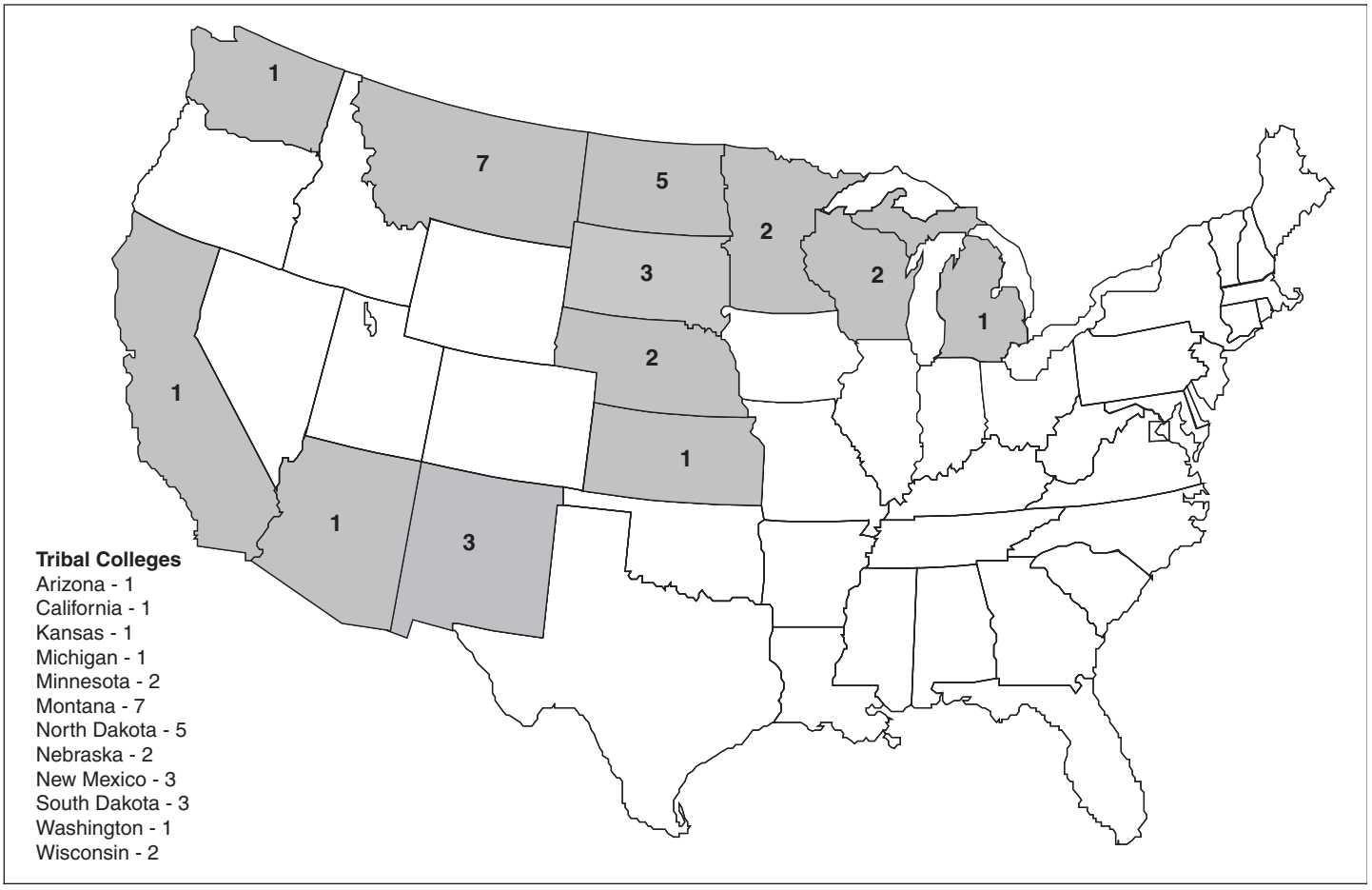
Tribal Colleges

Most Tribal Colleges were founded in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1998, the Higher Education Act[8] was amended to create a grant program for Tribal Colleges to improve educational quality offered to their students, and some of the schools first received funds in 1998. In the 2000-01 school year, there were 29 Tribal Colleges located in 12 states (see fig. 3). They included Diné College in Tsaile, Arizona; Salish Kootenai College in Pablo, Montana; and Oglala Lakota College in Kyle, South Dakota. Our analysis of the 2000-01 IPEDS shows that while Tribal Colleges were less than 1 percent of all public and private nonprofit postsecondary institutions, they enrolled 8 percent (11,262) of all American Indian/Alaska Native students in the United States. Tribal Colleges are the smallest of the three major types of Minority Serving Institutions, averaging less than 500 students, and nearly all are 2-year schools. About 85 percent of the students attending Tribal Colleges in the fall of 2000 were American Indian/Alaska Native. The percentage of students at Tribal Colleges who receive Pell Grants—a type of financial aid made available to the neediest students—was more than double that of students at non-Minority Serving Institutions (60 percent v. 24 percent).[9]

[8]Pub. L. No. 105-244, § 303(e) (1998).

[9]Although NPSAS contained data allowing us to develop information on the economic status of students and families at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions, this database contained data on students at only one Tribal College. The Pell Grant information is the only other information we were able to develop from Education's databases.

Figure 3: Distribution of Tribal Colleges, by State



Source: GAO analysis of IPEDS data.

Federal Aid to Minority Serving Institutions

Through certain provisions in the Higher Education Act, the Congress has recognized the role that Minority Serving Institutions play in serving the needs of students, many of whom are from disadvantaged backgrounds. These provisions authorize grants for augmenting the limited resources that many Minority Serving Institutions have for funding their academic programs. Historically Black Colleges and Universities are eligible for grants funded through Title III, part B; Hispanic Serving Institutions

through Title V, part A; and Tribal Colleges through Title III, part A[10] of the Higher Education Act. These grants seek to improve the academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability of eligible institutions. More specifically, according to Title III, part B, Historically Black Colleges and Universities receive grants, in part, to remedy discriminatory action of the states and the federal government against Black colleges and universities. Hispanic Serving Institutions receive funds to expand educational opportunities for and improve the academic attainment of Hispanic students. Finally, the grants for Tribal Colleges seek to improve and expand the colleges' capacity to serve American Indian students. The Congress has identified as many as 14 areas in which institutions may use funds for improving their academic programs. Authorized uses include purchase or rental of telecommunications equipment or services, support of faculty development, and purchase of library books, periodicals, and other educational materials. Table 2 provides more information on each type of grant.[11]

[10]All Tribal Colleges also receive a majority of their operating funds from various federal sources, such as the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act of 1978, Pub. L. No. 95-471 (1978). Whether they receive state funding, however, varies from state to state.

[11]Federal aid also flows to these institutions in a number of other forms. For example, students at these colleges or universities are eligible for the federal student aid programs, including Pell Grants and other funding for low-income students, such as student loans and work-study funds. In addition, other federal entities, such as the National Science Foundation, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Defense have programs that Minority Serving Institutions could use to improve information technology on their campuses.

Table 2: Characteristics of Grants for Minority Serving Institutions under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as Amended

	Type of grant		
	Title III, part B	Title V, part A	
Characteristics	Historically Black Colleges and Universities	Hispanic Serving Institutions[a]	Title III, part A Tribal Colleges
Amount of funding in 1999	$136 million	$28 million	$3 million
Number of schools funded in 1999	98	39	8
Amount of funding in 2002	$206 million	$86 million	$17.5 million
Number of schools funded in 2002	99	172[b]	27
Type of grant	Formulaic/non-competitive[c]	Competitive[c]	Competitive[c]
Duration of individual grants	5 years[d]	5 years[d]	5 years[d]
Wait-out period (minimum number of years between grants)	None	2 years	None

Source: The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended and the Department of Education.

[a]Hispanic Serving Institutions are the only Minority Serving Institutions that include private for-profit schools. Private for-profit schools are not eligible for funding under Title V, part A.

[b]In 2002, 172 Hispanic Serving Institutions received 191 grants. Nineteen of the 172 institutions received 2 grants—an individual grant and a cooperative development grant.

[c]Tribal Colleges and Hispanic Serving Institutions receive grants based on a ranking of applications from a competitive peer review evaluation. Historically Black Colleges and Universities receive grants based on a formula that considers, in part, the number of Pell Grant recipients, the number of graduates, and the number of students that enroll in graduate school within 5 years after earning an undergraduate degree.

[d]Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges are required to prepare and submit a 5-year comprehensive development plan when they participate in Title III, part A, Title V, part A, or Title III, part B programs.

One area to which such funds can be directed is technology, both inside the classroom and, in the form of distance education, outside the classroom. Both inside and outside the classroom, technology is changing how institutions educate their students, and Minority Serving Institutions, like other schools, are grappling with how best to adapt. Through such methods as E-mail, chat rooms, and direct instructional delivery via the Internet, technology can enhance students' ability to learn any time, any place, rather than be bound by time in the classroom or in the library. For Minority Serving Institutions, the importance of technology takes on an additional dimension in that available research indicates their students may arrive with less prior access to technology, such as computers and the

Internet, than their counterparts in other schools.[12] These students may need considerable exposure to technology to be fully equipped with job-related skills.

Distance Education

Distance education is one major application of this new technology. Although distance education is not a new concept, it has assumed markedly newer forms and greater prominence over the past decade. Distance education can trace its history to the 1870s when correspondence courses—a home study course generally completed by mail—were first offered. Now, distance education is increasingly delivered in electronic forms, such as videoconferencing and the Internet. Through these approaches, distance education provides postsecondary education access to students who may live in remote locations or whose schedules require greater flexibility. For example, schools such as the University of Phoenix Online and the University of Maryland University College target entire distance learning degree programs to working adults who take their classes largely at home. Distance education's effect on helping students complete their courses of study is still largely unknown. Although there is some anecdotal evidence that distance education can help students complete their programs or graduate from college, school officials that we spoke to did not identify any studies that evaluated the extent to which distance education has improved completion or graduation rates.

There Are Some Variations in the Use of Distance Education at Minority Serving Institutions Compared to Other Schools

It is difficult to generalize across the Minority Serving Institutions, but available data indicate that while Minority Serving Institutions tend to offer at least one distance education course at about the same rate as other schools, they differ in how many courses are offered and which students take the distance education courses. Minority Serving Institutions tend to be similar to non-Minority Serving Institutions in the percentage of schools that offer distance education, and to a considerable degree, they also mirror other schools in that distance education is more prominent at larger schools and at public schools. However, there are also differences between Minority Serving Institutions and other schools, and between the three categories of Minority Serving Institutions we reviewed. We found that Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges offered fewer distance education courses than other schools, which may be a reflection of their generally smaller size. The limited data available

[12]The Web-Based Education Commission, *The Power of the Internet for Learning: Moving from Promise to Practice.* (Washington D.C.: December 2000).

about student participation in distance education indicates that minority students may be somewhat less involved in distance education than other students. In the 1999-2000 school year, for example, 6 percent of students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities were involved with distance education, compared with 8.4 percent at non-Minority Serving institutions—perhaps reflecting the fewer number of distance education courses that Historically Black Colleges and Universities offer. This result is statistically significant.

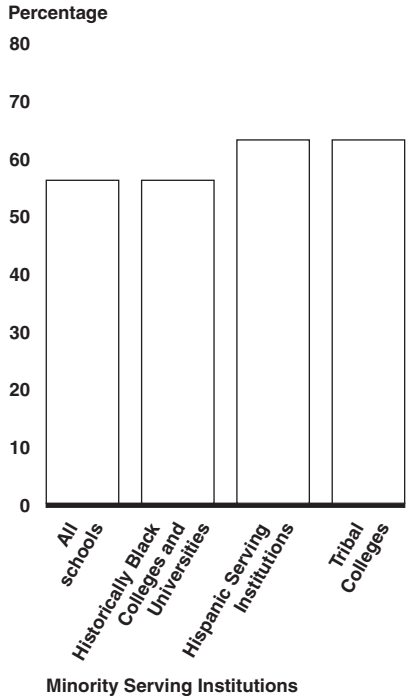
Percentage of Minority Serving Institutions Offering at Least One Distance Education Course Is about the Same as the Percentage for Other Schools

The percentage of Minority Serving Institutions that offered at least one distance education course is about the same as the percentage for all degree granting postsecondary institutions eligible for the federal student aid programs. Education's July 2003 report indicates that about 56 percent of 2-year and 4-year institutions whose students were eligible for federal student aid programs offered distance education courses during the 2000-01 school year.[13] The results from our questionnaire showed that about 56 percent of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 63 percent of Hispanic Serving Institutions, and 63 percent of Tribal Colleges offered at least one distance education course (see fig. 4). However, the data from our survey and the survey conducted by Education are not completely comparable because they cover two different time periods. Education's survey covered the 2000-01 school year while our survey covered the 2002-03 school year.[14]

[13]Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, *Distance Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions: 2000-2001.* (Washington D.C.: July 2003).

[14]Our survey and Education's survey are also different in the way that information was summarized. For example, Education's survey aggregates all private nonprofit schools and private for-profit schools as private schools. Our survey breaks out these types of schools into separate categories.

Figure 4: Percentage of Minority Serving Institutions That Offer Distance Education Is about the Same as the Percentage for Other Schools



Source: Department of Education and GAO's Minority Serving Institution survey.

According to our survey, Minority Serving Institutions offered distance education courses[15] for two main reasons: (1) it improves access to courses for some students who live away from campus and (2) it provides convenience to older, working, or married students. The following examples illustrate these conditions.

- Northwest Indian College, a Tribal College in Bellingham, Washington, has over 10 percent of its 600 students involved in distance education. It offers distance education by videoconference equipment or correspondence. The College offers over 20 distance education courses, such as mathematics and English to students at seven remote locations in Washington and Idaho. According to College officials, distance education technology is

[15]The two most common modes of delivering distance education for Minority Serving Institutions were (1) on-line courses using a computer and (2) live courses transmitted via videoconference.

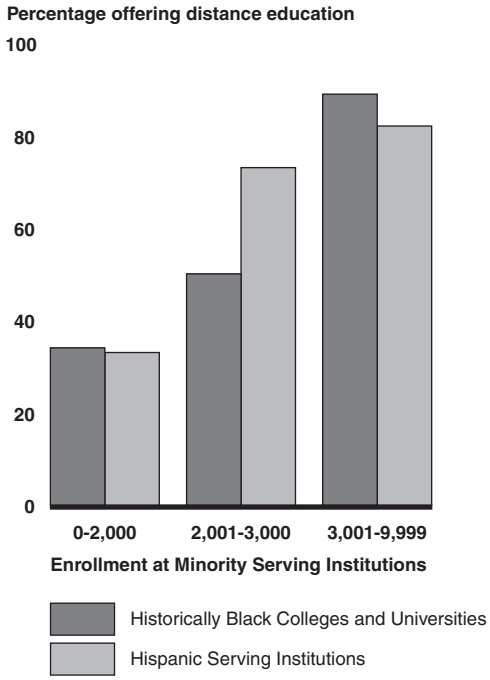
essential because it provides access to educational opportunities to students who live away from campus. For example, some students taking distance education courses live hundreds of miles from the College in locations such as the Nez Perce Reservation in Idaho and the Makah Reservation in Neah Bay, Washington. According to school officials, students involved in distance education tend to be older with dependents, and therefore, find it difficult to take courses outside of their community. Also, one official noted that staying within the tribal community is valued and distance education allows members of tribes to stay close to their community and still obtain skills or a degree.

- The University of the Incarnate Word is a private nonprofit Hispanic Serving Institution with an enrollment of about 6,900 students. The school, located in San Antonio, Texas, offers on-line degree and certificate programs, including degrees in business, nursing, and information technology. About 2,400 students are enrolled in the school's distance education program. The school's on-line programs are directed at nontraditional students (students who are 24 years old or older), many of whom are Hispanic. In general, the ideal candidates for the on-line program are older students, working adults, or adult learners who have been out of high school for 5 or more years, according to the Provost and the Director of Instructional Technology.

Distance Education at Most Minority Serving Institutions Follows National Trends with Regard to Size and Type of School Offering at Least One Distance Education Course

For the most part, those Minority Serving Institutions that offered at least one distance education course tended to be similar to other schools offering at least one distance education course with regard to size and type of school. Our survey results showed that Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions with 3,001 to 9,999 students were more than twice as likely to offer distance education courses as schools with 2,000 or fewer students (see fig. 5). Similarly, in July 2003, Education reported that a higher percentage of larger schools eligible for federal student aid programs offered distance education compared with smaller schools. Education reported its results using somewhat different size categories than the ones we used in our questionnaire, so the results cannot be presented side by side for comparative purposes. However, according to Education's report, the distribution was much the same: 41 percent of the schools with an enrollment of less than 3,000 offered distance education courses, compared with 88 percent of the schools with an enrollment of 3,000 to 9,999 and 95 percent of the schools with an enrollment of greater than 10,000.

Figure 5: Higher Percentage of Larger Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions Offer Distance Education



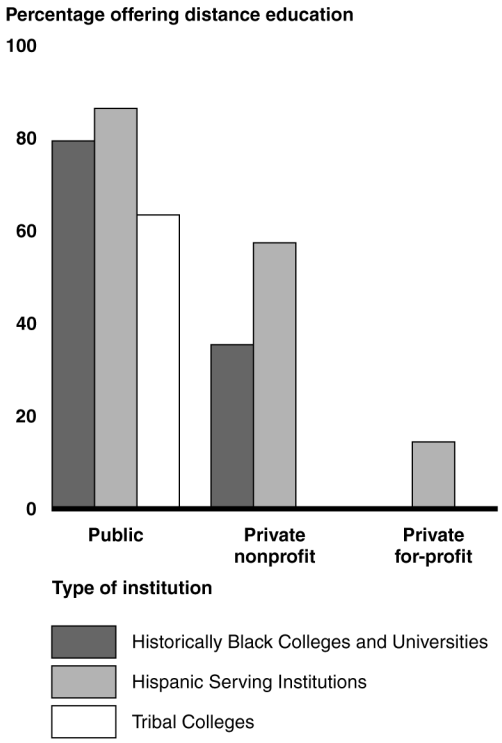
Source: GAO's Minority Serving Institution survey.

Our survey disclosed that Tribal Colleges, even though all have fewer than 2,000 students, were noticeably different from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions in the extent to which they were involved with distance education. Among Tribal Colleges, 65 percent offered at least one distance education course, compared with 34 percent of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and 33 percent of Hispanic Serving Institutions with 2,000 or fewer students. Our site visits to these schools raised several possible explanations. Potential students of many Tribal Colleges live in communities dispersed over large geographic areas—in some cases, potential students might live over a hundred miles from the nearest Tribal College or satellite campus—making it difficult or impossible for some students to commute to these schools. In these cases, distance education is an appealing way to deliver courses to remote locations. Also, officials at one Tribal College told us that some residents of reservations may be place-bound due to tribal and familial responsibilities, making distance education one of the few realistic postsecondary education options. Also important, according to some

officials, is that tribal residents have expressed an interest in enrolling in distance education courses.

With regard to type of school, Minority Serving Institutions mirrored the national trend in that the percentage of Minority Serving Institutions offering distance education was higher among public than private institutions (see fig. 6). Among public Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions, about 80 percent or more offered distance education; these percentages dropped by 20 percent or more for private nonprofit schools and was even lower for private for-profit schools. Similarly, Education's survey showed that about 90 percent of 4-year public institutions offered distance education, compared with 40 percent of private institutions.

Figure 6: Higher Percentage of Public Minority Serving Institutions Offer Distance Education



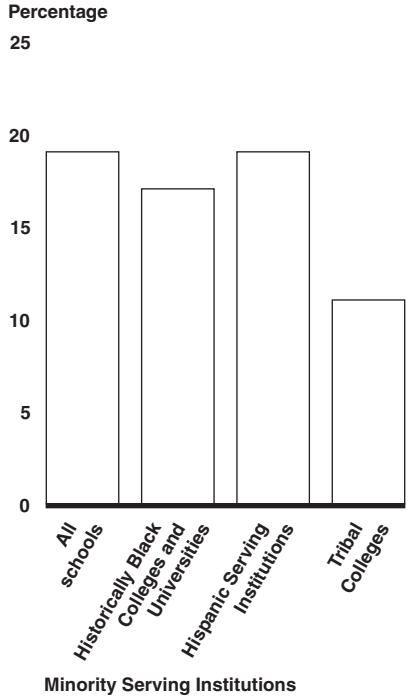
Source: GAO's Minority Serving Institution survey.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges Tend to Offer Fewer Distance Education Courses

While roughly the same percentage of Minority Serving Institutions offered at least one distance education course as non-Minority Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges tended to offer fewer courses. For example, of the schools that offered at least one distance education course, 52 percent of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities and 61 percent of Tribal Colleges offered 10 or fewer undergraduate distance education courses. By contrast, only 27 percent of 2-year and 4-year institutions that offered at least one distance education course and that were eligible for the federal student aid programs offered 10 or fewer distance education courses, according to Education's survey. Similarly, about 25 percent of Hispanic Serving Institutions that offered at least one distance education course also offered 10 or fewer courses. To some extent, these differences may reflect the fact that Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges, as a group, are smaller than other institutions. The relationship discussed earlier about an institution's enrollment and the size of its distance education program may help explain why the number of courses offered via distance education are generally smaller at these two types of Minority Serving Institutions.

While the overall size of the distance education programs was smaller, the percentage of Minority Serving Institutions offering degree programs through distance education was close to that of other schools. Education reported that about 19 percent of 2-year and 4-year institutions eligible for the federal student aid programs offered degree or certificate programs that could be earned entirely through distance education. Similarly, about 19 percent of Hispanic Serving Institutions and about 17 percent of Historically Black Colleges and Universities offered degree or certificate programs through distance education (see fig. 7). The percentage was lower for Tribal Colleges (11 percent).

Figure 7: Percent of Minority Serving Institutions Offering Degree Programs Is about the Same or Less Than Other Schools



Source: Department of Education and GAO Minority Serving Institution survey.

Fewer Minority Students Take Distance Education Courses

By analyzing Education's NPSAS database, we were also able to make some comparisons of the number of students taking distance education courses at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and non-Minority Serving Institutions. We were unable to develop data on the extent that Tribal College students use distance education because NPSAS included data from only one Tribal College. There appears to be a difference between minority students and other students in the extent to which they are involved with distance education courses. More specifically:

- Students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities tend to use distance education to a lesser extent than students at other schools. In school year 1999-2000, about 6 percent of undergraduate students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities enrolled in at least one distance education course and about 1.1 percent took their entire program through distance education. By comparison, 8.4 percent of undergraduates at other schools enrolled in at least one distance education course, and

2.5 percent took their entire program through distance education. These differences may reflect the fact that Historically Black Colleges and Universities generally offer fewer distance education courses than non-Minority Serving Institutions.

- Hispanic students attending Hispanic Serving Institutions use distance education at a lower rate than other students at the same schools. About 51 percent of the undergraduates at Hispanic Serving Institutions are Hispanic, but they comprise only about 40 percent of the undergraduate students enrolled in distance education classes. This difference is statistically significant. Similarly, our analysis also shows that the greater the percentage of Hispanic students at the institution, the lower the overall rate of distance education use at that school.

We analyzed student characteristics, such as their age and income, to determine if these characteristics could explain why these students were less involved in distance education, but our analysis did not establish such a link. The analysis showed that distance education students are more likely to be older, married, independent, a part-time student, and have a higher income than the average postsecondary student. Conversely, the average student at Historically Black Colleges and Universities is more likely to be younger, single, dependent, a full-time student, and have a lower income than the average postsecondary student, and to a somewhat lesser degree, the characteristics of students at Hispanic Serving Institutions tend to follow the same pattern. When we conducted a logistic regression analysis[16] to analyze these differences more carefully, we did not find that these characteristics tended to explain the extent to which a student is involved in distance education. Among the characteristics that we describe above, only a single student characteristic—marital status—was associated with whether a student enrolls in distance education, and this relationship was limited. This suggests that there may be other reasons, such as fewer courses being offered, that help explain why a smaller percentage of students at Historically Black Colleges and Hispanic students at Hispanic Serving Institutions enroll in distance education courses.

[16]Logistic regression procedures are often used to estimate the size and significance of the associations of different factors, such as marital status, age, and family income with a discrete or categorical outcome, such as whether a student did (or did not) take a distance education course in the past year.

Teaching Preference and Resources Available for Distance Education Affect the Extent to Which Minority Serving Institutions Offer Distance Education

According to officials of Minority Serving Institutions, there are two factors that explain why some Minority Serving Institutions do not offer distance education. First, nearly half of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions did not offer any distance education because they preferred to teach their students in the classroom rather than through distance education. Limited resources is the second factor reported by schools for not providing distance education. In addition, when placed within a broader context of technology improvements, Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions viewed distance education as a relatively low priority when compared to other purposes, such as increasing the use of information technology in the classroom. Most Tribal Colleges also viewed expanding technology usage on campus as a high priority, but they more frequently considered distance education a higher priority than Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions.

By Design, Some Minority Serving Institutions Prefer Not to Offer Distance Education

To a great degree or very great degree, nearly half of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions indicated that they do not offer distance education because classroom education best meets the needs of their students.[17] Conversely, only 10 percent of Tribal Colleges that are not involved in distance education indicated that classroom education best meets the needs of their students. Here are examples from two schools that prefer teaching their students in the classroom rather than by the use of distance education.

- Howard University, an Historically Black University in Washington, D.C., with about 10,000 students, has substantial information technology; however, it prefers to use the technology in teaching undergraduates on campus rather than through developing and offering distance education. The University has state-of-the-art hardware and software, such as wireless access to the school's network; a digital auditorium; and a 24-hour-a-day Technology Center, which support and enhance the academic achievement for its students. Despite its technological capabilities, the University does not offer distance education courses to undergraduates and has no plans to do so. According to the Dean of Scholarships and Financial Aid, the University prefers teaching undergraduates in the classroom because more self-discipline is needed

[17]Forty-four percent of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 37 percent of Hispanic Serving Institutions, and 39 percent of Tribal Colleges do not offer any distance education.

when taking distance education courses. Also, many undergraduates benefit from the support provided by students and faculty in a classroom setting.

- Robert Morris College is a private nonprofit Hispanic Serving Institution located in Chicago, Illinois, that offers bachelor degrees in business, computer technology, and health sciences. About 25 percent of its 6,200 undergraduates are Hispanic. Although the College has one computer for every four students, it does not offer distance education courses and has no plans to do so. School officials believe that classroom education best meets the needs of its students because of the personal interaction that occurs in a classroom setting.

Some Schools Would Like to Offer More Distance Education, but Have Limited Resources to Do So

Among Minority Serving Institutions that do not offer distance education, over 50 percent would like to offer distance education in the future, but indicated that they have limited resources with which to do so. About half of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions that do not offer distance education indicated that they do not have the necessary technology—including students with access to computers or the Internet at their residences—for distance education. A higher percentage of Tribal Colleges (67 percent) cited limitations in technology as a reason why they do not offer distance education. Technological limitations are twofold for Tribal Colleges. The first, and more obvious limitation is a lack of resources to purchase and develop needed technologies. The second is that due to the remote location of some campuses, schools do not have access to needed technology—that is, schools may be limited to the technology of the surrounding communities. For example, a school cannot purchase certain technologies that are not provided in those communities. All 10 Tribal Colleges that did not offer distance education indicated that improvements in technology, such as videoconference equipment and network infrastructure with greater speed, would be helpful. Here are some examples of how resource limitations impact development of distance education programs at Minority Serving Institutions.

- Little Priest Tribal College, located on the Winnebago Indian Reservation in northeastern Nebraska, does not offer any distance education courses, but would like to do so in the future. The college serves about 160 undergraduates and the Academic Dean indicated that two-way videoconference equipment and support personnel would be needed in order to offer distance education courses. She said that the school would like to offer courses in the native language (called Ho Chunk) of the Winnebago Tribe. Currently, a native speaker capable of teaching the

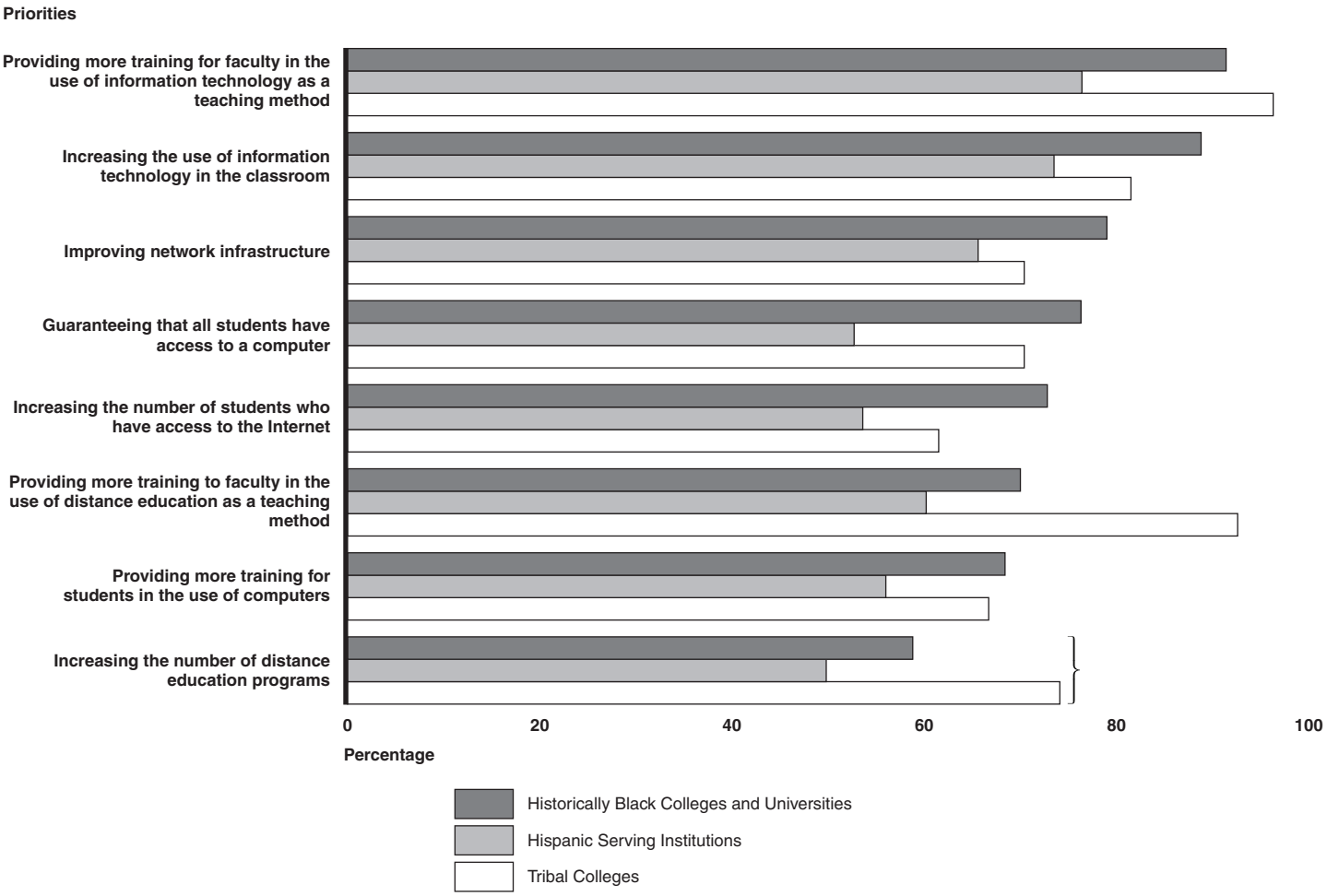
language resides in Wisconsin–hundreds of miles from the Winnebago reservation. Having such equipment would allow the instructor to teach the native language to students who attend classes on campus, according to the Academic Dean.

- Fisk University, an Historically Black University in Nashville, Tennessee, serves about 800 undergraduates and about 30 graduate students. The school does not offer distance education courses, but hopes to do so in the future. The Director, Academic Computing, indicated that distance education would help supplement the curriculum that the school currently offers to students. The school would also like to offer on-line courses in African-American History, however, it currently does not have the information technology equipment for distance education.

For Many Institutions, Expanding Technology on Campus is More Important Than Applying It to Distance Education

Minority Serving Institutions generally indicated that offering more distance education was a lower priority than using technology to educate their classroom students. All of the institutions reported that their highest priority was providing more training for faculty in the use of information technology as a teaching method. Other priorities included improving network infrastructure, increasing the use of technology in classrooms, and guaranteeing that all students have access to a computer. (See fig. 8 for a comparison of how distance education compares to other selected technology goals.)

Figure 8: Distance Education Generally Ranks Lower in Relation to Other Technology Goals



Source: GAO's Minority Serving Institution survey.

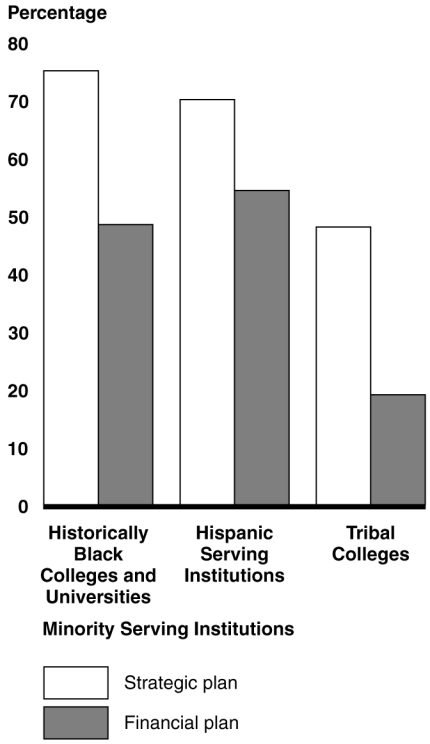
Minority Serving Institutions indicated that they expect to have difficulties in meeting their goals related to technology. Eighty-seven percent of Tribal Colleges, 83 percent of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and 82 percent of Hispanic Serving Institutions cited limitations in funding as a primary reason for why they may not achieve their technology-related goals. For example, the Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico, serves about 670 students and it uses distance education to provide courses for an associates degree in early childhood development to about 100 students. The school uses two-way satellite

communication and transmits the courses to 11 remote locations. According to a technology specialist at the school, this form of distance education is expensive compared to other methods. As an alternative, the Institute would like to establish two-way teleconferencing capability and Internet access at the off-site locations as a means of expanding educational opportunities. School officials noted, however, that many of the locations have no telephone or Internet service because they are in such remote areas of the state.

About half of the schools also noted that they might experience difficulty in meeting their goals because they did not have enough staff to operate and maintain information technology and to help faculty apply technology. For example, officials at Diné College, a Tribal College on the Navajo Reservation, told us they have not been able to fill a systems analyst position for the last 3 years. School officials cited their remote location and the fact that they are offering relatively low pay as problems in attracting employees that have skills in operating and maintaining technology equipment.

Having a systematic approach to expanding technology on campuses is an important step toward modernizing and evaluating technology at postsecondary schools. About 75 percent of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 70 percent of Hispanic Serving Institutions, and only 48 percent of Tribal Colleges had completed a strategic plan for expanding their technology infrastructure. Fewer schools had completed a financial plan for funding technology improvements. About half of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions, and 19 percent of Tribal Colleges have a financial plan for expanding their information technology (see fig. 9).

Figure 9: Percentage of Minority Serving Institutions That Have Strategic and Financial Plans for Expanding Their Technology Infrastructure



Source: GAO's Minority Serving Institution survey.

Studies by other organizations describe challenges faced by Minority Serving Institutions in expanding their technology infrastructure. For example, an October 2000 study by Booz, Allen, and Hamilton determined that historically or predominantly Black colleges identified challenges in funding, strategic planning, and keeping equipment up to date. An October 2000 report by the Department of Commerce found that most Historically Black Colleges and Universities have access to computing resources, such as high-speed Internet capabilities but individual student access to campus networks is seriously deficient due to, among other things, lack of student ownership of computers or lack of access from campus dormitories. An April 2003 Senate Report noted that only one Tribal College has funding for high-speed Internet.

Education Can Further Refine Its Programs for Monitoring Technology Usage at Minority Serving Institutions

Education is taking steps to monitor the extent to which its grants are improving the use of technology by Minority Serving Institutions; however, its efforts could be improved in two ways. First, as Education creates a new system for measuring the outcomes of its grants, it has opportunities to more completely capture technology-related information, including distance education, across the three major types of Minority Serving Institutions. Second, although Education has set a goal of improving technology capacity at Minority Serving Institutions, it has not yet developed a baseline against which progress can be measured. If Education is to be successful in developing such baseline data, it may need to examine the potential use of its existing research efforts, such as IPEDS. IPEDS is currently used to capture information on the different characteristics of institutions involved in the federal student aid programs. Education has studied the possibility of including technology-related information in IPEDS, but so far, has yet to make a decision on this matter.

Education Has Made Progress in Tracking Outcomes of Title III and Title V Programs, but Additional Improvements May Be Needed to Ensure More Complete Coverage Across the Major Types of Minority Serving Institutions

Increasing the technological capacity of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges is one goal Education has identified in its 2002-03 annual performance plan. Education's efforts are part of a larger effort by the administration to emphasize the outcomes of federal programs. According to the Office of Management and Budget, improving programs by focusing on results is an integral component of the administration's budget preparation process. In this regard, Education has made progress in tracking outcomes of its Title III and Title V programs, but additional improvements may be needed to make its efforts more complete across the three major types of Minority Serving Institutions.

In spring 2000, Title III and Title V program staff began an effort to improve the program monitoring system. As part of these efforts, Education wanted to develop a system that can capture information to demonstrate how grants improve the education of students that Minority Serving Institutions serve. Among the activities that Education and grantees discussed were how grants are being used to improve information technology on campuses and how best to collect information on how such efforts improve the education of students. For example, program staff held a series of four meetings with about 200 schools and conducted telephone conferences with another 90 institutions to obtain feedback on the format and effectiveness of the draft annual performance report. The Office of Management and Budget reviewed and approved the annual performance report and commended Education for "substantial revisions" made to its performance reporting system and "meaningful

interaction with stakeholders." In March 2003, Education received the first set of data from its grantees for its annual performance report. According to staff responsible for the annual performance report, the new monitoring effort is a "work in progress" and continued improvements and revisions will likely occur later this year.

In this regard, the progress Education has made in developing an annual performance report that focuses on results is a major step toward improving program performance, however, additional improvements may be needed. More specifically, we found that the way Education tracks the usage of grant funds for technology improvements among Minority Serving Institutions may not completely reflect how Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges use their grants. The tracking of technology-related information appears to be adequate for Hispanic Serving Institutions. (See table 3.) For example, Education's tracking effort for Hispanic Serving Institutions includes the extent to which program funds (1) improve student and faculty access to the Internet, (2) increase the number of computers available to students outside of classrooms, and (3) expand the number of new distance education courses and students. Similar information is not collected for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges even though a substantial number of these schools use grant funds to expand distance education offerings or to improve technology on campus. Eight of the 11 Tribal Colleges that received new Title III grants in 2001 stated that funds would be used to develop or expand technology usage, including distance education. Similarly, between 1999-2001, about 23 percent of Historically Black Colleges and Universities that responded to our survey indicated that they used Title III funds on distance education.

Table 3: Differences in the Types of Activities Monitored by Education in Minority Serving Institution Annual Reports

Activities monitored by Education in annual performance reports for Title III (part B), Title V (part A), and Title III (part A)	Minority Serving Institution reports		
	Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Title III (part B))	Hispanic Serving Institutions (Title V (part A))	Tribal Colleges (Title III (part A))
Increase in the number of "wired" classrooms	Yes[a]	Yes	Yes
Offer training to faculty in the use of technology	Yes	Yes	Yes
Increase student access to the Internet	No[a]	Yes	No
Increase the number of computers available to students outside of the classroom	No	Yes	No
Increase the number of courses using technology	No	Yes	No
Increase the number of students taking courses using technology	No	Yes	No
Increase the number of students using distance learning	No	Yes	No

Source: Department of Education and GAO analysis of Education's Annual Performance Reports for Title III, part A, Title III, part B, and Title V, part A of the Higher Education Act, as amended.

[a]A "yes" response indicates that the information was collected in the report. A "no" response indicates that the information was not collected in the report.

According to managers of the Titles III and V programs, the differences in the types of information on activities and outcomes that are captured for each report stems from differences in the titles themselves. Title V, part A, under which funds are provided to Hispanic Serving Institutions, explicitly allows program funds to be used for "creating or improving facilities for Internet or other distance learning academic instruction capabilities, including purchase or rental of telecommunications technology equipment or services." The program for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Title III, part B) and Tribal Colleges (Title III, part A) does not specifically address the use of funds in this manner, however, using grant funds for expanding distance education offerings or technology usage are authorized activities, according to Education staff. Inasmuch as Minority Serving Institutions indicated in their questionnaire responses that they have an interest in expanding both the use of technology in the classroom and distance education, it may be appropriate to make the annual performance reports as inclusive as possible.

Education Does Not Have Baseline Data to Measure Technological Capacity at Minority Serving Institutions

One difficulty that Education will encounter in attempting to judge the extent to which Minority Serving Institutions are increasing their technological capacity is that it has no baseline to measure against. Education may have opportunities to fill this void by expanding its existing research efforts to include data on technology usage and capabilities at all schools, including Minority Serving Institutions.[18] One vehicle for accomplishing this could be through IPEDS, a product of one of Education's research efforts that is conducted annually and that contains data on the characteristics of institutions and their students' eligibility for federal student aid programs.

Although Education has researched the usage of distance education[19] at postsecondary institutions, it does not collect data from postsecondary institutions on the capacity of or improvements in their technology infrastructure. The growing use of technology by postsecondary institutions has surfaced as an important area of research in recent years and Education has held meetings on how to measure technology capacity at postsecondary institutions. Staff from the Title III and Title V programs indicated that having such data for Minority Serving Institutions and other institutions would provide a national perspective on technology infrastructure at these schools. However, according to other Education officials, two issues need to be addressed before such a change can be made. First, there are different views on how to accurately measure technology infrastructure at postsecondary institutions. For example, in determining how many computers are available to students at a school, there is no agreement on whether personal computers, computers in the library, and computers for faculty should be included in total or in part. Second, before Education expands any of its data collection efforts, Office

[18]Education recognizes the importance of its research to policymakers and other users. Education stated in its 2002-03 annual plan that it will focus Education's research activities on topics of greatest relevance. In this regard, the Congress has expressed interest in information technology at Minority Institutions. In April 2003, the Senate passed S. 196, Minority Serving Institution Digital and Wireless Technology Opportunity Act of 2003 to strengthen technology infrastructure at Minority Serving Institutions. If enacted, this statute would create a new grant program at the National Science Foundation for funding technology improvements at institutions that serve a high percentage of minority students.

[19]The Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics has produced several reports on distance education, including *Distance Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions: 2000-2001* (Washington D.C.: July 2003) and *Distance Education Instruction by Postsecondary Faculty and Staff: Fall 1998* (Washington D.C.: February 2002). While the reports provide aggregate data on distance education, they do not provide data on distance education at Minority Serving Institutions.

of Management and Budget regulations[20] that implement the Paperwork Reduction Act require agencies to evaluate, among other things, the need for collecting data and the costs to respondents of generating, maintaining, or providing the data. Education would need to determine how best to resolve these issues before moving forward with any changes.

Conclusions

Minority Serving Institutions view the use of technology as a critical tool in educating their students. Technology allows greater access to the latest research and to a broader array of information. Ultimately, Minority Serving Institutions, like other schools, face stiff challenges in keeping pace with the rapid changes and opportunities presented by information technology.

In creating the Title III and Title V programs, the Congress acknowledged that Minority Serving Institutions have historically had limited resources to invest in educating their students when compared to other institutions. More complete data on how Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges use Title III funds for improving technology on campus, and thus, the education of students, would help inform program managers and policymakers about progress that has been made and opportunities for improvement. Additionally, as Education examines the many research efforts it has, it may find it beneficial to collect information on distance education and technology capacity at postsecondary institutions. Doing so would provide baseline data on Minority Serving Institutions and the progress they make in improving their technology capacity.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Secretary of Education (1) direct managers of the Title III and Title V programs to further improve their annual performance report for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges by including areas such as student access to computers and the number of distance education courses that were offered and (2) study the feasibility of adding questions on distance education and information technology to an existing study at Education, such as IPEDS, to develop baseline data on technology capacity at Minority Serving Institutions and to judge the extent to which progress is being made.

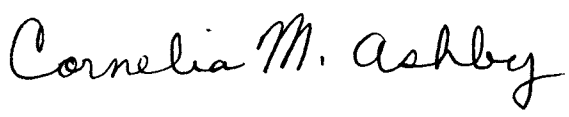
[20] 5 C.F.R., part 1320.

Agency Comments

In commenting on a draft of this report, Education generally agreed with our findings and recommendations. Specifically, Education agreed to broaden its monitoring of Title III and Title V programs to ensure that appropriate information about the needs of institutions in the area of distance learning and technology for course delivery are considered. Education generally agreed with our second recommendation to study the feasibility of adding questions on distance education and information technology to existing research efforts that it carries out. Education stated that it would explore expanding the sample of the Postsecondary Education Quick Information System (PEQIS) to include more Minority Serving Institutions. According to Education, PEQIS is used to collect information on topics of national importance from postsecondary institutions. Education used PEQIS to collect data for three distance education studies, including the most recent, *Distance Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions: 2000-2001*, data from which we used in this report. Also, Education stated that it would consider our specific suggestion related to what data could be collected from institutions under IPEDS. In addition to commenting on our recommendations, Education offered some technical comments on the report and we revised the draft report when appropriate. Education's written comments are reprinted in appendix V.

As arranged with your offices, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 24 days from its issue date. At that time, we will send copies of this report to appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of Education, and other interested parties. In addition, this report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site at http://www.gao.gov.

If you or members of your staffs have any questions regarding this report, please call me on (202) 512-8403. Other contacts and acknowledgments are listed in appendix VI.



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Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

To determine whether the use of distance education varies between Minority Serving Institutions and non-Minority Serving Institutions, we developed and sent questionnaires to a fall 2000 list of 108 Historically Black Colleges and Universities,[1] 334 Hispanic Serving Institutions, and 32 Tribal Colleges[2] that we received from Education. Each type of school received a distinct questionnaire. The questionnaires had questions on whether the institution offered distance education, and if so, how many courses and degree programs were offered. The response rate to each questionnaire was 78 percent for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 75 percent for Hispanic Serving Institutions, and 82 percent for Tribal Colleges. We compared the results of the survey with a July 2003 report from Education's National Center for Education Statistics entitled *Distance Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Education Institutions: 2000-2001*. This survey was sent to over 1,600 2-year and 4-year degree granting institutions that were eligible for the federal student aid programs and provided information on distance education offerings by these schools. We also analyzed the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey (NPSAS) to determine the extent that students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions enrolled in distance education courses. NPSAS contains information on characteristics of students who attended postsecondary institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions in the 1999-2000 school year. NPSAS contained information on students at only one Tribal College, so we were unable to develop similar information for students attending Tribal Colleges. Finally, we analyzed IPEDS to develop data on the institutional characteristics of Minority Serving Institutions.

[1]When we analyzed the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), we limited our work to the 102 Historically Black Colleges and Universities that were eligible for the federal student aid programs. For our survey instrument, we received a list of 108 Historically Black Colleges and Universities from Education. Five of the schools were not eligible for federal student aid programs in 2000-01 (Carver State Technical College; Selma University; Shorter College; Natchez College, and Knoxville College). A sixth school, Hinds Community College-Utica Campus had reported itself as part of the main campus by the time we conducted our analysis of IPEDS.

[2]When we analyzed IPEDS, we limited our work to the 29 Tribal Colleges eligible for the federal student aid programs. For our survey instrument, we received a list of 32 Tribal Colleges from Education. Three of the schools were not eligible for the federal student aid program in 2000-01 (Si Tanka College; White Earth Tribal and Community College, and Medicine Creek Tribal College).

To determine what factors account for any differences in usage of distance education between Minority Serving Institutions and non-Minority Serving Institutions, we developed statistics from NPSAS on the characteristics of students enrolled in distance education and those that were not. We conducted logistic regression—a type of analysis that is designed to show the influence of one or several variables on another variable to see whether student characteristics, such as age and income influenced their involvement in distance education at Minority Serving Institutions. We also used the results from our survey to see if different characteristics of Minority Serving Institutions, such as their size, location in rural or urban areas, and type of funding sources, such as whether the school was public or private nonprofit, had any bearing on whether the school offered distance education. Additionally, we used the results of our survey to see whether institutional strategies for teaching students may have had any effect on whether schools offered distance education.

To determine what factors Minority Serving Institutions consider when deciding whether to offer distance education, we used the results from our survey. To determine what steps Education could take, if any, to improve its monitoring of the results of their Title III (part A) and (part B) and Title V (part A) programs as it relates to improvements in technology, including distance education, we also used the results from our survey. Additionally, we reviewed the statutes that created programs for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges. We interviewed managers of these programs and obtained and reviewed documents related to Education's performance measures and goals.

To develop our survey instruments, we interviewed officials at organizations that represent Minority Serving Institutions, including the United Negro College Fund, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. We developed and pretested our questionnaire during visits to 6 Historically Black Colleges and Universities—Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland; Howard University in the District of Columbia; Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina; Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana; Wiley College in Marshall, Texas; and Texas College in Tyler, Texas. Also, we developed and pretested our survey at 5 Hispanic Serving Institutions—San Antonio Community College in San Antonio, Texas; University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas; Rio Hondo College in Whittier, California; East Los Angeles College in Monterrey Park, California; and National Hispanic University in San Jose, California.

We also developed and pretested our survey at 4 Tribal Colleges—Northwest Indian College in Bellingham, Washington; Diné College in Tsaile, Arizona; Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and D-Q University in Davis, California. In addition, to obtain additional information based on the results provided by Minority Serving Institutions, we visited and interviewed officials at Delaware State University in Dover, Delaware; Gavilan College in Gilroy, California; and Salish-Kootenai College in Pablo, Montana. To obtain additional information on how non-Minority Serving Institutions fund their distance education programs, we visited Cabrillo College in Aptos, California; Montana Tech in Butte, Montana; and the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware.

Finally, we reviewed studies on the history and use of technology at Minority Serving Institutions. The studies included *Historically Black Colleges and Universities (An Assessment of Networking and Connectivity*), Department of Commerce, October 2000; *Historically Black Public Colleges and Universities: An Assessment of Current Information Technology Usage*, Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund, October 2000; *Latinos and Information Technology—The Promise and the Challenge*, The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, February 2002; *Tribal Colleges: An Introduction*, American Indian Higher Education Consortium, February 1999; and *The Power of the Internet for Learning: Moving From Promise to Practice*, Report of the Web-Based Education Commission to the President and the Congress of the United States, December 2000.

We conducted our work in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards between October 2002 and September 2003.

Appendix II: Historically Black Colleges and Universities

In most ways, Historically Black Colleges and Universities provide the same educational opportunities found at other schools. The Department of Education reported that there were 102 Historically Black Colleges and Universities in 20 states as well as the District of Columbia, and one in the Virgin Islands that were participating in federal student aid programs in the 2000-01 school year. Historically Black Colleges and Universities offer a variety of degrees—from associates to doctoral. They are comprised of technical colleges, community colleges, public colleges, private colleges, and both religious and nonsectarian schools. They range in size from large (12,000 students at Florida A&M) to small (under 100 students at Clinton Junior College and Texas College). In other ways, there are distinctions to be made between Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other schools. The clearest distinctions are in the students they serve, and in the histories and missions of the institutions.

History

The 102 institutions recognized as Historically Black Colleges and Universities were established at various times in the nation's history in response to historical circumstances that limited educational opportunities for Black students. The earliest of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities precede the Civil War when abolitionists from the North founded formal institutions of higher learning for Black Americans. This first wave of establishing Historically Black Colleges and Universities began in 1837, when Richard Humphreys, a Quaker philanthropist, founded Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, with the purpose of educating free Blacks and emancipated slaves. Other pre-Civil War Historically Black Colleges and Universities that were founded to educate freed slaves include Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, founded in 1854; Wilberforce University in Ohio, founded in 1856; and Harris-Stowe State College in Missouri, founded in 1857.

The second wave of creating Historically Black Colleges and Universities began after the Civil War. More than four million slaves and free Blacks were illiterate at the time of emancipation in 1865. Between 1870 and 1890, 13 public colleges were established, including Virginia State University in Virginia and Claflin College in South Carolina. The founding of private schools, however, represented the largest portion of the second wave of school creation. Between 1865 and 1890, 37 privately supported Black colleges were created. Schools such as these were founded and funded by missionary philanthropists who supported education for Black Americans as a way to bring about racial equality. Included in this group are schools such as Morehouse College in Georgia and Stillman College in Alabama.

Federal support for Black institutions of higher education grew in the late 1800s. This support resulted, in part, from the passage of the Morrill Act of 1890—which prompted the third wave of creating Historically Black Colleges and Universities in this country. Under the Morrill Act of 1890,[1] the Congress made available land grants for the establishment of institutions of higher education under the condition that land-grant schools could not discriminate in their admissions policies based on race. States that did not want to create integrated institutions could use the grants to create racially segregated schools, provided that the funding was divided equitably between the institutions. Land-grant colleges and universities were required to teach practical industrial subjects, such as agriculture and mechanical arts. The Morrill Act of 1890 helped to fund 20 of today's Historically Black Colleges and Universities, including Alcorn State University in Mississippi, Florida A&M University, and Tuskegee University in Alabama.

The Higher Education Act was originally passed in 1965. Title III of this act provides financial assistance to institutions of higher education with low per-student expenditures, large numbers of financially disadvantaged students, or a large proportion of minority students. Title III, part B of the act provides grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities that are determined by the Secretary of Education to meet the statutory definition of such institutions.[2] The purpose of Title III, part B is to provide financial assistance to establish or strengthen the physical plants, financial management, academic resources, and endowments of Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Total funding under Title III, part B for Historically Black Colleges and Universities has increased from $136 million, funding 98 institutions in fiscal year 1999, to $206 million, funding 99 institutions in fiscal year 2002, or an increase of about 51 percent. Additionally, funding for graduate program opportunities at

[1]During the Civil War, in 1862, the Congress passed the First Morrill Act, which provided funding in the form of land grants to states for founding institutions of higher education. Land-grant colleges were intended to educate students in agriculture and the mechanical arts.

[2]The definition of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, found at 20 U.S.C. 1061(2) is threefold. First, Historically Black Colleges and Universities had to be established before 1964. Second, the institution's principal mission had to be then, as now, the education of Black Americans. Third, the institution must be accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary of Education to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered, or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities has increased 50 percent from $30 million in fiscal year 1999 to $49 million in fiscal year 2002.

Characteristics of Historically Black Colleges and Universities

In the 2000-01 school year, there were 102 Historically Black Colleges and Universities eligible for the federal student aid programs. These schools were located in 20 states—primarily in the Southern and Eastern portion of the United States, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands. Our analysis of the 2000-01 IPEDS shows that while Historically Black Colleges and Universities were only 2 percent of all public and nonprofit postsecondary institutions, in the fall of 2000 they enrolled 14 percent (223,359) of Black non-Hispanic students in the United States.[3] The percent of Black non-Hispanic students at a Historically Black College or University in the fall of 2000 ranged from 100 percent at 5 institutions (Clinton Junior College and Morris College in South Carolina, Johnson C. Smith University in North Carolina, Tougaloo in Mississippi, and Miles College in Alabama) to 10 percent at Bluefield State College in West Virginia, with an average of 85 percent. In comparison, non-Historically Black Colleges and Universities averaged around 10 percent Black students in the fall of 2000.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities offer a range of degrees from different types of institutions. Degrees offered in 2000-01 included associate, bachelor, master, first professional, and doctoral. Eighty-seven percent offered a bachelor's degree or higher. Of the 102 Historically Black Colleges and Universities, about half were private nonprofit institutions, and about half were public institutions. There are no private for-profit Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Additionally, there are single gender schools, such as Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia—a women's college—and one Catholic Historically Black University—Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities are generally smaller in size, have lower tuitions, and smaller endowments than postsecondary institutions overall.[4] The average postsecondary institution is 1.4 times

[3]The calculations in this section are based on data for the 2000-01 school year. This was the most current complete dataset available. This section excludes institutions not eligible for the federal student aid programs and for-profit institutions. The for-profit institutions are excluded because there are no for-profit Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

[4]Postsecondary institutions refer to all public and private nonprofit schools eligible for the federal student aid programs.

larger than the average Historically Black College or University. While 83 percent of Historically Black Colleges and Universities had 5,000 students or fewer, the same is true of only 78 percent of other institutions. The largest Historically Black University in the fall of 2000 was Florida A&M with 12,126 students, compared to the largest non-Historically Black University, which was the University of Texas at Austin with 50,000 students.

Two important sources of revenue for postsecondary institutions—tuition and endowments—were both lower at Historically Black Colleges and Universities than at other institutions. The average in-state, undergraduate tuition at public Historically Black Colleges and Universities was $1,993 in the 2000-01 school year. For private Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the average undergraduate tuition was $7,009. These same statistics for other institutions were $2,067, and $11,480, respectively. The average market value of institutional endowments for public schools at the end of the 2000-01 school year was about $5 million for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, but over $51 million for other public institutions. Endowment data on private nonprofit schools are not available in IPEDS.

Characteristics of Students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Demographic characteristics of students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities vary somewhat from national averages for postsecondary students. According to data from the Department of Education's 1999-2000 NPSAS, the average undergraduate student at a Historically Black College or University was younger than the national average of undergraduate students (24.8 years old versus 26.4 years old). Undergraduates at Historically Black Colleges and Universities were also more likely to be single, dependent, and full-time students when compared to the national average. Eleven percent of students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities were married compared to 23 percent of students overall, and 42 percent of students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities were independent, compared to 49 percent of students overall. Seventy-five percent of students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities were full-time students compared to 52 percent overall.

Economic Characteristics

Although tuition is generally lower at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, students who attend these schools are generally able to contribute less to the cost of their education than are students at non-Minority Serving Institutions. Median household family incomes are considerably lower for Black Americans than they are for households

overall. This is reflected in one measure of a family's ability to pay for college—the Expected Family Contribution.[5] The Expected Family Contribution was lower in 2000-01 for families of students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities than it was for families of students attending other, non-Minority Serving Institutions. In the 2000-01 school year, the average Expected Family Contribution for students attending public non-Minority Serving Institutions was $659, while it was only $480 for families of students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Additionally, the percentage of students receiving Pell Grants—financial aid that is available to the neediest students in the nation—at Historically Black Colleges and Universities was 51 percent, compared to 24 percent of students at non-Minority Serving Institutions.

Both students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and their parents have lower income levels than students and parents at other institutions. In 1998, the average yearly income of independent students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities was $24,508, while it was $35,643 for independent students at non-Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Also in 1998, the average yearly income of parents of dependent, undergraduate students was 1.3 times higher for non-Historically Black College and University parents—$48,311 for Historically Black College and University parents, and $65,037 for non-Historically Black College and University parents.

[5]Expected Family Contribution is a formula that considers family income; accumulated savings; the amount of taxes paid; family size; the number of children simultaneously enrolled in college; the age of the older parent and how close they may be to retirement; and the student's own financial resources. See 20 U.S.C. § 1087nn.

Appendix III: Hispanic Serving Institutions

As part of the 1992 Amendments to the Higher Education Act, the Congress stipulated that Hispanic Serving Institutions were deserving of grant funds to address educational needs of Hispanic students. Education reported that in the 2000-01 school year, there were 334 institutions eligible for federal student aid programs that were located in 14 states and Puerto Rico that qualified as Hispanic Serving Institutions, including the University of Miami and the University of New Mexico. Degrees offered from Hispanic Serving Institutions include associate, bachelor, master, professional, and doctoral. In the fall of 2000, the largest Hispanic Serving Institution had 46,834 students and the smallest had 58 students.

History

The creation of Hispanic Serving Institutions has resulted from a growing Hispanic population, and attempts to move this population more fully into the U.S. educational system.[1] Recent immigration to the United States has grown since the mid-1940s, with an increasing percentage of these immigrants coming from Latin America. The combination of high rates of immigration with high fertility rates among the Hispanic population has resulted in its being the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population and the largest minority group. At the same time, however, Hispanics have the highest high school drop out rate of any group in the country, and lower college enrollment and completion rates than both blacks and whites.

In 1992, the Congress added a new section to the Higher Education Act of 1965 authorizing a grant program for Hispanic Serving Institutions.[2] An institution is considered a Hispanic Serving Institution if its enrolled undergraduate full-time equivalent student population is at least 25 percent Hispanic and not less than 50 percent of the institution's Hispanic students are low-income individuals. The purpose of the grants is to expand educational opportunities for, and improve the academic attainment of, Hispanic students; and expand and enhance the academic offerings, program quality, and instructional stability of colleges and universities that are educating the majority of Hispanic college students and helping large numbers of Hispanic students and other low-income

[1]People of Hispanic origin were those who indicated that their origin was Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or some other Hispanic origin. Hispanics may be of any race.

[2]Pub. L. No. 102-325 § 302(d) (1992).

individuals complete postsecondary degrees. In 1995, the first grantees[3]—37 schools for a 5-year period—were funded after $12 million was appropriated for the program. In 1998, the Congress moved the provisions authorizing grants to Hispanic Serving Institutions to Title V of the Higher Education Act. In fiscal year 1999 the appropriation was raised to $28 million. By 2002, 172 of the 334 Hispanic Serving Institutions received $86.1 million in grant funds under Title V.

Characteristics of Hispanic Serving Institutions

In the 2000-01 school year, there were 334 Hispanic Serving Institutions that were eligible for federal student aid programs located in 14 states and Puerto Rico.[4] Our analysis of the 2000-01 IPEDS shows that while Hispanic Serving Institutions were only 5 percent of all postsecondary institutions in the fall of 2000, they enrolled 48 percent (798,489) of all Hispanic students.[5] The percent of Hispanic students at a Hispanic Serving Institution varied from 25 percent at ITT Technical Institute in California to 100 percent at 60 institutions in Puerto Rico.

Hispanic Serving Institutions offer a range of degrees—associate, bachelor, master, professional, and doctoral—from different types of institutions. For 60 percent of the institutions, an associate's degree is the highest degree offered, and the other 40 percent offered a bachelor's degree or higher. Of the 334 Hispanic Serving Institutions, 45 percent were public, 23 percent were private nonprofit, and 32 percent were private for-profit institutions. Hispanic Serving Institutions are generally larger in size than postsecondary institutions overall.[6] The average Hispanic Serving Institution in the fall of 2000 was more than two times larger than the average postsecondary institution overall. The largest Hispanic Serving Institution at that time was Miami Dade Community College in Florida,

[3]Funds are awarded as 5-year grants, with a mandatory 2-year wait out period before an institution can reapply.

[4]These 334 Hispanic Serving Institutions include branch campuses. For example, there are 16 campuses of ITT Technical Institute that are counted as separate Hispanic Serving Institutions.

[5]The calculations in this section are based on data for the 2000-01 school year. This was the most current complete dataset available. The calculations exclude institutions that were not eligible for federal student aid programs.

[6]Postsecondary institutions overall refers to all institutions that were eligible for federal student aid programs, including those that offer less than an associate degree. All Hispanic Serving Institutions offer at least an associate degree.

with 46,834 students, while the largest non-Hispanic Serving Institution was the University of Texas at Austin, with 50,000 students. In the fall of 2000 there were 9 Hispanic Serving Institutions with more than 25,000 students.

Two important sources of revenue for postsecondary institutions—tuition and endowments—were lower at public and private nonprofit Hispanic Serving Institutions than at non-Hispanic Serving Institutions. The average in-state undergraduate tuition at public Hispanic Serving Institutions was $1,083 in the 2000-01 school year. For private nonprofit Hispanic Serving Institutions, the average undergraduate tuition was $7,202, and for private for-profit Hispanic Serving Institutions it was $8,830. These same statistics for non-Hispanic Serving Institutions were $2,151, $11,542, and $8,745, respectively. The average market value of institutional endowments for public postsecondary institutions at the end of the 2000-01 school year was about $15.3 million for Hispanic Serving Institutions, compared to $52.1 million for non-Hispanic Serving Institutions. Endowment data on private nonprofit schools are not available in IPEDS.

Characteristics of Hispanic Students at Hispanic Serving Institutions

Demographic characteristics of Hispanic students at Hispanic Serving Institutions vary somewhat from national averages for all postsecondary students.[7] According to data from the 1999-2000 Department of Education's National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, the average Hispanic undergraduate student at a Hispanic Serving Institution was slightly younger than the national average of undergraduate students (25.5 years versus 26.4 years). Similar to the national average for undergraduates, about half of Hispanic undergraduates at Hispanic Serving Institutions were independent and about half were full-time students. Hispanic undergraduate students at Hispanic Serving Institutions were more likely to work full-time when compared to undergraduate students overall—44 percent of Hispanic undergraduates at Hispanic Serving Institutions worked full-time compared to 39.3 percent of students overall.

Economic Characteristics

Although tuition is generally lower at Hispanic Serving Institutions, students who attend Hispanic Serving Institutions are generally able to

[7]Students at Hispanic Serving Institutions refers to both Hispanic and non-Hispanic students, unless otherwise noted.

contribute less to the cost of their education than are students from non-Minority Serving Institutions; Median household family incomes are considerably lower for families of Hispanic origin than they are for white, non-Hispanics. This is reflected in one measure of a family's ability to pay for college—the Expected Family Contribution.[8] On average, the Expected Family Contribution was lower in 2000-01 for families of students at Hispanic Serving Institutions than it was for families of students attending other, non-Minority Serving Institutions—$449 compared to $659. Additionally, the percentage of students receiving Pell Grants—financial aid that is available to the neediest students in the nation—at Hispanic Serving Institutions was 31 percent, compared to 24 percent of students at non-Minority Serving Institutions.

Both students at Hispanic Serving Institutions and their parents have lower income levels than other institutions. The average yearly income of independent students at Hispanic Serving Institutions in 1998 was $28,921, while it was $35,501 for independent students overall. For Hispanic students attending Hispanic Serving Institutions, the average income is even lower, at $26,193. The average yearly income of the parents of dependent, undergraduate students in 1998 was 1.5 times higher for non-Hispanic Serving Institution parents—$43,675 for Hispanic Serving Institution parents, and $67,034 for non-Hispanic Serving Institution parents.

[8]Expected Family Contribution is a formula that considers family income; accumulated savings; the amount of taxes paid; family size; the number of children simultaneously enrolled in college; the age of the older parent and how close they may be to retirement; and the student's own financial resources. See 20 U.S.C. § 1087nn.

Appendix IV: Tribal Colleges

Tribal Colleges were founded to educate students both in Western models of learning, as well as in traditional American Indian cultures and languages. This dual mission of Tribal Colleges distinguishes them from other colleges and universities. The Department of Education reported that there were 29 Tribal Colleges in 12 states participating in federal student aid programs in the 2000-01 school year.[1] All of these colleges offered associate degrees, 2 offered bachelor's degrees, and 2 offered master's degrees. In the fall of 2000, the largest Tribal College had less than 2,000 students.

History

The history of Tribal Colleges is rooted in the desire of tribes to have greater control in the education of their members—called self-determination—and in the desire to improve access to postsecondary educational opportunities for American Indians. The Navajo tribe founded the first Tribal College, Diné College (formerly Navajo Community College), in 1968. By 1980, 20 Tribal Colleges, such as Blackfeet Community College in Montana, Northwest Indian College in Washington, and Sinte Gleska University in South Dakota, had been founded by various tribes. Tribal Colleges were often modeled after community colleges and shared community college philosophies of open admissions, job training, and community development along with local control and dedication to local needs.

For hundreds of years, the education system in the United States almost always sought to assimilate American Indians into a cultural and educational backdrop that was largely European. For example, in the nineteenth century, boarding schools were created with the intent of separating American Indian youth from their heritage and culture. However, beginning about 1968, the federal government moved toward a policy of tribal self-determination that included a greater set of tools and resources so that tribes could better control their own educational activities. For example, the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act[2] was passed in 1975, and in part, called for "assuring maximum Indian participation in the direction of educational as well as other federal services to Indian communities."

[1]The Department of Education listed 3 other Tribal Colleges where students were not eligible for the federal student financial aid programs.

[2]Pub. L. No. 93-638 (1975).

Concurrent to the self-determination movement, as the result of the GI Bill[3] of 1944 and the Higher Education Act of 1965, a college education became more accessible to all Americans, including American Indians. Tribes, including the Blackfeet, the Chippewa, and the Standing Rock Sioux created colleges in response to the growing interest on the part of American Indians in obtaining a college education.

While many Tribal Colleges offer degrees in areas of study frequently found at other postsecondary institutions, such as accounting, education, computer science, and nursing, they also offer courses and degrees unique to their tribes or to Tribal Colleges. For example:

- DQ University in Davis, California, offers associate of arts degrees in Native American fine arts, as well as in indigenous studies. They also offer certificates in gaming administration and in Indian dispute resolution.
- Diné College in Arizona offers associate degrees in Navajo culture, history, and language, and Navajo bilingual/bicultural education.
- Oglala Lakota Community College in South Dakota has an associate of arts degree in tribal management, as well as a bachelor of arts in Lakota studies.

One source of federal support for Tribal Colleges is through the Higher Education Act of 1965.[4] Title III of the act provides financial assistance to institutions of higher education with low per-student expenditures, large numbers of financially disadvantaged students, or a large proportion of minority students. Title III, part A provides grants to American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities, as defined by federal statute.[5] The purpose of Title III, part A is to assist eligible institutions to become self-sufficient by providing funds to improve and strengthen their academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability. In fiscal

[3]Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, ch. 268, 58 Stat. 284.

[4]Other sources of federal aid for Tribal Colleges include the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act of 1978, Land Grant Funding, and the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs.

[5]25 U.S.C. 1801(a)(4). The definition of a tribally controlled college or university is an institution of higher education, which is formally controlled, or has been formally sanctioned, or chartered, by the governing body of an Indian tribe or tribes, except that no more than one such institution shall be recognized with respect to any such tribe.

year 1999, 8 Tribal Colleges received a total of $3 million under Title III, part A. By fiscal year 2002, 27 Tribal Colleges received $17.5 million.

Characteristics of Tribal Colleges

In the 2000-01 school year, there were 29 Tribal Colleges[6] located in 12 states that were eligible for federal student aid programs. Our analysis of the 2000-01 IPEDS shows that while Tribal Colleges were less than 1 percent of all public and not-for-profit postsecondary institutions, they enrolled 8 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students in the United States, serving 11,262 students.[7] The percentage of American Indian/Alaska Native students in the student body at Tribal Colleges averaged 85 percent in fall 2000 and ranged from 100 percent (at Crownpoint Institute of Technology in New Mexico, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in New Mexico, Institute of American Indian Arts in New Mexico, Haskell Indian Nations University in Kansas, and Stone Child College in Montana) to 21 percent (at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College in Minnesota). In comparison, other U.S. colleges and universities[8] averaged around 1 percent American Indian students in fall 2000.

Tribal Colleges are typically community colleges, and therefore, offered less variety in the types of degrees offered, as well as the type of institution compared to other U.S. colleges and universities. In addition, they were much smaller on average than other U.S. colleges and universities. While there were 2 Tribal Colleges whose highest degree offered was a master's degree in 2000-01 (Oglala Lakota College and Sinte Gleska College) and 2 whose highest degree offered was a bachelor's degree (Haskell Indian Nations University and Salish Kootenai College), 25, or 86 percent, reported an associate degree as their highest degree offered. All 29 of the Tribal Colleges received funding from the federal government. There were no private for-profit Tribal Colleges. The average U.S. college or university was eight times larger than the average Tribal College. The largest Tribal College, Diné College in Arizona, enrolled 1,712 students in the fall of 2000. In comparison, the University of Texas at

[6]In 2002, the number increased by 3 to 32.

[7]The calculations in this section are based on data for the 2000-01 school year. This was the most current complete dataset available. These calculations exclude institutions that were not eligible for federal student aid programs and for-profit institutions. The for-profit institutions are excluded because there are no for-profit Tribal Colleges.

[8]References to "other U.S. colleges and universities" includes institutions located in U.S. territories, both public and private nonprofit.

Austin was the largest university in the nation, with an enrollment of almost 50,000 students.

Two important revenue sources for postsecondary institutions—tuition and endowments—were both lower at Tribal Colleges than at other U.S. colleges and universities. The average in-state, undergraduate tuition at Tribal Colleges was $2,017 in the 2000-01 school year.[9] The average in-state, undergraduate tuition at non-Tribal public colleges was $2,132 for the same year. The average market value of institutional endowments for public schools at the end of their 1999-2000 fiscal year was over $57 million for those non-Tribal Colleges that reported having endowments, but under $1.8 million for the 15 Tribal Colleges that reported having endowments. Endowment data on private nonprofit schools are not available in IPEDS.

Characteristics of Students Attending Tribal Colleges

The database used to generate characteristics of students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and at Hispanic Serving Institutions—NPSAS—only contained information on 1 Tribal College. As a result, we were unable to compile data on characteristics of students attending Tribal Colleges. A report issued by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, however, provides such information. According to the 1999 report, the typical Tribal College student was a single mother in her early 30s. According to the same report, in the fall of 1996, 64 percent of Tribal College undergraduates were women, as compared to 56 percent of undergraduates at all public institutions. The report cites the average age of Tribal College students in 1997 as 31.5 years old, while NPSAS data from 2000 shows the average age of undergraduate students overall to be 26.4 years old. The consortium also stated that half of all Tribal College students attended school on a part-time basis, which is a similar rate to undergraduate students overall.

Economic Characteristics

Although tuition is lower, students who attend Tribal Colleges are generally able to contribute less to the cost of their education than are students at non-Minority Serving Institutions. Median household family incomes are considerably lower on Indian reservations than they are in the rest of the country. This is reflected in one measure of a family's ability to

[9]This figure is based on 22 Tribal Colleges who reported tuition charges.

pay for college—the Expected Family Contribution.[10] The Expected Family Contribution was lower in 2000-01 for families of Tribal College students than it was for families of students attending other, non-Minority Serving Institutions. In the 2000-01 school year, the average Expected Family Contribution for students attending public non-Minority Serving Institutions was $659, while it was only $259 for Tribal College students. Additionally, the percentage of students receiving Pell Grants—financial aid made available to the neediest students in the nation—at Tribal Colleges was 60 percent, compared to 24 percent of students at non-Minority Serving Institutions. Again, because NPSAS data are not available for Tribal Colleges, we were unable to compile further information on the economic status of students and their parents.

[10]Expected Family Contribution is a formula that considers family income; accumulated savings; the amount of taxes paid; family size; the number of children simultaneously enrolled in college; the age of the older parent and how close they may be to retirement; and the student's own financial resources. It is defined in the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, 20 U.S.C. § 1087nn.

Appendix V: Comments from the Department of Education

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

AUG 21 2003

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Ms. Cornelia M. Ashby
Director, Education, Workforce,
and Income Security Issues
United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Ashby:

Thank you for providing the Department of Education with a draft copy of the U.S. General Accounting Office's (GAO's) report entitled "Distance Education: More Data Could Improve Education's Ability to Track Technology at Minority Serving Institutions" (GAO-03-900). I understand that GAO expects to publish the final report next month.

This study focuses on the state of distance education at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and reviews (1) the use of distance education at MSIs, (2) key factors influencing these schools' decisions about whether or not to offer distance education, and (3) steps the Department of Education (the Department) could take, if any, to improve its monitoring of technological progress under the Titles III and V programs. I was pleased to learn that the use of distance education at MSIs is consistent with national averages and MSIs are fully participating in the use of technology to deliver courses as evidenced by 57 percent of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), 64 percent of Hispanic Serving Institutions, and 61 percent of Tribal Colleges offering at least a course via distance learning.

In this report, you recommend that the Department (1) direct managers of the Title III and Title V programs to broaden their tracking systems so that they are applied in a more complete manner to the different types of MSIs, and (2) study the feasibility of adding questions on distance education and information technology to existing research efforts carried out by the Department.

As you point out, one of our annual performance goals is to increase the technological capacity of MSIs. We agree that the Department should broaden its monitoring of the Title III and Title V programs to ensure that we have appropriate information about the needs of institutions in the area of distance learning and technology for course delivery. The programs authorized by Titles III and V of the Higher Education Act of 1965 address the specific needs of different types of institutions of higher education that generally serve substantial numbers of low-income students and have limited financial resources. However, each program has its own unique application and reporting requirements that are necessarily responsive to the specific needs of the institutions and the students that they serve. Thus, our efforts to expand monitoring in these programs must continue to reflect these differences in program requirements, institutional characteristics, and

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student body. Some of these differences and teaching preferences are reflected in the report.

With regard to the broader issue of adding questions on distance education and information technology to the Department's existing research efforts, the draft report refers to the need to examine the potential use of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). As you note in the report, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has been examining the question of whether to add items to IPEDS on distance learning and information technology. While NCES has been working with the higher education community, to identify possible items related to distance learning and information technology, there is currently no consensus among higher education institutions on what data should be collected annually.

For this reason, NCES has used the Postsecondary Education Quick Information System (PEQIS) to collect data on this issue. PEQIS is designed to conduct brief surveys of postsecondary institutions or state higher education agencies on postsecondary education topics of national importance. NCES has conducted three studies of distance learning using PEQIS on distance education. The most recent report, Distance Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions: 2000–2001, released last month, presents data from a nationally representative survey on distance education at degree-granting postsecondary institutions. The data provide a national "snapshot" on the status of distance education in 2000–2001, including information about institutions offering distance education courses, distance education enrollments and course offerings, degree and certificate programs, and distance education technologies. In addition, institutions were asked to report on program goals, factors keeping institutions from starting or expanding their distance education programs, participation in distance education consortia, and information on issues related to accommodations for students with disabilities.

The new report shows that during the 12-month 2000–2001 academic year, 56 percent (2,320) of all 2-year and 4-year Title IV-eligible degree-granting institutions offered distance education courses for any level or audience, (i.e., courses designed for all types of students, including elementary and secondary, college, adult education, continuing and professional education, etc.) In addition, 12 percent of all institutions indicated that they planned to start offering distance education courses in the next three years; 31 percent did not offer distance education courses in 2000–2001 and did not plan to offer these types of courses in the next three years.

The report also concluded that public institutions were more likely to offer distance education courses than were private institutions. In 2000–2001, 90 percent of public 2-year and 89 percent of public 4-year institutions offered distance education courses, compared with 16 percent of private 2-year and 40 percent of private 4-year institutions. College-level, credit-granting distance education courses at either the undergraduate or

graduate/first-professional level were offered by 55 percent of all 2-year and 4-year institutions. College-level, credit-granting distance education courses were offered at the undergraduate level by 48 percent of all institutions, and at the graduate level by 22percent of all institutions. These findings at the national level appear to track closely to the trends identified in the draft report.

The previous two studies—*Distance Education in Higher Education Institutions* (Lewis, Alexander, and Farris 1997), which collected information for 1994–95, and *Distance Education at Postsecondary Institutions: 1997–98* (Lewis et al. 1999)—looked at slightly different populations.

As I indicated above, we have found that our approach of using sample surveys through PEQIS has provided a national perspective on a wide variety of topics related to distance learning across various categories of institutions. We will explore expanding the sample to include additional MSIs. In addition, we would certainly consider more specific suggestions for what data we should collect from institutions under IPEDS.

I appreciate your examination of this important issue. Under separate cover, we have provided to your staff some technical comments on the report. The Department of Education is committed to the continued development of distance education, especially at Minority-Serving Institutions.

Sincerely,

Sally L. Stroup

Appendix VI: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

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Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to those named above, Jerry Aiken, Susan Baker, Jessica Botsford, Julian Fogle, Chris Hatscher, Joel Grossman, Cathy Hurley, John Mingus, Jill Peterson, Doug Sloane, Stan Stenersen, and Susan Zimmerman made important contributions to this report.

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