American Indian College Fund Receives $2.4 Million from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to Increase Native Americans’ College Graduation

Denver, Colo.—May 3, 2016—The American Indian College Fund will create pathways to college for Native American youth to improve access to college, thanks to a $2.4 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The three-year, three-pronged program, called The Native Pathways to College Project, will begin June 1st of this year.

Through the College Admissions Pathways component of the program, the College Fund will work to increase the number of American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) junior and senior high school students who consider college as an option, increasing their financial readiness for colleges, guiding them through the admissions process, and easing their transition to college.

The Transfer Pathways component of the program will support the successful transfer of students attending two-year tribal colleges to four-year institutions.

Finally, the Pathways Bridge Programs will increase admissions testing and college readiness of high school students through academic preparedness strategies delivered by the tribal colleges.

The College Fund will work through partnerships with reservation-based high schools and the tribal colleges in designing and implementing the programs for students and their families, while also identifying mainstream colleges and universities that wish to increase the diversity of their student body by increasing AIAN student presence at their institutions.

Cheryl Crazy Bull, President and CEO of the American Indian College Fund, said, “We are so honored at the College Fund to partner with our tribal colleges and with Native high schools to build a college-going climate for our Native students. Our commitment to Native students achieving post-secondary education is strengthened by our focus on responding to students and families were they are at in their educational journey. We deeply appreciate and are pleased that the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation shares our vision of college attainment for Native students.”
Armando I. Bengochea, Program Officer at The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation said, “The project of improving college-going rates and transfer rates for AIAN students is extremely important to the nation and the best hope we have of growing the number of college graduates. The Mellon Foundation recognizes the unique importance, credibility and capacity of the College Fund to be able to tackle this problem in the most strategic way.”

**About The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**

Founded in 1969, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation endeavors to strengthen, promote, and, where necessary, defend the contributions of the humanities and the arts to human flourishing and to the well-being of diverse and democratic societies by supporting exemplary institutions of higher education and culture as they renew and provide access to an invaluable heritage of ambitious, path-breaking work. Additional information is available at mellon.org.

**About the American Indian College Fund**

Founded in 1989, the American Indian College Fund has been the nation’s largest charity supporting Native higher education for more than 25 years. The College Fund believes “Education is the answer” and has provided more than 100,000 scholarships since its inception and an average of 6,000 scholarships per year to American Indian students. The College Fund also supports a variety of academic and support programs, ensuring students have the tools to graduate and succeed in their careers. The College Fund consistently receives top ratings from independent charity evaluators. For more information about the American Indian College Fund, please visit collegefund.org.