

## **Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities**

“The United States has achieved many great things, but it also has a complex history with dark and cruel periods, including the mistreatment of Native Americans and the taking of a great deal of their land.

After the country was founded, the federal government took a series of steps to use grants of land to promote westward expansion, education and economic development. This included the Land Ordinance of 1785 and Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which facilitated the creation of a system of using land grants to fund local schools. A great deal of land was also sold or provided by the federal government to settlers.

This concept of using land was continued to raise funds for specific purposes. The Morrill Act of 1862 provided land to help fund a system of land-grant universities aimed at providing a higher education to a broader set of the public. Unquestionably, the history of land-grant universities intersects with that of Native Americans and the taking of their lands. That is forever part of our nation’s story.

While the U.S. has charted an imperfect path, over time the nation has sought to find ways to improve. In 1994, APLU (then known as the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges) and others worked to have Congress designate more than two dozen tribal colleges as land-grant institutions. This provided a recognition of these key institutions and gave these tribal colleges access to new federal resources to support their work with students and the community. This did not make up for the past, but it did represent important progress.

The mission of land-grant universities is one of inclusiveness. Land-grant universities are designed to provide access to a high-quality, affordable education for individuals from all different backgrounds, including those who are Native American. They are also defined by their high-level research enterprises and community engagement activities. Their mission seeks to understand and provide solutions to the greatest challenges facing communities, states, the nation, and the world. Core to this is a commitment by land-grant universities to extend the benefits of the knowledge, research and problem solving across each state.

While we cannot change the past, land-grant universities have and will

continue to be focused on building a better future for everyone. Land-grant universities have a responsibility to continue to provide opportunities for Native American students while working to appropriately and respectfully serve as ready and willing partners to help address community challenges and needs. And land-grant universities will share and continue to learn from the history of the Native Americans, whose lives, traditions, and cultures are inextricably linked to their own history and the diverse character of the United States.”