

Student Freedom Initiative's Commitment to Tribal Colleges Continues with Iḷisaġvik College in Alaska

WASHINGTON, DC [Feb. 5, 2024] - Student Freedom Initiative is pleased to announce a partnership with Iḷisaġvik College located in Utqiagvik (Barrow), Alaska, as part of the Tribal Colleges and Universities portfolio. This partnership is a modern funding solution for Iḷisaġvik College and ignites innovative financial resources curated for the Indigenous and Native American communities. The partnership will support student financial needs beyond paying for college by providing new technological equipment and teaching students how to invest their money, how to grow a network and the importance of relationship building. Every student is deserving of a quality education, and through this partnership, SFI is committed to building a future filled with prosperity.

This partnership is a significant tool to champion and support Indigenous higher education and is emblematic of SFI and its long-standing commitment to investing in minority-serving institutions (MSIs) and builds on future program investments.

Iḷisaġvik College is the second tribal college to enter into a partnership with SFI. Last year, Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe University, located in Hayward, Wisconsin, was the first tribal college to enter into a partnership with SFI.

“It is an honor to add Iḷisaġvik College as a partner as we expand our support and services to reach to our partnership with tribal colleges and universities. Student Freedom Initiative is impressed with how the college prepares students to positively contribute to their communities. SFI will be a resource for the college to scale their efforts, and educate and prepare students from Indigenous communities. SFI is privileged to give the students the financial freedom to achieve greatness,” said Robert F. Smith, SFI Board Chair.

The partnership will provide enhanced cybersecurity and cyberinfrastructure at Iḷisaġvik College, ensuring that Native American and Indigenous students have the institutional structure needed for them to thrive. SFI looks forward to this partnership with Iḷisaġvik, and potentially expanding into new agreements in the future within venture capital education, internship opportunities, tutoring, mentoring and capacity building through SFI.

The partnership encourages the use of non-monetary forms of support, including internships and certifications, as well as targeted capacity building, such as access to affordable IT infrastructure. The partnership aims to focus on the education of the Indigenous and Native American populations, specifically a future filled with new technologies and innovations.

Justina Wilhelm, President of Iḷisaḡvik College, looks forward to the partnership: “Quyanaqpak (thank you) to Student Freedom Initiative for their generous support that will improve and expand our cybersecurity that is much needed. As a Tribal College, we operate on limited resources; the generosity of SFI means that we will be able to improve our cyberinfrastructure as well as provide quality training to our staff.”

“SFI’s goal is to build a future filled with prosperity for students across all minority demographics and this partnership with Iḷisaḡvik College will go a long way to closing the gap in financial freedom these students often face,” said Mark A. Brown, SFI’s president and CEO. “Welcome to the SFI family!”

With the addition of Iḷisaḡvik College, Student Freedom Initiative is now engaged with 61 minority-serving institutions (MSIs) participating in one or more components of the program in a total of 22 states and U.S. territories, benefiting approximately 200,000 students.

About Student Freedom Initiative

A single-purpose nonprofit organization, Student Freedom Initiative aims to reduce the wealth gap through the lens of education. This is achieved by providing a catalyst for freedom in professional and life choices for students attending Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) by increasing their social and economic mobility using a student-centric, evidence-based, holistic and collaborative approach. Initially focused on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Student Freedom Initiative enables mobility through four transformational components: (1) Student Freedom Fund as a private education loan alternative to Parent PLUS loans; (2) internships and industry-driven certifications; (3) comprehensive support; and (4) targeted MSI capacity building (e.g., access to affordable broadband, strengthening endowment governance and risk adjusted returns, workforce development in clean energy). Student Freedom Initiative collaborates with community-based organizations, businesses and governmental entities through public-private partnerships to make sustainable, systemic changes to support the entire MSI ecosystem.

To date, the Student Freedom Initiative has received generous contributions from [Robert F. Smith](#), [Fund 2 Foundation](#), [Cisco](#), [Jane Street](#), [Prudential](#), [First Republic](#) and the [Walmart Foundation](#). The program has also been acknowledged and supported by the [Business Roundtable’s Racial Equity & Justice Subcommittee on Education](#). Our ability to provide support to MSI students is based on the continued financial support of these donors and others interested in aiding our mission.

To learn more, visit <https://studentfreedominitiative.org/>, and follow us on Twitter [@StudentFreedom](#)

About Iḷisagvik College

Located in the northernmost point of Alaska, Iḷisagvik College is an accredited Tribal College that provides quality post-secondary academic, career and technical education in a learning environment that perpetuates and strengthens Iñupiat culture, language, values and traditions. Iḷisagvik College is a public, non-profit organization. If you wish to donate to Iḷisagvik, your donation is tax deductible. To donate, visit <https://www.ilisagvik.edu/give/>.