

USDA New Four-Year Tuition Coverage for Tribal Scholars Program Accepting Applications until December 1

Category: Policy Blog

written by Alex Sampson | November 17, 2023

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced that it is now accepting applications for the [1994 Tribal Scholars Program](#) (the Program) to train the next generation of agricultural professionals and strengthen ties with tribal higher education institutions. This Program seeks to increase the number of American Indian and Alaska Native students studying agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, and related disciplines. The Program provides full tuition, fees, books, a housing stipend, and paid workforce training to any interested and eligible students pursuing degrees in agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, or related academic disciplines at a tribal college or university (TCU). Eligible applicants include graduating high school seniors, full-time students currently enrolled at a 1994 land-grant tribal college or university, or recent tribal college or university (TCU) associate degree graduates.

For FY 2024, 27 scholarship slots are available at:

- Agriculture Research Service
- Farm Service Agency
- Farm Production and Conservation
- Forest Service
- National Institute of Food and Agriculture
- Natural Resources Conservation Service

Application packages include an essay, resume, two letters of recommendation, and transcripts. **The application deadline is December 1, 2023.**

For more information on applying and submitting applications, click [here](#).

Background on USDA's Tribal College Program

The Tribal College Program was established to ensure USDA fulfills the requirements of the [Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994](#) and [Section 882 of the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996](#). These Acts established tribally controlled colleges and universities as land-grant institutions. Congress required that USDA develop a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with 1994 Institutions and establish programs to ensure these schools and the Native American communities they serve have equitable access to USDA's employment, programs, services, and resources. There are currently [36 land-grant institutions](#) (also known as "1994 Institutions", "1994s", and "tribal land-grants").

The Tribal College Program does this by equipping tribal schools' capacities to benefit Native American agriculture, rural Tribal economies, and to strengthen the United States' food security. To help USDA fulfill its mandated responsibilities, the Tribal College Program staff provide critical assistance to the Secretary of Agriculture with the following:

- Establishment and maintenance of formal MOAs with 1994 Institutions to ensure these schools

and the rural, tribal communities they serve have equitable access to the Department's employment, programs, services, and resources; and

- Development of Departmental Regulations, policy, guidance and procedures;
- Engage in outreach with these schools, the communities they serve, and the tribal governments that established them.

The Tribal College Program does its work through three programs, the USDA and American Indian Higher Education Consortium Leadership Group, the Tribal Scholars Program for students, and the Terra Preta do Indio Tribal Fellowship for staff and faculty members.

USDA 1994 Tribal Scholars Program

The USDA 1994 Tribal Scholars Program provides full tuition, fees, books, a housing stipend, and paid workforce training to any interested and eligible student pursuing degrees in agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, or related academic disciplines at a TCU. New for 2024, the tuition coverage can follow the student from a two-year associate program at a TCU to a four-year bachelor's degree program (at a TCU or another land-grant institution). When the student has completed the scholarship requirements, including a paid internship, USDA may convert the student to a permanent USDA employee without further competition. Scholars accepted into the program will be eligible for noncompetitive conversion to a permanent appointment with USDA upon successful completion of their degree requirements by the end of the agreement period. ([5 CFR 213.3202](#)) ([Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 - Section 12519](#))

If selected, scholars must commit to at least one year of service to USDA for each year of financial assistance provided. The details of this requirement will be outlined in the service agreement for the scholar, their university, and the USDA sponsoring agency.

To learn more, please visit [the USDA 1994 Tribal Scholars Program page](#).

USDA 1994 Tribal Scholars Program Application

Applicants may apply for more than one position. An application package includes:

- Current Resume
- Essay: Submit an essay answering these questions below with a word count of 500 - 800 words. (Note the position for which you are applying.)
 - What motivates you to consider a career in public service working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture? Include information about your educational and career goals and how this scholarship may assist you.
 - How did you become interested in studying food, agriculture, and natural resource sciences or another related discipline in college?
- Two Letters of Recommendation: One letter of recommendation must be from the applicant's academic counselor, advisor, or faculty member. Each letter must address the applicant's:
 - Personal strengths
 - Leadership qualities and potential
 - Academic and extracurricular achievements
 - Future academic and career aspirations
- Transcript indicating the applicant's most recent academic work

For questions, please text or call 202-845-5646, 202-870-8035 or email 1994@usda.gov.