



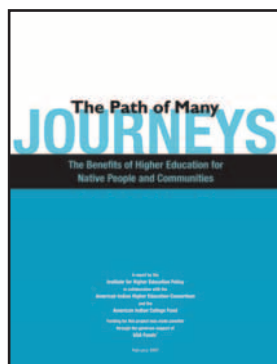
# Education Partnerships

USA Funds® is a nonprofit corporation that works to enhance postsecondary-education preparedness, access and success by providing and supporting financial and other valued services.

## USA Funds-sponsored report shows importance of higher education for American Indians

A new report shows that enhancing access to education for American Indians could reduce social-welfare costs and bring improvements to the overall quality of life for American Indians and their communities.

To address these issues and the potential benefits of higher education for American Indians and the communities in which they live, USA Funds recently underwrote the report “The Path of Many Journeys: The Benefits of Higher Education for Native People and Communities.”



The report, released by the Institute for Higher Education Policy in collaboration with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium and the American Indian College Fund, finds that low levels of educational attainment by American Indians cause significant losses for the individual and society. Yet despite the clear benefits of postsecondary education, many American Indians still cannot afford to go to college or to attend the college of their choice.

“USA Funds is pleased to underwrite this report in recognition of the need to enhance access to postsecondary education for American-Indian students,” says Henry Fernandez, USA Funds executive director of scholarships, outreach and philanthropy. “It is our hope that this report will bring to light the educational issues facing American Indians and provide solutions for tackling these issues.”

The report shows that traditional forms of Western higher education often have been unsuccessful with American-Indian populations, due to the differences in Western and American-Indian traditions, approaches and measures of success.

### Challenges facing American-Indian students

The report notes that, to successfully serve American-Indian students, higher education must recognize the following combination of challenges and constraints that these students face:

- ◇ American Indians, especially those on reservations, are among the nation’s poorest populations.

In 1999, 26 percent of the American-Indian/Alaska-Native population lived below the official poverty level, compared with 12 percent of the total population.

- ◇ Factors such as geographic isolation, limited opportunities for upward mobility in rural areas and reservations, and low rates of participation in the labor force contribute to the poverty cycle.
- ◇ A range of social problems — including injuries, violence, depression, substance abuse and inadequate health care — accompany poverty.
- ◇ In 2004 almost 28 percent of American Indians age 25 and over had not graduated from high school, compared with the national average of 15 percent.
- ◇ Only 42 percent of American Indians pursue any type of higher education; 13 percent attain a bachelor’s degree or higher. The comparable national averages are 53 percent and 28 percent, respectively.
- ◇ Among those living in American-Indian areas in 2000, one-third of the population age 25 and older had not graduated from high school.
- ◇ More than one-third of all American-Indian students are age 30 or older.
- ◇ Almost 20 percent are independent students with incomes lower than \$20,000.
- ◇ Students entering tribal colleges and universities have family incomes that average \$13,998, or 27 percent below the poverty threshold.

Because of these situations, students may need support, such as access to child-care services, flexibility in scheduling classes, and access to transportation, to complete a degree.

“American Indians face unique challenges in their pursuit of higher education,” says Fernandez. “To ensure successful outcomes, it is imperative to understand American-Indian students and how best to address the challenges they face.”

### Recommendations for making a difference

“The Path of Many Journeys” outlines recommendations and emphasizes that every part of the educational system — from governments and universities and elementary and high schools, to community and philanthropic organizations — can play a role.

# Selected grants awarded by USA Funds Oct. 1, 2006-Dec. 31, 2006

USA Funds awards grants to advance its nonprofit mission to enhance postsecondary-education preparedness, access and success.

## Business-Higher Education Forum

Washington, D.C.

**Project** Boosting K-12 Student Achievement: Promoting College Readiness for All

**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$184,010

The grant will support an initiative to engage corporate, academic and foundation leaders to address key issues in education for students in grades kindergarten through 12 and promote college readiness.

## First Rock Baptist Church Foundation Inc.

Washington, D.C.

**Project** 2007 Benning Community Learning Communities Initiative

**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$154,980

As part of the national Learning Communities Initiative, USA Funds is working with this organization to significantly increase the number of local youth who complete high school and successfully pursue postsecondary education.

## Wind River Dollars for Scholars

Fort Washakie, Wyo.

**Project** 2007 Wind River Learning Communities Initiative

**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$151,230

This chapter of Dollars for Scholars, a Scholarship America program, will strengthen the Wind River Learning Community in Wyoming. This Learning Communities endeavor is part of a national program spearheaded by a coalition of organizations — including USA Funds — to bolster education achievement.

## Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center Inc.

Indianapolis

**Project** 2007 George Washington Community School Learning Communities Initiative

**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$150,489

USA Funds' grant supports the Learning Communities Initiative efforts of the Washington Community School area in Indianapolis. Efforts focus on helping youth to graduate from high school and prepare for higher-education success.

## Sunnyside Unified School District Foundation

Tucson, Ariz.

**Project** 2007 Sunnyside Learning Communities Initiative

**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$149,409

As part of the national Learning Communities Initiative, Sunnyside School District in Tucson, Ariz., will work to ensure that all students are exposed to postsecondary-education options and that they are prepared to pursue further education following high school.

## Hispanic Scholarship Fund

San Francisco

**Project** Scholarships

**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$100,000

USA Funds provides an annual donation to the HSF scholarship fund to provide financial assistance to college students. HSF strives to double the rate of Hispanic students earning college degrees by providing scholarships and education-outreach support to the Latino community.

## United Negro College Fund

Fairfax, Va.

**Project** Scholarships

**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$100,000

USA Funds' annual grant to UNCF's general scholarship fund provides financial aid to deserving students. UNCF provides operating funds and technology-enhancement services for 39 member Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and scholarships and internships for students at almost 1,000 institutions.

## American Indian College Fund

Denver

**Project** Scholarships

**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$100,000

The mission of the American Indian College Fund is to raise scholarship funds for American-Indian students at qualified tribal colleges and universities and to generate awareness of those institutions. USA Funds supports this effort through its annual donation to the organization's scholarship fund.

## DE-DC-MD Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Inc.

Rosedale, Md.

**Project** 2007 College Goal Sunday

**Geographic Scope** Maryland  
**Amount** \$72,500

USA Funds' grant covers expenses associated with College Goal Sunday 2007 in Maryland, Delaware and the District of Columbia. The event provides parents and students with volunteer assistance in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, required for federal aid as well as for many state and institutional student-aid programs.

## United Negro College Fund

Indianapolis

**Project** UNCF Gala

**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$50,000

USA Funds is a corporate sponsor of UNCF's annual fund-raising events in Indianapolis. The 2006 gala grossed more than \$399,000 to support UNCF-member colleges and universities and more than 65,000 students across the United States.

## University of Nevada, Reno

Reno, Nev.

**Project** Dean's Future Scholars 2007

**Geographic Scope** Nevada  
**Amount** \$50,000

Dean's Future Scholars encourages culturally diverse middle-school students to enter a college-readiness program and provides support services for the students and their families each year until they graduate from high school. USA Funds is entering its fifth year supporting the program.

## Indiana Dollars for Scholars

Indianapolis

**Project** 2007 Hoosier Heroes

**Geographic Scope** Indiana  
**Amount** \$45,000

Hoosier Heroes provides Indiana students an opportunity to identify Indiana citizens who have made significant contributions to society. Junior- and senior-high-school students may nominate their own Hoosier Heroes. USA Funds' grant includes funding for 20 scholarships to be awarded to select students who write nomination essays.

## Kansas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

Wichita, Kan.

**Project** Kansas College Goal Sunday 2007

**Geographic Scope** Kansas  
**Amount** \$35,000

This funding supports College Goal Sunday 2007 in Kansas. College Goal Sunday provides free assistance with the FAFSA.

## Central Wyoming College

Riverton, Wyo.

**Project** Wyoming College Goal Sunday 2007

**Geographic Scope** Wyoming  
**Amount** \$27,000

USA Funds supports Wyoming College Goal Sunday 2007, which provides free assistance with the FAFSA.

## Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education

Phoenix

**Project** Arizona College Goal Sunday 2007

**Geographic Scope** Arizona  
**Amount** \$22,000

Arizona's College Goal Sunday provides free assistance with the FAFSA.

## Think Ahead Inc.

Dresden, Maine

**Project** Maryland College Aid Calculator for 2007-2008

**Geographic Scope** Maryland  
**Amount** \$18,000

USA Funds for the fifth year is sponsoring the Maryland College Aid Calculator in conjunction with the Maryland Higher Education Commission. The calculator gives visitors to the MHEC Web site — [www.mhec.state.md.us](http://www.mhec.state.md.us) — access to a tool that helps determine their Expected Family Contribution for college costs and eligibility for need-based financial aid.

## State Higher Education Executive Officers

Boulder, Colo.

**Project** Midwestern Higher Education Compact/SHEEO Policy Summit

**Geographic Scope** National  
**Amount** \$15,000

SHEEO and Midwestern Higher Education Compact conducted a national meeting for higher-education leaders to discuss "A Test of Leadership," a report issued by the U.S. secretary of education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education.

## Pacific Financial Aid Association

Honolulu

**Project** PacFAA Financial Aid Nights

**Geographic Scope** Hawaii  
**Amount** \$9,056

Through its Financial Aid Nights, PacFAA informs students about postsecondary-education opportunities and the availability of financial assistance. The grant expands the events to locations throughout the state.

## United Way of Central Indiana Inc.

Indianapolis

**Project** United on Broadway

**Geographic Scope** Indiana  
**Amount** \$5,000

USA Funds' grant supported this fund-raising event for United Way of Central Indiana, which supports human-services efforts in six counties.

# USA Funds president and CEO promotes college access, community involvement

**A**fter 35 years of working in the financial-aid community, Carl Dalstrom still finds new challenges and opportunities every day.

Dalstrom has served as president and CEO of USA Funds since 2000.

He helps fulfill the philanthropic mission that USA Funds encourages among its employees. USA Funds works to enhance postsecondary-education preparedness, access and success by providing and supporting financial and other valued services. The organization awarded \$16.6 million to support programs that helped students pursue higher education during 2006.

## Helping launch local Dollars for Scholars

A founding board member of Indiana Dollars for Scholars when it formed in 2002, Dalstrom also has served as board chair the past two years. He was instrumental in the organization's becoming a regional chapter. In this capacity, Indiana Dollars for Scholars serves 109 chapters throughout Indiana, works with groups to form Dollars for Scholars chapters in their communities, and assists chapters with fund raising.

"Carl has been invaluable to our organization," says Don Setterlof, executive director, Indiana Dollars for Scholars. "He's passionate about the work we do, and that shows. He has credibility and respect in the community and the industry, and he brings that to Dollars for Scholars."

"He takes the role of board chair very seriously," continues Setterlof. "He's a very busy man, but he is always very open and approachable. Carl always has ideas, and he is interested in the day-to-day operations of our organization. He's an active chair — not just a figurehead — and that has been a huge asset to us."

**Dalstrom, left, joins Woodie White, United Negro College Fund regional vice president, at the organization's 2006 gala in Indiana.**

Dalstrom also serves on the boards of the St. Vincent Hospital Foundation in Indianapolis and the National Student Clearinghouse. For the past two years, Dalstrom has served as the corporate chair of the United Negro College Fund gala in Indiana, encouraging other organizations to become involved and support UNCF-scholarship programs.

## Promoting employee involvement

Additionally, Dalstrom takes part in volunteer activities undertaken by USA Funds' employees. USA Funds' Indianapolis employees each year participate in volunteer events coordinated by organizations such as United Way of Central Indiana and Rebuilding Together Indianapolis. He says it is important that he is personally involved in these projects, to show USA Funds staff that volunteering and giving come from everyone in the organization.

"But even more than that," he says, "the work is fulfilling."

"With much of the work we do in the financial-aid industry, we don't get to see the immediate results. The impact is down the road," says Dalstrom. "When you have the opportunity to go for a day and help a senior with home repairs, you see immediate results. Seeing the immediate impact of your work and knowing you helped someone is a great feeling."

## Encouraging corporate support for higher education

Most recently Dalstrom is playing an active role in encouraging corporations to focus their corporate philanthropic dollars on postsecondary-education access and attainment.

According to the Business-Higher Education Forum, Dalstrom notes, by 2028, there will be 19-million more skilled jobs, requiring at least some college, than there will be people qualified to fill them. A large portion of the new jobs will demand skills and knowledge beyond those of a high-school graduate.

"Ensuring that every academically qualified and motivated student has the chance to earn a bachelor's degree is more than a social responsibility for organizations. It's also good business," says Dalstrom. "USA Funds cannot solve the problem on our own, but we can work to get other organizations involved and serve as a resource. When more organizations get involved, that's when we can really make an impact." ■



**Carl Dalstrom, USA Funds president and CEO, greets participants at a fund-raiser for Indiana Dollars for Scholars.**

## USA Funds-sponsored report (continued from page 1)

The following are among those recommendations:

- ◇ Increase funding for federal programs that are relevant to the health, environmental, economic-development and other issues that affect American-Indian students on their path to higher education.
- ◇ Increase funding for need-based financial-aid programs, such as Pell Grants.
- ◇ Support formula-funded institutional-development programs, such as Title III, which help higher-education institutions that serve primarily disadvantaged populations.
- ◇ Increase funding for early intervention programs.
- ◇ Train teachers and staff regarding the cultural differences in instruction, especially in areas that serve many American-Indian students.
- ◇ Fund and promote evaluations of program models and best practices that have been successful in supporting American-Indian students on their path toward undergraduate and graduate degrees.

"This report makes a powerful case for the importance of investing in higher education for American Indians," says Jamie Merisotis, president of the Institute for Higher Education Policy. "It's abundantly clear that we as a nation have an obligation and a collective self-interest in assuring that improved educational opportunities for Native Americans aren't just a promise, but a reality."

The report is available for downloading at [www.usafunds.org/forms/school\\_lender/path\\_of\\_many\\_journeys.pdf](http://www.usafunds.org/forms/school_lender/path_of_many_journeys.pdf) on the USA Funds Web site.

In addition to underwriting "The Path of Many Journeys," USA Funds has awarded a \$100,000 grant in each of the past six years to support the American Indian College Fund. USA Funds also is a member of the Learning Communities Initiative that works to significantly increase the number of youth in six selected communities — including Wind River Reservation in Wyoming — who complete high school and successfully pursue postsecondary education. ■

# Supporting American-Indian education

By Richard Williams  
President, American Indian College Fund

For years, Reema Arrow Top Knot believed her desire to attend college was just a lofty dream whose time had come and gone. Married right out of high school, Reema — a member of the Chippewa-Cree tribe of Montana — spent 11 years traveling with her husband, who was in the Army, and raising their three children. An accident left her husband paralyzed and forced the family to reevaluate its priorities. After returning to the Blackfeet Reservation, she decided to enroll at Blackfeet Community College, one of Montana's seven tribal colleges. With the help of scholarships from the American Indian College Fund, Reema is well on her way to obtaining her degree, already earning a 4.0 grade-point average.

As president of the American Indian College Fund, I am fortunate to hear success stories such as Reema's every day. Yet I also witness the struggle of many other American-Indian students to access postsecondary education and make a better life for themselves and their communities. Too often obstacles, such as a lack of financial aid, cultural isolation and family obligations, cause them to delay — or worse, abandon — their dreams of a college degree. In fact, only about 10 percent of Native people today earn bachelor's degrees, the lowest attainment of any group. Clearly, there is much work to be done.

Fortunately, the tide is turning. Since the late '60s, an era of self-determination in education has allowed Native people to assert control over their own educational institutions. Foremost in these efforts has been the establishment of the tribal-college system. With 32 tribal colleges and universities, or TCUs, now in operation, and many more on their way to becoming fully accredited institutions, Native people now enjoy access to postsecondary education in unprecedented numbers. And thanks in part to the scholarship support provided by the American Indian College Fund, students can afford to pursue their educational dreams.

Since the Fund began operations in 1989, it effectively and efficiently has served TCUs through its outstanding partnerships with philanthropic organizations. Often our philanthropic partners have worked with us to create groundbreaking initiatives at the TCUs.

Funders, such as USA Funds, Lilly Endowment, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Lumina Foundation for Education, to name just a few, have proven to be vital catalysts in our efforts to bring educational opportunity to our people. With their support, we are able to work tirelessly to help tribal colleges provide academically rigorous and culturally relevant education to an ever-increasing number of American-Indian students.

Additionally, the positive example set by our philanthropic partners helps me to answer the question I am asked so often: "How can I support the TCUs in a meaningful way?" Because Native Americans comprise such a small part of the U.S. population, it often is difficult for non-Native people to learn about the progress being made throughout Indian Country. But resources are available, including the following:

- ◇ Grantmakers for Education published "Relationships, Respect and Revitalization." USA Funds provided assistance with this report.

- ◇ The American Indian College Fund hosts annual tours in Indian Country, so supporters can visit with students and educators alike.
- ◇ The Institute for Higher Education Policy report "The Path of Many Journeys," also supported by USA Funds, now is available.



Richard Williams

**By educating themselves and learning about the historical obstacles that Indian people have faced in the educational system, supporters can appreciate today's breakthroughs and discern what programs are worth supporting.**

By educating themselves and learning about the historical obstacles that Indian people have faced in the educational system, supporters can appreciate today's breakthroughs and discern what programs are worth supporting.

Such work must be viewed as all other sound investments are, with patience and resolve. As any financial-aid administrator or philanthropic funder who has worked in Indian Country can attest, Indian education involves a complex web of partners, including tribal, public and government schools and independent organizations like the American Indian College Fund, working collectively to improve educational outcomes. We are making progress. But just as it took hundreds of years of disenfranchisement and bias to create a lack of educational opportunity for Indian people, it too will take time to bolster Indian education so that it reflects the best that Indian Country has to offer.

Thankfully, much of this work already is under way. Stories of postsecondary success, such as that of Reema Arrow Top Knot, slowly are becoming the norm. I dream of the day when tribal colleges will graduate doctors alongside traditional dancers, engineers alongside spiritual leaders, classroom teachers alongside the keepers of our oral histories — all receiving the same honor and appreciation for their contributions to our communities.

I know with certainty that this day is fast approaching. Because of this I am dedicated to playing my part in redefining the state of American-Indian education, one college graduate at a time.

*Williams, Oglala Lakota, has been president of the Denver-based American Indian College Fund since 1997. ■*

## Resources

- ◇ The Web site for the American Indian College Fund, [www.collegefund.org](http://www.collegefund.org), offers for downloading the report "Relationships, Respect and Revitalization — Grantmaking Strategies: A Guide for Native American Education and Philanthropy," as well as information about tours of Indian Country.
- ◇ The USA Funds Web site, [www.usafunds.org](http://www.usafunds.org), offers for downloading the report "The Path of Many Journeys: The Benefits of Higher Education for Native People and Communities." ■