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# Overview of Programs Supporting Minority-Serving Institutions under the Higher Education Act

## What are Minority Serving Institutions?

Minority-serving institutions (MSIs) are institutions of higher education (IHEs) that serve high concentrations of minority students. MSIs tend to have relatively low educational and general expenditures and enroll high proportions of financially needy students. Many MSIs have faced challenges in obtaining financial support, affecting their ability to enhance their academic offerings and institutional capabilities, which may ultimately affect how they serve their students.

## Background on Federal Support for MSIs under the Higher Education Act

When originally enacted, the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA; P.L. 89-329) authorized the Strengthening Developing Institutions program, currently known as the Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP), to strengthen and support postsecondary institutions that were struggling to survive because of financial limitations. The original program was not directed at MSIs, and Congress subsequently found that the program did not sufficiently meet the needs of institutions serving a large number of minority students. Under the Higher Education Amendments of 1986 (P.L. 99-498), Congress amended the program to make institutions that served high concentrations of minority and low-income students eligible to participate in the program. Under later amendments to the HEA, Congress established several additional programs that specifically target institutions that serve specific types of minority students.

## Current MSI Programs under the HEA

The overarching approach in the HEA to providing funding to support MSIs is through strengthening grant programs administered by the Department of Education that are similar to the original SIP. Generally, the purpose of the programs is to assist institutions in strengthening their academic, administrative, and fiscal capabilities. Under current law, these programs are available for institutions that serve high concentrations of Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Black American, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander, and Hispanic students. Each of the programs relies on a fairly similar set of eligibility criteria. Some examples of authorized uses of grant funds, which can vary across programs, are to support construction, maintenance, and improvement of instructional facilities, and the development and improvement of academic programs.

A description of the SIP program, which serves as the foundation on which many of the MSI programs are based, is provided below. It is followed by specific descriptions of each of the MSI programs that fit within the strengthening institution framework. Other federal support for MSIs

provided by smaller programs or programs outside of the HEA is not discussed here.

## Strengthening Institutions Program

SIP provides competitive grants to improve the academic quality and institutional management and increase the self-sufficiency of institutions with low expenditures and a high percentage of needy students. In general, an institution meets SIP eligibility criteria if it has low educational and general expenditures; has a requisite enrollment of needy students; is legally authorized within its respective state to award bachelor's degrees, is a junior or community college, or is specified in HEA Section 312(b); is accredited or pre-accredited by a Department of Education (ED)-recognized national or state accrediting agency; and is located within one of the 50 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, or the outlying areas. The eligibility requirements for the SIP program are also the basic criteria for several of the other MSI programs.

## Strengthening American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Program

The Strengthening American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCU) program provides grants with allowable uses similar to SIP grants to TCCUs, but the grants are largely allocated through a formula rather than a competitive process. The purpose of the program is to assist TCCUs in improving and expanding their capacity to serve American Indian students. To qualify for a TCCU grant, an institution must meet the general SIP criteria and must also qualify for funding under the Tribally Controlled Colleges and University Assistance Act of 1978 or the Navajo Community College Act, or be cited in Section 532 of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994.

## Strengthening Alaska Native and Hawaiian-Serving Institutions Program

The Strengthening Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions (ANNHs) program provides grants with allowable uses similar to SIP grants to ANNHs. The program is intended to enable ANNHs to improve and expand their ability to serve Alaska Natives or Native Hawaiians. To qualify for an ANNH grant, an institution must meet the SIP eligibility criteria and must also have an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 20% Alaska Native students or at least 10% Native Hawaiian students.

## Strengthening Predominantly Black Institutions Program

The Strengthening Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs) program provides grants with allowable uses similar to SIP grants to PBIs, but a portion of the grants are allocated through a formula rather than a competitive process. The purpose of the program is to assist PBIs in expanding educational opportunities. To qualify for a PBI grant, institutions must meet a set of criteria that are similar to, but

somewhat different from, the SIP eligibility requirements. Institutions must also have an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 40% Black American.

**Strengthening Native American-Serving, Nontribal Institutions Program**

The Strengthening Native American-Serving, Nontribal Institutions (NASNTIs) program provides grants with allowable uses similar to SIP grants to NASNTIs. The purpose of the program is to enable NASNTIs to improve and expand their ability to serve Native American and low-income students. To qualify for a Strengthening NASNTIs program grant, IHEs must meet the SIP eligibility criteria and must also have an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 10% Native American students.

**Strengthening Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions Program**

The Strengthening Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) program provides grants with allowable uses similar to SIP grants to ANNAPISIs. The purpose of the program is to enable ANNAPISIs to improve and expand their ability to serve Asian Americans and Native American Pacific Islanders and low-income individuals. To qualify for a Strengthening AANAPISI program grant, IHEs must meet SIP eligibility criteria and must also have an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 10% Asian American students or Native American Pacific Islander students.

**Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities Program**

The Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) program provides formula grants to eligible HBCUs for activities to strengthen academic, administrative, and fiscal capabilities. Institutions that are eligible for HBCU grants are known as Part-B institutions. A Part-B institution is defined in HEA Section 322(2) as any historically black college or university established before 1964 whose primary mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans and that is accredited or pre-accredited by an ED-recognized accrediting agency. The Part B definition also includes an exception for institutions established after 1964 that meet certain criteria.

**Programs for Institutions that Enhance Graduate Opportunities for Black Students**

The HEA authorizes three separate programs for institutions that enhance graduate opportunities for black students in certain areas of study: the Historically Black Graduate Institutions (HBGI) program, Master’s Degree programs at HBCUs, and Master’s Degree Programs at PBIs. The HEA specifically identifies the institutions that are eligible to participate in each of these programs.

**Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program**

The Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) program provides grants with allowable uses similar to SIP grants to HSIs to expand educational opportunities for Hispanic students and to enhance academic offerings and institutional stability at HSIs. To qualify for an HSI grant, an institution must meet the SIP eligibility criteria and must also have an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25% Hispanic.

**Promoting Post-baccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans (PPOHA) Program**

The Promoting Post-baccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans (PPOHA) program provides competitive grants to enable HSIs to expand post-baccalaureate educational opportunities for Hispanic students. To qualify for a PPOHA grant, an institution must meet the criteria for the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions program and must offer a post-baccalaureate certificate or degree-granting program.

**Funding for the MSI programs**

Funding for many of the MSI programs discussed in this In Focus has been provided through annual discretionary appropriations. However, in recent years, mandatory appropriations have been provided to many of the programs in addition to the discretionary appropriations. **Table 1** details mandatory and discretionary appropriations for each of the MSI programs discussed above.

**Table 1. FY2018 Discretionary and Mandatory Appropriations for Select MSI Programs**  
(dollars in thousands)

Program	Discretionary Funding	Mandatory Funding
SIP	\$98,886	N/A
Strengthening TCCUs	\$31,539	\$28,020
Strengthening ANNHs	\$15,772	\$14,010
Strengthening PBIs	\$11,361	\$14,010
Strengthening NASNTIs	\$3,826	\$4,670
Strengthening ANNAPISIs	\$3,826	\$4,670
Strengthening HBCUs	\$279,624	\$79,390
Strengthening HBGIs	\$72,314	N/A
Masters Degrees at HBCUs	\$8,571	N/A
Masters Degrees at PBIs	\$0	\$0
Developing HSIs	\$123,183	N/A
PPOHAs	\$11,052	\$0

**Source:** U.S. Department of Education, FY2018 Budget Tables, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget18/18action.pdf>.

For more information, see CRS Report R43237, *Programs for Minority-Serving Institutions Under the Higher Education Act*.

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