

United States Senate

February 17, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Secretary Burgum:

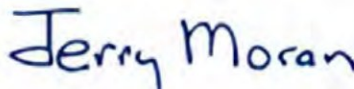
I am writing to request that you take action to mitigate harm to students attending Haskell Indian Nations University (Haskell) following the recent actions to terminate positions throughout the Department of the Interior (Department). Reports indicate that “around 38 employees have been let go” including at least seven instructors.¹ As we discussed in my office a few weeks ago, Haskell faces significant challenges. To avoid further disruptions to the health, safety, and academic well-being of the students, I ask that you take steps to ensure Haskell has an adequate workforce, including rehiring terminated individuals as necessary, and exempting the institute from any further cuts to the workforce.

The ability to retain employees at Haskell is already a significant challenge. Due to the specialized nature of the work and the unique mission of the university, finding qualified individuals to fill positions is often difficult. Haskell is the sole four-year, Tribal Nations University in the country, where Native American students can receive a tuition-free higher education in an environment that understands and prioritizes their heritage. The faculty and staff at Haskell are integral to this mission, offering invaluable services in teaching, student support, and administration. The recent layoffs, which affect nearly every department on campus, will leave students without instructors in some classes and will cause a significant reduction in student services, including meal services.

I remain committed to working with you to pass and implement legislation which I have authored to charter Haskell as an independent university outside the control of the Bureau of Education. The bill will allow Haskell’s Board of Trustees to make academic and personnel decisions for the university without the red tape that comes with the federal hiring and firing process. However, until that bill becomes law, the Department must prioritize the well-being of the students and the institution.

The loss of these employees is not only a blow to the university's operation, but to the Native American students it serves. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Jerry Moran
U.S. Senator

¹ <https://www2.ljworld.com/news/general-news/2025/feb/14/trumps-order-leads-to-layoffs-at-haskell/>