Executive Summary

Sinte Gleska University is a tribal institution of higher education, one of the first of the tribal colleges, located on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in south-central South Dakota. Chartered in 1970 to provide education and other community development opportunities for the Sicangu Lakota or Rosebud Sioux, SGU has an extensive Adult Basic Education (ABE) program preparing adult learners for the General Equivalency Diploma (GED). The ABE program operates four learning centers spanning a 2,800 square mile, 5-county area that consists of the Rosebud Sioux Reservation and Off Reservation Tribal Lands (ORTL), amounting to 4.5 million acres. SGU will expand and enhance its Community Learning Centers program that currently features four centers in four diverse communities. The expansion will include an additional four centers for a total of eight centers that will provide high-speed broadband access to strategically located populations in the central, north, south, east and western areas of the vast reservation. Each Center will be equipped with 15-20 thin client computer stations that will have high speed broadband service through connection to the University's network. Application servers at the University tech center in Mission, SD will reduce the need for switches and extraneous wires in each center and allow for remote network maintenance and tech support to individual computers. This program extends over a five-county area spanning more than 2,000 square miles. It serves the Sicangu Lakota and other tribal and non-Indian residents who live in one of the poorest areas of the country. All of the communities in the 5-county area of the reservation and (ORTL) are considered underserved and unserved based primarily on the historical poverty of the area. There are 24,110 tribal members (source: RST Enrollment Office) and approximately 5,000 non-Indians living in the service area. The reservation has one of the youngest populations in the country with 44% under the age of 18, as well as one of the poorest populations with a per capita income of under $9,000 and unemployment at 83% with 76% of employed living below poverty guidelines. The University proposes to provide high speed broadband so that all tribal residents can have access to information and educational programs through the Web. The service provider, Golden West Technologies, headquartered in Rapid City, SD, will provide fiber optic access to each center at a 5-MB speed capability. The SGU network will host the eight centers’ broadband access, running software applications, file saving, and storage through servers on the SGU campus. The University's Management Information Systems (MIS) staff will be able to provide maintenance and troubleshooting remotely from the campus, thus reducing the number and type of hardware devices in each center. This will permit center activities to focus on provision of broadband and educational and informational activities rather than on on-site maintenance that is costly and inefficient. The University will hire 4 new center managers whose job will be to provide the GED instruction and to establish and keep times available for students in grades 5 through college level and
provide assistance in accessing information through the Internet. A half-time employee recruited from SGU students living in the centers' areas will provide an extra 20 hours per week for center management, including maintaining a schedule with weekend hours that will be available for all community members. One full-time employee will be added to the University's MIS staff to assist center staff and will visit each center a minimum of once a month to provide on-site maintenance and assistance. The eight centers are strategically placed throughout the reservation. They are located in communities that have several smaller population areas in their vicinity. Centers will serve at least 2,000 individual users each year with student age groups between 5th grade through college. Other constituents include those seeking a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), and other adults seeking training in basic computing as well as those who seeking training or information on using the Internet to start a business or work for an on-line business. The potential to serve more than 2,000 users per year is great simply because the lack of computer access in individual homes is so great. The Tribe has 20 distinct communities with populations of 50-3,000 residents and with many homes located on acreage outside of town or community boundaries. The Rosebud Reservation economy is atypical of a business sector rural economy but is similar to that found on other reservations. Like many indigenous cultures worldwide, the Rosebud Reservation falls into a gray area between the accepted definition of Third and Fourth World Nations; i.e., having an underdeveloped market economy and nascent centralized planning processes in place (Cunningham: 2001). Census 2000 highlights for Todd County note that the percentage of people under age 18 (44%) was third highest among the nation’s counties and ranked fourth among U.S. counties in percentage American Indian population (85.6%) The per capita income (adjusted for inflation) of all people on the Rosebud Reservation & ORTL was $9,407. Latest data (2004-05 school year) on the high school drop-out rate was 63.8%. The Bureau of Indian Affairs American Indian Population & Labor Force Report (2005) lists unemployment at 83% with 76% of employed living below poverty guidelines SGU President Lionel Bordeaux conducted community forums, visiting all 20 communities between February-April 2009. The two community needs cited at each meeting were 1) access to computers, and 2) access to education programs. The University is foremost a recognized leader in community-based, grass-roots higher education. Our history shows our dedication to the people of the area and underscores our ability to continually provide academic and community development programs that meet local needs, despite adverse socio-economic conditions. The University charter mandates that it provide higher education and other learning opportunities for the Sicangu Nation (Rosebud Sioux) and surrounding communities as education is seen as a key to improving the quality of life on the reservation, one of the poorest areas of the country. Since its inception, the University has conferred 1,548 degrees and 204 certificates to over 1,000 graduates. The University has also allocated resources and sought grants for technology infrastructure development. It services 27 buildings that house university departments and programs located in the town of Mission, SD. All of the buildings are connected through a robust Intranet and all students, faculty and staff have access to an equally robust Internet. Our ability to provide consistent programs and to continually develop new degrees and work with the Tribe and tribal agencies on community development is apparent throughout our 40 year history. Sinte Gleska University is excited to take the lead in closing the digital divide that has created a chasm filled with lost opportunity between our tribal nation and the rest of the country. The total project cost is $1,724,484