

Opening Statement of Rep. Burgess Owens (R-UT), Chairman
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
“Enhancing Educational Outcomes in Indian Country: Postsecondary
Education at the Bureau of Indian Education”
June 24, 2025

As Chairman of the Higher Education and Workforce Development Subcommittee, it is my privilege to join you and others in hosting this important hearing – one where we will hear the latest about the status of postsecondary education provided by BIE for Native Americans.

I look forward to hearing from our witness, Mr. Scott Davis – currently carrying out the duties of Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Almost one year ago in another joint hearing by these subcommittees, we heard about the dysfunction at BIE – mismanagement, fraud, nepotism, a failure to investigate complaints, a failure to address sexual harassment, and a longtime failure to exercise proper oversight of Haskell Indian Nations University.

In addition to these failures, we will again discuss, as in the past, the inability of BIE to properly steward its buildings and campuses in educating Native American students.

And it is not just stewardship of property. It is also the recurring instances of sexual harassment at Haskell Indian Nations University that

are particularly troubling and the lack of a strong response by its leaders. And it doesn't stop there.

More broadly, BIE has failed to meet the mark. It has failed to create and instill a culture of accountability in the bureau and its schools.

Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute is similar. Senior officials there have also demonstrated a lack of leadership. A 2018 sexual harassment investigation by the Inspector General revealed that neither BIE nor Southwestern have a policy prohibiting sexual relationships between faculty and students.

All these incidents are problematic, and we need solutions. I am hopeful that the testimony of Mr. Davis will include carefully thought-out solutions that will get BIE, Haskell, and Southwestern on the path to long-term success. Our students deserve no less.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.