Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Nearly 400 more Indian college students received scholarships from the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs this year than in 1964, Commissioner Philleo Nash reported today.

BIA awarded college scholarships to 1,718 students--an increase of 30 percent over last year's figure, he said. Grants amounted to $1,225,000, or an average of $700 per student.

"The number of Indian high school graduates seeking higher education is increasing by 12 percent a year," the Commissioner pointed out. "Fortunately, BIA grants represent only one of the scholarship programs open to eligible Indian students."

Nash said 29 schools of higher learning now have scholarships especially for Indian students, including a number of institutions in the East. In addition, many churches and other groups, as well as tribal organizations, offer grants to Indians for education.

Individual BIA scholarships range from $50 to the entire cost of a college education, including living expenses. Extent of the grant in each case is based both on financial need and scholastic ability of the student, Nash said.

BIA's scholarship program began in 1933 with an annual fund of $9,400. Since 1956, the program has been accelerated each year to an annual level of more than $1 million. Last June, 121 BIA scholarship holders received college degrees and the total number of graduates is expected to increase each year.

Although the BIA grant is usually restricted to undergraduate work, some have been granted to Indians going to medical and law schools, Nash explained. A recent graduate of the Harvard Law School was cited as an example.

To be eligible for a BIA scholarship, an individual must have one-fourth or more Indian blood, and membership in a tribal group served by the Bureau. The grants are made primarily to youth residing on Indian reservations or other Indian-owned, tax-exempt lands.

All grants are handled by BIA area offices, located in Aberdeen, South Dakota; Anadarko, Oklahoma; Billings, Montana; Gallup, New Mexico; Juneau, Alaska, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Muskogee, Oklahoma; Phoenix, Arizona, and Portland, Oregon The Washington, D. C., office handles grants only for Indians of North Carolina and Florida.