



Office of the Governor

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Opportunity Scholarship grows New Mexico college enrollment by over 4% in first increase since 2010**

*Second-highest enrollment increase in the country; Thousands more New Mexicans pursuing college and career training*

SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and the state Higher Education Department announced on Thursday that New Mexico college enrollment has increased for the first time in over a decade, growing by over 4% as a result of the governor’s creation of tuition-free college with the Opportunity Scholarship.

The New Mexico Higher Education Department reported approximately 4,000 more New Mexicans enrolled in a certificate, associate, or bachelor’s degree program at the state’s public colleges and universities this fall compared to the prior year, a 4.1 percent increase in enrollment statewide. The number of first-time, full-time students also increased by over 9 percent. This year’s numbers mark the first growth in New Mexico’s college participation since 2010.

“As a direct result of our investment in tuition-free college and career training for New Mexicans, higher education enrollment is on the rise for the first time in over a decade,” said **Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham**. “The Opportunity Scholarship began as a vision of opening the doors to college for more New Mexicans than ever before – and now we see clearly that our investments are making the dreams of so many students a reality right here at home. As we grow and diversify the state’s economy and train our workforce for a thriving future, we are creating more opportunities than ever for New Mexico families.”

“This year’s enrollment numbers are just the first indication of the amazing potential the Opportunity Scholarship has to transform access to college and career training in New Mexico,” said Higher Education Department **Secretary Stephanie M. Rodriguez**. “With continued funding for the Opportunity and Lottery Scholarships and ongoing investments in support programs that serve our diverse student population, we can ensure that more students are on a path toward graduation and are moving toward success which will benefit New Mexico today and for generations.”

While data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center shows that enrollment this fall declined nationally by 1 percent and decreased among freshman, students over the age of 25, and for all ethnic groups other than Hispanic students, New Mexico is bucking the national trend and showing the second-highest college enrollment gain of any state, following only New Hampshire.

“When it comes to making policy to help students graduate college and make the most of their lives, New Mexico gets it. Their policy work is testament to exactly what happens when you implement Complete College America’s reforms and embed them in policy that is dedicated to working for all students—increasing graduation rates, increasing enrollment driven from retention, and more successful alumni,” said **Charles Ansell**, Vice President for Research, Policy, and Advocacy at Complete College America. “New Mexico is a national exemplar in moving beyond good intentions to policy actions that improve thousands of lives.”

With over 34,000 students receiving the Opportunity Scholarship this fall and over 10,000 on the Lottery Scholarship, more New Mexicans are benefitting from tuition-free college than at any time in state history.

New Mexico’s community colleges and branch campuses saw the largest growth with a six percent average increase. Comprehensive four-year colleges grew enrollment by 4.7 percent and research universities increased by 1.8 percent. Sector averages are listed below:

- Research Institutions: +1.8%
- Comprehensive Colleges: +4.7%
- Independent Community Colleges: +5.5%
- Branch Campuses: +6.7%
- Overall Total: +4.1%

The New Mexico Higher Education Department worked with public colleges and universities earlier this year to develop [strategic enrollment plans](#) with the aim of growing the number of new students enrolling and increase the number of students persisting and graduating. The agency is hopeful that this year’s numbers are the start of a trend of more students enrolling in higher education year after year.

Gov. Lujan Grisham first proposed the New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship in 2019, envisioning a scholarship program that would ensure New Mexicans could attend higher education institutions tuition-free, and secured funding for the first iteration of the program in the 2020 legislative session. In 2022 the governor signed the [Opportunity Scholarship Act](#) and approved \$75 million for the program, expanding tuition-free college to tens of thousands of New Mexicans under the most expansive tuition promise program anywhere in the United States. More than 45,000 Opportunity Scholarships have been awarded to date. The agency is seeking \$100 million for the program next year to ensure its continued ability to benefit students.

In addition to breaking down the barrier of tuition costs, Gov. Lujan Grisham has dedicated over \$6 million in targeted funds for programs that serve New Mexico’s changing student population. These include programs aimed at addressing student food security, expanding campus mental health resources, and increasing participation in the dual credit program among high school students. The governor also directed \$130 million in endowments to increase the number of students enrolling in and graduating from workforce education programs in educator preparation, nursing and social work.

For more information about the Opportunity and Lottery Scholarships and to explore college and career training options, visit [www.ReachHigherNM.com](http://www.ReachHigherNM.com).

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