

SANTA FE — College and university enrollment is up again in New Mexico, according to data released by the Higher Education Department Oct. 24, due in large part to the nation's most expansive college enrollment program.

Over 110,000 New Mexicans are pursuing career training certificates, associate, bachelor's and graduate degrees at state public and tribal colleges and universities, an increase of 2.3% over last year. Over 11,000 New Mexicans are pursuing higher education for the first time and as full-time students.

"As the tuition-free-college capital of the United States, New Mexico is setting the bar for what it looks like when states support working families, build up the workforce, and grow the economy," Gov. Lujan Grisham said. "Investing in our young professionals is investing in our future."

Since the enactment of the Opportunity Scholarship Act in 2022, New Mexico has enrolled an additional 6,700 students, a nearly 7% enrollment increase over the last two years.

"While the rest of the country grapples with questions about college affordability and access, particularly in the wake of recent Supreme Court decisions, New Mexico stands apart as a state dedicated to opportunity," Acting Higher Education Secretary Patricia Trujillo, Ph.D., said. "Every student walking through the doors of our college and university campuses holds the key to our state's future. We are committed to ensuring they make it to graduation day, into the workforce, and contribute to thriving communities."

Prior to the Opportunity Scholarship, New Mexico college enrollment showed steady declines like the rest of the country. During the first semester of the full Opportunity Scholarship last fall, overall college enrollment jumped by 4% and the state experienced a 6% jump from spring to spring.

This year, New Mexico's comprehensive universities saw the most significant year-over-year enrollment growth at 5.6%, followed by branch community colleges at 5%. New Mexico's three research universities (University of New Mexico, New Mexico State University, and New Mexico Tech) and Tribal colleges saw 3.2% increases. Navajo Technical University and

New Mexico college enrollment on the rise for second year in a row

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Northern New Mexico College experienced the highest year-over-year increases at 14.8% and 12% respectively out of all individual institutions.

Other highlights include the University of New Mexico welcoming its largest freshman class in history for the second consecutive year and New Mexico State University's fully online campus – NMSU Global – adding 2,100 new students, a 32.8% increase.

“With the Opportunity Scholarship, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has taken bold steps to ensure that higher education is within reach for all of New Mexico's residents, particularly those in rural areas who face unique challenges. In a world where college costs are skyrocketing, New Mexico stands out as a model of success. Enrollment numbers are continuing to go up, and it looks as though they aren't stopping,” Maureen Hoyler, Immediate Past President of the Council for Opportunity in Education, a national nonprofit dedicated to furthering the expansion of college opportunities for low-income, first-generation students, and students with disabilities, said.

The state's independent community colleges were the only group to show a decline at -1.1% compared to last year. This is due in part to Southeast New Mexico College losing enrollment of NMSU online students during the college's transition away from the New Mexico State University System and to enrollment declines at Mesalands Community College.

Since 2022, tuition-free college through the state's Opportunity and Lottery Scholarships has been fully funded for eligible state residents, benefitting nearly 40,000 undergraduate students each year.

The Higher Education Department launched a statewide college recruitment campaign this summer to encourage New Mexicans to enroll in college that featured ads in local movie theaters, newspapers, radio stations, and online. The state also launched ReachHigherNM.com, a one-stop online resource to help prospective students access state scholarship programs and enroll in the state's 29 participating colleges and universities.

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