



2026 AGENCY REPORT

State Tribal Collaboration Act Annual Report

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NEW MEXICO
HIGHER EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT



Fostering Student Success from Cradle to Career

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Executive Summary

The New Mexico Higher Education Department's (HED) mission is to provide financial, academic, policy oversight and support to New Mexico's public higher education institutions, Tribal Colleges, and our formal community partners. The purpose of HED is to promote efficiency, accountability, and, most importantly, student success. The agency also provides programmatic support and technical assistance to higher education institutions and adult education programs aimed at serving Native American students. HED seeks to broaden, deepen, and strengthen pathways of opportunities for Native American students through partnerships with higher education institutions in New Mexico. Increased collaboration between Tribes and the agency enhances access to higher education and adult education programs, leading to positive changes in Tribal communities and the lives of their citizens.

In New Mexico there are 28 Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) including four Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) and four Native American Non-Tribal Serving Institutions. TCUs in New Mexico include Diné College, Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), Navajo Technical University (NTU), and Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI). The purpose of TCUs is to serve and prepare Native American students through the incorporation of language, culture, and traditions within higher education curricula. In the Academic Year 2024-2025, the total number of Native American students served in higher education, adult education, and dual credit programs was 17,918. This included:

- 3,419 Native American students enrolled at Tribal Colleges
- 10,165 Native American students enrolled at public colleges and universities
- 638 Native American students enrolled at private post-secondary institutions and vocational programs
- 1,215 Native American students enrolled in adult education programs
- 2,481 Native American students enrolled in the Dual Credit Program

Agency Mission, Purpose, and Overview

Mission Statement

To provide financial, academic, and policy oversight, and support New Mexico's public higher education institutions and community partners for the purpose of promoting efficiency, accountability, and student success.

Purpose

The New Mexico Higher Education Department fosters and guides a system of higher education that best meets the needs of New Mexicans. This is accomplished by providing financing to, oversight of, and support for all of New Mexico's public universities, colleges, and state-sponsored adult education programs in addition to regulating the state's private, for-profit higher education institutions, and by offering academic and economic programs, such as the Dual Credit Program, in which both public and Tribal colleges and universities may participate.

Agency Overview

In 2005, HED was established as a cabinet agency in the Executive Branch as a single, unified department to administer laws and exercise functions formerly administered and exercised by the New Mexico Commission on Higher Education. The agency includes the following public-facing divisions: Academic Affairs and Policy, Adult Education, Capital Projects, Financial Aid, Gaining Early Awareness for Readiness and Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), Indian Education, Private Postsecondary Schools, and Planning and Research. In coordination with our divisions the agency works in tandem with our public higher education institutions and community partners to prioritize accessibility and ensure college and career readiness are at the forefront of our services.

Indian Education Division

Mission Statement

The Indian Education Division is responsible for building, ensuring, and maintaining effective two-way communication between the New Mexico Higher Education Department (HED) and Tribal communities across New Mexico.

Goals

The Indian Education Division aims to:

- Support Native American students, Tribal education departments, and Tribal communities;
- Strengthen, maintain, and improve the relationships between the agency and Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos in New Mexico;
- Communicate with Tribal communities regularly and seek consultation with Tribal leaders when appropriate;
- Develop new and improve current agency support services for Native American students through effective partnerships with institutions, legislators and Tribes; and

- Explore partnerships with Tribes, Nations, Pueblos, and other agencies or organizations to address topics of mutual concern and support innovative ideas.

Purpose

Reinstated by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and HED in 2020, the Indian Education Division (IED) builds and maintains effective communication and collaboration among the agency, Tribal colleges, Tribal education departments, Tribal leaders, and Tribal communities throughout New Mexico. IED is committed to working with Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos in the state for the best interests of Native American students in our higher education and adult education systems. The division works to promote and share constituent service support and agency resources available to Native American students. IED is also responsible for upholding the provisions of the State Tribal Collaboration Act (STCA) and the agency's STCA policy. Additionally, the division communicates, collaborates, and consults with Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos to understand the higher education needs and challenges, and works to address them promptly and accordingly.

Partnerships with Tribes

The IED continues to strengthen meaningful partnerships with tribal communities across New Mexico by prioritizing open communication, consistent engagement, and responsive support. Through ongoing Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes (NPTs) Community Visits, including recent visits to the Pueblos of Zia, Sandia, Santo Domingo, and Cochiti, the division has been able to introduce agency resources, establish clear points of contact, and identify the specific higher education and adult education needs of each community. This outreach will continue into the next fiscal year, with additional visits being coordinated to ensure majority of tribal communities are included. Complementing these efforts, the division is working closely with Tribal Leaders and Tribal Education Departments to update long-overdue Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), including the tuition waiver agreements that reflect a critical investment in Native American students. By serving as a facilitator between higher education institutions and tribal governments, HED is supporting renewed dialogue and aiming to complete these updates by the end of the year. In addition, the division's monthly TED meetings provide a stable forum for sharing updates, elevating tribal concerns, and highlighting available programs through partner presentations. Together, these efforts offer a strong foundation for partnership, and they can be further strengthened by continuing consistent communication, ensuring timely follow-up on tribal priorities, expanding collaborative planning with Tribal Education Departments, and maintaining transparency throughout policy and agreement updates.

Agency Division Collaboration

Through the monthly Tribal Education Department (TED) meetings, the Indian Education Division (IED) has created a consistent and effective platform for other public-facing Higher Education Department (HED) divisions to engage directly with the Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes (NPTs). These presentations provide tribal education departments with insight into available services, programs, and resources that may benefit their communities. This collaborative approach ensures that NPTs have direct access to HED divisions and a clear understanding of how to connect their communities to needed support. For example, recent presentations by the Adult Education Division helped address identified community needs by clarifying how tribal members can access adult education services and by providing contact points to support local referrals.

There is continued opportunity to strengthen internal coordination within the agency by regularly updating HED directors and divisions on the requests, priorities, and emerging needs shared by tribal communities. This communication also helps identify cross-division collaboration when outreach or technical assistance is requested. The IED and the Financial Aid Division have partnered to deliver joint presentations on state scholarship programs and other HED services directly within tribal communities, ensuring students and families are aware of available financial aid opportunities. Additionally, the division has facilitated connections between Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) and relevant professional development and funding opportunities. Collaborative outreach has also been conducted with the Capital Outlay Division and the Policy Division to ensure TCUs remain informed about agency initiatives and forthcoming opportunities. These coordinated efforts strengthen the department's overall responsiveness and reinforce a shared commitment to supporting tribal educational sovereignty and student success.

Through the HED Technical Summit that happened in March 2026, the IED presented two workshops geared toward Native students and the IED's current and future efforts. The division held a workshop on the MOUs to provide updates and feedback from a previous workshop on updating these MOUs. There were university staff and tribal education directors present for this presentation and opened meaningful discussion on what is needed to move this work forward. In the second session, we presented the current work we are doing and prompted the participants to provide us with feedback and insight into the ways that we can improve our relationship with their communities and what is working well for them currently. This expanded our perspective of how we are doing the work and created opportunities for strengthening our relations with other entities to serve as guidance and collaboration with us.

Communication, Collaboration, and Consultation with Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations

Building Collaborative Foundations with NPTs

For fiscal year 2026, the Indian Education Division has focused on strengthening partnerships and open communication with tribal communities across New Mexico. As part of this effort, the division has conducted Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes (NPTs) Community Visits, including recent visits to the Pueblos of Zia, Sandia, Santo Domingo, and Cochiti. Additional visits are currently being coordinated with several other NPTs. These visits serve to introduce the division and the agency to each tribal community, share available Higher Education Department resources, and establish clear points of contact to support the needs of tribal communities and their students. The division will continue coordinating NPTs Community Visits throughout the next fiscal year to ensure outreach to all tribal communities in the State of New Mexico. Through the NPTs Community Visits, the division has begun identifying the specific resources and services each tribal community may need in relation to higher education and adult education. These insights help to shape more responsive support strategies and inform future outreach efforts for the IED Division.

One key area requiring continued engagement with Tribal Leaders and Tribal Education Departments is the updating of Memorandums of Understanding between several public higher education institutions and the Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes. These MOUs include the tuition waiver agreements, which serve as an investment in selected Native American students by covering the cost of college tuition. Many of these agreements have not been updated for several years, and tribal leaders have requested renewed discussions with higher education institutions to review and revise the documents. The Higher Education Department will serve as a facilitator for these conversations, supporting both HEIs and NPTs by providing information and addressing questions related to the Opportunity and Lottery Scholarships. This work is currently in progress, with a tentative goal of completing updates by the end of the calendar year.

Higher Education Highlights

Native American Graduate Credentials

For Academic Year 2024-2025, a total of 2,010 students graduated. The total number of Native American students that graduated from New Mexico colleges and universities had a slight decline from last academic year by 11.8%. However, Native American students

graduating with a bachelor's degree increased by 7% from Academic Year 2023-2024 to Academic Year 2024-2025. With the following credentials having the highest completions:

- 1,507 certificates and associate degrees
- 373 bachelor's degrees
- 120 master's degrees
- 10 graduate certificates

Opportunity Scholarship

The Opportunity Scholarship enables New Mexicans to pursue a college degree or career training certificate, even if they are starting college for the first time later in life or going back after many years. Students may enroll part-time or full-time and must maintain a 2.5 GPA while in college.

During Academic Year 2021–2022, a total of 2,520 Native American students received the Opportunity Scholarship. Award levels for Native American students have remained consistently strong in recent years, reflecting sustained access to this financial support. For Academic Year 2024–2025, the number of Native American students receiving the Opportunity Scholarship has increased to 3,999 statewide, demonstrating significant growth in participation and continued progress in supporting Native student success.

Current and Planned Programs and Services for Native American Students

Academic Affairs

Completions

The total number of Native American students that graduated from New Mexico colleges and universities had a slight decline from last academic year by 11.8%. However, Native American students graduating with a bachelor's degree increased by 7% from Academic Year 2023-2024 to Academic Year 2024-2025. For Academic Year 2024-2025, a total of 2,010 students graduated with the following credentials.

Total Credentials Awarded to Native American Students for Academic Year 2024-2025						
Certificates <1 Year	Certificates 1-2 Years	Associate's Degree	Certificates 2-4 Years	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Graduate Certificates
274	587	634	12	373	120	10
Total: 2,010						

Dual Credit Enrollment

New Mexico is one of fourteen states that funds dual credit coursework. Students can earn credit at both their high school and a local college or university through the state's Dual Credit Program. The program allows high school students to enroll in college-level academic or career-technical courses offered by a public or Tribal higher education institution. Currently, 27 public colleges and universities across New Mexico participate in the Dual Credit Program, three of which are Tribal colleges: Diné College, Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), and Navajo Technical University (NTU).

- Fall 2024 Native American student Dual Credit enrollment statewide – 2,481
- Fall 2024 Native American student Dual Credit enrollment at Tribal colleges – 909
 - Diné College – 33
 - IAIA – 324
 - NTU – 552

Financial Aid

Purpose

The Financial Aid Division is committed to helping students access the financial resources they need to pursue higher education in New Mexico. Each year, the division administers nearly \$450 million in state financial aid through a wide range of programs designed to support the diverse needs of New Mexico's students and make college more accessible and affordable.

Goals

The Financial Aid Division aims to:

- Promote awareness that higher education is attainable and affordable for all New Mexico students;
- Provide students and their families with clear, accurate information to help them make informed decisions about financing their education;
- Ensure that information about state financial aid programs is accessible to all eligible students;
- Collaborate with New Mexico's public colleges and universities to ensure regulatory compliance and responsible stewardship of state and federal financial aid funds; and;
- Streamline and simplify the financial aid application process to improve access and reduce barriers for students.

Financial Aid Data

The New Mexico Opportunity and Lottery scholarships have provided support for Native American students enrolled in New Mexico's public and Tribal colleges and universities.

For Academic Year 2024-2025, Nearly 4,000 Native American students statewide were awarded the Opportunity Scholarship totaling \$10,653,356. Additionally, 670 Native American students statewide were awarded the Lottery Scholarship totaling \$2,768,445.

Tribal College Support

In Academic Year 2024-2025, Tribal college students continue to be eligible for the Lottery Scholarship. Qualifying students at Tribal colleges receive the same tuition support as students at New Mexico's public four-year colleges and universities. The agency estimates this will benefit over 1,400 students per year enrolled at New Mexico Tribal colleges. Each year, approximately \$2 million in state aid supports students specifically at Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs).

For Academic Year 2024-2025, approximately \$2.2 million in state financial aid was distributed to Native students attending Tribal colleges. This aid includes need-based grants such as the State Student Incentive Grant; merit-based grants such as Teacher Preparation; and State Work Study funds. Additionally, approximately \$6.2 million was distributed to Native American students in New Mexico Tribal colleges through federal Pell Grants.

Financial Aid Impact

State investments through the Opportunity and Lottery Scholarships have provided over \$31 million to Native American students attending both public and Tribal colleges since 2022. Over \$64 million was awarded to Native American students through federal Pell Grants since 2022.

For Academic Year 2024-2025, Native American students have received more than \$13.4 million in state financial aid while attending New Mexico's public and Tribal colleges.

**Note: All financial aid data presented was pulled from eDEAR (Electronic Data Editing and Reporting) submissions, using summer trailing methodology in alignment with enrollment reporting practices for Academic Year. Ethnicity data is self-reported by students and is based on IPEDS ethnicity coding for Native American/Alaska Native students.*

Native American Students – Key Financial Aid Comparison

	AY 2024–25		AY 2023–24		AY 2022–23	
Aid Type	Tribal Colleges	Non-Tribal Institutions	Tribal Colleges	Non-Tribal Institutions	Tribal Colleges	Non-Tribal Institutions
Pell Grants (Federal)	\$6,289,322	\$18,177,490	\$5,193,711	\$16,008,581	\$4,088,421	\$14,268,438
Opportunity Scholarship (State)	\$2,155,721	\$8,497,635	\$1,473,845	\$9,124,812	\$1,498,955	\$8,798,636
Lottery Success Scholarship (State)	\$121,676	\$2,646,769	\$65,412	\$2,295,937	\$117,109	\$1,834,098
Total (3 Sources)	\$ 8,566,719	\$29,321,894	\$6,732,968	\$27,429,330	\$5,704,485	\$24,901,172
Source: DEAR Financial Aid Files. These figures are drawn from Summer, Fall, and Spring term files and reflect students identified as Native American based on available demographic data. Because the data is term-based, some duplication may occur if students received aid across multiple terms or aid types.						

Financial Aid Contact Information

The Financial Aid Division is available to assist students, parents, and families with questions related to state financial aid programs, including scholarships, grants, and loan forgiveness programs. The agency's Financial Aid Help Line is staffed with experts to answer any inquiries: 1-800-297-9777 or Fin.Aid@hed.nm.gov.

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) New Mexico

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) New Mexico is a seven-year initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The program aims to increase access to college and career readiness resources for students. GEAR UP New Mexico (GUNM), a division of the New Mexico Higher Education Department (HED), serves eight school districts throughout the state.

Service Overview for the 2025-2026 School Year

In the 2025-2026 school year, GUNM supported 7,010 students from 7th grade through their first year of college. The program currently serves sixteen middle and high schools that are historically underrepresented in higher education. Four of the eight participating districts have significant Native American populations, including:

- Bernalillo High School

- Capital High School (Santa Fe)
- Española High School
- Taos High School

While GUNM does not collect specific Tribal affiliation information, 823 students (12 percent) of the total student population served during the 2024-2025 school year self-identified as Native American.

Services Provided

GUNM provides a range of college and career readiness services to students and their families. Services are tailored to local needs and include:

- Rigorous coursework
- Dual credit opportunities
- Tutoring and credit recovery
- Supplemental math instruction
- Mentoring by college students
- College visits
- Student leadership opportunities
- College entrance test preparation
- Financial aid advising and FAFSA submission assistance

Tribal College Visits

GUNM continues to provide opportunities for students and staff to engage with Native-serving postsecondary institutions across the region. During the 2025-2026 school year, GUNM facilitated college visits to:

- Adams State
- Diné College
- Central New Mexico College – Albuquerque
- Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA)
- Navajo Technical University
- New Mexico State – Grants Campus
- New Mexico State University – Las Cruces
- Northern New Mexico University
- Pikes Peak College
- San Juan College
- Santa Fe Community College
- Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI)
- University of New Mexico – Albuquerque

Sixty-two Native American students participated in these visits where they were provided students with opportunities to learn about academic programs, admissions requirements, student support services, and campus resources. Staff accompanying students also engaged with college access professionals to strengthen support for students transitioning to postsecondary education.

Workforce Development

GEAR UP New Mexico supports career exploration and workforce readiness through partnerships with employers, training providers, and educational institutions. In partnership with FOCUS Training, high school students visit businesses and industries throughout New Mexico to learn about career pathways, employment opportunities, internships, apprenticeships, and workforce training programs.

During the 2025-2026, thirty-two Native American students participated in workforce development bus tours. They also receive workforce readiness support, including resume development, cover letter writing, interview preparation, and job-search strategies. Programming is designed to increase awareness of career options and the education and training required to pursue them.

GEAR UP New Mexico offered two overnight bus tours in the spring—one focused on career exploration and one focused on apprenticeship opportunities. Programs visited include:

- Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department of New Mexico: Wildfire Response Training Program
- Central New Mexico Community College Health Sciences Pathways
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 611
- KNME-TV/NMPBS
- Associated Builders and Contractors of New Mexico
- CNM Ingenuity Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs
- Southwest Line Constructors Joint Apprenticeship and Training Program
- APRENDE Early Childhood Teaching Apprenticeship

School districts also offered workforce development exposure trips to the following sites:

- Albuquerque Open Space Division
- Capital Ford Dealership
- Jemez Mountains Electric Co-Op
- Kirtland Air Force Base
- New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute

- New Mexico Joint Apprenticeship for Electricians
- Presbyterian Hospital
- Spaceport America
- University of New Mexico Hospital (Albuquerque)

Additionally, many GUNM students accessed the Be Pro Be Proud mobile unit at their local schools. Through virtual reality simulations and interactive displays, students were introduced to careers in skilled trades and learned about training opportunities in high-demand industries.

Providing students with exposure to workforce and apprenticeship opportunities supports informed decision-making regarding postsecondary education, training, and career pathways.

Looking Ahead

As GUNM enters the 2026-2027 school year, the program will continue providing college and career readiness services to participating students across New Mexico. Statewide tours, college visits, workforce development activities, academic support services, and financial aid assistance will remain key components of program delivery.

GUNM will continue strengthening partnerships with Tribal communities, local school districts, and higher education institutions to support effective college and career readiness services for students across the state.

Through these efforts, GUNM will continue working to increase student awareness of post-secondary education and workforce opportunities while supporting successful transitions beyond high school.

Adult Education

The Adult Education Division provides funding and oversight for 26 adult education and 18 literacy programs across the state. Each program offers free educational and career development services for eligible New Mexico adults. The division works collaboratively with the Indian Education Division (IED) to increase awareness of the division's work, existing service sites, and to strengthen partnerships with Tribal communities in meaningful and impactful ways.

Adult education programs are vital to the state because they meet learners where they are. Programs provide support to strengthen core academic skills, to help learners earn a high school equivalency (HSE) credential or adult diploma, improve English language proficiency and civics knowledge, and promote workplace readiness and soft skills.

To be eligible for adult education services, participants must:

- Be at least 16 years of age;
- Not enrolled or required to be enrolled in high school; and
- Score below postsecondary skill levels on an approved assessment.

Preparation for HSE assessments is one of the most requested services that adult education programs offer. New Mexico has three pathways to high school equivalency credentials. The GED® and HiSET® are both nationally recognized, multi-part standardized tests that cover mathematical reasoning, language arts, social studies, and science subject areas. The third and newest pathway authorized in New Mexico is the National External Diploma Program, or NEDP®. This rigorous adult diploma program is a flexible alternative to testing that allows clients to work at their own pace to demonstrate mastery of academic and workforce preparation competencies. In addition to the nine adult education programs offered across the state, the NEDP can be accessed online via a “hub” that prioritizes serving Native American students and parents of young children.

In the 2025-2026 program year, the Adult Education Division served a total of 13,657 students; of these, 1,215, or 8.9 %, were Native American. Two of these programs serve a fully Native American population: Diné College located on the Navajo Nation and Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) in Albuquerque. In addition, the adult education programs at San Juan College, the University of New Mexico-Gallup, and New Mexico State University-Grants serve high percentages of learners from Tribal communities.

Adult education programs guide students into higher education, career training, and the workforce. Native American adults who participated in adult education in the 2025-2026 program year made strides in their academic goals, with 572 Native American participants achieving at least one educational functioning level gain. A total of 125 participants transitioned to post-secondary education and training, 333 participants passed at least one high school equivalency subtest exam, and a total of 178 earned their high school equivalency diploma –a 14.8% increase compared to prior year. Though note that not all students are seeking an HSE when they participate in an adult education program. Most importantly, Native American students’ learning outcomes continue to be higher on average than that of their non-Indigenous peers.

Capital Outlay

The Capital Projects Division is responsible for the stewardship and oversight of capital outlay funding for public and Tribal higher education institutions across New Mexico. This includes the development of a statewide capital outlay funding plan in collaboration with public and tribal higher education institutions for presentation to the Executive and Legislature each year. The Division also manages the day-to-day aspects of the higher education capital outlay program, which includes compliance with Executive Order 2013-006 Establishing Uniform Funding Criteria and Grant Management and Oversight Requirements for Grants of State Capital Outlay Appropriations by State Agencies and Other Entities as well as NMAC 5.3.10 Capital Projects Approval by the New Mexico Higher Education Department. In compliance with these requirements, HED establishes grant agreements between the Department and its grantees, monitors the grant agreement requirements, processes financial draws through the State Board of Finance, and organizes monthly Higher Education Capital Outlay Committee hearings.

The Department continues to give preference to projects which: contribute to a high-quality educational environment, support the mission and role of the institution, address major health and safety issues, renovate existing facilities in lieu of new construction, and improve building efficiencies within eligible campus facilities statewide.

Over the past three years, the department has expanded its considerations to include supplemental funding requests and demolition projects. Supplemental funding is reserved for previously recommended projects that require additional resources due to increased construction or labor costs. Demolition requests are prioritized based on the institution's ability to utilize the funding within the fiscal year in which it is awarded.

Tribal College Capital Outlay

Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) play a vital role in educating their communities and advancing culturally relevant teaching practices. Ensuring that TCUs have modern, high-quality facilities enhances student learning, supports program delivery, and strengthens student engagement. Capital investments in Tribal higher education institutions improve infrastructure and support new construction, benefiting students, faculty, the local economy, the workforce, and the communities served throughout New Mexico. For Fiscal Year 2026, TCUs received \$330,000 to support the purchase of equipment, along with an additional \$1,000,000 for a campus generator project at the Institute of American Indian Arts and \$2,000,000 for campus improvements at Navajo Technical University. TCUs will also benefit from a statewide \$6,000,000 appropriation to HED for academic libraries, which will provide funding for books, equipment, and electronic resources.

Private Postsecondary Schools

The Private Postsecondary Schools Division (PPSD) oversees and regulates private colleges, universities, and career institutions operating in New Mexico in accordance with the Post-Secondary Educational Institution Act and the Interstate Distance Education Act. The division is responsible for licensing eligible institutions, ensuring compliance with state laws and regulations, and protecting prospective and current students. PPCSD also provides consumer protection by overseeing institutional accountability and assisting students when a private postsecondary institution ceases operations or fails to meet the quality standards established by the New Mexico Higher Education Department.

For-Profit Private Schools Defined

A for-profit private postsecondary institution is a college, university, or career school that is privately owned and operated by an individual, corporation, or business entity. These institutions are primarily funded through tuition and fees rather than direct state appropriations. They often offer career-focused and workforce-oriented programs designed to prepare students for specific professions. Many for-profit institutions feature flexible scheduling, smaller class sizes, and accelerated program options, making them an attractive choice for students seeking a more individualized educational experience or a faster pathway to earning a credential or degree.

State and Private Schools' Relationship

New Mexico recognizes the important role that private postsecondary institutions play in providing educational opportunities and workforce training throughout the state. To ensure quality, accountability, and consumer protection, the New Mexico Higher Education Department regulates eligible private postsecondary institutions through the Private Postsecondary Schools Division (PPSD). Under the Post-Secondary Educational Institution Act and the Interstate Distance Education Act, PPCSD is responsible for authorizing qualifying institutions, granting exemptions where appropriate, monitoring compliance with state laws and regulations, and safeguarding the interests of prospective and enrolled students.

Private postsecondary institutions contribute to New Mexico's higher education landscape by offering a wide range of academic, technical, vocational, and professional programs that complement the state's public colleges and universities. Together, these institutions expand educational access, support workforce development, and provide students with diverse pathways to achieve their educational and career goals.

Enrollment numbers

During Academic Year 2024–2025, **638 Native American** students were enrolled in New Mexico's private postsecondary institutions. This total includes students attending both state-authorized private institutions with a physical presence in New Mexico and state-authorized private distance education institutions.

Native American student enrollment by program level was distributed as follows:

- **65.4%** enrolled in certificate programs
- **20.0%** enrolled in associate degree programs
- **7.3%** enrolled in bachelor's degree programs
- **4.9%** enrolled in master's degree programs
- **2.4%** enrolled in doctoral degree programs

These enrollment data demonstrate that certificate programs remain the primary educational pathway for Native American students attending New Mexico's private postsecondary institutions, reflecting the significant role these institutions play in providing career-focused education and workforce training opportunities.

State Tribal Collaboration Act Training and Certification

The New Mexico Higher Education Department has taken deliberate steps to ensure that all staff serving NPTs complete the *Building Cultural Equity with Native Nations* training each fiscal year. In collaboration with the State Personnel Office and the HED Tribal Liaison, the department conducted an assessment to determine which staff had fulfilled the training requirement and which individuals still needed to do so. Each division received targeted follow-up to reinforce their understanding of the requirement and to ensure awareness of the completion deadline. Additionally, HED Leadership encouraged division directors to actively support and remind their staff to complete the required training.

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