NEW MEXICO HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Fostering Student Success from Cradle to Career

PURPOSE OF HEARING:
Retention and Graduation Data from New Mexico's Public Higher Education Institutions

PRESENTATION TO:
Legislative Finance Committee

DATE:
Wednesday,
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LOCATION:
San Juan College
Farmington, NM

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COLLEGE RETENTION: PERSISTENCE OF STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Retention in a higher education setting is the process of keeping students enrolled in community colleges, universities, or other types of higher education institutions.

COLLEGE RETENTION RATES IN NEW MEXICO

Retention is an important part of higher education because it impacts graduation rates, which indicate how well a college or university is performing for its students.

Although retention was trending upwards over the past several years, the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic had a significant impact on retention rates in New Mexico and across the nation. The largest decrease in retention was in the two-year college sector at five percent from Academic Year (AY) 2018-2019 to AY2019-2020, while the four-year college and university sector slightly increased retention in that same time period. The sharpest decline in retention was in AY2019-2020 to AY2020-2021 across most sectors in the state, with the exception being the independent community colleges with a slight increase. However, the downward trend reversed for AY2021-2022.

The offset of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the momentum behind both the Opportunity and Lottery Scholarships likely contributed to increased retention from Fall 2021 to Fall 2022. Data is not yet available for Fall 2022 to Fall 2023, but state scholarships, like the Opportunity Scholarship, are anticipated to reduce financial hardship for many students, enabling them to stay enrolled in our state's colleges and universities. Additionally, it is important to note that COVID-19 played a critical role in higher education in New Mexico in 2020 and 2021. Research on the impact of teaching modalities – remote, hybrid, and in-person learning – will be necessary to understand the impact of pandemic-era instruction on retention.

When comparing New Mexico to other states, it is important to remember that although our state is neighbors to Arizona, Colorado, and Texas, we are not necessarily peers. State with similar demographics in ethnic diversity, student socioeconomic profiles, and overall population size include Louisiana and Mississippi.

TWO-YEAR AND FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE RETENTION RATES IN NEW MEXICO

ACADEMIC YEAR (AY)	AY2017-18	AY2018-19	AY2019-20	AY2020-21	AY2021-22
Four-Year Colleges & Universities	65%	66%	67%	61%	65%
Two-Year Colleges	52%	54%	49%	50%	53%
Overall Statewide Average	59%	60%	58%	56%	59%

Four-year college and university data from the annual New Mexico Council of University Presidents Reports and two-year college data from eDEAR files submitted to the New Mexico Higher Education Department.

AVERAGE HIGHER EDUCATION RETENTION RATES BY PEER STATES

ACADEMIC YEAR (AY)	AY2017-18	AY2018-19	AY2019-20	AY2020-21	AY2021-22
New Mexico	59%	60%	58%	56%	59%
Louisiana	59%	60%	62%	62%	60%
Mississippi	66%	66%	68%	69%	67%

Retention data for Louisiana and Mississippi from the National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

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COLLEGE GRADUATION: AWARDS AND DEGREE COMPLETION

Graduation rates track first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students to see if or when they graduate from a college or university. This is the same cohort used for computing retention rates. Full-time, or 100% of time, is defined as four years to complete a bachelor's degree and two years for an associate degree or certificate. Often, the rate is calculated for 150% of expected time, which is six years for a bachelor's degree and three years for an associate degree.

It is important to compare to institutions with similar student bodies and similar admission standards. For example, a university like the University of New Mexico has a very diverse student population, many students with Pell grants and many students who are first-generation college students in their families. Therefore, some students will take longer to graduate than students at a highly selective university with a less diverse student population and fewer students qualifying for Pell. Louisiana was chosen for a peer state analysis since this state also serves a high proportion of low-income and ethnically diverse students. While no other state perfectly matches New Mexico's unique student population and mix of public and tribal institutions, comparing data with similar or "peer" states can help us better evaluate performance metrics while controlling for similar environmental factors.

TWO-YEAR & FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE GRADUATION RATES IN NEW MEXICO

Institution Type	Two-Year Colleges			Four-Year Colleges	
ENTERING YEAR	**2-YEAR**	**3-YEAR**	**4-YEAR**	**4-YEAR**	**6-YEAR**
2012	10.3%	16.4%	20.2%	19.1%	36.2%
2013	14.0%	19.2%	24.5%	21.8%	36.7%
2014	16.3%	24.0%	28.3%	25.9%	39.6%
2015	17.5%	25.3%	29.3%	25.6%	39.0%
2016	17.0%	23.4%	29.6%	28.2%	39.6%
2017	19.8%	26.9%	30.8%	25.9%	--
2018	21.5%	28.8%	34.8%	28.1%	--
2019	18.4%	27.1%	--	--	--

Data from eDEAR "End-of-Semester" student files and degree files. Graduation in this data is defined as a certificate or degree of first-time, full-time entering freshman.

PEER STATE COMPARISON OF TWO-YEAR & FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE GRADUATION RATES

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
NEW MEXICO								
2-YEAR	10.3%	14.0%	16.3%	17.5%	17.0%	19.8%	21.5%	18.4%
6-YEAR	36.2%	36.7%	39.6%	39.0%	39.6%	--	--	--
LOUISIANA								
2-YEAR	25.3%	20.3%	21.5%	23.4%	23.8%	26.0%	26.8%	--
6-YEAR	35.0%	36.3%	37.4%	39.0%	39.0%	39.0%	41.1%	--

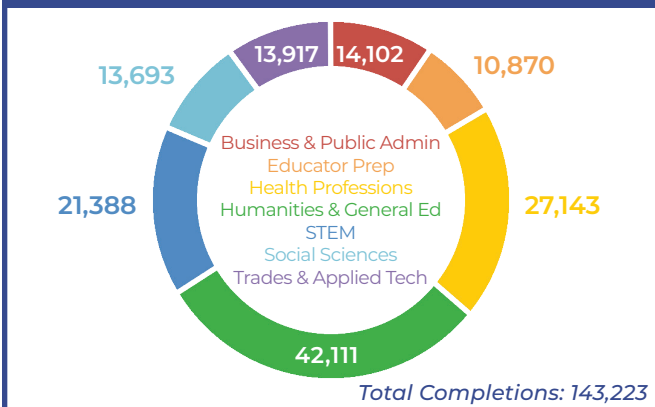*Graduation data for Louisiana from the National Center for Education Statistics IPEDS.*

GRADUATION DATA AVERAGES BY HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

TWO-YEAR SECTOR

- **Independent Community Colleges (2012-2019)**
  - 2-Year: **19.8%**
  - 3-Year: **26.8%**
  - 4-Year: **29.8%**
  - 6-Year: **31.4%**

- **Branch Campuses (2012-2019)**
  - 2-Year: **13.3%**
  - 3-Year: **21.1%**
  - 6-Year: **24.4%**
  - 8-Year: **25.3%**

FOUR-YEAR SECTOR

- **Research Universities (2012-2018)**
  - 4-Year: **30.0%**
  - 6-Year: **51.5%**
  - 8-Year: **54.8%**

- **Comprehensive Colleges (2012-2018)**
  - 4-Year: **11.1%**
  - 6-Year: **21.1%**
  - 6-Year: **28.3%**
  - 8-Year: **29.0%**

CUMULATIVE DEGREE PRODUCTION
Academic Years 2018 to 2022

13,917 | 14,102 | 10,870
13,693 | 21,388 | 27,143
42,111

Business & Public Admin
Educator Prep
Health Professions
Humanities & General Ed
STEM
Social Sciences
Trades & Applied Tech

Total Completions: 143,223

CUMULATIVE DEGREE PRODUCTION IN NEW MEXICO

From 2018 to 2022, 143,224 individuals have completed a postsecondary credential at a public higher education institution in New Mexico. Although the highest rate of completion is within the humanities at over 42,000 students, health professions surpass STEM degree production by 5,755.

Adding the two, STEM-H makes up for 34% of degree production in New Mexico. Other high-need fields - educator prep, trades and vocational education, and STEM-H - make up for over 50% of all completed credentials in New Mexico from 2018 to 2021.

GRADUATION: TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

The data shows that the two-year sectors have increased the percentage of students graduating 150% of time from 16.4% to 27.1% over the past eight years. The COVID-19 Pandemic may have had a small impact, as the rate for the Class of 2019 (2018 data) dropped slightly in 2019. The full impact of the pandemic will not be known until graduation data from AY2022-2023 is available. Oftentimes, many students at two-year colleges also take longer than 150% of time to graduate, hence why three-year and four-year data is tracked by the New Mexico Higher Education Department.

The graduation rates at the branch campuses are lower than the independent community colleges, although they have been increasing at a similar rate to the independent community college sector. This could be explained by the fact that many of these students transfer to the main campus before completing a degree. Both two-year community college sectors did see a slight decrease in graduation rates for the Class of 2019, likely due to delayed graduations during COVID-19 or the disruption of traditional instruction methods.

GRADUATION: FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

The six-year (150%) graduation rates at the universities have not changed greatly over the past five years, but there was a three percent increase from around 36% to 39%. However, there has been a large increase in four-year (100%) graduation rates, from 19% to over 28%, meaning many students are completing sooner, which saves them significantly in total tuition and time spent.

As with retention rates, the graduation rates for the research university sector are higher than for the comprehensive college sector - a little over 50% compared to a little under 30%. Both sectors show a large increase in four-year graduation rates, 22% to almost 34% for the research universities and 8.0% to around 13% at the comprehensive colleges. Fortunately, this shows that students are completing sooner in New Mexico.

The four-year college and university graduation rates for New Mexico compared to Louisiana are a little lower, but this could be partially due to the different types of higher education institutions, such as generally smaller colleges and universities in addition to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The research university sector graduation rates in New Mexico are higher than the rates in both Mississippi and Louisiana, while the comprehensive colleges, or regional schools, graduation rates are lower. Deeper analysis can help to further explain these differences once more appropriate peer groups and institutions are reviewed by the New Mexico Higher Education Department.

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COLLEGE REMEDIATION RATES IN NEW MEXICO

Remedial courses ensure that a student can successfully pass required courses in the future and complete standard degree requirements to graduate. According to data submitted to the New Mexico Higher Education Department, New Mexico has experienced a decrease in remediation rates since AY2017-2018 by over 10% overall and in both the two-year and four-year sector.

College remediation is a supplementary education program assigned to certain students to assist them in achieving expected competencies in core academic subjects, such as mathematics, reading, and writing.

### TWO-YEAR AND FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE REMEDIATION RATES IN NEW MEXICO

ACADEMIC YEAR (AY)	AY2017-18	AY2018-19	AY2019-20	AY2020-21	AY2021-22
Four-Year Colleges & Universities	36.7%	35.4%	28.0%	21.2%	25.0%
Two-Year Colleges	46.1%	45.1%	40.3%	37.0%	33.4%
Overall Statewide Average	**42.5%**	**41.7%**	**37.2%**	**34.1%**	**31.4%**

Data from eDEAR files. Remediation in this data is the percentage of first-time freshmen from New Mexico high schools who took at least one remedial course in their first fall or summer semester in college.

However, breaking down the data by race and ethnicity, there are clearly three groups that need more support in preparing for college and careers in New Mexico – Hispanic, Native American, and Black or African American students. Although remediation rates have decreased for all three populations, especially during this administration, by an average over 10% for all three groups combined, more support in college and career readiness is vital to help diverse groups of students succeed. Some examples of future investment and advocacy include building momentum and capacity for the New Mexico Public Education Department's College and Career Readiness Bureau and the New Mexico Higher Education Department's federally funded GEAR UP New Mexico (GUNM) program. GUNM provides college and career readiness programs and services to middle and high school students in seven districts across the state. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the program will invest $31.4 million over seven years to help thousands of K-12 students and their families access higher education.

REMEDIATION RATE BY RACE & ETHNICITY IN NEW MEXICO

ACADEMIC YEAR (AY)	AY2017-18	AY2018-19	AY2019-20	AY2020-21	AY2021-22
Hispanic	47.2%	45.6%	41.8%	37.0%	32.2%
Native American	54.6%	53.4%	38.4%	36.7%	32.0%
Asian	28.8%	20.0%	24.2%	24.1%	25.0%
Black/African American	44.5%	50.0%	39.7%	41.2%	40.7%
Native Hawaiian	50.0%	50.0%	14.3%	20.0%	57.1%
White	26.0%	27.2%	23.2%	25.5%	29.5%
Two or More Races	36.2%	37.1%	23.2%	24.7%	23.0%
Unknown	37.1%	34.1%	43.6%	30.3%	28.6%
Non-Resident	43.8%	41.5%	26.7%	35.0%	28.0%
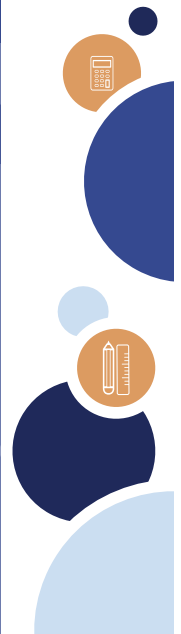
ADDRESSING COLLEGE REMEDIATION IN NEW MEXICO THROUGH CO-REQUISITES

Central New Mexico Community College, Northern New Mexico College, San Juan College, and Western New Mexico College are working in partnership with the University of New Mexico's Project ECHO and Complete College America, a national higher education organization, on a co-requisite project to implement a model that enrolls students in a general education credit-bearing course, such as English and mathematics, while supporting a basic and introductory skills course simultaneously. In co-requisite remediation, students who have been assessed as not yet ready for college work receive extra help while they take a college-level general education course instead of receiving a traditional prerequisite developmental course in mathematics, reading, or writing. According to Inside Higher Ed, there is extensive evidence of the effectiveness of co-requisite remediation in the United States showing higher course pass rates than traditional remedial courses.

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