



COUNCIL OF UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS

Membership: Eastern New Mexico University, New Mexico Highlands University, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, New Mexico State University, Northern New Mexico College, The University of New Mexico and Western New Mexico University

February 8, 2022

Honorable Senator George Munoz
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
NM State Capitol Building
Santa Fe, NM 87501
Re: Free College

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you and the Legislature for your continued support for funding of student financial aid in New Mexico. We are grateful that appropriations for the Opportunity Scholarship and the Lottery are included in the HAFC version of HB2.

On behalf of the Council of University Presidents (CUP), I am writing to request your support for the funding of “Free College” to be made eligible for all New Mexicans. The CUP also supports making it as easy as possible for students to receive scholarship support and making it easy for the institutions to manage the fund. This is accomplished in SB140.

Data from The National Center for Education Statistics show that for every \$1,000 in additional Federal and State aid, a student’s graduation rate can improve up to 2.82%.

According to College Board data, New Mexico is one of the top five states with the lowest average in-state tuition. This represents a long-standing commitment for higher education institutions in the state to remain accessible to all New Mexicans. Low tuition combined with generous financial aid packages has benefited hundreds of thousands of New Mexico students, as well as their families and communities, without incurring large amounts of debt. This is why it is important to support Free college in New Mexico.

According to the “Campaign For Free College Tuition”, research shows that the private and public economic benefit of free tuition would outweigh the cost. That’s why half of the states, including New Mexico, in the country already have some form of free college tuition.

With the support of the State, institutions can provide assurance to students that so long as appropriations are available, those deemed eligible according to statute will continue to qualify.

Again, we appreciate your support for the appropriation in HB2 funding for Lottery and the Opportunity Scholarship Program and your consideration of SB140, the Opportunity Scholarship Act.

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Best,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'MHS', is positioned above the typed name.

Marc H. Saavedra, Executive Director
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