

FAQ: NEW MEXICO OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP



NEW MEXICO
HIGHER EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT

Fostering Student Success from Cradle to Career

What is the New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship?

Established by Gov. Lujan Grisham in 2020, the Opportunity Scholarship covers tuition and required fees for eligible New Mexico residents pursuing career training certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees at New Mexico public colleges and universities.

Do I qualify for the Opportunity Scholarship?

If you are an established New Mexico resident and plan to enroll in at least six credit hours at a public college or university in New Mexico toward a training certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's degree, you may qualify.

How do I apply for the Opportunity Scholarship?

There is no application for the scholarship. If you are an eligible student enrolled in a New Mexico public college or university, the financial aid office at your school will work with you to award the scholarship.

What does the Opportunity Scholarship pay for?

The Opportunity Scholarship can be used to cover up to 100% of tuition and required fees at any New Mexico public college or university.

Should I still complete my FAFSA if I am going to receive the Opportunity Scholarship?

Yes! If you qualify to receive federal aid such as a Pell Grant, you can put this money toward other college costs like books, housing, meal plans, transportation, etc.

Remember to complete your
FAFSA
at fafsa.gov



The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is your ticket to federal grants, scholarships, work study, and more. It opens annually on Oct. 1. Students are strongly encouraged to complete the FAFSA to receive the maximum federal and state aid they may qualify for.

Does my school provide the Opportunity Scholarship?

There are 29 participating two-year and four-year colleges for this program:

- Central New Mexico Community College
- Clovis Community College
- Diné College
- Doña Ana Community College (NMSU)
- Eastern New Mexico University - Portales
- Eastern New Mexico University - Ruidoso
- Eastern New Mexico University - Roswell
- Institute of American Indian Arts
- Luna Community College
- Mesalands Community College
- Navajo Technical University
- New Mexico Highlands University
- New Mexico Junior College
- New Mexico Military Institute
- New Mexico State University - Las Cruces
- New Mexico State University - Alamogordo
- New Mexico State University - Carlsbad
- New Mexico State University - Grants
- New Mexico Tech
- Northern New Mexico College
- San Juan College
- Santa Fe Community College
- Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute
- The University of New Mexico - Albuquerque
- The University of New Mexico - Los Alamos
- The University of New Mexico - Taos
- The University of New Mexico - Gallup
- The University of New Mexico - Valencia
- Western New Mexico University

I started college but did not finish. Can I use the Opportunity Scholarship to go back and finish my degree?

Yes! If you have less than 90 credit hours on your transcript toward an associate degree or less than 160 toward a bachelor's degree, you may qualify.

I used to receive the Lottery Scholarship but lost it. Can I be eligible for the Opportunity Scholarship?

If you have not yet finished your degree, you may be eligible if you enroll in at least six credit hours and maintain a 2.5 cumulative GPA going forward.

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How do I establish New Mexico residency for purposes of qualifying for state scholarship programs like the Opportunity Scholarship?

To be considered a New Mexico resident for state scholarship eligibility, you must be able to prove that you have lived in New Mexico for the past 12 consecutive months. There are limited exceptions for Tribal members, active members of the armed services, and others. You can review complete residency requirements on our website at hed.state.nm.us.

Does this program require me to enroll each consecutive semester?

Yes, you will need to demonstrate continuous progress toward your certificate or degree. If a documented disability or mitigating circumstance interferes with this requirement, the financial aid office at your college or university can explore options with you to maintain future eligibility.

Can I use the scholarship to go to school in the summer?

Yes! The Opportunity Scholarship can be used to cover the cost of tuition and required fees associated with courses leading to your certificate or degree taken during the summer semester. You will need to enroll in at least three credit hours.

If I do not meet the credit hour or cumulative GPA requirements, can I reestablish my eligibility?

If you have not previously received the Opportunity Scholarship, you may be able to establish eligibility and begin receiving the scholarship. However, you must maintain eligibility to continue receiving it.

What certificate programs qualify?

Students enrolled in certain certificate programs leading to careers in high-need fields including healthcare, education, STEM, and technical trades are eligible to receive the Opportunity Scholarship. The Higher Education Department will work with the Department of Workforce Solutions to release a list of eligible programs each year.

How long can I continue to receive the scholarship?

As long as you continue to enroll in at least six credit hours per semester and are progressing toward an approved training certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's degree and maintain a 2.5 GPA, you can continue to receive the scholarship. If you are pursuing an associate degree, you can continue to receive the scholarship up to your first associate degree or completion of 90 credit hours, whichever comes first. If you are pursuing a bachelor's degree, you can receive the scholarship up to your first bachelor's degree or 160 credit hours completed, whichever comes first.

I need to withdraw. Can I receive the scholarship again in the future?

If you withdraw, you will not be eligible to continue receiving the scholarship. However, your college or university may be able to work with you if you experience a hardship affecting your eligibility. Please contact the financial aid office at your school directly so that they can work with you to explore options for maintaining eligibility.

I am not a U.S. citizen. Can I still receive this scholarship?

New Mexico residency is required to be eligible for the New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship, but United States citizenship is not a requirement for this particular scholarship.

I am a NM resident, but I plan to enroll at an out-of-state institution. Is the scholarship transferable out of state?

The Opportunity Scholarship is only available to New Mexico residents enrolled in New Mexico public colleges and universities. It is not transferable to out-of-state institutions.

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I am a distance education student. Will this scholarship cover the fees charged for online courses?

The New Mexico Higher Education Department is promulgating rules to determine which fees will be allowable under the Opportunity Scholarship. The final rules regarding allowable expenses will be published by July 1, 2022. The Opportunity Scholarship will cover tuition for qualified students enrolled in distance education courses at New Mexico public colleges and universities.

What if I want to take classes at two or more institutions during a semester?

Contact your financial aid officer or academic advisor at your school to see if there is a consortium agreement in place with the other college or university where you wish to take classes.

I was told in the past I did not qualify for this program. Is it possible I may qualify now? Have requirements changed?

If you did not previously qualify, you may qualify under the new eligibility criteria and expansion in funding. If you are an established New Mexico resident enrolling in at least six credit hours at a New Mexico public college or university toward the completion of a training certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's degree, you may qualify. Please reach out the financial aid office at the college or university at which you plan to enroll and they will walk you through the process.

I received a bachelor's degree in the past. Can I return to college for a second bachelor's degree under this program?

The Opportunity Scholarship is only available for students pursuing their first bachelor's degree. However, if you plan to pursue a second bachelor's degree in a high-need workforce field, you may be eligible for one of our loan-for-service programs. You can learn more about these programs on our website at hed.state.nm.us.

I attend a private post-secondary institution in New Mexico will I qualify for this scholarship?

The Opportunity Scholarship is only available to New Mexico residents enrolled in public colleges and universities that are funded by the state of New Mexico.

I am an out of state student attending a New Mexico public or Tribal school as a distance education student. Do I qualify?

You must be an established New Mexico resident in order to be eligible for the New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship. You can see full information about residency requirements for college students on our website at hed.state.nm.us.

I am incarcerated. Can I receive the scholarship for online classes?

There is no prohibition for incarcerated students. Students may receive the scholarship if other eligibility requirements are met and there is a no balance of unpaid tuition and/or fees.

What if I already receive another state scholarship?

If you receive another state scholarship, it will be applied first and then the Opportunity Scholarship will be applied (not to exceed the cost of tuition and required fees).

I have already completed a degree and have student loans. What resources are available to help with existing student loans?

If you attained a degree in a high-need field and are working in New Mexico, you may qualify for one of our loan repayment programs. You can find more information about those programs on our website at hed.state.nm.us

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When do I have to establish the 2.5 GPA?

You will need to establish a 2.5 cumulative GPA starting the first semester you receive the Opportunity Scholarship and maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher to continue receiving it.

If I currently attend a community college and I plan to transfer to a four-year university, will I continue to receive the scholarship?

If you declare a degree path leading to a bachelor's degree upon transferring to a participating public college or university, you may be eligible to continue receiving the Opportunity Scholarship until you complete your first bachelor's degree or complete 160 credit hours, whichever comes first.

I received a 2.0 GPA last semester. Do I qualify for the Opportunity Scholarship this coming semester?

If you have not previously received the Opportunity Scholarship, you may be able to establish eligibility this semester by establishing and maintaining a 2.5 cumulative GPA. If you have a mitigating circumstance or documented disability, be sure to notify your school's financial aid office right away so that they can explore options with you to maintain eligibility.

Will the Opportunity Scholarship cover the first semester needed to qualify for the New Mexico Legislative Lottery Scholarship?

If you are a Lottery-eligible student, a bridge scholarship provided by your school can be used to cover the cost of tuition during your first semester while you establish eligibility.

Do I qualify if I attend a trade school?

Certificate and degree programs in the trades and other high-need workforce areas are eligible if they are provided as credit-bearing credentials at a New Mexico public college or university. Private trade schools do not qualify.

Is the Opportunity Scholarship available for international students?

Students must establish residency in New Mexico and attend an in-state public college or university. You can review full residency requirements on our website at hed.state.nm.us

I am a dual credit student. Can I receive the Opportunity Scholarship?

No. Dual credit students do not pay tuition. You must graduate from high school or receive a high school equivalency credential (HSE) and enroll as a regular college student prior to receiving the scholarship.

I am needing to retake a class. Will this affect my eligibility? Does this count toward the six credit hours?

Circumstances such as retaking courses will be addressed in rules promulgated by the Higher Education Department on or before July 1, 2022. Students with mitigating circumstances should contact the financial aid office as soon as possible.

What aid is available for books, housing and other expenses?

If you qualify for federal aid, such as a Pell Grant, these funds can be used for other college costs such as books, housing, meal plans, transportation, etc. If you receive a private scholarship or a scholarship directly from your institution, you may be able to use these funds for other costs as well.

Who can I contact if I still have questions?

Please contact the Financial Aid Division at Fin.Aid@state.nm.us or 1-800-279-9777 or contact the financial aid office at your college or university.