



## 2021 AGENCY REPORT

# New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship Report

*For the period ending June 30, 2021  
(Fiscal Year 2021)*

NEW MEXICO  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT



*Fostering Student Success from Cradle to Career*

## 2021 Agency Report

### New Mexico Higher Education Department

#### Opportunity Scholarship Report

*For the period ending **June 30, 2021** (Fiscal Year 2021)*

#### New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship

The New Mexico Higher Education (NMHED) reports herein the status of the New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship for fiscal year 2021 (FY21), the period July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2022. The purpose of the New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship is to provide tuition-free college in the form of scholarship assistance to students at New Mexico's public postsecondary and Tribal colleges. In the 2021 legislative session, language was incorporated into the General Appropriation Act (House Bill 2, Laws 2020 Chapter 83) funding the Opportunity Scholarship. An excerpt of language in the act reads as follows:

*The opportunity scholarship program shall prioritize financial aid based on need to undergraduate, credential-seeking students who are enrolled in a two-year academic program, who have completed the free application for financial student aid or another form of income verification, who are adults or eligible for a lottery tuition scholarship, and who are enrolled full-time taking at least twelve credit hours with a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. The opportunity scholarship program shall provide financial aid to cover unmet tuition and fee costs of students after state ~~lottery tuition scholarships,~~ ~~other financial aid, institutional financial aid, and private financial aid is used,~~ excluding federal Pell grant awards.*

The struck language identified above was part of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's line-item vetoes within the General Appropriation Act (HB2). While the program was originally funded \$17 million for FY21, the amount was reduced to \$10 million during the solvency measures of the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Session of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Legislature. Language in the HB2 permitted the scholarship to students who were enrolled full-time and working toward an associates degree, and either adults or eligible for a Lottery Tuition Scholarship in FY21.

#### Program Participation

Despite the language restricting enrollment to full-time students and the broad challenges faced by students during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the scholarship awarded 9,194 scholarships totaling \$6.5 million to 6,380 unduplicated students in FY21. Following is a table showing the distribution of awards in FY21:

Higher Education Institution	Fall Amount	Fall Awards	Spring Amount	Spring Awards
Eastern New Mexico University	\$ 19,931	26	\$ 15,846	24
New Mexico Highlands University	\$ 20,701	12	\$ 10,268	8
Northern New Mexico College	\$ 44,798	95	\$ -	0
Western New Mexico University	\$ 72,265	0	\$ 29,479	13
Eastern New Mexico University – Roswell	\$ 240,256	251	\$ 177,189	207
Eastern New Mexico University – Ruidoso	\$ -	0	\$ -	0
New Mexico State University – Alamogordo	\$ 69,170	83	\$ 90,665	96
New Mexico State University – Carlsbad	\$ 26,715	55	\$ 55,629	95
New Mexico State University – Dona Ana	\$ 557,571	867	\$ 689,261	1115
New Mexico State University – Grants	\$ 28,926	40	\$ 51,144	62
University of New Mexico – Gallup	\$ 117,361	185	\$ 86,547	134
University of New Mexico – Los Alamos	\$ 24,293	46	\$ 30,304	51
University of New Mexico – Taos	\$ 36,177	79	\$ 24,926	45
University of New Mexico – Valencia	\$ 113,987	199	\$ 42,229	96
Central New Mexico Community College	\$ 987,895	1482	\$ 1,395,097	1892
Clovis Community College	\$ 25,163	23	\$ 122,739	176
Luna Community College	\$ 5,359	29	\$ 13,531	74
Mesalands Community College	\$ 52,054	57	\$ 41,871	45
New Mexico Junior College	\$ 90,202	165	\$ 49,412	85
San Juan College	\$ 239,136	262	\$ 468,971	507
Santa Fe Community College	\$ 145,146	235	\$ 118,615	185
New Mexico Military Institute	\$ 37,499	34	\$ 21,510	20
Diné College	\$ 5,000	2	\$ 14,000	7
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	\$ -	0	\$ -	0
Navajo Technical University	\$ -	0	\$ 16,304	14
Institute of American Indian Arts	\$ 10,000	10	\$ 10,000	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,969,605</b>	<b>4,237</b>	<b>\$ 3,575,536</b>	<b>4,957</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			<b>\$ 6,545,141</b>	

Source: New Mexico Higher Education Department Financial Aid Division draw-down files

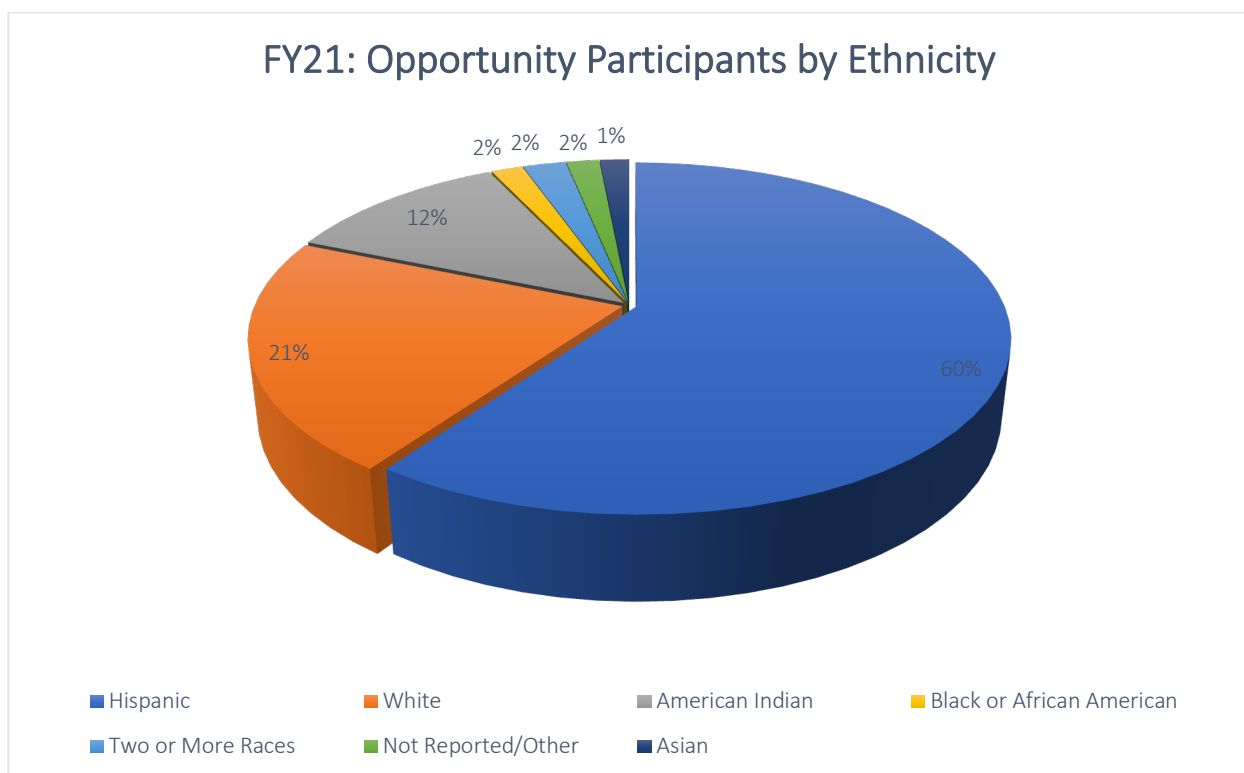
Pursuant to specified language within the appropriation act, unspent funds of approximately \$3.5 million reverted to the General Fund at the end of FY21.

## Demographics of FY21 Opportunity Participants

The New Mexico Higher Education Department has analyzed participant data provided by the public postsecondary institutions and presents the following overview of participant demographics:

- Sixty-four percent (64%) of participants were female and thirty-six percent (36%) were male;
- The oldest participant was 74, the youngest was 19, and the average age of participants was 25 years of age;
- Ninety-six percent (96%) of participants completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); and
- Eighty-three percent (83%) of participants received a Pell Grant in addition to the Opportunity Scholarship

The following chart shows the distribution of scholarship recipients by ethnicity in FY21:



## Looking Forward: The Opportunity Scholarship in FY22

Moving towards tuition-free college for students, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and the State of New Mexico is working to ensure the Opportunity Scholarship program covers tuition costs for all New Mexico students of higher education, including non-traditional students and individuals pursuing a certificate, associate, and bachelor's degrees in New Mexico. Qualified students include returning adult learners and recent high school graduates, including those who complete a home-based or non-public school secondary education program. Covering tuition and fees means federal aid can be used for expenses such as transportation, housing, and childcare. Reducing the minimum credit hour requirement for returning adult learners from 12 credit hours to six credit hours allows students to work and earn while pursuing a degree. Returning adult learners can receive stackable certificates under the Opportunity Scholarship, which are key for gaining and maintaining employment in many career technical fields.

For FY22, the Legislature appropriated \$18 million for the Opportunity Scholarship, and the New Mexico Higher Education Department anticipates expending the full appropriation. In the Fall 2021 semester, 5,704 students received \$9.6 million in support. However, the current unmet need is estimated at \$59 million. The agency and participating higher education institutions estimate there are about 31,000 students who qualify for the Opportunity Scholarship but have been not awarded due to lack of appropriations. Due to the lack of funding, colleges and universities have established funding methods including a first-come, first-serve basis, receiving only one semester of funding, and funding students who had a 2.5 GPA or higher. The New Mexico Higher Education Department will continue to advocate for increased funding for this critical scholarship and the support it provides New Mexico's students from all walks of life.

Through the Fall 2021 semester, the Opportunity Scholarship has provided over \$16 million in support to over twelve thousand students across New Mexico. The New Mexico Higher Education Department remains committed to student success and its stewardship of the scholarship for the benefit of its students and all of New Mexico.