

Community colleges joining together for NM success

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It's been such a difficult year in New Mexico and across the country – the pandemic, the resulting recession, and continuing social and political challenges. But we're getting through this by moving forward together – finding unity and common causes that will help us build a path to recovery and much brighter days ahead.

As I look forward to 2021 in my role as CNM president, we're going to do our part to help accelerate our state's recovery. I'm determined, like my peers and colleagues, to continue expanding collaborations with our fellow higher education institutions in ways that bring more prosperity to all students and our state's economy.

Recently, legislative committees have appropriately challenged New Mexico colleges and universities in many areas. Our higher education institutions are demonstrating leadership and striving daily to meet the challenges. We have continued to provide education and training during the pandemic, mitigating health risks to our students, faculty and staff. We continue to provide critical social, academic and professional support – though mostly virtual – to our dual credit and adult students, to K-12 teachers statewide, small businesses, and others.

With increased pressure on our resources, community colleges have come together to pursue shared initiatives designed to improve student success, streamline business practices and improve accountability.

In a breakthrough for higher education in New Mexico, CNM is partnering with Clovis Community College, Santa Fe Community College, Northern New Mexico College and San Juan College in Farmington to implement and share an Enterprise Resource Planning system to manage student information, financial processes and personnel functions. This modernization will make it easier for students to register for courses, access financial aid and plan their educational path. It will also create opportunities to share staff expertise and system maintenance.

CNM is working with fellow community colleges on ways to share courses and programs. For example, CNM licensed our successful Deep Dive Coding bootcamps so other colleges can provide this high-demand technical training to students in their communities. After an immersive 10-week bootcamp, students graduate with modern web and software development skills coveted by employers. Of more than 600 graduates, 87% achieved their professional goals within six months, earning an average starting salary of nearly \$49,000 with much upward mobility. We're striving to provide students across the state access to this life-changing program, delivered by their local college at a low cost.

CNM, San Juan College and six other community colleges from across the country are revolutionizing how students access high-demand skills training courses to help them quickly secure employment or advance in their current career. We've created a first-of-its kind, "course-to-job" marketplace called Unmudl. The online marketplace helps students access valuable skills training desired by employers and pathways to degrees.

This shows how New Mexico colleges are serving as national leaders in providing accelerated options for those who need to improve job prospects quickly.

Of course, many community college students continue their education at our partner universities. CNM produces the most students statewide who transfer, with the majority advancing to the University of New Mexico. We continue to work with universities to help students move between institutions with greater ease.

CNM also provides startups with business mentorship, training and access to capital. Through a sub-contract with New Mexico Tech, CNM teams with the Air Force Research Laboratory to operate Hyperspace Challenge, an accelerator for startups and universities that can support the U.S. Space Force's technology needs. This year's competition includes three Albuquerque startups and New Mexico State University. In its third year, Hyperspace Challenge has accelerated public-private partnerships to drive space innovation and attract Challenge winners like SmartCone Technologies to Albuquerque.

Many challenges for higher education remain. But through innovation and collaboration with our partners – including local and state leaders – CNM will continue striving to help modernize higher education, focusing on greater success for students, our communities and our state's economy.