NEW MEXICO SIMON SCHOLARS

TWENTY YEARS OF ACHIEVING DREAMS

NEWS RELEASE

October 7th, 2025

New Mexico Simon Scholars Program Celebrates 20 Years of Partnering with Albuquerque and Santa Fe Public Schools to Change Students' Lives

- One-of-a-kind program goes beyond scholarships and academics to coach and prepare qualifying students for college and career success
- Scholars consistently exceed state and national averages for high school and college graduation rates

SANTA FE, N.M. — New Mexico Simon Scholars Program (NMSSP) recently welcomed its 20th class of high school scholars at select public schools in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, continuing its mission since 2005 of changing lives for students from underserved communities. A flagship program of The Simon Charitable Foundation based in Santa Fe, NMSSP is New Mexico's only private education initiative that not only provides essential financial assistance for college but also supports students for up to seven years with academic tutoring, college guidance and life skills coaching.

"Our 20th anniversary class of Scholars brings to life the values that make the New Mexico Simon Scholars Program unique," said Bear Nash, Executive Director – The Simon Charitable Foundation and NMSSP. "Not only are these students academically driven and determined to unlock their dreams of college, but they also share a commitment to giving back to others; a belief in the human potential to learn, grow, and achieve; as well as a sense of hope and optimism for the future."

The program partners with select public high schools in Albuquerque and Santa Fe – Albuquerque High, Highland High, South Valley Academy, Santa Fe High and Capital High – to recruit academically driven sophomores and remains active from the start of junior year through high school graduation and college. Counselors and teachers at the partner schools play a key role in identifying candidates as well as working with NMSSP staff to enable students' success.

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New Mexico Simon Scholars consistently exceed key state and national education metrics for high school and college graduation rates:

- New Mexico Simon Scholars have an average high school graduation rate of 98% (2024) compared to the state average of 78% (2024).
- College graduation rate within 6 years for New Mexico Simon Scholars is 73% (2024) compared to the national average of 62% (2023) and 11% for low-income first-generation college students.

Through personalized teaching, workshops and mentoring, the program enables Scholars to build not only academic prowess, but also to develop a keen sense of community and acquire vital life skills such as financial literacy, self-advocacy, professionalism, self-knowledge and resilience.

“Resilience is a particularly important quality of our Scholars, who come from some of the most challenging economic and personal circumstances,” explained Janeth Santos, Program Manager and NMSSP alumna. “Using the life and interpersonal skills they develop through our program, students can reframe their experiences of hardship into unique perspectives that set them apart for success. In the process, they have the opportunity to evolve the culture for their families.”

Components of NMSSP include the following wraparound resources for students, many of whom are the first in their families to graduate from high school or attend college:

- In high school, Scholars benefit from an annual stipend, a laptop, personalized tutoring and mentoring, workshops and retreats, college visits and readiness support.
- In college, Scholars receive a scholarship of up to $16,000 and individualized support as needed.

New Mexico Simon Scholars go on to college at institutions ranging from University of New Mexico to University of Chicago to Stanford University, pursuing careers ranging from business and medicine to engineering, fine arts and more.

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About New Mexico Simon Scholars Program

Celebrating our 20th anniversary in the 2025-26 school year, the New Mexico Simon Scholars Program (NMSSP) is a core program of The Simon Charitable Foundation that coaches and propels students from underserved communities in Albuquerque and Santa Fe to attain their dream of a college degree. Our program is the only one of its kind to provide not only essential funding assistance for college but also empowering support for students from junior year in high school through college graduation. Partner

public high schools include Albuquerque High, Highland High, South Valley Academy, Santa Fe High and Capital High. Community education partners include Nusenda Credit Union, Santa Fe Community College, St. John's College, College and Career Plaza and AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination). Program collaborators that offer financial or experiential opportunities to Scholars include Davis New Mexico Scholarship, University of New Mexico, New Mexico State University, Thornburg Investment Management and Globe Runner Scholarship Fund. To ensure continued growth, NMSSP values support from community organizations, educational institutions and prospective employers. For more information, visit us at nmsimonscholars.org.

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