



**NEW MEXICO**  
**OPPORTUNITY**

## **FACT SHEET: Opportunity Scholarship - HB 14**

**Tuition-free two-year certificate and degree programs for all**

**Tuition-free college for recent high school graduates**

### **Why do we need the Opportunity Scholarship?**

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's administration is investing in transformative opportunities for New Mexico families, and that transformation begins with education. By creating tuition-free higher education for New Mexicans at public institutions across the state, we are ensuring students and returning-adult learners have every chance to pursue and attain the skills they need to thrive in a 21st-century economy. New Mexico was the first state to offer tuition-free college through the Lottery Scholarship. But tuition has risen while lottery earnings have declined, leaving college students with a significant financial burden – significant enough that many New Mexicans decide they can't afford to access higher education.

The Opportunity Scholarship will ensure that New Mexico students can once again afford to seek higher education, filling the gap left by the Lottery Scholarship and other state aid to cover 100% of tuition and fees. The Opportunity Scholarship will be implemented in two phases over the course of two years. In Year One, the Opportunity Scholarship will implement 100% coverage of tuition and fees for both recent high school graduates and returning-adult learners enrolling in trade programs, credit-bearing certificates and associate degree programs, commonly referred to as two-year community college programs. In Year Two, the Opportunity Scholarship will expand to additionally cover 100% of tuition and fees for recent high school graduates enrolled full-time in four-year bachelor's degree programs. Beginning in FY21, this essential investment by the state will ensure that 55,000 students see the impact of tuition-free college. Enrollment will increase at all 29 of New Mexico's public colleges and universities. The stage will be set for big economic benefits in the future, including better employment opportunities, higher overall incomes, and a stronger workforce for New Mexico. That's why the Opportunity Scholarship matters.

**Year 1:** 100% tuition & fee coverage for two-year college, including trade programs and credit-bearing certificates, for recent high school graduates and returning adults (24 years old or older)

**Year 2:** Expanding 100% tuition & fee coverage to *a/so* include four-year bachelor's degree programs for recent high school graduates

## Restoring the Promise of the Lottery Scholarship

The Lottery Scholarship was intended to provide free college for New Mexico high school graduates; but over time, the scholarship coverage has diminished. Today, the Lottery Scholarship only covers 60% to 75% of those costs for students. By supplementing the Lottery Scholarship with the Opportunity Scholarship, students will pay no tuition or fees at any of the state's 29 public institutions of higher education. This benefit will incentivize students to remain in New Mexico to pursue their education, resulting in a stronger workforce and associated economic benefits.

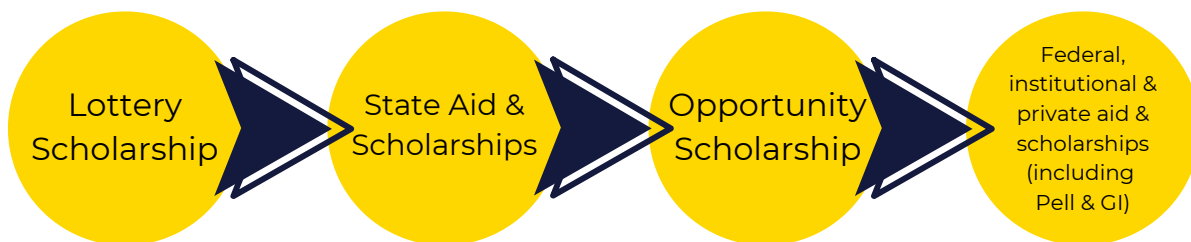
In order to maintain continuity of the state's existing scholarship programs, eligibility requirements for both the Lottery and Opportunity scholarships (recent high school graduates and honorably discharged veterans) remain the same as in the current rules and requirements of the Lottery Scholarship.

It is important to note that we have witnessed the following benefits from the Legislative Lottery Scholarship (FY13-FY18):

- Students receiving the Lottery Scholarship are **three times more likely to receive a degree.**
- Students with four or more semesters with the Lottery Scholarship have a **70 percent degree completion rate.**
- Students with seven or more semesters have a **95 percent degree completion rate.**

## What is a "Middle-Dollar" Scholarship?

The Lottery Scholarship remains what is considered a "first-dollar" scholarship in New Mexico. Students receive a tuition benefit based on their eligibility upon high school graduation or honorable military discharge. The Opportunity Scholarship is a "middle-dollar" scholarship, covering the tuition and fee gap remaining after the application of the Lottery Scholarship and other state scholarships. Federal Pell grants, GI Bill benefits, and institutional and private scholarships are applied *after* the Opportunity Scholarship, enabling students to leverage additional financial aid for the cost of attendance and living expenses.



**The New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship:  
renewing the promise of the first-in-the-nation  
Lottery Scholarship and providing tuition-free  
higher education for New Mexico students**