

Hopes to raise FAFSA completion goal

SANTA FE - Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart announced a new Public Education Department initiative to increase the annual statewide FAFSA completion rate to 80 percent. Sept. 19. This goal is designed to support Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's recently announced New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship.

The New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship is Governor Lujan Grisham's vision for increasing college access for New Mexico students. This plan to set the national standard for college affordability, will change the life outcome for tens of thousands of students, both now and far into the future. The New Mexico Public Education Department and New Mexico public schools will play a pivotal role in ensuring that the state utilizes every possible dollar to reach all of New Mexico's aspiring college students.

The most effective way K-12 schools can contribute to the financial sustainability of this program is for them to increase the FAFSA participation rate for high school students. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is the form that the federal government, states, colleges and other organizations use to award financial aid. Submitting it is a student's key to accessing grants, scholarships, work-study programs and federal student loans. Currently, about 65percent of New Mexico's high school students complete the FAFSA. At this rate, thousands of students are missing out on potential federal funds that would make college more affordable.

"By coming together to increase our FAFSA completion rates, we are seeding the soil that will produce thousands more doctors, computer scientists, authors, architects, nurses, artists, and teachers across our state," Secretary Stewart stated. "For thousands of students, we will make possible a college experience that breaks a generational cycle of poverty. Together, we are

delivering on the moonshot for our children.”