



Not for Immediate Release

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RRPS, CNM Boards Formalize Groundbreaking Partnership to Expand Trades Education in Sandoval County

Partnership will connect high school students and adult learners in Rio Rancho to prolific career opportunities in the skilled trades through CNM's highly regarded programs that lead to industry credentials, certificates and degrees

On Monday evening, the Rio Rancho Public Schools (RRPS) Board of Education and the Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) Governing Board approved a Joint Use Agreement that solidifies a long-term partnership to significantly expand Career Technical Education (CTE) in Sandoval County for high school students and adult learners. The partnership is also designed to help address the growing need for more skilled trades workers to support business growth and economic development in Sandoval County and New Mexico.

RRPS high school students will be able to take CNM's tuition-free, dual-credit CTE classes that lead to industry-recognized credentials, certificates and associate degrees. CNM's dual-credit classes count for both high school credit and college credit, providing RRPS students the opportunity to earn CNM certificates or degrees at the same time they graduate from high school. CNM students and adult learners will also be able take classes and trainings at the new facilities.

By signing the Joint Use Agreement (JUA), RRPS and CNM have committed to funding renovations and construction of facilities in Rio Rancho that will be shared by both institutions for at least 25 years for the delivery of CTE education to RRPS and CNM students. It also formalizes the initial CTE programs that will be offered by CNM when the facilities open to students in January 2025.

"On behalf of CNM, we're thrilled to be joining forces with Rio Rancho Public Schools to help more young people and adult learners gain access to high-quality education and training in CTE fields, which will lead them to life-changing careers that also serve the economic development goals of Sandoval County and the skilled workforce needs of local employers," said CNM President Tracy Hartzler. "This groundbreaking partnership provides a long-term solution to the pressing need for more skilled trades workers in

Sandoval County while also providing high school students in RRPS with a much quicker and very affordable path to rewarding careers and more financial security for their families.”

“The partnership between Rio Rancho Public Schools and CNM provides tremendous opportunities for students,” said Rio Rancho Public Schools Superintendent Dr. V. Sue Cleveland. “Our CTE programs will provide a dedicated pathway for students who have an interest in the skilled trades, and students will be able to graduate workforce-ready or have a jumpstart on a postsecondary education. This will have an enormous return on investment for Sandoval County and the state of New Mexico.”

In January 2022, RRPS purchased a 75,000 square foot building at 7001 Zenith Court NE in Rio Rancho and an adjacent 10-acre lot that together is known as the “CTE Complex.” As part of the JUA, RRPS has committed to renovating and equipping the current building on the property – the Skilled Trades Facility – to include classroom and lab spaces for the following CNM programs: Electrical Trades (including photovoltaics/solar); Welding; Plumbing and Gas Fitting; Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning (HVAC); and Computer Information Systems (CIS) networking classes. RRPS estimates a total capital investment of \$38.7 million to design and prepare the building for full operations, including about \$26 million for renovation and \$12.7 million already invested to acquire the property. RRPS plans to break ground on the renovation in December.

As part of the agreement, CNM will design, construct and equip a Transportation Facility at the CTE Complex in Rio Rancho, where CNM will relocate its Automotive Technology (including electric vehicle classes) and Diesel Technology programs. CNM estimates a total capital investment of \$22 million for the Transportation Facility with groundbreaking in May 2024 and opening in August 2025.

Beginning in the 2023 Fall Term, CNM will temporarily offer Welding and CIS courses at the CNM Rio Rancho Campus located in the Rio Rancho City Center while the Skilled Trades Facility is being renovated.

Through the JUA, CNM and RRPS also commit to a continuing partnership focused on delivering educational and training programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials and quality careers that align with economic development strategies for Sandoval County, Bernalillo County and New Mexico. CNM and RRPS will also continue working together to leverage funding to cover capital and operational expenses for the CTE Complex through public and private sources, as well as initiate further enhancements to the Complex as technology and skilled workforce career paths evolve.

RRPS will hire and pay for instructors of high school core academic courses offered at the CTE Complex. CNM will hire and pay for CTE instructors and provide the curriculum for the Skilled Trades Facility and the Transportation Facility.

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