Welcome to the inaugural newsletter for Mission: Graduate. Our goal is to graduate 60,000 more individuals with college certificates and degrees by the year 2020. Together with our educational partners we are developing community-wide strategies that will increase graduation rates. We look forward to sharing the results of their efforts when our next data report is released later this year.

Additionally, Mission: Graduate is working with numerous community partners to implement collaborative projects that are designed to improve student success at key points on a child’s journey from cradle to career. To date, Mission: Graduate has pulled together nearly 350 individuals and 100 organizations, who are now actively working on one or more projects or providing advice to the initiative.

And this is just the beginning. As we get deeper into our work, we continue to look for partners who want to participate in a
Employment Network - Nov. 7, 8-9:30

College Completion Network - Nov. 10, 1-3pm

High School Graduation Network - Nov. 17, 10-noon

Early Childhood Accountability Partnership - Dec. 4, 8:30-10:30

Meet the Team

As Mission: Graduate’s efforts have grown, so has the team supporting the work. Meet the new team members.

Teri Wimborne is serving as the Director of Collective Impact. Teri’s job is to help facilitate the goal-setting and action plan implementation of our four collaborative action networks.

Deborah Good serves as a Project Associate, and Jodi Burshia as a Graduate Research Assistant at the UNM Center for Education Policy Research. Working with Mission: Graduate’s various project teams, Deborah and Jodi provide general project support, including conducting research, collecting and analyzing data, developing toolkits and other materials for use by our community partners, and supporting collaborative project or who are interested in aligning their existing efforts to the goals of Mission: Graduate. Through this monthly newsletter, we will highlight the efforts of our partners and showcase the best data-informed practices that are contributing to increased graduation rates.

Additionally, we will share the stories of the individual people who are making a difference every day. If you have story ideas, please don’t hesitate to contact Emily Padilla, and if you’d like to learn about opportunities for partnering with Mission: Graduate, please feel free to contact me, Angelo Gonzales.

Attendance Initiative Gets Underway with "Every Day Matters" Campaign

One of the ways that Mission: Graduate is working to achieve the goal of 60,000 new college degrees or certificates, is to work with area schools to help reduce “habitual truancy.” In the state of New Mexico, it’s defined as having at least ten unexcused absences in a school year.
the collaborative action process.

Ruth Juarez, an AmeriCorps Vista member supports the team by conducting “asset mapping,” which involves identifying existing organizations and programs in our community that can help achieve the goals of Mission: Graduate.

Emily Padilla is handling communications and administrative duties.

Teri, Deborah, Jodi, Ruth, and Emily join Angelo Gonzales, Beata Thorstensen, and Leslie Hoffman who are continuing in their roles as Mission: Graduate’s Executive Director, Director of Data and Analysis, and Employer Engagement Consultant, respectively.

Follow us on Facebook to see pictures and meet the rest of team.

Thank you Pauline

In August, we also said a fond farewell to Pauline Barnes, who served as an Encore Fellow and Network Facilitator since September 2013. We thank Pauline for the critical role she played in helping to build our four collaborative action networks, and in helping the networks develop their goals and action plans. She also managed the hiring.

The “Every Day Matters” campaign, which encourages students to attend school every day, is the first step in a longer-term initiative to raise awareness and improve support to students at risk of developing attendance problems in our community.

During the first phase of the project, Mission: Graduate's Early Childhood Accountability Partnership and High School Graduation Network developed toolkits that principals, educators, families, and service providers can use to raise awareness about the importance of showing up to school. To date, the Mission: Graduate team has delivered 150 toolkits to schools and service providers, and more than 25,000 “rack cards” to schools, community organizations, and health care providers in the greater Albuquerque area. The rack cards are an important tool for teachers and school leaders to facilitate conversations with parents and families about concrete steps they can take to support getting their children to school every day.

In addition to these awareness raising activities, Mission: Graduate is now working with its community partners to identify a smaller set of schools where, over the course of the 2014-15 school year, we can identify and demonstrate effective, community-driven practices that have the potential to “move the needle” on attendance rates throughout Central New Mexico.

Attendees Find Summit Worthwhile

Click here to read full story.
Earlier this year, more than 100 community, business, and education members participated in the Mission: Graduate GradNation Community Summit. Participants learned about research-based strategies designed to help students graduate from high school and college.

One element that made the summit stand out was youth participation. Student facilitator Alex Germain told us after the summit, "Sometimes when adults ask you to speak, you can tell that they aren't really interested. It was very clear that our opinions mattered and played a role in how things played out. It taught me that no matter who you are, where you come from, what you look like, there's a place for you. You are important and you can make a difference."

Click here to read full story.

Employers Commit to Help Increase Degree Attainment in Central New Mexico

Employer engagement hit an exciting milestone as 14 education and business leaders came together in September to launch an effort to track what individual companies are doing to support increased educational attainment for their employees, as well increased educational opportunities for students in the community.

Representatives from Albuquerque Public Schools, Central New Mexico Community College, the University of New Mexico, Wells Fargo, Kirtland Federal Credit Union, Intel, Sandia National Laboratories, PNM, New Mexico Gas Company, Presbyterian Health Services, and UNM Hospitals participated in the meeting. Esparza Advertising, Albuquerque Publishing Company, and Molzen Corbin are also part of the project.

Participants shared what their companies are doing to support their employees and their families, as well as students in the community. The group will use tailored scorecards to measure their own success and progress toward the goal. Additionally, the scorecards will help participating employers learn what's working and share best practices with other companies that don't have established programs. These programs range from tuition reimbursement and career exploration
initiatives to internships and community partnerships. “This type of collaboration provides a great opportunity for companies to share best practices that can help us meet our 2020 goal of 60,000 degrees and certificates in Central New Mexico,” says Leslie Hoffman, Employer Engagement Consultant for Mission: Graduate.

If you are an employer and would like to participate in the next phase of this project, please contact Leslie.