



**Eastern New Mexico University
Ruidoso Branch Community College
Strategic Plan
2024 – 2029**

Prepared by: Stevens *Strategy*



Part I: Introduction, Mission, and Focus

Nestled between the Hondo Valley and the Sierra Blanca Peak, The Ruidoso Branch Community College of Eastern New Mexico University (ENMU-Ruidoso) sits in the Village of Ruidoso. ENMU-Ruidoso puts the “community” in *community* college by serving everyone from local high school students, the traditional college population, working adults interested in developing new skills, and a strong and supportive coalition of stakeholders from local government and enterprise.

As our previous strategic plan suggests, we stand ready to live our mission by impacting our students and our community. Over the last 5 years, we have made substantial progress in recruitment, outreach, and physical infrastructure. We faced the COVID-19 pandemic with a nimble and innovative mindset, quickly offering students new, but reliable, means of using our services from their homes. We remodeled our primary space, prioritizing students with a learning commons and The Success Emporium for student support. We launched programs and developed partnerships with local businesses that have boosted enrollment and improved our name recognition.

We are proud of this work, but now, we look to the future of the College and the people that it serves. As a two-year institution, we must take a student-centered and agile approach to sustainability and growth. This strategic plan is a collection of priorities, driven by our mission, our history, robust institutional data, and the expert insights of our leadership, faculty, staff, and community members. Over the next 5 years, this plan will propel us forward and build on our commitment to Ruidoso and the surrounding communities.

History of ENMU-Ruidoso

By higher education standards, ENMU-Ruidoso is a young institution. While college courses were offered in Ruidoso as early as the 1940s, ENMU did not start to officially offer instruction in the area until 1991. In the late 1990s, the local community rallied to pass the first mill levy in support of the College, cementing the relationship between the two. Over the next decade, the College was gifted a permanent location on Mechem Drive, offered classes there and in various locations in Lincoln County, and opened a successful GED® program.

In 2006, the state legislature officially approved ENMU-Ruidoso as a branch campus of ENMU Portales. In the following year, The Village of Ruidoso elected its first Community College Board, a 5-member body which still governs the College today.

Since then, we have embraced the opportunity to make an impact on our community and acquired investments in the infrastructure and people needed to sustain our College. We have embraced the online learning movement and reached almost double the number of students by doing so. We have renovated our main campus with an eye toward functionalism, but have also designed it to be a welcoming space, where students want to gather and collaborate. We added a commencement ceremony and developed new partnerships and programs.

Today, we live our mission by offering programs that meet the needs of the citizens of Lincoln County and surrounding communities. We have a building full of faculty and staff who understand that our purpose is to make an impact on our students now and in the future, and together, we are prepared to help ENMU-Ruidoso build its brand of unique community education and become the premier community college in New Mexico.

Mission and Focus

Through this strategic planning process, we affirm our mission to **enhance the lives of our students and the communities we serve, now and into the future.**

Eastern New Mexico University-Ruidoso Branch Community College combines a traditional learning environment with twenty-first century instructional technology to provide an enhanced educational experience. ENMU-Ruidoso emphasizes liberal education, freedom of inquiry, cultural diversity and whole student life. Scholarships, cultural enrichment, excellent teaching and enriched learning define the college community's relationship and contributions.

The mission of ENMU-Ruidoso Branch Community College includes seven purposes:

- To offer general academic studies for students wishing to transfer to a University.
- To offer career and technical education programs leading to gainful employment for students in their chosen field.
- To offer a dual credit enrollment Early College Program for qualified high school students.
- To offer workforce education and training services and provide institutional leadership in the economic development of the region.
- To offer programs of instruction leading to Associate degrees and Certificates of Completion.
- To offer lifelong learning opportunities for all citizens through continuing education and community service programs.
- To offer adult education for those wishing to achieve literacy skills, completion of a high school equivalency diploma and English proficiency.

Our mission is grounded in our focus:

- Prepare students for meaningful careers and advanced study
- Impart citizenship and leadership for the betterment of the community
- Support and expand the role of higher education and excellent teaching
- Empower citizens to respond to a rapidly changing world
- Contribute to the economic viability and well-being of our community

The vision, strategic priorities and initiatives outlined below (see Part IV) are designed to help us maintain this focus and accomplish our mission.

Part II: The Strategic Planning Process

As the beginning of the strategic planning process, we engaged Stevens Strategy, a consulting firm specializing in higher education. Stevens Strategy uses a five-phase model for strategic planning, which we adopted through the spring and summer of 2023. The process begins by deploying data and internal expertise to identify strategic issues – internal actions we may take in light of external forces acting outside our control. Through broad constituent engagement, the process moves into a response phase, where students, faculty, staff, and the community contribute to the plan by providing input on strategic issues and potential solutions for them. In Phase III, the Steering Committee and College leadership collaborate to take all information acquired in the first two phases and synthesize it in order to identify a set of strategic priorities

that comprise the bulk of the strategic plan. Phases IV and V provide a framework for implementation.

Our strategic planning process kicked off in January 2023 and ran through June. The primary data-gathering and design phases wrapped up in March, and discussions to refine our strategic priorities and the initiatives to meet them took place in April and May. This document was developed and refined in June, and formally approved by the Steering Committee in early July. What follows is a detailed description of the individuals and groups involved in this process, and the information they used to inform the strategic plan.

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee is a representative group of faculty, staff, administrators, and students who come together to inform the strategic planning process. During the development of our ENMU-Ruidoso's strategic plan, the Steering Committee:

- Provided insights on data and trends using internal and external sources
- Identified strategic issues facing the College, with the College's culture and history in mind
- Designed interactions with various constituencies to seek input throughout the process
- Interpreted qualitative information from constituents to inform strategic priorities
- Assisted with the development of strategic priorities and high-level initiatives to meet them
- Evaluated the emerging strategic plan for feasibility and alignment with ENMU-Ruidoso's mission and focus
- Reviewed this document and provided substantive feedback as it was developed

The members of ENMU's Strategic Planning Steering Committee were:

Caitlin Daugherty, Alumnae and Staff Member

Murray Murphy, Community College Board

Eric Eggleston, Foundation Board

Coda Omness, Vice President of Student Learning and Success

Hank Hargis, Coordinator of the Success Emporium

Ryan Trosper, President

Jeff Frawley, Professor and Chair of Language and Fine Arts

Constituent Engagement

Our strategic plan was developed in collaboration with our people. We engaged constituents in several modalities at various touchpoints during the process. Engagement began with a town hall in January 2023 to describe the upcoming work, its goals, and desired outcomes, and to contextualize the strategic plan with the current state of the College. At that time, constituents were invited to participate in a brief pre-planning survey that would inform the Steering Committee about "big issues" facing the College. As the plan developed, we hosted hybrid on-campus and remote focus groups with constituents in March 2023 (facilitated by Stevens Strategy). These were designed to address the emerging strategic priorities and glean insights

into potential initiatives to meet them. A summary of participation in these constituent engagements is provided below.

Exhibit 1. Number of constituents engaged by format.

Constituency	Town Hall	Pre-Planning Survey	Focus Groups
Students	--	72	--
Faculty	7	9	8
Staff	35	4	23
Community member or external partner, including Community College Board	--	4	18

Note. Participations may not be mutually exclusive.

Data Use and Synthesis

To inform our understanding of strategic issues, we sought data from the following sources:

- **ENMU's Institutional Research Office**
- **ENMU-Ruidoso's Strategic Enrollment Plan**
- **Successes and points of growth in the 2018-2023 strategic plan**
- **The Village of Ruidoso**

There were notable trends gleaned from these data points that informed this strategic plan. First, **enrollment in our high school dual-credit program and in our nondegree seeking programs has grown in the last 5 years** – a particularly encouraging pattern given the effect that COVID had on enrollment nationwide and given the challenges for enrollment at two-year colleges nationwide. Our General Studies Program and our Education programs have seen consistent enrollment, and our online Cybersecurity program is growing.

Some data points indicated that students are in need of additional support. Notably, the DFW rate for adult (non dual-credit) students was relatively high regardless of modality (e.g., around 30% for online and on-ground courses in 2021), and trend that was in place before COVID. **Our persistence rate past the first semester is also relatively low, sitting around 55-60% historically.**

We also looked to our 2018-2023 strategic plan to determine which, if any, initiatives should be carried forward beginning in 2024. In that plan, the key priorities were to be ready to meet the needs of students, employers, the community, and serve our mission. While we believe that substantial progress was made on all of these fronts, our clearest success has been our continued relationship with the Village of Ruidoso. Together, we have hosted events, developed programs, and lobbied for funding and additional resources.

Finally, we sought some high-level data from our local environment, much of which affirmed our understanding of our community. In particular, ***Lincoln County households are less likely to have children under the age of 18 living in them than the rest of the state, and enrollment in local K-12 schools has declined by more than 10% in the last 6 years.*** The median age in the Village is 51, and the number of retirees in the area is growing.

The Village also has broad economic disparities. Approximately 15% of the population lives below the poverty line and wages are about 30% lower than they are in the rest of the state, even as construction and housing prices have both increased over the last 10 years. ***A May 2023 survey of students attending ENMU-Ruidoso indicated that 68% of students are food insecure and 37% reported being homeless in the last 12 months.***

Each of these data points informed some aspect of the strategic plan, either by bringing a strategic priority to the forefront or by illuminating a specific strategy.

Part III: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

In Part II, we described the process we deployed to develop this strategic plan. Each feature of this process – from the expert insights of our Steering Committee to the internal and external data we harvested to the valued input from our key constituencies – has helped us develop a broad understanding of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. These elements of our internal operations and our external environment have laid the groundwork for our strategic priorities.

We count a number of strengths at ENMU-Ruidoso. Perhaps the most obvious of these strengths is our strong and supportive local community. These people take pride in our College and continue to engage us by attending events and contributing to our programs. Our College is also poised to succeed. We already boast small class sizes and strong student-faculty relations, as well as a strong dual-credit program that builds a pipeline of potential students. ENMU-Ruidoso also has a strategic and nimble administration and staff with an eye toward the future, as evidenced by our recent acquisition of the adjoining Sierra Mall. This space will present us with opportunities to grow our programs and appeal to students in the coming years.

We also acknowledge some weaknesses, which we should work to address in this strategic plan. We struggle to retain students, especially those who are already prone to academic challenges. Likewise, we struggle to bring new faculty and staff to our team, owing, in part, to our recruitment efforts. In particular, the interaction between our human capital and our infrastructure is a point of growth. Finally, we lack local brand awareness and visibility, though, recent activities to this end have been promising.

Looking externally, we also have a number of opportunities. We are part of the ENMU system, and that relationship provides opportunities for growth and infrastructure development. The Village of Ruidoso constantly sees new industries and businesses introduced to its system, many of which could benefit from workforce training and development. We also have the potential for growth through our traditional programming (and tapping yet unreached markets of students in surrounding communities), online programming, and potentially, athletics.

We must also be aware of potential threats – outside forces that may impact our activities. For one, we have limitations on external resources, with very little indication that those resources will grow substantially in the coming years. We are also acutely aware of the high cost of living in the area, which has the potential to keep students, faculty, and staff away from our College. Finally, community college enrollment is declining nationwide for myriad reasons. Without innovation, there is no reason to assume our enrollment trends will be different.

Part IV: Our Vision and Strategic Priorities

Our Strategic Vision

Our strategic plan is the culmination of the process and synthesis described above. In affirming our mission and acknowledging our history, we are committed to being an institution that puts students first, to make an impact on our communities now and in the future. We recognize that fulfilling our mission will require us to constantly evaluate our environment and our performance, and take a data-driven and strategic approach to ensure the future of the College.

Thus, our vision is that:

ENMU-Ruidoso will be a forward-looking institution that leverages the strengths of the ENMU system and the local community to deliver a learner-first educational experience.

This vision will be realized by setting and achieving the following strategic priorities over the next 5 years:

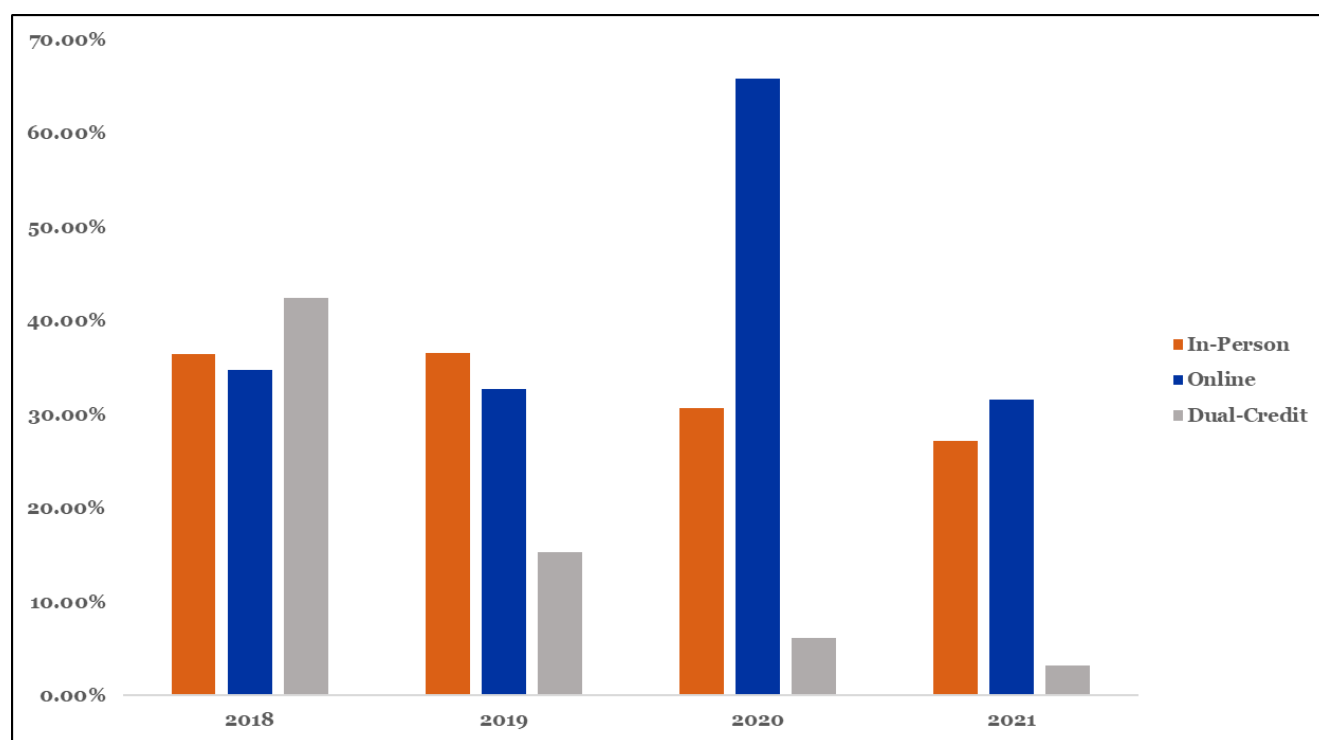
- **Enrollment: We will build student enrollment, retention, and completion through our spaces, events, programming, people, and the community.**
- **Engagement: We will leverage our partnership with our community to enrich our campus and our services.**
- **Enhancement: We will create and maintain diverse revenue streams to ensure the future of our institution and continue serving the community.**
- **Evaluation: We will regularly and systematically assess and review the needs of our students, employees, and community to ensure data-driven decision-making.**
- **Expansion: We will build and market our unique brand of education to our community.**

Priority #1: Enrollment

We will build student enrollment, retention, and completion through our spaces, events, programming, people, and the community.

Our faculty and staff are excellent advocates for our students. Every day, they work to develop new ways to reach students, including our adult learners. Through the Success Emporium, we offer tutoring and other academic support services. Our faculty teach in all modalities and offer one-on-one assistance to students in need. However, some of our students continue to struggle academically (see Exhibit 2; note that online D/F rates in 2020 were likely exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic), which speaks to the need for comprehensive services, including social and emotional support. Engaging students in other ways, including by offering innovative programs and opportunities to learn by experience in their community, may also improve academic performance.

Exhibit 2. Percentage of students withdrawing or earning a D/F grade by modality.



Therefore, over the next 5 years we will:

- Explore new programs to attract students to our campus.
- Build an infrastructure to support our students academically, socially, and emotionally.
- Design courses and curricula using innovative modalities and formats.
- Facilitate connections between our students and the local community to foster professional development and networks.

Priority #2: Engagement

We will leverage our partnership with the community to enrich our campus and our services.

It was clear through this process that the Ruidoso community is one of our strengths. Over a dozen community members came out to our town halls and more still responded to our request to complete a pre-planning input survey. In general, participants indicated that the community wants (1) their children to stay close (and have local educational opportunities to train them accordingly), (2) the College to host events and gatherings to bring the community together, and (3) outreach to students and employers outside the taxing district. Perhaps most clearly, the community wants the College to provide the training and support that will build the local workforce and lend to a sustainable future for the whole community.

We have always had a valuable partnership with our community. We have a dedicated Community College Board and a Foundation, both of which actively work alongside our administration to work toward positive outcomes.

With their support, we will:

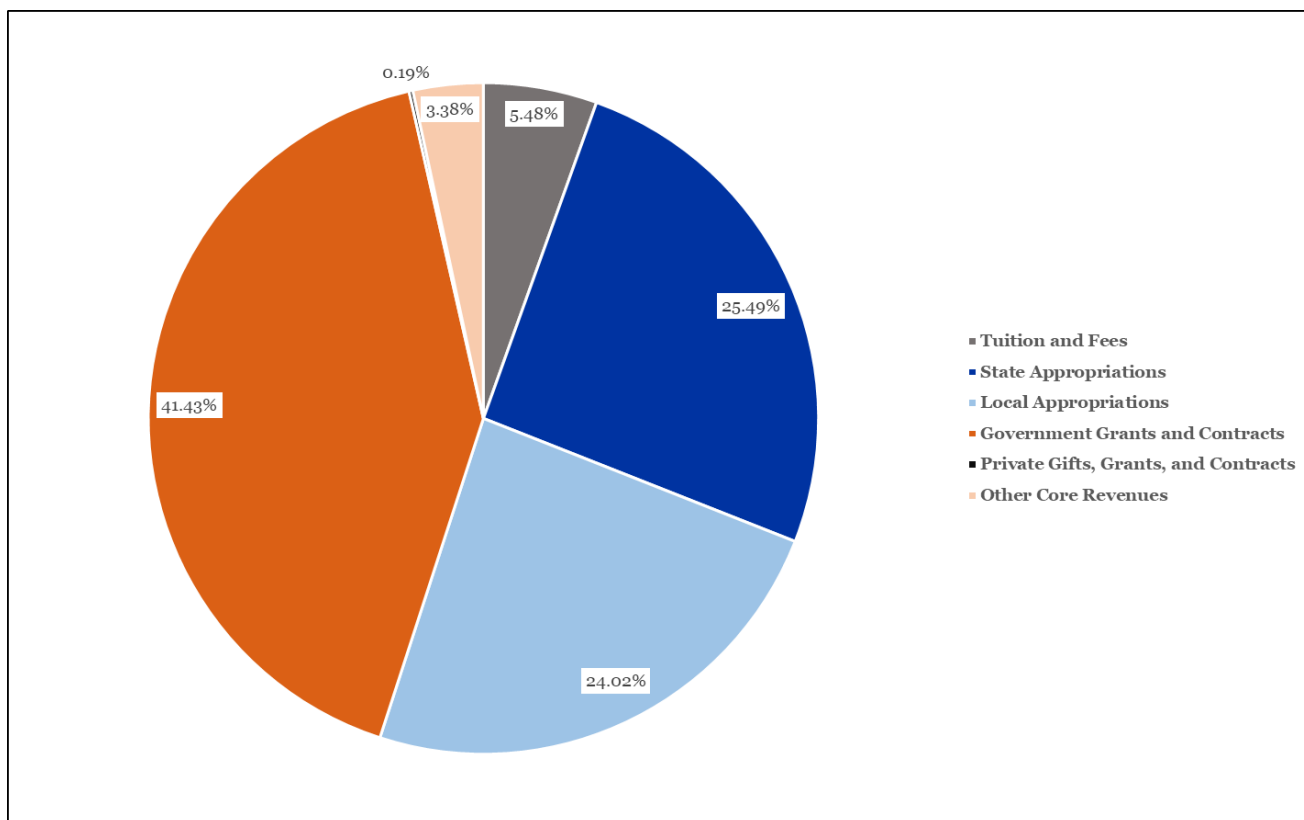
- **Create volunteer experiences for interested members of the community to share in our mission and support our students.**
- **Identify new opportunities for internships and training in our supported communities.**
- **Increase our responsiveness to all of Lincoln County and the Mescalero Apache Tribe to foster an inclusive environment for our students.**
- **Coordinate community-building programs that use our space and infrastructure.**

Priority #3: Enhancement

We will create and maintain diverse revenue streams to ensure the future of our institution and continue serving the community.

As we identified above, our external funding is sometimes limited and other times, inconsistent. Enrollment is an important source of revenue for our College as are our local appropriations. However, we have not attracted much in the way of private gifts, nor have we maximized our potential for external grant funding (see Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3. Percent of core revenues per FTE by source in 2021.



Moving forward, it is essential that we identify other ways to bring revenue to our College that will allow us to make investments in programs and services that benefit our students. Our constituents have the skills and awareness to bring us to the next level, and our community is energized by our recent successes.

Therefore, we will:

- **Consider pathways to expand our taxing district and ensure that all local constituents benefit from our services.**
- **Seek external grant funding to support our programs and services.**
- **Leverage our renovated spaces for hosting external events.**
- **Incentivize innovation in revenue-building for our employees and partners.**

Priority #4: Evaluation

We will regularly and systematically assess and review the needs of our students, employees, and community to ensure data-driven decision-making.

While we stand ready to innovate, we must do so strategically, based on trends and projections, rather than on intuition or routine. One area of note is the performance of our programs and the students who graduate from them. We have several programs with enrollment under 10 students. While these programs likely offer a benefit to some constituents, it has thus far been difficult for us to determine whether these programs have benefitted the students who graduate

from them, and thus, it is difficult to determine whether these programs should be continued or warrant further investment.

Historically, we are a small institution with limited resources. Much of the data that we've used in the past to inform our decision-making has been collected and housed by the ENMU main campus. Moving forward, we are committed to tracking outcomes *locally* and using them to create a sustainable and nimble system that benefits our students, faculty, and staff.

To this end, we will endeavor to:

- **Maintain and analyze institutional data to identify innovative solutions and opportunities, including schedules, spaces, and systems that are strategic and student-centered.**
- **Conduct a regular program and service review to ensure our offerings meet the needs of current and future students.**
- **Assess our human capital and organizational design to optimize the delivery of our services for students and the local community.**
- **Develop a system of recognition for employees and students who live and sustain our mission.**

Priority #5: Expansion

We will build and market our unique brand of education to our community.

Through our interactions with constituents, it is clear that, while we sit near the center of town, many families are not aware of our programs or services. Our own students are often uninformed about the many ways we can help them succeed. While we have made strides in terms of outreach, it will be essential that we begin to explore new ways to reach people in and around Lincoln County, as well as throughout the state and into neighboring regions. We have a product worth selling, are surrounded by natural beauty, and are nested within a vibrant and energized community. It is time for us to market ourselves accordingly.

Over the next 5 years, we will:

- **Harness media and other solutions to capitalize on a large and untapped market of potential students and partners.**
- **Evaluate the local market for advertising, reputation-building and community education opportunities.**
- **Grow our network of contacts in and around New Mexico to improve our name recognition and our brand.**