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## **UNM Hospital Announces Investment in Youth Internships to Build Health Care Runway**

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – The University of New Mexico Hospital, in partnership with Future Focused Education, announced a groundbreaking initiative to fund up to 45 paid healthcare internships annually for high school and recent graduates. The nearly \$1 million partnership aims to foster a new generation of health care professionals who deeply understand and represent their communities.

### **Growing Our Own: Commitment to Community-Driven Health Care**

This initiative underscores a joint commitment to "growing our own" - nurturing young talent from the very communities UNM Hospital serves. It presents an opportunity to align the education of young people with the evolving needs of the healthcare sector.

"We really see this partnership as two big wins," said Kate Becker, CEO of UNM Hospital. "We're able to increase the number of professionals providing patient care and we are able to enrich our pipeline program that encourages high school and undergraduates to pursue health care careers."

The partnership celebrates a multi-year commitment to support work-based learning (WBL) during and post-high school, creating a continuum of opportunities for youth, all the way through obtaining certificates or degrees from NM universities.

### **A Model for Statewide Adaptation**

Future Focused's X3 internship sets itself apart by offering more than just work experience. Interns earn school credit and a stipend that not only respects their time but also contributes to their families, effectively replacing minimum wage jobs with enriching work experiences that build resumes. This aspect of the program is pivotal for New Mexico, as it provides a tangible pathway for young people to engage in meaningful, career-oriented work while staying engaged in school.

The X3/UNMH partnership, which began just before the COVID-19 pandemic, has grown from a modest two student interns four years ago to over 180 students participating in a variety of internships over the next three years.

"New Mexico needs employers to invest in work-based learning opportunities before and after graduation, and UNMH is leading the way," said Mike May, Director of Workforce Learning at Future Focused Education. "The X3 model can be adapted to other parts of the state facing similar workforce challenges. The investment serves as a springboard for developing opportunities in rural and smaller communities outside the Albuquerque metro, encouraging creative approaches to cultivating young talent and attracting qualified professionals to underserved areas. We need to invest early to grow our own and retain that talent."

By involving young people as health experts in their own communities and families, the UNMH + X3 internship partnership aims to create upstream solutions to pressing healthcare challenges. Interns are educated and mentored to become role models, building homegrown talent where we need it most.

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**UNM Hospital** is New Mexico's only Level-I Trauma Center, only academic health center, and the only dedicated children's hospital. UNM Hospital fills a number of critical missions for Bernalillo County and the State of New Mexico as the only medical center providing the highest level of ICU care, complex surgical care, and advanced medical care.

**Future Focused Education** is the leading expert in innovative school models and work-based learning in New Mexico. Their evidence-based approaches to capstones, graduate profiles, paid high school and college internships, and community-centered programs have proven success at increasing equity and opportunities for the students that need it most. Learn more at [futurefocusededucation.org](https://futurefocusededucation.org).

To learn more about the X3 Internship Program, please visit Future Focused Education's website: <https://futurefocusededucation.org/x3/>