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Speaker Bates and Delegate Chee commend PNM Navajo Nation Workforce Training Initiative students



PHOTO: Speaker LoRenzo Bates and Council Delegate Tom Chee with PNM Navajo Nation Workforce Training Initiative students at San Juan College in Farmington, N.M. on April 25, 2017.

FARMINGTON N.M. – Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) and Council Delegate Tom Chee (Shiprock) attended a reception on Tuesday, in recognition of Navajo students enrolled in Trades and Technology, Energy, Engineering, Geology and Chemistry programs at San Juan College, who were awarded scholarships as part of the PNM-Navajo Nation Workforce Training Initiative.

The PNM-Navajo Nation Workforce Training Initiative was established in 2013 through a partnership between PNM and the Navajo Nation along with San Juan College and Navajo Technical University. Through the initiative PNM contributes \$1 million, distributed \$200,000 annually over five years, to Navajo student scholarship recipients who are enrolled in certain fields of study that relate to energy production.

The program is designed to ensure that New Mexico and the Four Corners area have the trained workforce needed for existing and emerging jobs, and that members of the Navajo Nation are well trained to fill these positions.

Speaker Bates joined the students at the Henderson Fine Arts Center along with San Juan College president Dr. Toni Hopper Pendergrass, and PNM officials to celebrate the accomplishments of the students.

A total of 62 students received scholarships from PNM this year and a total of 23 recipients will graduate with certificates or associate degrees this semester.

“The skills you learn here and in your career will build a better future and livelihood for you and your families and that’s the most important part,” stated Speaker Bates. “Careers in the field of energy development will continue to be a crucial component in the Nation’s economy and production in the Four Corners region will continue long into the future.”

Speaker Bates also noted that the circumstances affecting the long-term future of Navajo Generating Station and other power plants makes the students’ skills and education more valuable and important for energy development.

“We must find new ways to produce cleaner energy methods in order to transform coal into energy. With the education and training who all have received, we look to you to lead us in that direction in the years and decades to come,” added Speaker Bates.

During the reception, two students shared their personal and educational experiences and explained how the scholarship funding from PNM helped them to advance their education.

One student shared the personal struggles that he overcame prior to becoming a student at San Juan College, which included a suicide attempt and the loss of his mother soon after. Through the PNM scholarship funding, he was able to enroll in classes and he was able to purchase welding tools, pay for tuition, and part of his apartment rental expenses.

“The scholarship helped me and now I want to focus on my future plans. I want to be able to have a career to provide for my future kids and I never want them to have to experience the feelings of sadness, loneliness, and depression like I have,” said the student.

Delegate Chee, a former schoolteacher, said he is very proud to see several of his former students receive the scholarship and graduate from San Juan College. He congratulated the students and thanked their parents and families for supporting them.

Since the program’s inception, PNM has provided 230 scholarships to San Juan College students alone. As a result, 92 have received associate degrees and 66 have completed certificates.

For more information regarding the PNM Navajo Nation Workforce Training Initiative, please visit: <https://www.pnm.com/navajo>.

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