



# ¡Arriba! internship program connects local businesses with young talent

September 5, 2017

Twelve students from Rio Arriba County have just taken their first steps into the world of work with help from an innovative new internship program.

[Northern New Mexico College](#), Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos National Security, LLC, and Rio Arriba County high schools partnered to launch ¡Arriba!, a workforce development initiative that matches business mentors with qualified student interns.

“We want to give students the opportunity to put knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to use in a practical way, and also give students a chance to develop soft skills, professional skills and experience in the workforce,” says Joaquin Gallegos, the program’s coordinator (and assistant professor of environmental sciences at Northern New Mexico College). “Often, if you just show up at a job, you may keep the job, but you don’t excel. What we’re trying to emphasize here are those skills and that experience that will project you into the next level in your professional career.”

The 16-week program spanned the second half of the spring semester and the whole summer semester at Northern.

The interns were paired with 12 businesses and organizations within the Española Valley that provided the students with a dedicated mentor and helped them develop a defined project to work on.

Veronica Ramirez, a dual-credit student at Northern and Española Valley High School, interned with [Española Valley Fiber Arts](#) (EVFAC). She helped organize the first annual [New Mexico Fiber Crawl](#) that took place in May 2017, involving 43 stores and 22 artists from Albuquerque to Taos.

Intern Veronica Ramirez describes her internship experience at Española Valley Fiber Arts Center at the ¡Arriba! presentation night.

“Through the internship I have gained knowledge not only from the curriculum at Northern but from the business as well,” Ramirez says. “I also gained a business ethic, job experience and networking that will benefit me with future job opportunities.”

Since the program finished, she has been given the chance to become an employee as part-time events coordinator at the Center.

Ramirez's mentor Olimpia Newman, Director of Development at EVFAC, says her organization also got a lot out of the program: “The New Mexico Fiber Crawl was a

success, and EVFAC was very pleased with the outcome overall. Without Veronica we would not have been able to do all that we accomplished.”

¡Arriba! currently has students enrolled in the fall semester for another set of internships and is planning a third cohort for the spring and summer of 2018.

For more information about the program, contact Joaquin Gallegos at 505-747-5480.

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