

SKYHAWK PRESS

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Cultivating the Next Generation of Scientists: From NTU to Harvard

Cambridge, MA — On August 4, 2026, seven Navajo Technical University (NTU) students completed a 10-week Harvard University Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program, conducting research alongside mentors and exploring science careers.

During the REU symposium, NTU leadership—President Dr. Elmer Guy, Dean Dr. Casmir Agbaraji, and PREM PI Dr. Thiagarajan Soundappan—met with Harvard leaders, including SEAS Dean David Parkes, Community Engagement Director Dr. Kathryn Hollar, and HUNAP Executive Director Jordan T. Clark, to discuss strengthening PREM faculty partnerships, long-term collaborations, and future student cohort selection.

Students designed 10-week research schedules with advisors, engaged with the community, toured regional innovation centers, and attended weekly communication and professional skills training. The NTU student projects included:

- Teshi Begay, Tori-Lynn Largo, and Hunter Reidhead: “Native American Tea & Herb Bioactive Extraction and their Antimicrobial Effects” (including research ethics).
- Lynette Castillo: “The chemistry and spectroscopy of turquoise - relevance to cultural history.”
- Gaile Martin: “Fabricating passive flow devices with custom-built check valves.”
- Wayant Billey and Karen Dan: “Real-time spatial mapping of heavy metal contamination using a 3D printed electrochemical sensing boat.”



Navajo Technical University Hosts 2026 Fall Faculty Convocation

Crownpoint, NM – On August 10, 2026, Navajo Technical University held its traditional Fall Faculty Convocation to mark the beginning of the new academic year inside the Academic Building.

NTU credits its ongoing success to the remarkable faculty members whose diverse expertise, academic achievements, and collaborative efforts drive the institution's research and scholastic excellence. The university proudly recognizes the essential contributions of its faculty members, both on and off campus, as they work to advance knowledge and foster societal progress.

The convocation also included the Assessment Report/Awards for the 2025/2026 academic year for past and present faculty members, as well as interactive exercises and open discussions focused on personal development.

This annual event serves as a meaningful platform to honor teaching excellence, career milestones, and research achievements, while allowing existing faculty to welcome new colleagues and receive updates on upcoming university initiatives. As part of its commitment to providing a supportive environment for all students, NTU is actively accepting applications for the Fall 2026 semester, which begins on August 17, 2026. Incoming students will have access to excellent facilities and a wide array of programs within a vibrant community of peers.

The convocation will take place throughout the week, and the university expresses its sincere appreciation to everyone who participated, whether attending in person or virtually.

It Begins From Within.

For more information, contact:

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NTU Wellness Center

Student Senate Meeting

every Friday at 1 pm in
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Students undergo training for the Center for Advanced Manufacturing

Sandia Park, NM - This summer, student interns traveled to a manufacturing laboratory in Sandia Park for practical, hands-on training. The equipment they are learning to operate mirrors the machinery in the primary CAM lab at Navajo Tech's main campus in Crownpoint, NM.

The CAM lab features specialized machinery, including an SLM machine (a metal 3D printer that uses metal powder), a milling machine (which uses rotating multi-tooth tools to remove material), and a lathe (which rotates the material against a stationary tool to shape it). Students gain direct experience with these exact types of machines during their time.

The primary goal of the internship is to introduce students to a professional manufacturing environment, with a strong focus on machine operation and comprehensive shop safety. The practical insights and knowledge acquired during these programs significantly enhance their academic development and provide a distinct advantage when applying for jobs after graduation. Upon finishing their internships, the students will return to the main campus fully prepared to operate the equipment in the local CAM lab.

In addition to engineering students, the CAM lab integrates media students into the program. Media interns travel with the laboratory interns, receiving equal treatment and opportunities. While documenting the lab's activities through photographs, training videos, and promotional trailers to capture the overall atmosphere, they also receive hands-on experience with the machinery.



DO YOU HAVE AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO MAKE? CONTACT DALE MORGAN AT

dmorgan@navajotech.edu

YOUR ANNOUNCEMENT WILL APPEAR IN THE FOLLOWING MONTH'S NEWSLETTER.

I BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW...



A French-language Scrabble World Champion doesn't speak French.

A woman called the police when her ice cream didn't have enough sparkles.



Uncle Ben's rice was sent to World War II troops.



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NTU Main Campus Fall 2026 New Student Orientation

Crownpoint, NM — On August 12, 2026, Navajo Technical University (NTU) hosted its Fall New Student Orientation at the Wellness Center, led by Career Services Coordinator Shawna Begay and the Student Services Department. The event welcomed first-year and transfer students with icebreakers and networking activities.

Dr. Delores Becenti delivered opening remarks highlighting alumni achievements, academic excellence, and NTU support services. Program activities featured team-building, prize giveaways, presentations on policies and resources, and guidance for success. Parents also attended to learn about university programs.

Administrative units—including the Bookstore, Career Services, IT, Financial Aid, Student Resources, and Online Learning—gave presentations, while faculty and academic departments provided introductions and information booths.

Dickey's BBQ of Gallup catered lunch, followed by campus tours led by Recruiter Michael McMillan. NTU thanks all attendees, noting key coverage of financial aid, first-year resources, career services, NSSC tutoring, faculty introductions, and compliance policies (FERPA, academic standards, and health guidelines).



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SunShare donated \$7.2 million to Navajo Technical University, the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women, and Santa Fe Habitat for Humanity

On August 19, 2026, SunShare, LLC, with CSolPower, LLC, announced the completion of its first two New Mexico community solar gardens in Santa Fe and Deming. SunShare pledged over \$7 million to local organizations, an initiative celebrated by Dr. Elmer Guy and Abe Bitok. Dr. Guy highlighted the project's potential for economic, educational, and technical training opportunities.

A ribbon-cutting event took place at the 6 MWdc Juniper Sol garden in Santa Fe, which began operating on July 1. The 4.5 MWdc Rockhound Sol garden in Deming was energized the same day.

Attended by local leaders and subscribers, the event featured remarks from key figures:

- Deb Haaland noted that Juniper Sol expands access to affordable renewable energy.
- SunShare CEO David Amster-Olszewski emphasized that the project efficiently meets growing energy demand while saving 2,000 subscriber families money for 25 years.
- Tiffany Jiron stated the support will help prevent violence and aid survivors in New Mexico.

Key details of the Juniper Sol garden include:

+ Covers 31 acres, powers nearly 2,000 homes, and avoids 261 million pounds of CO2.

NTU expresses our sincere gratitude to all attendees of the event, including distinguished guests: Lt. Governor Candidate Stephanie Garcia Richard, Public Regulation Commissioner Gabe Aguilera, and Senator Liz Stefanics.

SunShare remains resolute in its mission to drive positive change, advance clean energy solutions, and invest in indigenous communities. The company's contributions exemplify the power of collective action and the potential of renewable energy to fuel transformation.



NTU Nursing Program Updates Presented to Legislative Health and Human Services Committee

Gallup, NM – On August 20, 2026, Navajo Technical University (NTU) representatives—Program Consultant Dr. Michelle Kahn-John, Dean Dr. Casmir I. Agbaraji, and Lobbyist Linda Lovejoy—presented updates on the NTU Nursing Program to the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee.

NTU recently launched its Registered Nursing (RN) program and is developing a Nursing Assistant program while seeking a program director. Students are currently completing clinical rotations at Fort Defiance Hospital, and NTU plans to build a nursing simulation lab to support regional healthcare education with culturally aligned, Indigenous-led instruction.

“Our greatest accomplishment has been launching the program last year and supporting our students as they advance,” stated Dr. Kahn-John, emphasizing the impact of new leadership, classrooms, and labs.

For students considering a career in nursing, NTU provides an opportunity to develop professional skills and prepare for work that directly contributes to the health and well-being of their communities. You can learn more about the NTU Registered Nursing Program and application requirements through Navajo Technical University.

NTU’s Registered Nurse Associate of Applied Science program provides students with a pathway toward a career in nursing. The program includes academic prerequisites and nursing coursework designed to prepare students for professional practice. The RN program is currently accepting applications for the next application cycle, with limited cohort capacity.



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Welcome Back Chili & Frybread Event Hosted by NSSC

Crownpoint, NM – On August 24, 2026, to start the new academic year, the Nitsahakees Bee'anoseel Student Success Center (NSSC) hosted a welcome-back event, serving frybread and chili beans to students. Attendees took a relaxing break, enjoyed a bowl of beans, and connected with members of the NTU community who are all excited to engage with everyone throughout the year!

Spearheaded by NSSC Coordinator Marquita Nez, the gathering invited staff and faculty to participate, creating a welcoming, supportive, and energetic atmosphere for students. Simply stopping by to offer a warm greeting or have a quick conversation can significantly improve a student's first week.

"As students move through the fall term, remember that perseverance is about pressing forward through difficulties rather than avoiding challenges. We encourage students to seek support early—by taking advantage of tutoring, asking questions, and using available tools before a problem arises. Small actions taken today build the foundation for future achievements," Marquita stated.

Location & Hours: The Student Success Center is located in Rooms 145 and 146 on the first level of the Student Union Building. Operating hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5:30 pm, with the computer lab remaining open until 7:00 pm, depending on staff availability.

Thank you for helping us provide a positive and welcoming start to the semester for our students!



NTU Student Senate Hosts Welcome Back Cookout

Crownpoint, NM – On August 25, 2026, The NTU Student Senate hosted a free Welcome Back Cookout for the entire NTU Main Campus community.

Organized by the NTU Student Senate with assistance from Ryan Guy, NTU Student Life Coordinator, the event provided students, faculty, and staff with an opportunity to come together, enjoy a meal, and celebrate the beginning of the fall semester.

Those who attended were treated to their choice of a hamburger or hot dog, along with chips and a drink. The cookout offered a welcoming atmosphere and a chance for members of the NTU community to connect and enjoy some time together.

Now that the semester is entering its second week, the Student Senate wanted to host an event that would bring the NTU community together, lift spirits, and help kick off the fall semester on a positive note.

The NTU Student Senate hopes everyone enjoyed the meal and wishes the entire NTU community continued success as we move forward through the fall semester.



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Shanelle Smiley Signs with Two Navajo Technical University Athletic Programs

Crownpoint, NM - On August 27, 2026, Navajo Technical University student and dual athlete Shanelle Smiley signed with two NTU athletic programs while pursuing her General Studies degree and working toward her long-term goal of becoming a college literature professor.

Smiley will compete with the NTU Women's Basketball and Cross Country teams. Stating that she is looking forward to building relationships with her teammates, competing at the collegiate level, and representing NTU against other institutions. A lifelong runner, Smiley is especially excited to continue cross country at the college level.

"I've been running since I was little, and I'm really excited to run at the college level. I'm going to put in the work," Shanelle commented.

Smiley also emphasized the value of basketball as both an individual and team sport, highlighting the importance of personal development while contributing to the team.

NTU Athletics Director George LaFrance said he has enjoyed watching Smiley develop as an athlete and expects her work ethic to contribute to her success. He commented, "I've watched this young lady grow, and she's going to do well. She's a hard worker, and she gives it her all."

Smiley's mother, Karen Smiley, said she is proud of her daughter and believes competing in college athletics will support her educational goals. "I'm excited for her. It's encouraging for her education and allows her to follow her dreams. As a parent, you support your child no matter how old they are. She has been running since she was a baby, and I'll continue to support her," Karen concluded.



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CHINLE INSTRUCTIONAL SITE

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Drums of Summer In Arizona 2026

Chinle, Arizona - On August 5, Navajo Technical University's Chinle Instructional Site welcomed community members for its Drums of Summer celebration, bringing together families, students, and visitors for an evening dedicated to Diné culture, tradition, and community.

The event featured performances by Chinle Swingin' Echoes, Cornfield Travelers, and TsiYiTohi Singers, among others, with LA Williams serving as emcee. NTU extends its appreciation to LA Williams for their outstanding leadership in highlighting the event and showcasing the NTU Chinle Instructional Site throughout the evening.

The celebration also welcomed Crystalyne Curley, candidate for Navajo Nation President, who addressed attendees on the importance of education and encouraged students and families to pursue higher education as a pathway to strengthening their communities and creating future opportunities.

Traditional Navajo songs and dances are cultural traditions that bring communities together through music, singing, and dance. Performed at public gatherings and celebrations, the songs are sung in the Navajo language and accompanied by hand drums, while the dances encourage community participation, celebrate Diné culture, and help preserve traditions for future generations.

Attendees enjoyed traditional Navajo tacos, supported local vendors, and celebrated the rich cultural heritage of the Navajo Nation. Navajo Technical University thanks everyone who attended, the drum groups for sharing their music and traditions, the event volunteers, KTNN for providing live broadcast coverage, and all who contributed to the event's success.



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Navajo Technical University Chinle Campus Hosts Fresh Produce Distribution Event in Collaboration with La Planta

Chinle, Arizona — On Aug 12, 2026, Navajo Technical University partnered with La Planta Produce Distribution to distribute nutritious produce to students, faculty, staff, and members of the local community.

The success of this initiative was made possible through collaborative effort. Navajo Technical University expresses its sincere appreciation to La Planta Produce Distribution for providing the fresh produce; to the NTU Peer Navigators and volunteers for managing loading, unloading, organization, and distribution operations; and to the broader NTU community and general public for their continued engagement and support.

This initiative helps address essential food needs for local families as students, faculty, and staff prepare for the upcoming Fall academic term. The University acknowledges all individuals who support the health and well-being of Navajo Technical University and the surrounding region.

Navajo Technical University extends formal gratitude to La Planta, the event volunteers, and all attendees for their participation and assistance.



Navajo Technical University Participates in the 2026 Navajo Nation Central Fair Parade

Chinle, Arizona — On Aug 15, 2026, Navajo Technical University proudly joined today's vibrant Navajo Nation Central Agency Parade, bringing together our enthusiastic students, dedicated faculty, and hardworking staff to represent NTU with immense Skyhawk pride!

A special thank-you goes out to the entire Central Agency community for extending such a warm welcome and for continuing to champion higher education opportunities across the Navajo Nation.

Our beloved mascot, Sammy the Skyhawk, shared an inspiring and special message for all of our students enrolled for the Fall 2026 academic semester: "Welcome, Skyhawks!" We sincerely wish you endless success as you pursue your higher education, build a brighter future, and work diligently toward achieving your lifelong career and personal goals.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who came out, cheered along the route, and vibrantly demonstrated their NTU spirit throughout the event.



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KIRTLAND INSTRUCTIONAL SITE

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New Student Orientation at NTU Kirtland

Kirtland, NM - On August 19, 2026, the Navajo Technical University Kirtland Instructional Site held a New Student Orientation to welcome incoming students for the Fall 2026 semester.

Organized by Kirtland faculty and staff, the interactive session offered information to help students transition smoothly into their academic programs. Site Coordinator Garrett Yazzie opened the event with welcoming remarks. Various NTU departments hosted informational tables, allowing students to ask questions, discover available resources, and connect directly with campus representatives. Each program also presented an overview of its offerings to the audience.

Additionally, the NTU Marketing Department provided complimentary coffee to attendees who completed a brief survey. Before wrapping up, the Kirtland site provided lunch for all participants.

Navajo Technical University extends its warm wishes to all students across all campuses for a productive and fulfilling Fall 2026 semester!



NTU Featured Alumni

Navajo Technical University recognizes Starr O'riah LaPahe. Ms. LaPahe is of the Red Bottom People clan (Tł'aashch'ii'i) and was born for the Salt Water clan (Todikozhi). Her maternal grandfather belongs to the Water Edge clan (Tabaahi), and her paternal grandfather belongs to the Big Water clan (Totsohnii).

Raised in her paternal grandparents' home, Ms. LaPahe resides in Whippoorwill, Arizona, where she attended classes at the NTU Chinle instructional site, gaining her Bachelor of Science degree in Early Childhood Multicultural Education in the spring of 2024.

Beyond her academic pursuits, Ms. LaPahe engages in culinary arts and equestrian activities. She participates in traditional cultural practices, including song, dance, and media communications, and possesses leadership experience gained through the Chinle High School JROTC program. Notably, she achieved a significant personal milestone by earning an associate degree, becoming the first member of her family to complete a higher education degree.

Her previous honors include serving as Miss Tseyi (2018–2019), representing Chinle and the Navajo Nation, prior to her selection as Miss Navajo Technical University (2024-2025). Ms. LaPahe acknowledges the substantial support of her younger sister, Autumn LaPahe. She also attributes her ongoing motivation to the memory of her late paternal grandfather, Tom LaPahe, whose guidance and encouragement continue to serve as a foundational influence in her life. Supported by her family, Ms. LaPahe approaches her responsibilities with dedicated focus.

"I remain deeply committed to my cultural heritage, my academic responsibilities, and my domestic obligations," stated Ms. LaPahe. "As the eldest daughter, I fulfill responsibilities involving family care, household management, and livestock maintenance. I encourage all students in the pursuit of their educational objectives."



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NTU Featured Faculty

Originally from Mariano Lake, NM, Verna Sue Casamero belongs to the Deeschii'nii (Start of the red streak people) and Tsin sikaadnii (born for the clamp trees) clans, with Tabaahi (edge of water) as her maternal clan and Hashtl'ishnii (mud clan) as her paternal clan.

Verna graduated from Crownpoint High School (Class of 2017), earned a Certificate in Welding from Navajo Technical University (Fall 2018), and received an AAS in Welding Technology from New Mexico State University (Spring 2022). She is currently pursuing a Certificate in Drafting and Graphics Technology at NMSU.

Now a full-time welding instructor at NTU's main campus, Verna shares, "Welding has always been a passion of mine. Once I learned to control my puddle and understand the process, it clicked, and teaching naturally followed."

Though she didn't initially plan to teach, mentoring local students has become deeply rewarding. "I see potential in my students even when they don't," she noted. "I push them to succeed and be work-ready."

Verna began teaching alongside Christopher Storer for three years and taught welding for three years at Crownpoint High School before joining NTU full-time, instilling professionalism, work readiness, and accountability in her students.

A career highlight was guiding students Kory Harvey, Landen Littleben, and Austin Begay to 2nd place in the high school division at the New Mexico SkillsUSA Welding Fabrication Competition. "Watching them succeed made me very proud," Verna said. "My goal is to build a strong NTU welding program, help students reach their potential, and place in the top three at next year's competition."

She expresses deep gratitude to her mentors Christopher Storer, Tom Bebo (NTU Construction), and Richard Gutierrez (NMSU Welding) for their guidance.

"Their belief in me kept me going, and my family's love and support meant everything," she shared.

"Most of all, I thank my late uncle, Harrison Mariano," Verna concluded. "He reminded me that teaching trade skills makes a real difference. His encouragement stays with me daily, and I'm grateful for everyone who shaped who I am today."

