



Rainforest Ecosystem



UNM INNOVATION ACADEMY



APLU

INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY UNIVERSITIES
AWARDS PROGRAM

IEP CATEGORY • PLACE

CASE
STUDY
2018

**University of New Mexico:
Innovation Academy**

ABOUT THE INNOVATION ACADEMY

The [Innovation Academy](#) (iA) is the University of New Mexico's student community for ideas, businesses, and people at the Lobo Rainforest Building. The Innovation Academy is a mindset shared in the UNM community that asks, "How do we teach and learn best so that students are prepared for life beyond college?" Based on the Rainforest theory of a bottom-up approach to innovation, iA encourages different people and groups to come together to create. It is a cross-pollinating approach to finding solutions to problems and developing new ideas. iA is based on the belief that solutions can be found when people with different backgrounds and skills come together to work on real problems and needs coming from companies and the community. This type of experiential, hands-on learning prepares students to be successful in careers and work places in the real world and deepens their core subject knowledge. The Innovation Academy is developing [many programs](#) to cultivate networks and create connections to build community. Some of the programs at iA are highlighted below:



Figure 1: Participants in the iA Pitch Competition

2+1+2 PROGRAM

The UNM Innovation Academy, in partnership with Central New Mexico Community College and UNM, provides an unexpected route to a graduate degree. The [2+1+2 Program](#) strategically utilizes already established academic programs at two of New Mexico's finest higher education institutions and helps students navigate them in a faster and more affordable way. This program is geared toward serving the nontraditional student population in New Mexico to provide them a pathway to achieve their academic goals that meets their needs. Students can transition from an associate degree, through a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts degree, and complete a Master of Business Administration or a Master of Public Administration graduate degree in five years. The program has over 100 active students with \$37,480 average savings for 2+1+2 students when eligible for the New Mexico Lottery Scholarship and \$26,843 average savings for a 2+1+2 student.

THE CANOPY AT THE LOBO RAINFOREST FOR CREATIVE COLLABORATION

Based on the Stanford D-School, The Canopy provides a platform for students, staff, and faculty across campuses, as well as individuals in the public and private sectors, to learn creative and

innovative processes in design and systems thinking through hands-on strategies and real-world challenges. A focus on learning is a defining factor and in order to teach innovation, The Canopy will be a model for innovation in teaching. The Canopy studio area accommodates up to 25 individuals at a time. Four to five design stations will be furnished to facilitate the design and systems thinking process. Most items are on wheels to enable ongoing reconfiguration as needed. High tables and stools have been incorporated to encourage standing up during parts of the design thinking process. White boards, partitions, and even the Lobo Rainforest's glass walls will be put to use.

COURSES AND OTHER PROGRAMS

There are many ways that iA students can gain knowledge and support. This includes through iA courses such as “Create, Sell, Bank” where students work at the Lobo Rainforest to plan and establish multiple streams of income for their product/service using e-commerce, search engine optimization, and affiliate marketing techniques. They present their best ideas at the [Rainforest Pitch Competition](#) for seed funding. More information of other classes can be found in the [iA impact report](#). The Rainforest Pitch Competition is in partnership with STC.UNM and Innovation Academy. Students pitch to a live audience in hopes to win seed funding for their business idea. Pitch competition winners have gone to create legitimate businesses and are continuing to produce revenue streams. Also, the Innovation Academy hosts a non-traditional internship fair at the Lobo Rainforest every semester where local small businesses and others interested in start-up culture mingle with students looking for internships. The vibe is casual, so students and prospective employers can learn about shared interests and make connections instead of coldly reviewing resumes and making small talk. Many students have found internships at our internship fairs, and some have even gone on to work long-term after their internship ended. Additionally, the Innovation Academy provides students and community members a one-stop shop for small business creation with the Create You Own Job Fair. Anyone interested in opening a small business in Bernalillo County could get everything they needed in one place at the Lobo Rainforest: from business licensing and tax help, to small business loans and venture funding opportunities.

Beginning in fall 2018, the Early Innovation Academy (EiA) will offer local high school students from EiA Partner Schools access to all the iA resources and tools. Incoming freshmen will have the opportunity to participate in a special summer orientation called UNM Survival Guide, where Innovation Academy staff and students will give them the inside look at being a Lobo and provide a glimpse of what they can expect as Innovation Academy students.

Overall, the Innovation Academy consists of 860 students – this includes over 50% female students, over 65% first generation college students of 50% students of color. 85 different majors are represented. The Innovation has 148 iA affiliated courses with over 217 faculty involved. 36 student companies are in operation. 136 students have received academic credit to start their business. Innovation Academy students have been awarded \$129,300 and have raised \$1,332,000 from outside investors for their business ventures. All the opportunities that the iA provides,

including the Disney College Program and Tech Navigator Challenge, to name a few others, is available on the Innovation Academy [website](#), in addition to more information on some the student companies that have launched.

ABOUT APLU

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is North America's oldest higher education association. APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The association's membership consists of public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations.

APLU's mission is to: expand access and improve student success to deliver the innovative workforce of tomorrow; advance and promote research and discovery to improve society, foster economic growth, and address global challenges; and build healthy, prosperous, equitable, and vibrant communities locally and globally.

Based in Washington, DC, the association's work is furthered by an active and effective advocacy arm that works with Congress and the administration as well as the media to advance federal policies that strengthen public universities and benefit the students they serve.

ABOUT THE IEP UNIVERSITIES PROGRAM

APLU and its **Commission on Economic and Community Engagement (CECE)** established the Innovation and Economic Prosperity (IEP) Universities Program to help higher education institutions codify, elevate, and advance their campus enterprise supporting economic and community development.

The **IEP designation program** recognizes institutions that have demonstrated a meaningful, ongoing and substantial commitment to economic and community development, growth, and economic opportunity.

The **IEP awards program** recognize exemplary and innovative projects in university-based economic and community engagement:

- **Talent** and workforce development
- **Innovation**, entrepreneurship, and tech-based economic development
- **Place** development through public service, outreach, and community engagement

Learn more at: www.APLU.org/IEP