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**AFRL New Mexico Announces Virtual**

**High School STEM Signing Day**

*Participating Students are Eligible for $1000 Scholarships*

**ALBUQUERQUE**-The Air Force Research Lab New Mexico Tech Engagement Office today announced it will again be hosting New Mexico STEM Signing Day. However, due to COVID-19, this year’s STEM Signing Day will be held virtually. It will also be open to more students across the state who will be eligible to win one of several $1000 scholarships.

The AFRL NM Tech Engagement Office created the New Mexico STEM Signing Day last year as a way to celebrate high school seniors who are making a commitment to pursue higher education in science, technology, engineering or math related fields. Fashioned after athletic signing days, students will sign “letters of intent” to their chosen field and school.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has hit our high school seniors hard. Traditions they had been looking forward to for years, such as graduation ceremonies and prom, have been cancelled. That’s why it was important for us to find a way to celebrate these students, their accomplishments and their future plans,” said Matt Fetrow, Director of the AFRL NM Tech Engagement Office.

“As we look for new and innovative ways to celebrate the Class of 2020 during this unforeseen time, High School STEM Signing Day is a wonderful new tradition,” said Public Education Department Secretary Dr. Ryan Stewart.  “I am so proud of our high school students for advancing their college and career ambitions.  The resilience that our Seniors are demonstrating during this challenging time will serve them well in their future STEM careers.”

Traditionally, schools are asked to nominate students to participate in STEM Signing Day, but this year students will be able to self-nominate. Any New Mexico high school senior who is graduating this spring and who plans to attend a two- or four-year institution next fall to pursue a degree in a STEM-related field is invited to participate.

Interested students can register online through April 30, 2020 at [www.afrlnewmexico.com/stem-signing-day](http://www.afrlnewmexico.com/stem-signing-day).

Students who register will be sent their letters of intent which they can print out and sign. Students and families are encouraged to hold their own STEM Signing Day celebrations at home and then share it on social media with the hashtag #NMSTEMSigningDay2020.

Students and families will also be invited to an exclusive statewide virtual STEM Signing Day celebration on May 4, 2020 and participating students will be entered into a drawing for the chance to win a $1,000 scholarship.

“STEM jobs have always been vital to the economic health of New Mexico and our country, but the current pandemic is showing us that we need scientists and other STEM professionals more than ever” Matt Fetrow, added. “That’s why it’s important to recognize those students who are interested in furthering their STEM education and pursuing STEM careers.”

**About the AFRL Tech Engagement Office**

The AFRL Tech Engagement Office handles tech transfer/commercialization and STEM education outreach programs for Air Force Research Lab New Mexico. These programs are administered through agreements with various partners, including New Mexico Tech University, the University of New Mexico, Explora and the New Mexico Trade Alliance.