



Rural Centered  
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A Monthly Newsletter from the  
Colorado Center for Rural Education



## Fort Lewis College: Preparing Rural Teachers Since 1914

We recently spoke with [Dr. Jenni Trujillo](#), Dean of the [School of Education](#) at [Fort Lewis College](#) (FLC) about their long history of serving the southwest area of Colorado and the Four Corners area. They've been focused on preparing teachers since 1914. It started as a high school at the old Fort Lewis, became a two-year college, and finally turned into a four-year college. Currently they serve about 250 students at any given time. Since they have in-person, hybrid, and 100% online models, they enroll people from other geographic areas as well.

On the [undergraduate](#) side, the college offers early childhood education, K-12 teaching, elementary education, and secondary education degree programs.

They also have a number of undergrad degree programs that combine love of certain subjects with a teaching degree, including [adventure](#), [art](#), [English](#), [exercise science](#), [theater](#), and [world languages](#).

[Graduate study opportunities](#) include [culturally and linguistically diverse education](#), [principal leadership](#), [special education](#), [leading in context](#), and [teacher licensure](#).

## Keeping Them in the Fold

“We’re a relatively small program, so we can offer students a lot of personal attention,” said Trujillo. “We work to preserve the strength of each cohort and ensure they stay connected with each other, the college, and our community.” For example, FLC curates experiences for the students, such as hands-on visits to the nearby Navajo Nation or Ute Mountain Ute Reservation.

With its history in southwest Colorado, the college is dedicated to bilingual education programs. Theirs is the oldest in Colorado, having been founded in 1972. Bilingual programs include Spanish, Navajo, and Ute.

“Students enjoy the in-classroom, hands-on experiences we can provide for them,” Trujillo said. Those can be transformative; one student who had never considered a career in early childhood education completed several field hours in a kindergarten classroom and ultimately ended up being a kindergarten teacher! “Schools are so complex, and teaching continues to get more complicated. We are proud that our graduates feel prepared and ready to step into their role as a teacher and classroom leader,” said Trujillo.

Though some teacher candidates do go back to the Front Range after graduating, many of the teacher candidates stay in rural southwest Colorado, and some go to work in the tribal nations.



*Fort Lewis College Teacher Candidates on a Field Experience*

## Looking Ahead

"We definitely want to continue to grow the program," said Trujillo. "We feel we offer exceptional opportunities, especially for rural teachers." Colorado Center for Rural Education Director Dr. Robert Fulton said, "Fort Lewis College is a special place that provides tuition-free education to students from any federally recognized Native American tribe. As such, they are uniquely situated to serve rural students."

For more information about undergraduate teaching degree programs, email [John Smith](#), Coordinator of Teacher Licensure & Dual Enrollment. If you already have a degree and are interested in becoming a teacher or furthering your expertise by attending a graduate program, email [Shawn Whitehead](#), Coordinator of Graduate Studies & Outreach.

## Upcoming Application Timelines

**Colorado Rural Student Teaching Stipend** applications for fall 2025 accepted: December 1, 2024, through March 31, 2025

**National Board Certified Teacher Stipend** applications accepted: January 1, 2025, through April 30, 2025

Visit TEACH Colorado's [Financial Aid and Scholarship Information](#) for information about additional scholarships.

For financial aid available to in-service and aspiring educators, download the [Colorado Department of Education's Educator Recruitment and District Supports flyer](#).

## We'd Love to Get Your Feedback!

Can you do us a favor? The Colorado Department of Higher Education is conducting an evaluation of the Colorado Center for Rural Education (CCRE). Will you please take five minutes to complete this [brief survey](#) regarding CCRE's work? Thank you for your help!

## Featured Partners

Learn more about our [featured partners](#) and how they are helping to solve the teacher shortage in rural Colorado.

The Colorado Department of Higher Education's [Colorado Educator Loan Forgiveness Program](#) offers loan repayment assistance on qualified loans for educators, mainly for those who serve in rural and hard-to-fill positions in Colorado. Participants are eligible to receive up to \$5,000 in loan forgiveness in a given year.

Robert Fulton, PhD | Director

