



Dr. Traci Filiss Announces Retirement After Nearly Two Decades of Pioneering Public Education in Northern New Mexico

Dr. Traci Filiss Retires
as Founder & Executive Director of *Taos Academy*

A trailblazer in digital and blended learning, Dr. Filiss leaves behind an institution recognized statewide and nationally, and a legacy that will shape Taos youth for generations to come.

The Taos Academy community announces with profound gratitude and deep pride that Dr. Traci Filiss, founder, co-creator, and Executive Director/Superintendent of Taos Academy Charter School, will retire this summer, bringing to a close nearly two decades of transformative service to the youth, families, and community of northern New Mexico.

Dr. Filiss holds a Master's Degree in Digital Curriculum Design and Instruction and earned a Doctorate of Education in Organizational Leadership, credentials she put to work from the very first day she envisioned a school unlike any other in rural New Mexico. She arrived at the idea of Taos Academy with more than 14 years of prior classroom and administrative experience, and after founding a successful distance-learning program **recognized by the New Mexico School Board Association for excellence in educational innovation.**

Alongside co-founder Karin Moulton, Dr. Filiss brought Taos Academy to life approximately seventeen years ago. Together they designed a school rooted in a singular conviction: that every learner deserves access to excellence, regardless of ability or location. Their pioneering hybrid model, blending in-person and distance learning long before such approaches became mainstream, was purpose-built for the digital generation, and for the underserved students of Taos County, where economic hardship and geographic isolation have historically limited educational opportunity.

"We hold the belief that every learner deserves access to excellence in educational opportunities regardless of his or her abilities or location."

Under Dr. Filiss's leadership, Taos Academy grew into a New Mexico Spotlight School, placing its overall index score above the 75th percentile and **ranking among the highest-performing schools in the state**. Students regularly claimed **first place in the Governor's STEM Challenge**, a distinction the school earned **six consecutive years** running. Graduates have received **Danielson, Fulbright, and Gates scholarships, qualified for National Merit recognition, and earned bilingual seals**. Many have graduated from Taos Academy carrying college credits already in hand, with alumni reporting that the school's Early College pathway allowed them to earn a bachelor's degree in just three years after high school.

The school's recognition has not been limited to New Mexico. Taos Academy's innovative learning model drew **national attention from U.S. News & World Report's Best High School Rankings, the Clayton Christensen Institute, and the Evergreen Education Group, organizations at the forefront of educational research and reform**. The school's students also excelled in the Northeastern Regional Science Fair, the New Mexico State Science and Engineering Fair, and secured **State Championship in esports** three years in a row.

Dr. Filiss also fought for her students in the halls of the New Mexico Legislature. Over three years she lobbied tirelessly for a bill requiring school districts to share technology tax revenue with state-chartered schools, a provision with consequences for more than 70 charter schools throughout New Mexico. Her perseverance paid off when the bill passed in the final moments of the legislative session. Colleagues said all charter schools in the state owe her a profound debt. For this work, she was named **Charter School Administrator of the Year by the New Mexico Coalition for Charter Schools in 2016**.

In 2022, under Dr. Filiss's guidance, Taos Academy earned **official designation as a New Mexico Community School**, expanding its mission to draw together students, families, local businesses, and civic partners around evidence-based, equitable educational strategies. The following year, 2023, she presided over the opening of a new **Career Technical Education** building providing hands-on training in technology and hospitality fields. And in 2025, she fulfilled a vision held since the school's founding: the **unveiling of a new wellness building and outdoor amphitheater** to serve students and the wider Taos community alike.



Throughout it all, the work remained deeply personal. Taos Academy serves a community where over half the student population is economically disadvantaged and more than 60 percent of students identify as Hispanic, Native American, or Black, groups historically underserved by conventional schooling. Dr. Filiss approached this reality not as a limitation, but as a calling, building systems of **flexible scheduling, individualized support, social-emotional learning, outdoor education, and community partnership that met students where they were.**

Dr. Traci Filiss leaves Taos Academy not as it was, but as it will be, for every student who walks through its doors for decades to come.

Highlights of a Remarkable Career -

- Co-founded Taos Academy Charter School alongside Karin Moulton, c. 2008
- Earned Doctorate of Education in Organizational Leadership
- Named NM Charter School Administrator of the Year, 2016 — NMCCS
- Championed landmark NM legislation: technology tax revenue sharing for all 70+ state charter schools
- Guided Taos Academy to NM Spotlight School designation — top 75th percentile statewide
- Students won the Governor's STEM Challenge six consecutive years
- Recognized by U.S. News Best High School Rankings, Clayton Christensen Institute & Evergreen Education Group
- Opened Career Technical Education Center, 2023
- Earned school designation as an NM Community School, 2022
- Unveiled new Wellness Building & outdoor Amphitheater, 2025
- Led school through COVID-19 with a nationally noted distance-learning model

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A Tuition-Free Public Charter School · Grades 5–12 · taosacademy.org