

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: HB 16

48th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2008

Short Title: UNM Communication Disorders Programs

Sponsor(s): Representative Jimmie C. Hall and Others

Analyst: Eilani Gerstner

Date: January 19, 2008

Bill Summary:

HB 16 appropriates funds to the Board of Regents of the University of New Mexico (UNM) for FY 09 for expansion of student clinical studies and practicum programs for communication disorders in the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences.

Fiscal Impact:

\$250,000 is appropriated from the General Fund. The bill contains a reversion clause.

According to the Higher Education Department (HED) analysis, UNM and New Mexico State University (NMSU) submitted a collaborative request for \$600,000 to HED; however, funding for this initiative was not included in HED's recommendations for FY 09.

The Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) notes that HED's evaluation table of FY 09 research and public service projects provided to the LFC classifies this project as a "breach" of the Higher Education Formula.

Issues:

According to UNM, students who accept tuition and stipends under this project will be obligated to work in the public schools for three years upon graduation. The NMSU bill analysis of HB 17, the corresponding bill that appropriates funding for the same project at NMSU, says that:

- Nationally, there is a growing need in the public schools for more speech-language pathologists (SLPs), and the shortage of qualified SLPs is a particular problem in New Mexico.
- Since services for communication disorders are mandated by law, schools without an SLP must provide services through external contracts, and contracted services cost New Mexico millions of dollars.
- The project to be funded by HB 16 is a collaboration between UNM and NMSU to address the shortage of SLPs in New Mexico public schools through a two-fold approach that involves (1) expansion of existing, campus-based programs, and (2) extension of current programs through distance education.

The UNM analysis also addresses the SLP shortage issue, referring to a September 2007 survey showing that:

- Las Cruces Public Schools had 14 SLP vacancies;
- Gadsden Independent Schools had eight SLP vacancies;
- Albuquerque Public Schools had 21 SLP vacancies; and
- the shortage is equally acute, if not worse, in smaller school districts.

Finally, HB 16 is a companion bill to HB 17, appropriating the same amount of funding for the same purpose to UNM for the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, and SB 28 is a related bill that covers the same request by NMSU.

Related Bills:

HB 17 *NMSU Communications Disorders Programs*

SB 28 *Expand NMSU Communications Disorders Program*