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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 1/30/09

SPONSOR Morales LAST UPDATED \_\_\_\_\_ HB \_\_\_\_\_

SHORT TITLE WNMU Social Work Master's Program SB 285

ANALYST Haug

### APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY09	FY10		
	\$356.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Higher Education Department (HED)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 285 appropriates \$356.0 from the general fund to the Board of Regents of Western New Mexico University for a master's of social work degree program.

### FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$356.0 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of Fiscal Year 2011 shall revert to the general fund.

### SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The HED states that this request was submitted by NMSU to HED for review, but is not recommended for funding for FY10, regardless of whether the State's fiscal picture improves.

The LFC Appropriation Recommendations, Volume II, pages 364-365 states:

The committee has concerns about the growth of research and public service projects within the higher education budget, as well as the alignment of these projects with state goals and strategic plans. The committee also continues to have significant concerns about accountability and performance outcomes for these projects.

The committee recommendation reduces funding included in the HED request by varying levels from FY09 funding amounts for research projects, public service projects and P-20 pipeline projects focusing on students.

With respect to special projects, higher education institutions advanced 114 proposals for new projects and expansions at a total general fund cost of \$54 million during the HED budget request process in fall 2008.

According to the December 2008 revenue estimate, FY10 recurring revenue will only support a base expenditure level that is \$293 million, or 2.6 percent, less than the FY09 appropriation. All appropriations outside of the general appropriation act will be viewed in this declining revenue context.

The Executive Budget in Brief notes that over the years more than 300 RPSPs have been created, accounting for a large portion of institution budgets. The current RPSPs were reviewed while considering the relevance of the project to the core mission of the institution, the community benefit and the outcomes associated with each project. (Budget in Brief and Policy Highlights, P 9-10.)

The HED states:

The focus of the MSW is on rural social work and on social work with Native American or Hispanic populations. The curriculum will include education of students to provide a pool of social work practitioners, both in clinical practice and for supervisory positions.

With this funding, WNMU would hire the faculty required for accreditation, support their efforts to recruit students, and provide opportunities for travel to all the WNMU sites and essential conferences. Students will use instructional television, face to face classes, and online classes in a hybrid program that will allow them to remain in their rural communities while obtaining the education necessary for professional social work practice.

Currently, there are two MSW programs offered in New Mexico, one at New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas and one at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. Both of these programs are primarily geographically specific, while WNMU's program is anticipated to utilize distance education technologies and methods that have been tested at other distance education based MSW programs in the United States. WNMU views itself not in competition, but as a distinct alternative since it will be focused on instructional television learning methods.

WNMU currently offers a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Social Work. A new Master's in Social Work program would address critical shortages of licensed level social workers in New Mexico.