

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS**

**Bill Number:** SB 64

**52nd Legislature, 1st Session, 2015**

**Tracking Number:** .198518.1

**Short Title:** UNM & NMSU Student Global Competiveness

**Sponsor(s):** Senator Cisco McSorley

**Analyst:** James Ball

**Date:** February 3, 2015

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**Bill Summary:**

SB 64 makes two appropriations to support study abroad opportunities (SAOs) for students at all New Mexico public two-year and four-year colleges and tribal colleges.

**Fiscal Impact:**

The following appropriations are made from the General Fund in FY 16:

- \$250,000 to the Board of Regents of the University of New Mexico (UNM) for the Global Education Office; and
- \$250,000 to the Board of Regents of New Mexico State University (NMSU) for the Office of Education Abroad.

Unexpended or unencumbered funds revert to the General Fund.

According to the fiscal impact report (FIR) from the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC), NMSU submitted a request to the Higher Education Department (HED) to fund SAOs in FY 16, although UNM did not. Neither HED, nor LFC, nor the Executive recommended funding for this initiative for FY 16.

**Substantive Issues:**

According to NMSU, study abroad is one of the best ways students can acquire global skills and open up personal and professional opportunities. Study abroad is often a life-changing experience for many students, opening their eyes to different ways of life and promoting understanding and tolerance. Both UNM and NMSU report, however, that New Mexico ranks 48<sup>th</sup> among the states in the percentage of postsecondary students who participate in SAOs, primarily due to lack of financial resources and support.

The FIR notes that both UNM and NMSU appear to have broad discretion in implementing SB 64. The bill does not restrict the use of the funds, nor does it indicate how funds would be distributed among New Mexico's public postsecondary institutions. The FIR also expresses doubts that the appropriations could be expended in one fiscal year due to the administrative implications implied in the bill.

**Background:**

Both UNM and NMSU cite studies indicating that students who participate in study abroad programs demonstrate:

- increased leadership skills;
- improved academic performance;
- stronger critical thinking skills;
- higher rates of graduation than traditional students;
- higher levels of competitiveness in the local and global workforce; and
- higher levels of knowledge and global awareness related to entrepreneurial activities.

**Committee Referrals:**

SEC/SFC

**Related Bills:**

None as of February 3, 2015.