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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR: Sanchez M. DATE TYPED: 2/21/01 HB _____
 SHORT TITLE: UNM Law School Special Entrance Requirements SB 411
 ANALYST: Wilson

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY01	FY02	FY01	FY02		
			NFI		

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Commission on Higher Education (CHE)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 411 establishes a pilot program at the University of New Mexico School of Law that would allow for admission of up to five students annually who possess relevant experience related to reading the law, or work experience in the legal, judicial or legislative fields. This entrance criterion would be in lieu of a requirement that law school applicants possess an undergraduate degree. The School is to report annually to the CHE and the Legislature about the results of the pilot program, including its recommendation on whether to terminate or expand this program.

Significant Issues

The University of New Mexico School of Law is accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA) and thus complies with its requirements for academic quality. According to information provided by the School, ABA Standard 502 requires that an accredited law school "shall require for admission to its J.D. degree program a bachelor's degree, or successful completion of three-fourths of the work acceptable for a bachelor's degree, from an institution that is accredited by a regional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education." The ABA standard further states that an accredited law school may admit an applicant who does not meet these educational requirements in an extraordinary case, and delineates the requirements and documentation necessary to justify such an admissions decision.

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In order for the UNM School of Law to implement Senate Bill 411 and retain its ABA accreditation, it would be necessary to design new admissions and record-keeping processes for such extraordinary admissions circumstances. Given that far more applicants now apply for admission than the School is able to admit each year, it is unclear that creating the new processes to comply with the ABA standard would be cost-effective for five students.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

None on the Commission on Higher Education. There is an unknown impact on the University of New Mexico.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

None on the Commission on Higher Education. There would be an unknown impact on the University of New Mexico.

DW/njw