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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2/7/06

SPONSOR Williams LAST UPDATED 2/9/06 HB 517/aHEC

SHORT TITLE Community College Asteroid Studies Program SB \_\_\_\_\_

ANALYST Earp

### APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY06	FY07		
	\$100.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From  
Higher Education Department (HED)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of HEC Amendments

The House Education Committee amendments strike the word “community” from the title and the body of the bill. The impact of this change is to clarify that the proposed program could benefit student recruitment for all colleges.

#### Synopsis of Original Bill

House Bill 517 appropriates \$100,000 from the general fund to the Board of Regents of New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (NMTech) to improve recruitment of community college students through participation in an asteroid and comet studies program at the Magdalena Ridge Observatory.

### FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$100,000 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2007 shall revert to the general fund.

## **SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

This proposal was not included among the special program funding requests submitted by the NMTech to the Higher Education Department (HED) for review. Consequently, this proposal has not been included in the HED fiscal year 2007 funding recommendations to the Legislature.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

NMTech would bear administrative responsibility for the proposed project. No significant administrative impact is apparent.

## **OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

The following background information has been provided through HED:

The Magdalena Ridge Observatory (MRO) is a multi-instrument observatory on top of Magdalena Ridge which houses a Target-of-Opportunity 2.4m telescope and a multi-element optical interferometer array designed to produce model independent images.

Magdalena Ridge Observatory project is an international scientific collaboration between New Mexico Tech (NMTech), the University of Cambridge (UK), and the New Mexico observatory consortium which includes New Mexico State University (NMSU), New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU), the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), and Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The Magdalena Ridge Observatory project is overseen by the Office of Naval Research (ONR).

Currently there are three major areas of public outreach supported by MRO staff. The first is public Star Parties at the Etscorn Campus Observatory. This allows New Mexico school and youth groups to regularly attend star parties at the New Mexico Tech Astronomy Club. These events provide timely information about current astronomical events such as meteor showers and close approaches of the planets. The second public outreach is the astronomer mentoring for middle school and high school teachers by MRO scientists with Socorro and Laguna Pueblo school system. The third public outreach includes classroom demonstrations of astronomical concepts including planetarium presentations for the Gallup-McKinley and the Dulce School system.

House Bill 517 will support a fourth outreach program that targets community college students who will participate in an asteroid and comet studies program that will expose students to hands-on research at the MRO. The expectation is that this experience will increase the opportunities of community college students interested in asteroid and comet studies to transfer to NM Tech or other observatory consortium member universities such as NMSU and NMHU.