

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: SB 28

48th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2008

Short Title: Expand NMSU Communication Disorders Program

Sponsor(s): Senators Mary Kay Papen and Cynthia Nava and Representative Andy Nuñez

Analyst: Eilani Gerstner

Date: January 19, 2008

Bill Summary:

SB 28 appropriates funds to the Board of Regents of New Mexico State University (NMSU) for FY 09 to expand the Communications Disorders Program to increase the number of speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in the public schools.

Fiscal Impact:

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

According to the Higher Education Department (HED) analysis, the University of New Mexico (UNM) and 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.

Issues:

According to NMSU, students in NMSU's Communications Disorders Program who accept tuition and stipends under this project will be obligated to work in the public schools upon graduation. According to the NMSU bill analysis:

- Nationally, there is a growing need in the public schools for more 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 collaboration between NMSU and UNM will 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.

Also addressing the SLP shortage issue is the UNM analysis of HB 16, the corresponding bill that appropriates funding for the same project at UNM, which says that according to a September 2007 survey:

- 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.

Also, according to the Public Education Department analysis, New Mexico currently has 1,028 licensed SLPs and 21,280 students who receive speech services.

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

Related Bills:

HB 16 *UNM Communications Disorders Programs*

HB 17 *NMSU Communications Disorders Programs*