

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: *HB 450

49th Legislature, 1st Session, 2009

Short Title: WNMU Early Childhood Program

Sponsor(s): Representative Dianne Miller Hamilton and Others

Analyst: James Ball

Date: February 6, 2009

Bill Summary:

HB 450 makes an appropriation to fund early childhood program needs at Western New Mexico University (WNMU).

* HB 450 contains an emergency clause.

Fiscal Impact:

\$265,000 is appropriated to the Board of Regents of WNMU from the General Fund for FY 10.

Unexpended or unencumbered funds revert to the General Fund.

Fiscal Issues:

According to the Higher Education Department (HED), this particular request was not submitted by WNMU for review and is not included in the department's funding recommendation for FY 10. A proposal was submitted to HED, however, in the amount of \$56,500 for the Child Development Center at WNMU. The department would not oppose this project's funding for FY 10, as submitted, if the state's fiscal picture improves.

HED notes, however, that the appropriation amount contained in HB 450 differs from WNMU's original HED request by adding an additional \$208,500. In FY 08 WNMU received \$588,200 in recurring funds for the Child Development Center. Approval of HB 450 would increase recurring funding to \$853,200.

The Fiscal Impact Report for HB 450 states the concerns the Legislative Finance Committee has regarding 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.

Issues:

WNMU has the following goals for the early childhood program in FY 10:

- reorganize programs to better align with the program mission;
- strengthen the infant/toddler mental health component of the program;

- offer trainings specific to infant/toddler mental health with outreach to southern New Mexico;
- develop a course on “Relationship Building with Children” (ages 3-10);
- enroll 10 new bachelor’s degree early childhood education students;
- continue to offer low-cost quality child-care to working families, allowing increased options for employment in the work force;
- increase ability to offer year-round school age care to accommodate a growing waiting list;
- continue the fiscal program management of the Silver High School Growing Tree Infant/Toddler Program;
- strengthen early intervention across all programs by implementing a new assessment to measure programs effectiveness and establish a base for future research;
- continue the expansion of the Family Counseling Center to provide additional community outreach and professional training; and -
- maintain professional teaching salary schedule for stability and to reduce staff turnover.

Background:

HED’s analysis of HB 450 notes that, according to officials of the early childhood program at WNMU their services have proven extremely beneficial to the students and work force in Grants and Luna counties. Continuation of this program will provide for quality child-care and provider training. The programs have been successful in serving a diverse population and in focusing on retention of students. Families have achieved postsecondary educational goals as a result.

Related Bills:

None as of 2-6-2009.