

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: SB 152a

49th Legislature, 1st Session, 2009

Short Title: Require Freshman Year Outcomes Reports

Sponsor(s): Senators Cynthia Nava and Mary Jane M. García

Analyst: Pamela Herman

Date: February 23, 2009

FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

AS AMENDED

The Senate Education Committee amendment:

- **strikes the first Senate Public Affairs Committee amendment;**
- **changes language in the bill referring to “freshman year” to “first year of college”;**
- **requires that, upon a request from a school district superintendent, as well as a public high school in New Mexico, a public postsecondary educational institution shall provide a report of students who enroll in the institution within three years of graduating from that high school or leaving without enrolling in another high school or earning a general educational development certificate; and**
- **requires that the Higher Education Department be provided a copy of the report.**

The Senate Public Affairs Committee amendment:

- **requires that, upon a request from a public high school in New Mexico, a public post-secondary educational institution shall provide a report of students who enroll in the institution within three years of graduating from the high school or leaving the high school without enrolling in another high school or earning a GED.**
- **changes the terms “first” and “second” semesters to “fall” and “spring” semesters; and**
- **changes the term “freshman year” to “first year of college.”**

Original Bill Summary:

- **SB 152 requires that each public postsecondary education institution report annually to each public high school in New Mexico about the freshman year outcomes of the students from that high school who enroll in the postsecondary institution within three years of graduating or leaving high school.**
- **The bill allows for information in the reports to be used by the high schools and the institutions to improve instruction, student preparation, and advisement.**
- **SB 152 also requires the Higher Education Department (HED), in consultation with the Public Education Department (PED) and representatives of public high schools and public postsecondary institutions, to prescribe the form of the reports. Reports must:**

- not include any personally identifiable student information; and
- show the following data:
 - advanced placement by subject;
 - total credits earned;
 - grade point average;
 - retention from first to second semester of the freshman year; and
 - frequency and patterns of remedial or development courses being taken.

Fiscal Impact:

SB 152 makes no appropriation.

Issues:

According to the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) of the Department of Finance and Administration, close to half of recent public high school graduates who have entered New Mexico public postsecondary institutions between years 2000 and 2007 have taken at least one remedial course in literacy or mathematics, and roughly one-quarter have taken two or more such courses, in their first semester.

The OEA data also reveal achievement gaps based on race, ethnicity and gender:

- Native American, Hispanic, and African-American students have required remediation in higher education at a “considerably higher” rate than those of white or Asian students; and
- female students have required remediation at a slightly higher rate than males.

The Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) heard testimony in 2007 regarding the significant costs paid by students, families, scholarship funders, and state and local governments and institutional budgets when a student arrives in college unprepared for college-level work. These costs are sometimes characterized as “double billing” because in most cases the state has already paid for students’ apparently inadequate high school education. There have been various, and varying, recent efforts to quantify these costs in New Mexico:

- In its Fiscal Impact Report for HB 681, *Payment of Remedial Courses at Colleges* (2007), the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) estimated roughly that the cost of remediation tuition and fees only for one semester for recent graduates at two-year institutions to be \$581,525; and for two semesters to be approximately \$1.2 million.
- In June 2007, HED estimated the total burden in the higher education funding formula of remediation for recent high school graduates, not including student fees, at \$3.8 million annually.
- The 2006 Alliance for Excellent Education proposed that the “annual remediation savings” that New Mexico could realize from “a reduced need for community college remediation” by better preparing students for college was approximately \$9.8 million in higher education costs annually.

- The alliance points out that economically, remediation is a poor substitute for adequate preparation, since students who need remediation are likelier to exit college without a degree and thus tend to earn less income. For example:
 - the alliance cites a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) finding that the leading predictor that a student will drop out of college is the need for remedial reading; and
 - based on estimated lower annual earnings of \$20,171 for individuals with some college but no degree compared with college graduates, the alliance estimates that New Mexico lost a total of \$22.0 million in 2006 because of inadequate preparation for college.

OEA states that, in order for public high schools to adequately monitor how well they are implementing high school reforms enacted by the Legislature since 2007, it is critical that they receive accurate data on how well their graduates are performing once they reach postsecondary institutions, as directed by SB 152.

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) reports that 23 states have “postsecondary feedback systems” that include reports sent to high schools that demonstrate the performance of the high school’s recent graduates in postsecondary education. According to ECS, in most cases the report is prepared by a higher education governing body as a result of a statutory provision. A handful of states include this feedback data on district and school accountability report cards, and four states mandate that the data be used for school improvement purposes.

Background:

Following the first OEA report on New Mexico freshman remediation rates in 2006, the LESC convened a 60-member Work Group on College/Workplace Readiness and High School Redesign. The committee adopted the recommendations of the work group by endorsing legislation to increase the rigor and relevance of the New Mexico high school diploma through key high school redesign measures in 2007 and 2008, including:

- joining with 28 other states in the American Diploma Project of Achieve, Inc, to align state high school standards with college- and workplace-ready standards;
- increasing mathematics and laboratory science requirements for a New Mexico high school diploma;
- requiring that Algebra I be offered in grade 8;
- establishing a system of college and workplace readiness assessments beginning in grade 9 to provide students, parents, and teachers with early information about a student’s degree of preparation for life after high school;
- replacing the existing High School Competency Exam, which tests middle school level skills and knowledge, with a more rigorous standards-based assessment or portfolio of indicators for high school graduation;
- establishing dual credit programs to help smooth students’ transitions to college and give those who are prepared an opportunity to begin earning college credit while working toward a high school diploma; and
- creating the New Mexico Cyber Academy to expand high school course offerings through distance delivery.

Since 2006, the LESC, in concert with PED, HED, OEA, postsecondary institutions, and the business community, has continued the work of aligning high school curricula and assessments

with expectations of college and the workplace, with technical assistance from Achieve, Inc., and, since the fall of 2008, with seven other states and a consortium of national education organizations in the College and Career Ready Policy Institute, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

In keeping with this effort, throughout the 2008 interim, to assess if and to what extent public postsecondary institutions and local public school districts communicate and coordinate their efforts to prepare students for college-level coursework and the work force, the LESC heard testimony and engaged in discussions with representatives of all of New Mexico's state and tribal two- and four-year institutions of higher education. Among the many initiatives presented in testimony to the committee, at least three colleges indicated that they report to local school districts about the progress of their students in their freshman year.

Related Bill:

SB 317 *Use of Student ID Numbers on Transcripts*