

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: SB 670

49th Legislature, 1st Session, 2009

Short Title: 3 Dimensional Academies for Lifelong Learners

Sponsor(s): Senator Carlos R. Cisneros

Analyst: James Ball

Date: February 26, 2009

Bill Summary:

SB 670 makes an appropriation to contract for the design, development, and implementation of a project-based, story-centered, and learn-by-doing curriculum that will:

- be supported by real-time mentoring from career-field experts for delivery through virtual three-dimensional academies for students in New Mexico;
- enhance career, critical thinking, and communication skills as well as college preparedness;
- use simulated professional experiences that create realistic workplace situations, stimulating interest in the industry clusters of:
 - aerospace;
 - health care;
 - energy; and
 - digital media and film;
- be available for local or remote participation by lifelong learners working together in teams mentored by faculty and professionals on a website controlled by the state; and
- provide for professional development in mentoring methods and techniques for New Mexico faculty and real-time career-field mentors.

Fiscal Impact:

\$6.0 million is appropriated from the separate account of the Appropriation Contingency Fund, also known as the “education lockbox,” to the Higher Education Department (HED) for FY 10 and FY 11.

Unexpended or unencumbered funds revert to the Appropriation Contingency Fund at the end of FY 11.

Fiscal Issues:

According to HED, this request is consistent with the department’s strategic priorities and goals, but given the state’s current fiscal restraints and similar ongoing efforts, HED does not support this request at this time.

According to the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA), the “education lockbox” was created by the Legislature to support PreK-12 education reform. The Office of Education

Accountability reported in May 2008 that, of the original \$120 million in the fund, slightly over \$67.0 million remains. SB 79 in the current legislative session appropriates \$35.7 million of the balance to the State Equalization Guarantee distribution for the purpose of supplementing the General Fund in FY 09, leaving approximately \$30.0 million for other educational reform efforts.

Issues:

HED points out in the analysis of SB 670 that Innovative Digital Education and Learning-New Mexico (IDEAL-NM) and the New Mexico Computer Application Center have already begun collaborative work to implement virtual three-dimensional learning opportunities for New Mexico's students using the state's supercomputer, known as Encanto. In addition, 21st Century learning platforms are being built in some of the state-funded film and digital arts education programs at three of the state's universities. Collaborative efforts in this regard also are being built with the two national laboratories.

The analyses of SB 670 by DFA, HED, and the Public Education Department (PED) all note that the concept of three dimensional academies is duplicative of services currently being offered, particularly those of IDEAL-NM. CS/HB 2 et al. contains \$994,400 for New Mexico Cyber Academy/IDEAL-NM.

It appears that Global Telesis 3 (GT3) could provide the services described in SB 670. According to the company's website, GT3 plans to develop a wide range of open-source, virtual, three-dimensional facilities and academies so that individuals can try out various careers and workforce skills in a virtual learning environment before leaving high school or entering college. GT3 will provide participants with hands-on experience allowing them to experiment with real work experiences after completion of their curricular work or to pursue further study at the university and college level, as well as engage in professional development and workforce training.

Background:

According to PED, currently, distance learning through IDEAL-NM provides online services to P-12 schools, higher education institutions, and government agencies statewide. The IDEAL-NM partnership between PED and HED offers, among other things, high school courses and credit-bearing college courses through which high school students can recover failed credits, satisfy high school graduation requirements, or take high school/college dual credit courses.

Related Bills:

*CS/SB 79 *Fund Transfers & Appropriation Cuts*
CS/HB 2 et al. *General Appropriation Act of 2009*