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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2/20/09

SPONSOR Gutierrez LAST UPDATED \_\_\_\_\_ HB 696

SHORT TITLE NMSU Vertebrate Wildlife Museum Support SB \_\_\_\_\_

ANALYST Haug

### APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY09	FY10		
	\$50.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From  
Higher Education Department (HED)

Responses Received From  
New Mexico State University (NMSU)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 696 appropriates \$50 thousand from the general fund to the Board of Regents of New Mexico State University to provide operational support for the university's Vertebrate Wildlife Museum in the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Ecology. (FWCE)

### FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$50.0 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of Fiscal Year 2010 shall revert to the general fund.

### SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The HED states that this request was not submitted by NMSU to the HED for review and is not included in the Department's funding recommendation for FY10.

This appropriation is not included in the LFC appropriation recommendations for Higher Education.

The LFC Appropriation Recommendations, Volume II, pages 364-365 states:

The committee has concerns about 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.

The committee recommendation reduces funding included in the HED request by varying levels from FY09 funding amounts for research projects, public service projects and P-20 pipeline projects focusing on students.

With respect to special projects, higher education institutions advanced 114 proposals for new projects and expansions at a total general fund cost of \$54 million during the HED budget request process in fall 2008.

According to the February 2009 revenue estimate, FY10 recurring revenue will only support a base expenditure level that is \$575 million less than the FY09 appropriations before the 2009 solvency reductions. All appropriations outside of the general appropriation act will be viewed in this declining revenue context.

The Executive Budget in Brief notes that over the years more than 300 RPSPs have been created, accounting for a large portion of institution budgets. The current RPSPs were reviewed while considering the relevance of the project to the core mission of the institution, the community benefit and the outcomes associated with each project. (Budget in Brief and Policy Highlights, P 9-10.)

The HED states that according to NMSU the appropriation would be used to:

- Fund collecting trips for students. These collecting trips are intended to put students in the field and gather mammals, reptiles, and amphibians for the purpose of studying back at the lab.
- Upgrade equipment such as specimen cases and a new freezer to store the animals gathered on their collecting trips.
- Upgrade the vertebrate preparation lab. This lab is where the students actually begin to examine the collected animals.

The HED notes further that NMSU's Vertebrate Wildlife Museum is not a museum in the traditional sense; it is a teaching facility for the roughly 145 FWCE majors. The facility contains the vertebrate of a multitude of specimen and is not open to the public. Its primary purpose is a laboratory setting for course work. The FWCE Department has seen a steady growth of five students a year during the last 3-5 years. The Department is committed to excellence in ecology, conservation and management of aquatic and terrestrial resources of arid lands. Since 1990 undergraduate enrollment in the department has fluctuated between a low of 109 and a peak of 223. On average, there are approximately 25 graduate students in their master's program, plus seven PhD students who are being directed by their faculty through other graduate programs at NMSU.