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July 21, 2015

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Legislative Education Study Committee

**FR:** Travis Dulany

**RE: STAFF REPORT: TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER PROGRAM UPDATE**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Since as early as 2011, the Public Education Department (PED) has utilized General Fund appropriations intended for interventions for low-performing schools to send teams of New Mexico school leaders and central office staff to the University of Virginia's School Turnaround Specialist Program (UVA-STSP), an executive leadership program aimed at helping to improve low-performing schools.

Although the UVA-STSP has demonstrated success during the years that New Mexico schools have participated, members of the Legislature and interested stakeholders have expressed support for a similar program to be created in New Mexico, utilizing in-state higher education institutions, asserting that a home-grown program would be more effective in supporting teachers in such culturally diverse state.

In FY 15 and FY 16, the Legislature appropriated funding to PED for programs to support school teacher and leader preparation (see "NMPrep and NMLead," below). Several legislators have reported that these funds are intended to create a program in New Mexico similar to that of the UVA-STSP; however, testimony to the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) indicates that the funds were used to create a Master of Business Administration (MBA) program

for educational leaders. Additional testimony to the LESC, as well as a PED request for applications (RFA), suggests that a UVA-like program is underway.

In order to provide the committee with relevant information on the topic, this staff report discusses:

- the University of Virginia's School Turnaround Specialist Program;
- NMPrep and NMLead; and
- school turnaround planning grants: request for applications.

For this LESC meeting, staff have requested the following entities to provide an update on this initiative:

- PED;
- New Mexico State University (NMSU); and
- the University of New Mexico (UNM).

## **UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA SCHOOL TURNAROUND SPECIALIST PROGRAM**

The UVA-STSP was created by the Partnership for Leaders in Education (PLE), a nonprofit organization run through the Darden Foundation. The PLE is a partnership between the Darden School of Business and the Curry School of Education at UVA.

Course delivery for the UVA-STSP is primarily led by Darden School of Business faculty, while educational program support and some course delivery are provided by Curry School of Education professors and other educational professionals.

Throughout the years that PED has funded New Mexico educators to attend the UVA-STSP, the LESC has heard testimony indicating high praise for the UVA program. Despite the apparent merits of the UVA-STSP, however, several LESC members expressed concern during the 2012 and 2013 interims that state funding is being sent out-of-state when New Mexico has a number of higher education institutions that may have the capacity to support a similar leadership program. Additional concerns noted that the UVA program may not address the particular needs of New Mexico in relation to state statutes, regulations, and department guidelines. Furthermore, committee members noted that a New Mexico-grown turnaround program would more effectively account for the diverse nature of our state.

## **NMPREP AND NMLEAD**

In both FY 15 and in FY 16, the Legislature made General Fund appropriations to PED for programs to enhance school teacher (NMPrep) and school leader (NMLead) preparation, further explained below.

## ***FY 15***

The *General Appropriation Act of 2014*<sup>1</sup> included:

- \$1.65 million for NMPrep, which was allocated as follows:
  - \$426,000 to New Mexico State University, partnered with Northwest Regional Education Cooperative (NREC);
  - \$665,000 to UNM, partnered with Teach for America; and
  - \$378,000 to New Mexico Highlands University, also partnered with NREC; and
- \$3.0 million for NMLead, which was allocated as follows:
  - \$372,000 to Eastern New Mexico University, partnered with the National Institute of School Leadership; and
  - \$2.6 million to a collaboration of NMSU, UNM, and the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation (WWNFF).

## ***FY 16***

- Although the appropriations for FY 15 were separate line items in the *General Appropriation Act of 2014*, NMPrep and NMLead were funded under the same appropriation for FY 16 at \$4.15 million.
- Language contained in the *General Appropriation Act of 2015*:
  - extended the unspent portion of FY 15 NMLead funding for one year, through FY 16; and
  - included a veto of the word “turnaround” as shown in the ~~striketrough~~ below:

*“The general fund appropriation...to the public education department for teacher and school leader preparation includes one million dollars (\$1,000,000) to be allocated to two or more New Mexico universities for a collaborative school principal ~~turnaround~~ leadership program involving one or more colleges of education and one or more business colleges.”*

## ***LESC Testimony***

During the 2014 interim, the LESL heard testimony on two separate occasions regarding turnaround leadership for low-performing schools and the NMLead program.

### June 2014 Testimony

In June of 2014, the Associate Chair of the UNM Department of Teacher Education informed the LESL that UNM and the Anderson School of Management – as well as NMSU and its College

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<sup>1</sup> The FY 15 appropriation was subject to 0.275 percent sanding.

of Business, Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS), the New Mexico School Leadership Institute, and the WWNFF – had partnered together to create a statewide program to train principals with the skills and competencies to turn around New Mexico’s low-performing schools.

The Associate Chair further stated that, over the life of the grant, three cohorts were to be selected, trained, and coached in turnaround leadership. Each cohort, he said, would:

- attend two intensive classes, one weekend per month over two consecutive semesters; and
- in the third semester, be placed in a full-time residency/internship in an appropriate school with a high-performing principal.

At the end of the program, he testified, principal preparation graduates would receive continued mentoring and support from a leadership coach who will use site visits to further develop leadership capacities. He concluded by stating that, at the end of the turnaround leadership program, candidates who had completed the training would be eligible for New Mexico licensure in school administration.

#### November 2014 Testimony

Varying somewhat from the June 2014 testimony, in November of 2014 the LCPS superintendent indicated that the programs designed under NMLead, with additional support from the WWNFF, would follow a two-pronged approach:

1. The first prong includes a three- to four-year MBA degree program in Educational Leadership from both NMSU and UNM.
2. The second prong includes a UVA-like turnaround program that is adapted and tailored to New Mexico. The LCPS superintendent emphasized, however, that the second prong had not yet been funded or completed.

The Associate Chair of the UNM Department of Teacher Education also spoke during the November LESC meeting, speaking of the opportunities the MBA program would provide to build capacity for management and deep knowledge of schools. With the WWNFF as a sponsor and partner, he said, the plan proposed to divide New Mexico regionally between north and south. Across both regions, three cohorts of 12 students would be selected to participate in the program. Each selected participant would qualify for a \$32,000 stipend to help those school leaders who might lack the financial resources to participate. The Associate Chair also indicated that prospective participants would be nominated at the local level by superintendents or other senior school administrators.

Regarding the second prong of the program, the Associate Chair of the UNM Department of Teacher Education explained that the university reviewed the evaluation data from the UVA program and found limited success with rural, Hispanic, and Native American communities. He emphasized the importance of building on the UVA program and other work done here in the State of New Mexico.

Committee discussion during this meeting focused on the Legislature’s desire for a turnaround program for current school personnel, similar to the UVA-STSP, rather than an MBA program

for aspiring school leaders. PED subsequently announced a request for applications (RFA) for school turnaround planning grants funded through NMLead, further discussed below.

### **SCHOOL TURNAROUND PLANNING GRANTS: REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

On February 20, 2015, PED released an RFA seeking applicants for planning grants to support higher education institutions to create and submit plans for “new, innovative turnaround programs incorporating expertise from both business and education fields to develop programming to help turn around New Mexico’s struggling schools into successful schools.”

Under the RFA, \$500,000 in competitive funding was available, and applications were due March 24, 2015. Recipients under the grant program were able to make expenditures to complete the program plans through the end of FY 15. The RFA further required final program plan reports to be submitted to PED by August 1, 2015.