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June 7, 2006

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Legislative Education Study Committee

**FR:** Pamela Herman

**RE: STAFF BRIEF: COLLEGE READINESS & HIGH SCHOOL REFORM: TASK FORCE ON HIGH SCHOOL/COLLEGE ALIGNMENT: PROGRESS REPORT**

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The 2006 Interim Workplan for the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) includes monthly presentations regarding the college readiness of New Mexico high school students.

**Issues:**

At least since the 2002 interim, the LESL has heard testimony regarding the high rate of remedial coursework taken by college freshmen from New Mexico high schools and considered legislation to address this issue.

- During the 2002 interim, in connection with the state's P-20 initiative, the LESL heard testimony regarding alignment of high school curricula with college placement tests. State and national education advisors testified that such alignment is an important step toward implementing a seamless, integrated statewide preschool through college system that prepares high school students for college success and enables them to transition smoothly into their postsecondary studies. Testimony before the LESL indicated that in order for the alignment process to succeed, educators at the secondary and postsecondary levels must collaborate to assure that the result satisfies the needs of students at both levels.

- In 2003, the LESC endorsed and the Legislature enacted a new provision in the *Public School Code* requiring that high school curricula and end-of-course tests be aligned with the placement tests administered by two- and four-year public educational institutions in New Mexico (see Attachment 1). The statute requires the Public Education Department (PED) to collaborate with the Commission on Higher Education (CHE, now the Higher Education Department) in aligning high school curricula and end-of-course tests with placement tests.
- Because of its interest in seeing this alignment proceed, for the 2004 interim the LESC requested that PED and CHE provide it with three progress reports (in May, August, and November) concerning efforts to address the statutory mandate.
  - At the August 2004 presentation, PED provided documentation from the College Board that illustrated the substantial alignment between the College Board's standards and those in New Mexico for math and English.
  - Also in August 2004, a higher education representative stated that higher education faculty members in mathematics and English had reviewed the competencies in the national *Standards for Success* promulgated by the Association of American Universities and determined which should be taught in high school and which in college.
  - A November 2004 written report summarized the activities of PED and CHE in collaboration with the New Mexico Association of Community Colleges (NMACC) to address the alignment issue. According to the report, the work focused primarily on the alignment of standards in mathematics, reading, and language arts at the high school and postsecondary level with national standards. The report proposed an amendment to current statute that would have deleted the current law and replaced it with a provision that would have aligned high school end-of-course tests with New Mexico content standards and postsecondary entrance competencies.
- At a fourth and final 2004 presentation on this issue, in December 2004, the LESC heard testimony from Dr. David T. Conley, Director of the Center for Educational Policy Research at the University of Oregon regarding alignment of high school curricula and postsecondary placement tests. The presentation set forth a step-by-step process for alignment. The presenter also offered possible short term approaches to alignment, such as:
  - developing a common placement exam to be administered in the senior year of high school to all students who intended to apply to a state public institution of higher education (IHE), making admission contingent upon completing any necessary remediation; or
  - requiring all students to take a commercial placement test; and
  - redesigning the state high school competency exam to extend to entry-level college knowledge and skills; and finally;
  - implementing exit-level testing requirements in the senior year for all college-bound students.

- According to the NMACC, a statewide inventory of placement tests and “cut scores” showed little consistency among two-year IHEs. A similar inventory has not been completed regarding placement testing at four-year IHEs.
- In 2005 the Legislature considered HB 136, *Placement Tests in Public Colleges*; however, the bill did not pass (see Attachment 2). The bill would have required:
  - that the Higher Education Department (HED) develop standardized English and mathematics placement tests for use by IHEs;
  - that 11<sup>th</sup> grade students whose Next-Step Plans indicate that they intend to pursue postsecondary education take these tests; and
  - if the test scores indicate a need, that prior to graduation the student’s high school provide the student with the developmental coursework needed to enroll in freshman-level coursework.
- In the 2005 interim, the LESC requested that the Secretary of Higher Education take responsibility for the alignment process. Subsequently, the Secretaries of Higher Education and Public Education created a joint task force on alignment to recommend a plan for achieving the mandate of alignment, and this task force established a June 2006 deadline to report its recommendations to the LESC.
  - The task force is chaired by representatives of HED and PED and includes members of the LESC, representatives of a majority of state public IHEs and three public school districts, and representatives from NMACC, the Council of University Presidents, the National Education Association-New Mexico, the New Mexico Coalition of School Administrators, and the Office of Education Accountability (OEA).
  - To support the work of the task force, the secretaries requested that the OEA conduct a study of New Mexico high school graduates needing remediation in higher education. The preliminary results of that study were released on April 17, 2006 and presented to the LESC on May 4, 2006. The study showed that, of approximately 35,650 students who entered a state public IHE directly after graduating from a New Mexico high school, over a five year span from 2000 to 2004:
    - ✓ approximately 49 percent required one or more remedial classes in mathematics or literacy skills;
    - ✓ approximately 41 percent took classes in mathematics (“numeracy or computational skills”); and
    - ✓ approximately 31 percent took classes in literacy or communication skills.
  - At the May 2006 meeting of the task force, a PED representative presented proposed options under discussion at the department for changes to the New Mexico High School Competency Exam requirements, including:
    - ✓ using the New Mexico Standards-based Assessments as part of a body of evidence both for high school graduation test and as indicators of college readiness; or

- ✓ moving the 11<sup>th</sup> grade New Mexico Standards-based Assessments to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and requiring the administration of the ACT test in 11<sup>th</sup> grade at state expense.
- Achieve, Inc., a national bipartisan, nonprofit organization, advises that states should give all high school students an assessment before their senior year that is capable of measuring readiness for credit-bearing postsecondary courses and 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs so that high schools will be able to help fill in any learning gaps before students graduate. In its publication *Closing the Expectations Gap 2006*, Achieve states that:
  - six states (California, Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Missouri, and Texas) give statewide assessments to students in high school that are used for college admissions, and/or placement decisions;
  - eight additional states (Connecticut, Indiana, Michigan, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island) plan to do so; and
  - twenty-two states are currently participating in the American Diploma Project Network to strengthen high school standards, curricula, assessments and data and accountability systems.

**Background:**

- *Standards for Success* is the 2003 report of a national study conducted by the Association of American Universities that was designed to answer the question of what students must know and be able to do in order to succeed in entry level college courses. A section of the report entitled “Mixed Messages” highlights the finding that most state exams may not align well enough with college success standards to provide feedback to high school students and teachers regarding college readiness. The report recommends that leaders of state secondary and postsecondary systems devise strategies to increase the alignment between state K-12 standards and assessment systems and postsecondary admissions and placement policies.
- According to *Measuring Up 2004*, the national report card for higher education issued by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, New Mexico was one of only two states to receive an F in preparation of students for education and training beyond high school. The report notes in particular the very small percentages of New Mexico middle school students enrolled in algebra and high school students enrolled in upper-level math and science that research confirms are necessary for college success. The report states that in New Mexico “extremely small proportions of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders” score in the top 20<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally on SAT and ACT college entrance exams.
- The *Public School Code* currently requires different examinations for establishing accountability for public schools and school districts and for determining student eligibility for high school graduation.
  - The *Assessment and Accountability Act* requires the administration of statewide standards-based academic assessments:
    - ✓ for grades 3 through 9 and 11 in mathematics, reading and language arts, and social studies by school year 2005-2006; and

- ✓ in one of grades 3 through 5, 6 through 9, and 11 in science by school year 2007-2008.
- Statute requires that to receive a high school diploma a student must pass a state graduation examination in the subject areas of reading, English, math, writing, science, and social science (including the constitutions of the United States and of New Mexico). The New Mexico High School Competency Exam, the state graduation test, is first administered in grade 10 and PED policy provides five opportunities for a student to pass the exam prior to the end of grade 12. PED states that the exam is not aligned with state content standards.
- Statute also requires that final examinations be administered in writing to all students in all classes offered for credit.

**Presenters:**

Dr. Elizabeth Gutierrez, Director, Policy Development and P-20 Programs, HED, and Dr. Catherine Cross Maple, Deputy Secretary, Learning and Accountability, PED, will describe the work and present the recommendations of the HED/PED Joint Task Force on High School/College Alignment.

Dr. Don E. Watson, Assistant Secretary, Assessment and Accountability, PED, will describe changes proposed by PED to the New Mexico High School Competency Exam and the “Bookmark Method” of setting cut scores for graduation and college readiness on assessments.

**Questions the committee may wish to consider:**

1. What are the major barriers to achieving alignment of high school curricula and end-of-course tests with higher education placement tests in English and mathematics?
2. What alternatives did the task force consider in developing its recommendations?
3. What are the recommendations of the task force to achieve successful implementation of the alignment required in statute?
4. Which recommendations does the task force consider to be first priorities?
5. Which recommendations, if any, will require legislative action?
6. What recommendations, if any, does the task force address to HED, PED, the public schools, and institutions of higher education?
7. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the changes proposed by PED regarding statewide assessments administered for public high school students?
8. What time frame, if any, has the task force identified for achieving the sought-after alignment between end-of-course and college placement tests?

~~**22-2-8.9, 22-2-8.10. Repealed.**~~

~~Repeals. — Laws 2003, ch. 153, § 73 repeals 22-2-8.9 NMSA 1978, as enacted by Laws 2001, ch. 165, § 1, relating to reading enhancement for public school students not reading at grade level, effective April 4, 2003. For provisions of former section, see 2001 Replacement Pamphlet.~~

~~Laws 2003, ch. 153, § 73 repeals 22-2-8.10 NMSA 1978, as enacted by Laws 2002, ch. 287, § 1, relating to the statewide mentorship program for certain beginning teachers, effective April 4, 2003. For provisions of former section, see 2001 Replacement Pamphlet.~~

**22-2-8.11. High school curricula and end-of-course tests; alignment.**

High school curricula and end-of-course tests shall be aligned with the placement tests administered by two- and four-year public educational institutions in New Mexico.

The department of education shall collaborate with the commission on higher education in aligning high school curricula and end-of-course tests with the placement tests.

**History:** Laws 2003, ch. 37, § 1.

**Cross references.** — As to student achievement, see 22-2C-1 NMSA 1978 et seq.

**Duplicate laws.** Laws 2003 ch. 37, § 1, and Laws

2003, ch. 71, § 1 enact identical new sections of the law, effective on June 20, 2003. Both have been compiled as 22-2-8.11 NMSA 1978.

~~**22-2-8.12. Next step plans required; school districts, state board and state superintendent; additional duties.**~~

~~A. As used in this section:~~

~~(1) "interim next-step plan" means an annual personal written plan, developed by a student, in consultation with the student's parent or guardian and school counselor or other school official charged with coursework planning for the student, in which the student specifies post-high-school goals and sets forth the coursework that will allow the student to achieve those goals; and~~

~~(2) "final next-step plan" means a personal written plan, developed by a student, in consultation with the student's parent or guardian and school counselor or other school official charged with coursework planning for the student, that shows that the student has committed or intends to commit in the near future to a four-year college or university, a two-year college, a trade or vocational program, an internship or apprenticeship, military service or a job.~~

~~B. No student shall be promoted from the ninth, tenth or eleventh grade who has not developed and filed an updated interim next-step plan within sixty days prior to the end of each school year. The plan shall explain any differences from previous interim next-step plans, shall be filed with the principal of the student's high school and shall be signed by the student, the student's parent or guardian and the student's guidance counselor or other school official charged with coursework planning for the student.~~

~~C. No student shall receive a high school diploma who has not completed and filed a final next-step plan prior to graduation. The plan shall be filed with the principal of the student's high school and shall be signed by the student, the student's parent or guardian and the student's guidance counselor or other school official charged with coursework planning for the student.~~

~~D. A local school board shall ensure that each high school student has the opportunity to develop the student's next-step plan and is reasonably informed about:~~

~~(1) curricular and course options;~~

~~(2) opportunities available that lead to different post-high-school options; and~~

~~(3) alternative opportunities available if the student does not finish a planned curriculum.~~

~~E. The state board shall:~~

~~(1) establish specific accountability standards for administrators, counselors, teachers and school district staff to ensure that every student has the opportunity to develop a next-step plan; and~~

HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR  
HOUSE BILL 136

47TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2005

*W.C. Don Williams*

AN ACT

RELATING TO HIGHER EDUCATION; REQUIRING STANDARDIZED PLACEMENT  
TESTS IN ENGLISH AND MATHEMATICS FOR PUBLIC POST-SECONDARY  
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS; PROVIDING THAT DEVELOPMENTAL  
COURSEWORK MAY BE COMPLETED PRIOR TO GRADUATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

Section 1. STANDARDIZED PLACEMENT TESTS.--

A. The commission on higher education, in  
consultation with academic officers of two- and four-year  
public post-secondary educational institutions, shall develop  
or adopt standardized placement tests for English and  
mathematics requirements that will be used by all public post-  
secondary educational institutions for course placement of  
entering freshmen. The commission on higher education shall  
ensure that the placement tests are included in the alignment

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1 of high school curricula and post-secondary standardized  
2 placement tests, pursuant to Section 22-13-1.2 NMSA 1978.

3 B. If a high school student intends to pursue post-  
4 secondary education or training as reflected in the student's  
5 next-step plan pursuant to Section 22-13-1.1 NMSA 1978, the  
6 student shall take a commission on higher education-adopted  
7 standardized post-secondary placement test during grade eleven  
8 administered by a two-year or four-year educational  
9 institution; provided that no student shall be required to  
10 participate who provides to the appropriate school official a  
11 written waiver of participation signed by the student's parent.  
12 A student is not precluded from taking or retaking any tests to  
13 determine course placement.

14 C. The two- and four-year post-secondary  
15 educational institutions shall provide that the test results of  
16 a student who takes the test are transferred to the public  
17 school that the student is attending prior to the end of grade  
18 eleven. If the score in English or mathematics indicates that  
19 the student will be required to take developmental coursework  
20 as a prerequisite to entry into freshman-level post-secondary  
21 English or mathematics courses, the high school shall provide  
22 the student the required developmental coursework or its  
23 equivalent prior to graduation. The high school shall provide  
24 a written notice to the student and the student's parent  
25 explaining the academic necessity for the developmental

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underscoring material = new  
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1 coursework.

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