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June 22, 2009

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Legislative Education Study Committee

**FR:** Eilani Gerstner

**RE: STAFF SUMMARY: *READY FOR COLLEGE 2009* REPORT**

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The Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) has received the *Ready for College* reports from the Department of Finance and Administration's Office of Education Accountability (OEA) each interim since the first report was issued in 2006. Published in collaboration with the Public Education Department (PED) and the Higher Education Department (HED), the reports focus on the percentage of New Mexico high school graduates who, typically based on a placement test, are assigned to remedial or developmental courses in New Mexico colleges and universities during the previous fall semester in order to be ready for college-level courses.

The *Ready for College 2009* report focuses on data gathered from fall 2008. Among other issues, the report studied how remediation rates varied by:

- the number of remedial courses students took;
- student ethnicity;
- subject (mathematics and reading);
- high schools from which students graduated; and
- students' scores on the New Mexico 11<sup>th</sup> grade standards based assessments in mathematics and reading, a point that has not been investigated in previous *Ready for College* reports.

The report also addresses the need for a longitudinal prekindergarten through postgraduate (P-20) data system. Among the results of the report,

- in fall 2008, 9,363 New Mexico high school graduates attended a New Mexico public postsecondary institution and 50.2 percent of these students took at least one remedial course;
- of these students,
  - 25.4 percent took one remedial course;
  - 16.3 percent took two remedial courses;
  - 7.6 percent took three remedial courses; and
  - 0.9 percent took four remedial courses.

According to the report, an achievement gap exists in that remediation in at least one subject was required for:

- approximately 35 percent of Asians;
- approximately 36 percent of Caucasians;
- approximately 57 percent of African-Americans and Hispanics; and
- approximately 69 percent of Native Americans.

Remediation rates differed for mathematics (numeracy and computation) and reading (literacy and communication):

- 40.1 percent of students took remedial mathematics only; and
- 31.8 percent of students took remedial reading only.

Remediation rates also varied according to the types of high schools the students had attended. Taking at least one remedial course was:

- 28.6 percent of students from foreign high schools;
- 32.1 percent of students from out-of-state high schools;
- 45.4 percent of students from New Mexico public charter high schools;
- 50.2 percent of students from New Mexico regular public high schools;
- 50.7 percent of students from New Mexico who had a General Education Development (GED) certificate; and
- 69.9 percent of students from New Mexico alternative high schools.

The analysis of how the 11<sup>th</sup> grade standards-based assessment scores of over 6,883 high school students compared to the number of remedial courses they took showed that, for the group as a whole, the higher students scored on either standards-based assessment, the fewer remedial courses they took in that subject. However, when broken into sub-groups by ethnicity and institutions attended, this relationship was less apparent.

When broken down by ethnicity within each subject:

- in mathematics, students who scored proficient or better in 11<sup>th</sup> grade but placed into remedial mathematics included:
  - 24.7 percent of Native Americans;
  - 17.4 percent of Hispanics;
  - 15.3 percent of African Americans;
  - 14.1 percent of Caucasians;
  - 11.0 percent of Asians; and
  
- in reading, students who scored proficient or better in 11<sup>th</sup> grade but placed into remedial reading included:
  - 36.0 percent of Native Americans;
  - 19.3 percent of Hispanics;
  - 16.5 percent of African Americans;
  - 9.2 percent of Caucasians; and
  - 6.3 percent of Asians.

The percent of students who scored proficient or better in 11<sup>th</sup> grade but took remedial courses also varied among institutions attended. Results for individual institutions are listed in the *Ready for College 2009* report on slides 29 through 34; while there was much variation, no clear trend or ranking appeared evident.

Without further study, it would not be appropriate to draw conclusions about what could cause the disparity between (1) the correlation, for the group as a whole, between proficiency on the standards-based assessment and fewer remedial courses, and (2) the variation in sub-groups when broken down by ethnicity and institution attended. A variable to investigate in future research may be what courses students take in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

On this point, there is some New Mexico-based research that indicates that the mathematics and literacy courses students take in 12<sup>th</sup> grade may influence their college course placement, as may the highest level of mathematics taken in high school:

- in 2007, an LESC staff report on remediation included the results of a 2006 joint Central New Mexico College (CNM) and Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) study of college-level course placement of APS high school graduates when they attended CNM;
- the results of the study indicate that, in general, the more rigorous their high school courses, the more likely students were to be placed into college-level courses;
- also, students who did not take a mathematics course in their senior year were less likely to be placed into college-level mathematics courses.

Finally, the *Ready for College 2009* report also addresses the need for a longitudinal P-20 data system and recent initiatives to continue to implement the system, among them:

- the requirements for state P-20 data systems in the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (ARRA);
- LESC-endorsed legislation enacted in 2009 to require public postsecondary institutions to report remediation rates and other information to high schools upon request;
- LESC-endorsed legislation (SB 581), which was introduced in 2009 but did not pass, that would have established a data warehouse council and examples of reports that the legislation would have required; and
- the June 8, 2009 executive order creating a New Mexico Data Warehouse Council to implement a P-20 data system and to apply to the US Department of Education for federal funds set aside for that purpose.

**Presenter**

Dr. Peter Winograd, Director of OEA, will present more of the findings and results of the *Ready for College 2009* report.