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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR: Campos DATE TYPED: 02/25/01 HB \_\_\_\_\_  
 SHORT TITLE: NM Junior College's Virtual College SB 663  
 ANALYST: Gilbert

### APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY01	FY02	FY01	FY02		
\$ 500.0				Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to House Bill 685 and House Joint Resolution 25

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files  
 New Mexico State Department of Education (SDE)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 663 appropriates \$500.0 from the general fund to the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) to continue development of the New Mexico Virtual College. This bill contains an emergency clause.

#### Significant Issues

For working professionals and others wishing to continue their education, issues of time and distance often prohibit enrollment in higher education courses. The New Mexico Virtual College helps resolve the scheduling and geographic barriers faced by many students seeking higher education.

According to the State Department of Education (SDE), the very successful New Mexico Virtual School, administered by the SDE, demonstrates the need for virtual learning in New Mexico. Within three weeks of opening, course enrollments in the school exceeded 660. A virtual college would likewise build the capacity of New Mexico's higher education institutions to serve students seeking advanced educational opportunities.

### FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The \$500.0 appropriation contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY02 shall revert to the general fund. This bill contains an emergency clause.

**ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

Continued development of the Virtual College will require significant planning and coordination efforts among the various community colleges and existing distance learning providers.

**RELATIONSHIP**

House Bill 685 and House Joint Resolution 25 also pertain to distance learning programs.

**OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

Many rural areas in New Mexico do not have the ability to connect to virtual learning opportunities due to an inadequate telecommunications infrastructure. A modern, statewide telecommunications network would help ensure adequate access to the New Mexico Virtual College by all New Mexicans.

LG/ar/njw