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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 02/07/12

SPONSOR Gonzales LAST UPDATED \_\_\_\_\_ HB 265

SHORT TITLE UNM-Taos Water Institute SB \_\_\_\_\_

ANALYST Hartzler-Toon

### APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY12	FY13		
	\$108.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act: Section 4, J Higher Education, University of New Mexico; New Mexico State University; New Mexico Highlands University

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

#### Responses Received From

Higher Education Department (HED)  
University of New Mexico (UNM)  
New Mexico State University (NMSU)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 265 appropriates \$108 thousand from the general fund to UNM for the Water Institute of the Northern Rio Grande for operations. The water institute is located at the Taos campus of UNM.

### FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$108 thousand contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2013 shall revert to the general fund.

None of the agency responses, including UNM's response, provided information on a budget for the appropriation. It is unclear whether House Bill 265 would sufficiently cover faculty and student salaries, benefits, and operating costs for the program. The water institute has never

received specific state funding, such as including it as research or public service project, and the state-required budget documents do not show project funding.

The HED noted that this bill to provide an operations budget for the water institute was not presented by UNM as part of the department's annual review of existing and new research and public service projects in October 2011. This review process requires prior approval by the governing body of the university. The department does not recommend funding requests that circumvent the formal review process and that are not included in the Executive's annual budget recommendation for fiscal year 2013.

### **SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

In 2008, the UNM Taos branch campus initiated a water resource center to serve as an information clearinghouse for those in northern New Mexico. With some grant funding and other support since then, the water institute has provided access to research, maps, archival data, sources recording traditional knowledge, and documents pertaining to the northern Rio Grande. The institute has also sponsored lectures and provided expert assistance on specific projects and inquiries.

### **PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS**

While the UNM-Taos branch campus has annual performance measures and targets in compliance with the Accountability in Government Act, the campus does not have measures associated with the water institute. If the institute receives an appropriation, measures and targets would be developed as part of the HED's process for research and public service projects.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Both New Mexico State University (NMSU) and New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU) maintain watershed and water-related programs in northern New Mexico. The NMSU Water Resources Research Institute (WRRI), established in 1963 and approved under the federal Water Resources Research Act, supports faculty and student research in New Mexico and the southwest and currently has working relationships with a number of acequias in northern New Mexico. The NMHU New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute (NMFWRRI), established in 2006 and under the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act, also works with New Mexico communities on watershed projects, including those in basins around the Rio Grande. Additionally, the N.M. Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources and its aquifer mapping program have conducted research and collected basin information on the Rio Grande and other basins.

THT/svb:amm