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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Marquardt DATE TYPED 02-16-05 HB 605
 SHORT TITLE NMSU Sloan Digital Sky Survey Participation SB _____
 ANALYST Woods

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY05	FY06	FY05	FY06		
	\$250.0			Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to the appropriation for New Mexico State University in the General Appropriations Act.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Response Received From

New Mexico State University (NMSU)

No Responses Received From

New Mexico Commission on Higher Education (CHE)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 605 – Making an Appropriation for New Mexico State University to Participate in the Sloan Digital Sky Survey – appropriates \$250,000 from the general fund to the Board of Regents of New Mexico State University for expenditure in FY06 to match other grants for participation in the Sloan digital sky survey. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY06 shall revert to the general fund.

Significant Issues

NMSU indicates that the Department of Astronomy – within the NMSU College of Arts and Sciences – operates internationally recognized observatory facilities at Apache Point Observatory in southern New Mexico. The department is and has been an active participant in the Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS), a program conducted with facilities at New Mexico’s Apache Point Obser-

vatory. This international collaboration has been one of the most scientifically productive and recognized astronomical programs of the last decade.

NMSU additionally suggests that the telescope, instrumentation, and support facilities for the Sloan extension are already in place at Apache Point Observatory. Private funding in excess of \$5 million has been granted to this project, and an international collaboration of universities and research institutions has committed over \$5 million. An additional \$5 million request has been submitted to the National Science Foundation (NSF) and NMSU remains optimistic as to NSF's response.

NMSU notes that this legislation will provide the university with the matching funds to enable NMSU to remain an active participant in the Sloan Digital Sky Survey project by becoming a full partner in the survey's 2005-2008 second phase and that the university will continue to manage the SDSS facilities at Apache Point Observatory for the international consortium.

This project is not included in CHE's *2005-2006 Higher Education Funding Recommendation*.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$250,000 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY06 shall revert to the general fund.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

NMSU advises that the SDSS Extension will make use of instruments and infrastructure – including computing and communications facilities – which are already in place and operational. These facilities, at New Mexico's Apache Point Observatory, represent nearly \$100 million in design, development, and construction effort.

Further, current administrative staff levels – operating within existing university administrative structures – are adequate, with no additional administrative resources required.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

Relates to the appropriation for New Mexico State University in the General Appropriations Act.

OTHER SUBTANTIVE ISSUES

NMSU observes that the participation of the university in the operations of Apache Point Observatory and the original Sloan Digital Sky Survey has been scientifically productive and of benefit to both the graduate education program and the university. Participation has brought increased research opportunities for faculty, students, and research staff, and it has provided opportunities for other funding from various agencies. Moreover, these projects have brought prestige and visibility to New Mexico and New Mexico State University as drawn from the willingness to commit relatively modest resources to promising new ventures and to the support of successful ongoing scientific research projects.