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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 1-23-06

SPONSOR Rawson LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE NMSU Apache Point Observatory SB 5

ANALYST Dearing

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY06	FY07		
	\$75.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates HB 177

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

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

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 5 appropriates \$75,000 to the New Mexico State University Board of Regents for the purpose of supporting the Apache Point Observatory outreach program in fiscal year 2007. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of 2006-2007 Fiscal Year shall revert to the General Fund.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$75,000 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2007 shall revert to the general fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Legislative Finance Committee does not recommend funding to expand this program in fiscal year 2007 within the higher education institutional budget summary.

For more than ten years, NMSU has been a member of the Astrophysical Research Consortium (ARC) which owns and operates the ARC 3.5m and the Sloan Digital Sky Survey telescopes at Apache Point Observatory (APO.) For the State of New Mexico and NMSU, the projects at APO are bringing scientific recognition and prestige and world-class educational outreach opportunities to its students and citizens. For Otero County, APO has significant economic impact through its highly skilled jobs, purchases of goods and services, and tourist attraction to the National Science Observatory/APO Astronomy Visitor Center. This bill will expand activities with a K-12 outreach program that will introduce New Mexico school teachers and students to technological and scientific experiments, museum tours, and visits to schools.

The funding will be primarily utilized to hire an outreach staff member at APO and funding for experiment kits, supplies, and travel support for the schools to come to the site.

NMSU requests this funding to hire a dedicated outreach staff member at APO and funding for experiment kits, supplies, and travel support for the schools to come to the site.

The promotion of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education programs within educational institutions within New Mexico have recently been high-lighted as issues that are at the forefront of the New Mexico Federal Congressional Delegation's funding and legislative initiatives. This proposed legislation is directly related to the overall goal of increasing scientific, technical, engineering, and mathematical abilities of students within the state, as well as increasing the ability of teachers to convey this knowledge to their students.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The Sloan Digital Sky Survey project has recently received national recognition as being the most comprehensive star/sky mapping project currently undertaken.

According to the NMSU project overview provided with funding request, project goals are stated to:

- 1) Increase the number of school and teacher visits to the APO.
- 2) Motivate college-bound students to seek science degrees and careers
- 3) Increase dissemination of knowledge of APO astronomy and its scientific discoveries to New Mexico residents and students
- 4) Increase the presence of NMSU at the NSO/APO Astronomy Visitor Center, via enhanced exhibits

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

NMSU's APO will continue to operate on a limited budget and operations will remain at a status quo.

PD/mt