LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS

Bill No: HB 134 **49th Legislature, 1st Session, 2009**

Short Title: NMSU Science, Math & Aerospace Program

Sponsor(s): Representative Jeff Steinborn and Others

Analyst: James Ball **Date: February 2, 2009**

Bill Summary:

HB 134 makes an appropriation to support the science, engineering, mathematics and aerospace academy at New Mexico State University (NMSU) to improve student achievement and increase participation statewide.

Fiscal Impact:

$200,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Board of Regents at NMSU for FY 10.

Unexpended or unencumbered funds revert to the General Fund.

Fiscal Issues:

According to the Higher Education Department (HED) analysis of HB 134, this appropriation represents an increase over the existing recurring General Fund appropriation of $65,600.

HED states that this request was submitted by NMSU to HED for review in the amount of $265,700. HED has a neutral recommendation for the project for FY 10, if the state's fiscal picture improves.

In addition to funding from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Southern New Mexico Science, Engineering, Mathematics and Aerospace Academy (SNM-SEMAA) has received financial support from several private foundations.

The Legislative Finance Committee Fiscal Impact Report notes that the committee has concerns about the growth of research and public service projects within the higher education budget, as well as the alignment of these projects with state goals and strategic plans. The committee also continues to have significant concerns about accountability and performance outcomes for these projects.

Issues:

HED states that HB 134 would provide for an increase in student participation to:

- 3,000 elementary and high school students with a goal of 51 percent female and 89 percent underrepresented youth;
- enable 2,000 students to visit the NMSU Aerospace Engineering Laboratory (AEL); and
- encourage outreach and partnership with 2,000 parents and relatives of underrepresented youth in the fields of science, engineering, mathematics, and technology.

HED further notes that there is currently a waiting list of students who could be accommodated in the summer programs.

Background:

According to the Public Education Department (PED), SNM-SEMAA has provided academic enrichment and career awareness for the past nine years in the fields of science, engineering, mathematics and technology for students and teachers in the Las Cruces, Gadsden and Hatch Valley school districts. The academy houses the AEL, which has been previously funded by NASA. Students and teachers come to the lab on the NMSU campus after participating in previous after-school programs. The summer programs at AEL have been particularly popular over the years. Engineering students, faculty, and parents have also been active in the program, as well as students and faculty from the NMSU College of Education.

SNM-SEMAA has been praised by NASA as its most successful SEMAA. In addition, many SNM-SEMMA program materials have been translated into Spanish.

PED also states that a program evaluation conducted by an outside evaluator in 2008 showed that students who participated in three or more years of SEMAA outperformed non-participating peers on the New Mexico Standards Based Assessment.

HED notes that SNM-SEMAA has earned the Innovations in American Government Award from Harvard University, along with numerous other awards from NASA.

Related Bills:

HB 69 *NMSU Pre-Freshman Engineering Program*
HB 201 *NMSU Aerospace Engineering Program*