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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

**SPONSOR** Cervantes **ORIGINAL DATE** 02/16/14  
**LAST UPDATED** \_\_\_\_\_ **HB** \_\_\_\_\_  
**SHORT TITLE** Study Establishing School Of Public Health **SB** SM 72  
**ANALYST** Hartzler-Toon

### ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY14	FY15	FY16	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
<b>Total</b>		\$1.5	\$0	\$1.5	Nonrecurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

Senate Memorial 72 requests the Higher Education Department (HED) to conduct a feasibility study of establishing a school of public health in New Mexico. The memorial requests that the feasibility study be submitted to the Legislative Health and Human Services and Legislative Finance Committees by November 1, 2014.

### FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

At this point, there may be a modest operational cost if the HED were to update the feasibility report provided to the LHHS and LFC pursuant to House Memorial 43 (2012 Session). (See Attachment A.)

THT/jl

# **On the Feasibility of Creating a School of Public Health in Higher Education in New Mexico**

## **A Report to the New Mexico Legislature**

**New Mexico Higher Education Department, November 1, 2012**

**Background:** During the 2012 legislative session the Legislature, via House Memorial 43, requested the Department of Higher Education to comment on the feasibility of establishing a school of public health in New Mexico. After the session NMHED contacted relevant officials at both the University of New Mexico and New Mexico State University to ascertain the desirability of creating such a school and, if desirable, to ascertain the level of commitment, as well as the willingness of each institution, to collaborate in such a project. As the NMHED review began, interviews were held with Dr. Paul Roth, Chancellor for Health Sciences at UNM; Dr. Tilahun Adera, Dean of the NMSU College of Health and Social Services; Dr. Barbara Couture, President of NMSU; and Dr. Wendy Wilkins. As the study continued others were consulted as well.

In initial conversations with officials of each university, both questions were answered, in general terms, in the affirmative: both institutions believe it would clearly be in the interests of the people of New Mexico for there to be a School of Public Health; and both institutions were disposed to collaborate in the creation of a School of Public Health. Both NMSU and UNM Health Sciences accepted the concept, in principle, of creating a single center, governed jointly by the two institutions. Encouraged by this cooperation NMHED asked each institution to provide the Secretary of Higher Education with an inventory of the assets each have that could be put to use in collaboration toward a single School of Public Health. NMHED expected to host a small gathering of officials from both institutions in late summer or early fall 2012 to sketch out an agreement for a single governing structure, divide up functions according geography, relevant expertise, comparative advantage, etc., and to determine an appropriate timeline and sequencing of planning effort, rough estimates of cost, etc. NMHED would report these results to the legislature, expecting the institutions to carry on under a joint governance arrangement into the future with limited oversight from NMHED.

However, changes in the top leadership at UNM and NMSU delayed progress toward these goals. Moreover, the new leadership at each institution adjusted the internal level of priority for the proposed project; namely, the new leadership at UNM determined it would be in UNM's best interests to proceed alone toward the creation of a UNM School of Public Health. UNM would incorporate those assets at NMSU that they felt would enhance their School. On the other hand, the new leadership at NMSU strengthened the priority of the NMSU-UNM Public School project. While willing to consider a joint School of Public Health, instead of going alone, NMSU expects to be a full partner in the enterprise. By the time these institutional adjustments had been made, it was too late for NMHED to respond with a fully developed recommendation by November 1, 2012, as requested by HM 43.

What follows is a summary of material presented to me by each institution as background material, in response to a request for an overall inventory of health assets under the control of each. The intent was

to have a more elaborate inventory of assets, but the delays referred to above prevented this. Recommendations made by the Department of Health for greater collaboration between institutions are included.

Both UNM and NMSU provided a rationale for the creation of a School of Public Health in New Mexico:

**Need for a School of Public Health:** NMSU notes there are currently only 46 accredited Schools of Public Health in the United States. None of these is in New Mexico, and most are east of the Mississippi. Only seven states west of Arkansas have a School of Public Health.

**Health Challenges in New Mexico:** UNM notes New Mexico leads the nation in the drug overdose rate; it is third in lack of health insurance coverage, fifth in days of poor mental health, seventh in inadequate immunization coverage, and eighth in untreated dental decay. Mortality rates for diabetes, influenza, occupational injuries, and motor vehicle crashes are higher than the national average, as well as alcohol-related deaths, homicide, and suicide. NMSU notes that serious health needs go unanswered especially in Southern New Mexico and the U.S.-Mexico Border Region. If the U.S.-Mexico border were a separate state it would rank last in access to health care, second in death rates due to hepatitis, third in deaths due to diabetes, and first in the number of cases of tuberculosis. Obesity among Mexican Americans who live in the border region is five to ten times higher than in the rest of the nation.

Schools of Public Health can have a substantial impact on public health. They train public health professionals, have access to federal funds for which other institutions are not eligible, and are more competitive in efforts to secure funding from many granting agencies. UNM notes that nearly one quarter of the current public health workforce is eligible to retire in 2012. Their replacement will require a wide range of health training from individual courses to undergraduate, masters, and PhD levels. In New Mexico there are serious shortages in epidemiologists and health workers trained in health policy and health law. UNM concludes: ***a school of public health in NM would provide expanded training opportunities to support the needs of the public health workforce.*** In an early conversation with Dr. Paul Roth, Chancellor for Health Sciences at UNM, he indicated that recent changes in federal law will imply the addition of 320,000 new persons into the ranks of the health insured in New Mexico in the next few years. This will put a great deal of pressure on the delivery of health care in the state, expanding the demand for health care workers at all levels.

**Accreditation Issues:** Both NMSU and UNM note that the Council on Education for Public Health Schools (CEPH), which accredits Schools of Public Health, requires the Masters in Public Health (MPH) degree or an equivalent degree, in each of five areas of public health: epidemiology, biostatistics, environmental health, health policy/management; and social and behavioral health. In addition they must offer a doctoral degree in at least three of the five specified areas of public health knowledge. They must provide instruction, research, and service activities that are sensitive to the needs of their students and community.

**Institutional Assets:** Both NMSU and UNM programs are fully accredited. NMSU is accredited for a MPH in Community Health. NMSU notes that it offers its MPH in two formats: traditional face-to-face,

and online only. The online program is one of the few in the country that is completely online, enabling NMSU to reach into some of the most isolated regions in the state, where public health is badly needed.

UNM is accredited for three MPH degrees: epidemiology, Community and Behavioral Health, and Health Policy. The New Mexico Department of Health collaborates with these programs and provides internship opportunities in the agency and in community sites. CEPH accreditation requires a School of Public Health to have the capacity to provide all five masters degrees, and three doctoral education programs, along with the faculty, organizational structure, and resources to implement and sustain the school. ***Given the current structure of each program, collaboration between NMSU, UNM and the Department of Health would be highly desirable to ensure the School of Public Health would avoid duplication and have a strong assurance of accreditation.***

The Department of Health, through interim Cabinet Secretary of Health Brad McGrath, sent a brief report commenting on House Memorial 43, with the following recommendations:

1. Improve the MPH practicum design at both UNM HSC and NMSU to include managed experience and increased exposure for the student, a better entry process, and an evaluation component based on a set of competency-based standards of the internship from the student, university and DOH perspective.
2. Expand the Public Health Learning Collaborative to support the DOH goals to improve public health competencies and preparedness of the workforce.
3. Expand the collaboration to other educational institutions and other programs (e.g., Western NMU, Eastern NMU, Northern NM College, preventive medicine residency).

**Conclusions:** Unfortunately, due to turnover in leadership at both NMSU and UNM, it was not possible to complete a thorough review of the feasibility of creating a School of Public Health. Nevertheless, there appear to be powerful reasons to establish a School of Public Health in the interests of public health in New Mexico. Strong assets exist at UNM and NMSU that could be shared in the creation of such a center, and this would seem to be a propitious time to begin. Based upon the review as it stands now, and in the spirit of the memorial, NMHED will continue to study the feasibility of creating a School of Public Health in New Mexico. Specifically, NMHED expects to study (a) the location of the school; (b) a governance structure for the school; (c) likely program offerings for the school; (d) the appropriateness of faculty for this endeavor, and (e) funding issues.