

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: HB 485

51st Legislature, 1st Session, 2013

Tracking Number: .200216.1

Short Title: Doña Ana Regional Educational Initiative

Sponsor(s): Representative Andrew “Andy” Nuñez and Others

Analyst: James Ball

Date: March 3, 2015

Bill Summary:

HB 485 makes an appropriation to implement the Doña Ana County Regional Educational Initiative (DACREI) at the Doña Ana Community College (DACC).

Fiscal Impact:

\$100,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Board of Regents of New Mexico State University (NMSU) for DACC in FY 16. Unexpended or unencumbered funds revert to the General Fund.

Fiscal Issues:

The Higher Education Department (HED) notes that this request was not submitted by UNM to HED as part of the formal budget review process for FY 16 appropriations. HED further states that the appropriation in HB 485 represents a recurring expense to the General Fund for operational costs.

Substantive Issues:

The analysis of HB 485 by HED states that:

- the appropriation will be used to support DACREI, also known as the Bridge Program (BP);
- BP is an educational initiative driven by the business community to develop the local workforce and to reduce the high school drop-out rate in Doña Ana County; and
- funds, if appropriated, will be used to:
 - allow BP to continue building the relationships between educators and the healthcare community for the Healthcare Early College High School (HECHS) in Las Cruces, as well as a connecting business and education leaders for the new HECHS in Hatch;
 - build a network of resources to develop a better understanding of educational outcomes and the economic impacts of those outcomes;
 - continue support and sponsor research on best practices in education, such as:
 - ✓ dual credit classes;
 - ✓ back-awarding of associate degrees;

- ✓ removing barriers between institutions that limit student success; and
 - ✓ degree completion; and
- increase mentoring opportunities between students and the business community.

HED also states that BP is credited with developing the state's first early college high school at DACC and has facilitated collaboration between public and private sectors to support education and build individual workforce skills.

As part of the program, students learn a skill while they are in high school so that they can graduate with a diploma and a certificate to work in a specific field. For this reason, BP has promoted the advancement of dual credit courses to help high school students make a seamless transition after graduation into college. To date, BP at the Arrowhead Park Early College High School has not experienced a single dropout.

BP's board of directors works to coordinate the efforts of the business community with educational partners, including:

- Las Cruces Public Schools;
- Gadsden Independent School District;
- Hatch Valley Public Schools; and
- New Mexico State University.

Background:

During the 2012 interim, testimony by NMSU staff to the Legislative Education Study Committee indicated that the:

- goal of The Bridge of Southern New Mexico is to break the downward spiral in education that often leads to limited economic development, a high percentage of students dropping out of school, an unprepared and untrained workforce, and communities with low income;
- Bridge is working in Doña Ana County to build a pipeline to improve education and prepare a well-qualified workforce in order to strengthen the economic future in the county; and
- as part of these efforts, the Arrowhead Park Early College High School (APECHS) was established in collaboration with the Bridge, Doña Ana Community College, NMSU's College of Education, and Las Cruces Public Schools.

The APECHS, the staff concluded, seeks to focus on "at-risk" students, primarily to allow these students to graduate with both a high school diploma and an associate degree.

Committee Referrals:

HEC/HAFC

Related Bills:

None as of February 24, 2015.