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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Montoya ORIGINAL DATE 2/17/2015
LAST UPDATED _____ HB 282

SHORT TITLE Higher Ed Common Course Naming & Numbering SB _____

ANALYST Hartzler

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY15	FY16	FY17	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total		\$150.0	\$0	\$150.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act, Section 4J, Higher Education Department

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

No Agency Responses Received

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 282 amends Section 21-1B-3 NMSA 1978 by adding an August 1, 2017 deadline by which the Higher Education Department (HED) must establish a common course naming and numbering system for undergraduate-level core courses. The bill updates other provisions in law referring to the Commission on Higher Education, which preceded HED.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The bill does not contain an appropriation. However, for FY16, HED requested a \$150 thousand general fund appropriation to complete the tasks identified in developing and implementing a statewide, common course naming and numbering system.

The proposed approach to implementing these refinements includes the designation by the Secretary of Higher Education of a Blue-Ribbon Committee composed of a select group of postsecondary administrators and faculty members under the leadership of a knowledgeable director. The team would conduct a detailed review of the courses currently included in the matrix and make recommendations about content and organization. In addition, the team would develop a process to begin the creation of the

common core naming and numbering system, which will be in place for the 2017 academic year. It is further recommended that the team implement a "top down" conceptual approach to the task using the Lumina Foundation document, The Degree Qualifications Profile as a guide. This document, now in its second edition, has been used by over 400 institutions to review and strengthen their general education curricula and enhance connections between general education and the major. This program is directly aligned with the Governor's priorities and has been included in past legislative initiatives.

Neither the LFC nor executive recommended funding this request.

Based on the department's FY16 request for funding, LFC staff estimate an increase in HED's operating expenses to complete activities required in HB 282 and current law.

Related to this task, the LFC recommended a \$200 thousand general fund appropriation to the University of New Mexico for its degree mapping project. The university is collecting course naming and numbering information from all public, post-secondary institutions to build degree maps, or pathways of required and prerequisite courses that a student could follow to complete an academic program. The deadline stated in HB 282 would advance UNM's project.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

As stated in HED's request for a special appropriation,

The inventory of core courses on the HED website continues to expand. Proposed new courses are evaluated and approved by task discipline-area committees according to an established process twice each calendar year. An earlier planned revamping of the transfer and articulation system was started in 2012. The initiative was based in part on the Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile. Unfortunately the department's efforts were discontinued when key staff left the agency.

Since 2012, the core course matrix continued to expand in numbers. At last count there are a total of approximately 1,300 courses. Concern has been expressed that the original intent of identifying and including transferable courses has been exceeded and the system is in need of analysis and adjustment. Interest has been expressed during meetings of institutional chief academic officers' meetings in an overall review of the core course matrix and its possible overhaul.

A second area of concern is the common course naming and numbering system, which is used to substantially identify these courses until the common system is in use. Neither of these systems has been fully implemented.

A third area of concern centers on the required development of transfer modules, which are a standardized set of courses composed of 64 semester hours including the 35 semester hour common core. A number of transfer modules were created and are in use.

In May 2014, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) issued reports on statewide college articulation and transfer policies. ECS notes that the trend is for states to shift from institutional agreements to statewide policies. However, many states still have fragmented policies that apply to one system of higher education and not another. ECS' 50-state analysis shows:

- 36 states have a transferable core of lower-division courses.
- 16 states use a common course-numbering system.
- 36 states have a guaranteed transfer of associate's degree.
- 16 states have a standard credit by assessment policy.

ECS recognizes that New Mexico requires a common course-numbering system, though the system has not been fully implemented. The policies listed above are considered “best practices” for increasing college program completions and easing transfers from community colleges to four-year colleges and universities.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

The bill includes a deadline for the department's action. HB 282 requires the department complete a statewide common course naming and numbering scheme by August 1, 2017.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The department requested additional funds to complete the tasks in Section 21-21B NMSA 1978.

ALTERNATIVES

At a minimum, institutions, particularly those with branch community colleges, can require common course naming and numbering within their respective systems. Or, if not implemented within institutional systems, promoting common naming and numbering within accredited programs can facilitate transfer and articulation. In New Mexico, all nursing programs at state institutions have implemented a common curriculum making it easier for students to complete associate programs and transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions and enroll in baccalaureate programs.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

- Why has HED not been able to complete this process to date?
- Are additional resources needed to complete this process?
- What performance measures can be implemented to measure the effectiveness of common naming and numbering on student articulation and transfer?

TH/bb