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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 02/03/16

SPONSOR Brandt LAST UPDATED \_\_\_\_\_ HB \_\_\_\_\_

SHORT TITLE College Credit for Military Training SB 29

ANALYST Daly

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

	FY15	FY16	FY17	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
<b>Total</b>			NFI			

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Conflicts with SB 153.

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

#### Responses Received From

Higher Education Department (HED)  
 Department of Military Affairs (DMA)  
 New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (NMIMT)  
 Veterans Services Department (VSD)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 29 requires the governing boards of postsecondary institutions, both public and those private schools organized and operating under Chapter 21, to determine credit hours for military coursework or military service relevant and transferable to a degree program requirement for any student who provides a specified or HED-approved military transcript.

### FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

HED reports no fiscal impact. WNMU similarly anticipates no fiscal impact, as it already provides this service to its military veteran students.

## SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Allowing prior military experience (both coursework and service) to count as post-secondary credit hours may facilitate the higher educations of veterans while also contributing to more timely graduation rates. VSD advises that many states have military service credit programs as a way of cost savings to the student veteran as well as to higher education institutions and the federal government. Most service members have taken at least basic college courses as part of their military training, and that most members who discharge after their first tour have at least the equivalent of an associate's degree. When these veterans enroll in post-secondary institutions, however, they are required to retake many of these basic college courses. According to VSD, current practice at most of these institutions is to give military service credit only for electives and not towards actual coursework for degree requirements for their majors. For example, NMIMT explains that while 12 of the 21 degrees it offers accept military courses as electives, the content and learning objectives of those courses are not equivalent to any of the courses required for a degree and do not meet the standard for "required" courses.

HED provides this explanation of military service as college credit generally:

Many veterans wish to leverage their military experience as they pursue postsecondary education following their service. Experience and training gained while serving in the military is documented in the U.S. Department of Defense's Joint Services Transcript (JST). The American Council on Education (ACE) is a non-profit organization under contract to DOD that reviews the JST and develops recommendations for college-level coursework equivalencies for transfer. An ACE credit recommendation represents college-level equivalencies based on a review of workforce training, military training or occupations, and other sources of learning outside the college classroom, such as national exams and certifications. Actual credit transferred is solely at the discretion of the college or university.

SB 29 does not, as drafted, require governing boards to consider or apply ACE's (or any other organization's) recommendations when making their determinations of equivalencies for military coursework or service.

HED also advises, however, that some transfers may lead to some difficulties:

According to a 2015 report from the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, the transcription of certain types of credit from military training and occupations can be problematic. Some veteran students have an extensive training history reflected on the JST. This can result in a very large number of ACE recommended credits, many of which may not count toward the credential that a student is pursuing. Because of financial aid eligibility requirements, the practice of transferring all ACE recommended credits can lead to financial aid ineligibility for student veterans who have too many credits on their transcripts that do not ultimately count towards their intended degrees.

Further, the acceptance of military service credits in New Mexico is not uniform among institutions of higher education, HED reports:

Credits potentially can be applied to a student degree plan in a number of ways, including as credits that meet elective requirements, general education requirements, and program

or major requirements. According to information provided by the New Mexico Association of College Registrars and Admission Officers, every public institution has provisions for the acceptance of transfer credit on the JST. However there is no uniform policy or transfer matrix shared by the institutions regarding JST credit transfer. Many of the credits transferred from the JST will apply as elective credits but not towards a student's degree, even if the credits are closely aligned with coursework the degree requires.

This inconsistency is likely to continue under the provisions of SB 29, since the determination of equivalency and transferability is left to each governing board.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

According to HED, directing the board of regents or governing body of a public or private post-secondary educational institution to determine credit hours interferes with the proper role of governing boards and higher education institution administration and faculty governance. Best practice would have the governing board direct the higher education institution's administration, in conjunction with faculty, to determine the credit hours for military coursework or military service relevant and transferable for a degree program requirement.

### **CONFLICT**

While SB 153 charges HED with developing and implementing statewide military credit equivalency and transfer policies, SB 29 requires the governing board of each state institution of higher education to develop its own policies.

### **OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

NMIMT points out that Chapter 21, Article 1, NMSA 1978, assigns the task of determining and fixing the standard of requirement for admission to the institution to its Board of Regents.

Additionally, HED advises that it and the state institutions of higher education have set long-term statewide goals to increase 4-year graduation rates, improve transfer and articulation, and improve remedial education outcomes. HED is pursuing these goals through these initiatives:

1. Statewide common course numbering and alignment of lower division coursework;
2. Development of meta-majors (a one to two semester map of coursework that will articulate to multiple degrees) and transfer modules;
3. Reformation of the general education core curriculum;
4. Co-requisite remediation and Math pathways;
5. Reduction in the number of hours required for both associate's and bachelor's degrees;
6. Means of incentivizing 4-year graduation; and
7. Performance funding.

As way of comparison, several other states have enacted laws regarding military service credits, including Louisiana, Texas, Oregon, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Idaho, Ohio, and Virginia. . For example, Louisiana (La. Rev. Stat. Ann. 17:33510) requires each postsecondary institution:

“...to award educational credits to a student enrolled in the institution, who is also a veteran, for courses that are part of the student’s military training or service and that meet the standards of the American Council on Education or equivalent standards for awarding academic credit if the award of educational credit is based upon the institution’s admission standards and its role, scope, and mission.”

Virginia, in addition to academic credit for military service experience, requires public postsecondary educational institutions to implement policies that provide students called to active military duty during an academic semester with the opportunity to earn full course credit. These policies must include an option for students who have completed 75 percent of the course requirements at the time of activation to receive full course credit.

Indiana’s law regarding academic credit for military service allows occupational or professional licensure boards to issue a license, certificate, registration, or permit to a military service applicant or military spouse who meets certain requirements, or to issue a temporary practice permit or provisional license while the military service applicant or spouse is satisfying certain requirements as determined by the board.

#### **ALTERNATIVES**

HED suggests that a comprehensive, statewide transfer policy for military credit reflected on the JST (or other military transcript) could be developed in parallel with HED’s existing work on articulation, transfer and common course numbering.

#### **WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL**

DMA comments that the underlying issue of how state institutions of higher education recognize military service credit will remain unresolved, with some schools providing full recognition and others granting only partial or no credit for military service schools completed.

MD/jle