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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Fajardo ORIGINAL DATE 1/25/2020
LAST UPDATED _____ HB 204
SHORT TITLE NM Tech Supercomputing Challenge SB _____
ANALYST Valenzuela

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY20	FY21		
	\$200.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

NM Higher Education Department (HED)

New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (NMIMT)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 204 appropriates \$200 thousand from the general fund to the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology for the purpose of supporting the supercomputing challenge, which is an annual competition of student teams from throughout New Mexico. The competition is managed by a 501(c)3 organization with the same name, based in Los Alamos, NM.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$200 thousand contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY21 shall not revert to the general fund.

NMIMT received funding for the Supercomputing Challenge totaling \$59.8 thousand in FY15 and \$59.4 thousand in FY 16. Based on the appropriation, the university would have sufficient funding for three years if the activity levels remained similar to prior year levels. PED has provided funding for the competition in the past as well.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The New Mexico Supercomputing Challenge is an annual science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) competition designed to expose students in grades 6 through 12 to STEM fields. The mission of the Supercomputing Challenge is to teach teams of elementary, middle and high schools students how to use powerful computers to analyze, model, and solve real world problems.

The Supercomputing Challenge, because of its private sector partnership, also showcases New Mexico students to local tech firms and national laboratories. Students form supercomputing challenge teams to tackle a range of topics in the areas of Astronomy, Biology, Geology, Physics, Ecology, Mathematics, Economics, Sociology, and Computer Science. Sponsored by partnerships between federal laboratories, universities, and business, the sponsors provide access to supercomputers and lend equipment to schools. Students are actively engaged with sponsors on developing and completing the projects.

Each challenge year commences with a kickoff conference at NMIMT, where students have the opportunity to attend talks and tutorials to gain essential knowledge for successful completion of the annual challenge. Student teams are required to submit proposals, attend the kickoff training session, conduct peer reviews, and attend project evaluations at various universities across the state. Last year, locations of the project evaluations included San Juan College; New Mexico State University; Santa Fe Community College; Eastern New Mexico University; Northern New Mexico College; University of New Mexico; New Mexico Highlands University; University of New Mexico Grants; University of New Mexico Los Alamos; and New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology.

According to the administrators, approximately 250 to 350 students participate in the competition each year.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

If funded, NMIMT and HED should work to develop performance measures to track the impact of the Supercomputing Challenge to provide information such as the number of students who entered postsecondary institutions in New Mexico to pursue a degree or certificate program in STEM fields.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Given past participation, appropriating funding to NMIMT is not expected to have an additional impact on the university.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

NMIMT did not submit this request to the New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED) for possible incorporation into the NMHED higher education funding recommendation. The NMHED has a formal process for reviewing earmarked budget requests for higher education institutions when developing the NMHED funding recommendation.