



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

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Governor Bill Richardson Applauds Passage of Bill Creating Higher Education Department

SANTA FE - Governor Bill Richardson today applauded passage of House Bill 745 creating the Higher Education Department, one of the Governor's key initiatives, which will ensure that higher education is a priority in New Mexico. The House overwhelmingly passed the measure on a 57 to 7 vote.

"I want to thank Speaker Ben Lujan for successfully carrying this bill through the house," said Governor Richardson. "By creating a secretary of higher education, who is in charge of a cabinet-level agency, we will hold universities accountable for coordinating resources and enforcing high standards.

"By strengthening our higher education system and coordinating efforts, we can attract more students to our universities and colleges and, as a result, strengthen New Mexico's workforce," Richardson said.

The bill replaces the Commission on Higher Education with the Higher Education Department as a cabinet-level department and headed by a cabinet secretary. The secretary will be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.

The change elevates the importance and visibility of higher education in the state and allows the secretary to have a more direct impact on policy and set the public agenda for higher education.

It also creates a Higher Education Advisory Board, which will advise the Department and the Governor on policy matters, made up of 12 members as follows:

- Four representatives from four-year post-secondary educational institutions.
- Three representatives from community colleges.
- One representative of accredited private post-secondary institutions.
- One representative of business.
- One representative of college and university faculty.
- One representative of non-faculty staff.
- One representative of university students.

The Governor will appoint board members, who will serve staggered terms.

The bill now heads over to the Senate. A duplicate bill, Senate Bill 677, is also progressing through the Senate.