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## \$20M Grant for N.M. Universities at Risk

### 20 Percent Match Would Be Required

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BY ASTRID GALVAN  
Journal Staff Writer

For years, an organization that has won multimillion-dollar research grants for

New Mexico universities has been able to do so with nothing more than in-kind donations such as office space.

But this year, New Mexico's Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research, also known as EPSCoR, will have to prove it can provide a match of 20 percent before it applies for a new five-year, \$20 million grant. Universities can match not just

with monetary contributions but by hiring new faculty for the project.

Leaders at EPSCoR are worried that attracting that kind of money — it amounts to \$4 million over five years — will be a challenge in a state that is still battling economic problems.

The current grant, which funds research on the impact of climate change in Northern

New Mexico, ends next year, EPSCoR associate director Mary Jo Daniel said.

EPSCoR is working on proposing a new research project, for which it will seek the new \$20 million grant in the fall. The group must have the matching funds committed by then.

The match can come from a non-federal group or the private sector, but EPSCoR

is hoping universities such as New Mexico State, University of New Mexico and New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology will pitch in.

"We are hoping we are going to be able to get a lot of support from (universities), but we're hoping we can get it from others as well," Daniel said. "EPSCoR has brought in a lot of money to the state."

EPSCoR in 2008 was awarded

a five-year, \$15 million grant from the National Science Foundation, a federal agency. The funding has allowed NMSU, UNM, Tech, New Mexico Highlands and Los Alamos and Sandia national labs to conduct climate change research in the northern part of the state. About 150 students are involved, Daniel said.

See **\$20M** on **PAGE A2**

# \$20M Grant For Universities at Risk

from PAGE A1

The money has paid for remote monitoring stations that study sources of water coming into the state, said Jack Jekowski, co-chair for an EPSCoR advisory committee.

While providing faculty, staff and office space, the universities have not had to contribute any money.

A decision by the National Science Foundation will soon change that.

"About 2½ years ago, the National Science Foundation ... made a pretty dramatic decision to get commitment from the states for this (grant program). They wanted to see real cash dollars and donations. It's taken this long for it to ripple through the system," Jekowski said.

He said getting universities to commit a 20 percent match will prove difficult because they are already grappling with slashed budgets.

"There's some concern that coming up with that much, even if it's over five years, will be a bit much, particularly with the funding cuts," he said.

So far, there hasn't been much talk at the universities about how, or whether, they will be able to help financially.

UNM spokeswoman Cinnamon Blair called the program "critical" and said the university is "a part of the dialogue and process to examine ways of managing funding and creating partnerships to successfully fund the necessary commitment."

EPSCoR, which UNM

administers, has benefited the school by bringing in expert faculty, encouraging research on climate change and water sources at the local level and providing students with research opportunities, she said.

New Mexico Tech officials have not yet considered the possibility of providing a match for a new EPSCoR grant, spokesman Tom Guengerich said.

"I don't think our money people have really analyzed it to see what the impact will be," he said.

Still, Guengerich said, it's not uncommon for the school to have to match a federal grant.

"New Mexico Tech has enjoyed a lot of success in getting federal grants for research over a number of years. A significant number do require matching," he said.

Daniel, of EPSCoR, said finding matching money is one of several steps in getting the next grant.

"We're at the very beginning stages in terms of writing the proposal ...," she said. Daniel said EPSCoR formed a steering committee that will meet in the spring to consider project ideas.

Although she shares concern about getting schools and outside groups to provide a match, Daniel said EPSCoR's strong relationships with the schools will help.

"We're optimistic that we're going to get all the pieces, but we are always looking for more opportunities," she said.