

Dear Editor,

Please consider for coverage. Thank you.

### **Records Requests Cost College Thousands**

*Española, NM* – A recent surge of Inspection of Public Records requests at Northern New Mexico College has prompted the institution to solicit the support of legal counsel, a task that is estimated to cost taxpayers over \$15,000.

According to Northern's records custodian, the College has received over 30 records requests in the past month, 20 of which were made by a single individual who was formerly employed by the College. Requests were made for documents ranging from budget records to emails and personnel files.

"The number of requests is so large that it has exceeded our ability to respond internally. We are currently forwarding the requests to our legal counsel, who determines whether requested records are of a nature that can be released," said Domingo Sanchez, Vice President for Finance and Administration.

Currently, Northern only employs one individual in charge of responding to records requests. Documents must be a matter of public record to be released. The state Inspection of Public Records Act limits the amount of time the College has to respond, prompting the involvement of several employees, all of whom have other primary functions.

One of the requests required 80 hours of work of fulfill. It is estimated that the College will spend over 200 hours responding the requests it has received to date.

The College is also concerned with the environment being created by the requests "Requests for emails and personnel folders are creating fear among staff and faculty, some of who have been personally harassed by former employees," said President Barceló.

Sanchez said that handling the requests has already cost the college \$8,000, money he said is needed elsewhere. Sanchez said the College will ~~continue~~ working towards filling eligible requests as they are submitted.