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**CONTACT:** Laura J. Mulry  
Director of Media & Public Relations  
(505) 428-1776, (505) 946-7980  
[laura.mulry@sfcc.edu](mailto:laura.mulry@sfcc.edu)

## **SFCC Hires Firm to Help Move Higher Education Center Forward**

Santa Fe Community College has hired attorneys to try to break a stalemate with the state over construction plans for the college's Higher Education Center.

At a meeting Monday, the college's Governing Board voted to engage the Albuquerque firm of Freedman Boyd Hollander Goldberg Ives & Duncan P.A. to attempt to negotiate a hearing before the Higher Education Department's Capital Projects Review Committee. According to state statute, (21-2A-6(D) NMSA 1978), the committee must approve the construction plans before a facility can be built on land the college owns on the campus of the former College of Santa Fe. "We feel the college has been very patient, waiting to be placed on the HED committee agenda for the past eight months. We have all the other necessary approvals, and want to see this important bond-funded project move forward," said SFCC President Sheila Ortego.

The project hit a roadblock with the current administration when officials maintained that further legislative approval was necessary under the law. The college disputes this position, as does an Attorney General's advisory letter issued in late December. Santa Fe area legislators declined to bring a bill forward during this year's session, arguing that no legislative action was required under the law.

Dr. Ortego said: "We have tried to reconcile the disagreement through dialog with Higher Education Department officials and with Governor Susana Martinez, but at this point we feel a more formal process of negotiation is necessary in order to move the discussion along. We hope for a positive outcome so that students can pursue affordable higher education in a convenient location in Santa Fe in the near future."

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