

RCW 28B.77.080 Needs assessment process and analysis—

Recommendations—Activities requiring council approval. (1) The council shall develop a comprehensive and ongoing assessment process to analyze the need for additional degrees and programs, additional off-campus centers and locations for degree programs, and consolidation or elimination of programs by the four-year institutions of higher education. Council recommendations regarding proposed major expansion shall be limited to determinations of whether the major expansion is within the scope indicated in the most recent ten-year plan for higher education or most recent system design plan. Recommendations regarding existing capital prioritization processes are not within the scope of the evaluation of major expansion. Major expansion and proposed mission changes may be proposed by the council, any public institution of higher education, or by a state or local government.

(2) As part of the needs assessment process, the council shall examine:

(a) Projections of student, employer, and community demand for education and degrees, including liberal arts degrees, on a regional and statewide basis;

(b) Current and projected degree programs and enrollment at public and private institutions of higher education, by location and mode of service delivery;

(c) Data from the workforce training and education coordinating board and the state board for community and technical colleges on the supply and demand for workforce education and certificates and associate degrees; and

(d) Recommendations from the technology transformation task force created in chapter 407, Laws of 2009, and institutions of higher education relative to the strategic and operational use of technology in higher education. These and other reports, reviews, and audits shall allow for: The development of enterprise-wide digital information technology across educational sectors, systems, and delivery methods; the integration and streamlining of administrative tools including but not limited to student information management, financial management, payroll, human resources, data collection, reporting, and analysis; and a determination of the costs of multiple technology platforms, systems, and models.

(3) Every two years the council shall produce, jointly with the state board for community and technical colleges and the workforce training and education coordinating board, an assessment of the number and type of higher education and training credentials required to match employer demand for a skilled and educated workforce. The assessment shall include the number of forecasted net job openings at each level of higher education and training and the number of credentials needed to match the forecast of net job openings.

(4) The council shall determine whether certain major lines of study or types of degrees, including applied degrees or research-oriented degrees, shall be assigned uniquely to some institutions or institutional sectors in order to create centers of excellence that focus resources and expertise.

(5) The following activities are subject to approval by the council:

(a) Creation of higher education centers and consortia; and

(b) New degree programs and creation of off-campus programs by an independent college or university in collaboration with a community or technical college.

(6) Institutions seeking council approval under this section must demonstrate that the proposal is justified by the needs assessment developed under this section. Institutions must also demonstrate how the proposals align with or implement the ten-year plan for higher education.

(7) The council shall develop clear guidelines and objective decision-making criteria regarding approval of proposals under this section, which must include review and consultation with the institution and other interested agencies and individuals.

(8) The council shall periodically recommend consolidation or elimination of programs at the four-year institutions of higher education, based on the needs assessment analysis.

(9) In the case of a proposed major expansion or mission change, the needs assessment process under subsection (2) of this section constitutes a threshold inquiry. If the council determines that the need for the proposed major expansion or mission change has not been justified, the inquiry is concluded. If the council determines that the need for the proposed major expansion or mission change has been sufficiently established, the council, in consultation with any directly involved institutions and other interested agencies and individuals, shall proceed to examine the viability of the proposal using criteria including, but not limited to:

(a) The specific scope of the project including the capital investment requirements, the number of full-time equivalent students anticipated, and the number of academic programs planned;

(b) The existence of an efficient and sustainable financial plan;

(c) The extent to which existing resources can be leveraged;

(d) The current and five-year projected student population, faculty, and staff to support the proposed programs, institution, or innovation;

(e) The plans to accommodate expected growth over a twenty-year time frame;

(f) The extent to which new or existing partnerships and collaborations are a part of the proposal; and

(g) The feasibility of any proposed innovations to accelerate degree production.

(10) After the council completes its evaluation of the proposed major expansion or mission change using the needs assessment under subsection (2) of this section and viability determination under subsection (9) of this section, the council shall make a recommendation to either proceed, modify, or not proceed with the proposed major expansion or mission change. The council's recommendation shall be presented to the governor and the legislature. [2012 c 229 § 111; 2010 c 245 § 5; 2005 c 258 § 11; 2004 c 275 § 9. Formerly RCW 28B.76.230.]

Findings—Expand on demand—System design plan endorsed—2010 c 245: See note following RCW 28B.50.020.

Findings—Intent—2005 c 258: See note following RCW 28B.45.014.

Part headings not law—2004 c 275: See note following RCW 28B.76.090.