

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1312

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to the authority to offer engineering programs at regional comprehensive universities.

Brief Description: Eliminating the exclusive authority of the University of Washington and Washington State University to offer certain engineering courses.

Sponsors: Representatives Sells, Schmick, Wallace, Anderson, Driscoll, McCoy, Chase, Kenney, Carlyle, White and Roberts.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/30/09, 2/13/09 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes the restriction that only the University of Washington (UW) and Washington State University (WSU) may offer civil, mechanical, and chemical engineering.
- Removes the restriction that only the UW may offer aeronautic and astronautic engineering.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Wallace, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Anderson, Ranking Minority Member; Schmick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Carlyle, Driscoll, Haler, Hasegawa and White.

Staff: Cece Clynch (786-7195)

Background:

Exclusive Lines of Study.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

State laws stipulate that only the University of Washington (UW) or Washington State University (WSU) may offer degrees in particular major lines of study.

- Degrees offered only by the UW: Law, medicine, forest products, logging engineering, library sciences, aeronautic and astronautic engineering, and fisheries.
- Degrees offered only by WSU: Agriculture (in all its branches and subdivisions), veterinary medicine, and economic science in its application to agriculture and rural life.
- Degrees offered only by the UW or WSU: Pharmacy, architecture, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, chemical engineering, and forest management.

In 2003 the restriction that only the UW or WSU could offer electrical engineering was lifted. In 1985 restrictions with respect to lines of study in liberal arts, pure science, mining, home economics, commerce, journalism, and marine engineering were removed. At the same time, a new major line restriction was added so that only the UW could offer astronautic engineering.

Higher Education Coordinating Board Program Approval. Creation of a new degree program at a public four-year institution requires approval by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB). In its evaluation process, the HECB must utilize clear guidelines and objective decision-making criteria and must review and consult with the institution and other interested agencies and individuals. Institutions seeking approval must demonstrate that the proposal is justified by the HECB's needs assessment and show how the proposal aligns with or implements the statewide Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education.

Subsequent to the 2003 removal of the major lines restriction with respect to electrical engineering, Eastern Washington University (EWU) applied for and received HECB approval to offer electrical engineering. Eastern Washington University began offering coursework in electrical engineering in the fall of 2005.

Summary of Bill:

Restrictions on offering the following major lines of study are removed: civil, mechanical, chemical, aeronautic and astronautic engineering.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Eastern Washington University (EWU) is focused on providing access and opportunity. Over 26 percent of the freshmen, and 22 percent of the student population overall, are from underrepresented groups. Over 50 percent of EWU students are the first in their families to attend college. EWU's experience offering electrical engineering has been positive; the placement rate of these graduates has been good, and the program has received accreditation. EWU already has a mechanical engineering technician program which is in high demand. Offering a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering would be a natural expansion since EWU already has the equipment, faculty, and many of the courses. With an aging workforce, there is a need in the Spokane area for new engineers. Efforts to reach out to young people to interest them in engineering, like EWU's Project Steam, have been positive. The businesses, colleges, and universities in Spokane are working together.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Carlyle, prime sponsor; Dr. John Mason, Judd Case, and Mick Brzoska, Eastern Washington University; Doug Kelley, Avista Corporation; and Michael Allen, Spokane City Council.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.