

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5043

As Passed House:

March 30, 2009

Title: An act relating to creating a higher education coordination board work group to develop a single, coordinated student access portal.

Brief Description: Convening a work group to develop a single, coordinated student access portal for college information.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Kilmer, Kauffman, Shin, Rockefeller, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Jarrett, Tom and McAuliffe).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/6/09, 3/20/09 [DP].

Floor Activity

Passed House: 3/30/09, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Higher Education Coordinating Board to convene a work group to develop a plan to create a one-stop, web-based college information access portal.

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, Grant-Herriot, Haler and White.

Staff: Andi Smith (786-7304)

Background:

A "portal" or "web portal" is defined as a website serving as a guide or point of entry to the World Wide Web and usually including a search engine or a collection of links to other sites

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arranged by topic. The portal typically offers a broad array of resources and services, such as forums, email, news, and other services. In the private sector, examples of portals include Yahoo.com or MSN.com.

At the end of the 1990s, many governments began to develop portal sites for their citizens. For government entities, the purpose of a portal is to provide a wide array of comprehensive information on government resources, services, and forms for citizens. The federal government has developed a portal at USA.gov and Washington has created "Access Washington" at access.wa.gov.

Some types of portals can offer user-specific, customized views. For example, at many colleges and universities, web portals have been developed to offer customized, specific content available based on an individual's role (e.g. faculty, student, staff, administrator). Roles help the portal determine privileges for reading, searching, updating, and personalizing content.

Many of the state's colleges, universities, and education agencies currently maintain separate portals that contain information specific to their schools or programs. For instance, the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) maintains a website where students and parents can obtain information about financing a college education. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) maintains the CheckOutACollege.com website that includes various types of information enabling students to explore options within the community and technical college system. The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board has recently launched careerbridge.wa.gov, which includes information about community and technical colleges as well as private career schools. The HECB and the SBCTC are also currently working on an academic guidance and planning system (Academic GPS) that uses web-based technology to provide an online, statewide system for degree planning and advising. Several states have compiled services like these into a single website. The most sophisticated of these websites serve as one-stop portals to all public post-secondary institutions in the state.

Summary of Bill:

The HECB must convene a work group to develop a plan to create a one-stop, web-based portal for college information. The portal will contain comprehensive information regarding financial, academic, and career planning, admissions, scholarships, and financial aid. The portal will also contain on-line applications for these services.

In developing the plan, the work group must investigate similar efforts in other states with a focus on building a portal that is student-friendly. The work group must investigate the types of services typically offered, governance, marketing, and the portal's impact on increasing postsecondary participation. The plan must include recommendations on the process and timelines for creating the portal, resources necessary to build and maintain it, metrics for gauging success, and enabling legislation. The plan must also identify roadblocks to implementation as well as potential cost savings to students, families, and the state. The work group will complete the plan and submit it to the Legislature by December 1, 2009.

The HECB must complete this work within existing resources.

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) The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) has launched the portal website CheckOutACollege.com and it is being actively marketed to help students explore their interests and match them with colleges. The SBCTC looks forward to participating in the work group. The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) believes that this bill is about access and guidance. Not only has the SBCTC started a portal but so has the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB). The HECB hopes to create a site that represents all aspects of higher education. The WTECB has launched the portal careerbridge.wa.gov since the WTECB also believes in the creation of a one-stop-shop. This bill is an important addition.

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs supports the bill because there is a lot of information out there and it is important to make it accessible. Only 12.5 percent of Latinos have a bachelors degree but there has been a 372 percent growth in representation in the K-12 system. Very few of these students continue on to colleges and it is critically important to provide information about college to these students. It is also important to consider solutions for low income people who likely do not have computers at home.

The private career colleges support this bill. The idea of a single, one-stop website is an exciting and customer-friendly concept. We are excited to be included in the planning process and strongly support the bill. Students are also in support of the bill and feel that this is long overdue. It is especially important to bring in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to make this a K-20 initiative. Given that the project is supposed to be student-centered, we would like to see students included in the work group.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Cynthia Torres-Jimenez, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Bob Billings, Higher Education Coordinating Board; Bryan Wilson, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Jessica Edwards, Commission on Hispanic Affairs; Gena Wikstrom, Northwest Career Colleges; and Mike Bogatay, Washington Student Lobby.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.