
Ways & Means Committee

HB 2074

Brief Description: Changing functions of the higher education coordinating board.

Sponsors: Representative Sullivan.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes requirements that the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) conduct needs assessments for proposed major expansions or mission changes of public institutions of higher education, and removes the requirement to assess the need for teacher preparation courses.
- Removes requirements that the HECB evaluate and make recommendations on operating and capital budget requests from the public four-year institutions and the community and technical college system.
- Removes the requirement that the HECB conduct a cost study measuring costs of instruction, costs to provide degrees in specific fields, and costs for precollege remediation; and removes the requirement that the HECB determine and transmit approved undergraduate and graduate educational costs to the boards of regents and trustees of the public institutions of higher education.
- Removes requirements related to the HECB's coordination and development of transfer and articulation policies.
- Removes the requirement that the HECB establish minimum college admission standards.

Hearing Date: 4/13/11

Staff: Madeleine Thompson (786-7304) and Trista Zugel (786-7157).

Background:

The Higher Education Coordinating board (HECB) was created in 1985, succeeding the state's Council for Postsecondary Education. The overall purpose of the HECB is to provide planning,

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coordination, monitoring, and policy analysis for higher education in Washington, in cooperation and consultation with the institutions' governing boards and all other segments of postsecondary education. The HECB is intended to represent the broad public interest above the interests of individual colleges and universities. Statutes in Chapter 28B.76 RCW and throughout Title 28B assign a number of responsibilities to the HECB, which have been altered and added to over time.

In 2002 the Washington State Institute for Public Policy conducted a review of the HECB and concluded that its overall role and focus needed greater clarification. During the 2003 interim, a legislative work group examined in detail the HECB's role, workload, and assignments. Legislation enacted in 2004, Substitute House Bill 3103, altered the HECB functions related to its overall purpose, its role in developing transfer and articulation policy, degree approval, identifying postsecondary costs, and accountability. Legislation enacted in 2010 expanded functions related to needs assessment analyses and the design of the state's higher education system.

The purpose of the HECB is to:

1. Develop a strategic master plan for higher education in Washington and continually monitor progress toward meeting goals.
2. Based on objective data analysis, develop and recommend statewide policies to enhance higher education.
3. Administer state and federal financial aid and other programs in cost-effective manner.
4. Serve as advocate on behalf of students and overall higher education system.
5. Represent the broad public interest above the interests of the individual colleges and universities.
6. Coordinate with other agencies to create a seamless public education system geared toward student success.

The HECB has been tasked with the following policy functions:

Strategic Planning. The strategic plan encompasses all higher education sectors: the two-year system, workforce training, the four-year institutions, and financial aid. The HECB is to use regional planning and decision-making before initiating a statewide planning process. In addition to reviewing institution-level plans from the four-year institutions, the HECB reviews the comprehensive master plan for the community and technical college system, to ensure alignment with the overall state vision and priorities. The HECB must report annually on progress being made in implementing the strategic master plan.

Higher Education System Design. Mission changes and major expansions are subject to approval by the HECB. Gaining HECB approval is a two-step process. First, a needs assessment process is conducted to analyze the need for the proposed change. If the need is established, the HECB proceeds to examine the viability of the proposed mission change or major expansion, and make recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor. The HECB is required to consider the strategic and operational use of technology as part of the needs assessment process.

Every two years the HECB, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) must assess

the number and type of higher education and training credentials required to meet employer demand. They will compare forecasted job openings at each level of education and training and the number of credentials needed to match them.

Budget Review. The HECB must collaborate with higher education institutions and appropriate state agencies to identify budget priorities and levels of funding for higher education. Their recommendations should reflect not merely the sum of institution requests, but prioritized funding needs for the overall system. The HECB then reviews institution and SBCTC requests based on how they align with the board's priorities, institutional missions, and the strategic plan. Institutions must submit both biennial and supplemental budget requests to the HECB by August 1. The HECB is required to rank major capital projects at four-year institutions in a single list by priority order.

Transfer Policy. The HECB is directed to adopt statewide transfer and articulation policies that ensure efficient transfer of credits and courses. The intent of the policies is to create a statewide system of articulation and alignment. Policies may address: creation of a statewide system of course equivalency, creation of transfer associate degrees, statewide articulation agreements, and applicability of technical courses toward baccalaureate degrees. Institutions and the SBCTC must cooperate in developing and maintaining the policies.

Accountability. The HECB must establish an accountability monitoring and reporting system. Based on guidelines developed by the HECB, each four-year institution and the SBCTC submit a plan to achieve measurable performance improvements along with their biennial budget requests.

The HECB reports on the institutions' progress along with its biennial budget recommendations. The HECB must develop indicators and benchmarks to measure its own performance, including the performance of committees and advisory groups tasked with working on various topics in higher education. The HECB's accountability plan is submitted to the Legislature each biennium along with the institutions' progress reports.

Cost Study. In consultation with other state agencies and the higher education institutions, the HECB must develop standardized methods and protocols for measuring costs of instruction, costs to provide degrees in specific fields, and costs for precollege remediation. By December 1, 2004, the HECB will propose a schedule of regular cost study reports to the legislative higher education and fiscal committees for their review. Higher education institutions must participate in the development of cost study methods and provide all necessary data in a timely fashion.

Summary of Bill:

The following statutory requirements of the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) are removed:

- conducting an ongoing needs assessment or evaluating proposed major expansions or mission changes of institutions by amending a statute;
- assessing needs for teacher preparation courses;
- reviewing, evaluating, and making recommendations on operating and capital budget requests from the public four-year institutions and the community and technical college system;

- conducting a cost study measuring costs of instruction, costs to provide degrees in specific fields, and costs for precollege remediation;
- determining and transmitting approved undergraduate and graduate educational costs to the boards of regents and trustees of the public institutions of higher education every even-number year;
- coordinating transfer and articulation among institutions of higher education, conducting an ongoing work group to identify new areas for statewide articulation and reporting on progress to the Legislature;
- convening a course equivalency work group;
- establishing minimum college admission standards by amending the related statute; and
- develop information annually on the approximate amount of state support that students receive.

The HECB retains administration of the state's financial aid programs, strategic planning for the state's higher education system, some functions for collecting and collating data from higher education institutions on their accountability measures, and evaluating the need for various programs based on employer demand, and some other programmatic functions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on April 9, 2011.

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