

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1320

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### As Reported by House Committee On: Higher Education

**Title:** An act relating to an online higher education transfer and student advising system.

**Brief Description:** Requiring an online higher education transfer and student advising system.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Zeiger, Seaquist, Haler, Pollet, Magendanz, Bergquist, Moscoso, Morrell and Tarleton.

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

Higher Education: 2/5/13, 2/7/13 [DPS].

#### **Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires the Washington Student Achievement Council to establish and maintain a statewide Online Transfer and Student Advising system by September 1, 2014, in conjunction with other state agencies and higher education institutions.
- Directs that the purpose of the Online Transfer and Student Advising system is to assist students to access higher education programs quickly and speed completion of their educational programs by clarifying and simplifying the process for exploring programs, resources, and transferability of courses.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Seaquist, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Haler, Ranking Minority Member; Zeiger, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fagan, Hansen, Hargrove, Johnson, Magendanz, Pedersen, Riccelli, Sawyer, Scott, Sells, Smith, Tarleton and Wylie.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Reykdal.

**Staff:** Madeleine Thompson (786-7304).

#### **Background:**

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*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.*

### Student Transfer.

The development of statewide articulation agreements are designed to improve transfer and to reduce the number of excess credits. According to a report of the Washington Student Achievement Council, more than 19,000 students transferred credits from community and technical colleges to public and private baccalaureate programs in Washington in the 2011-2012 academic year. Approximately 13,000 students (68 percent) transferred to one of the six public baccalaureate institutions. Nearly 5,700 students (30 percent), transferred to private four-year institutions. This includes the addition of nearly 1,900 transfer students to Western Governors University in 2011-12. Transfers from community colleges to the Bachelor of Applied Science degree programs offered at the community and technical colleges have grown to over 300 transfers in the 2011-12 academic year.

### Online Student Advising.

One model for online student advising is the Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students system also known as FACTS.org. It was launched in 2000 as a one-stop statewide student advising system. The system was designed by the Florida Department of Education for the purpose of providing an online service for students to access resources and assist high school and college students to make informed choices about their education. Students can use FACTS.org to monitor their high school progress, learn about postsecondary opportunities, plan their career objectives, apply to college online, choose majors, and evaluate their progress towards a degree. The system is administered by the Florida Center for Advising and Academic Support.

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### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), in conjunction with the public baccalaureate institutions, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board), is required to establish and maintain a statewide Online Transfer and Student Advising system (OTSA) by September 1, 2014. The purpose of the OTSA is to assist students to access higher education programs quickly and speed completion of their educational programs by clarifying and simplifying the process for exploring programs, resources, and transferability of courses. The purpose is also to create greater efficiency for higher education institutions through online transfer and advising.

The OTSA must provide an integrated system of online student advising, registration information, and comprehensive admissions and transfer information for transfer between community and technical colleges and public baccalaureate institutions. The OTSA must be easily accessible to all Washington high school students and their parents or guardians, higher education students, faculty, counselors, advisors and other professional staff.

There must be integration with websites maintained by four-year public baccalaureate institutions, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Workforce Board, and other websites to provide an inventory of postsecondary degrees and certificates available in the state, including online options.

Various types of information must be available through the OTSA:

- educational requirements for various occupations, including labor market information;
- admissions requirements and prerequisites for all postsecondary programs;
- identification of course options that meet the requirements of a selected path toward a degree or certificate;
- registration and admissions information for programs at any public higher education institution in the state; and
- information regarding student financial aid and other services that assist students to complete degrees and certificates.

The OTSA must provide a method for students to assess which courses and programs are transferable from one higher education institution to another, and which programs will transfer with credit towards completion of their chosen degree or certificate. Specific accommodations must be made to address the unique transfer opportunities for students transferring both to and from The Evergreen State College.

The four-year public baccalaureate institutions, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the WSAC, and the Workforce Board are directed to sign a memorandum of understanding that specifies roles and responsibilities regarding the design, implementation, promotion, development, maintenance, and analysis of the effectiveness of the Online Transfer and Student Advising system.

#### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The online student transfer and advising system may specify pathways that meet the requirements of a degree or certificate. Specific accommodations must be made for students transferring both to and from The Evergreen State College, which may include providing transfer policy information specific to the college.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

#### **Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) For students who try to complete degrees on time and work hard to ensure credits transfer, it can still be hard to understand what credits transfer, even after talking to advisors, and this online system would help to make the process more efficient and save students time and the state money. Students are often unaware that certain credits only transfer as electives and do not count toward their major. It is important to integrate this information online and to include information about program completion, employment and earnings outcomes. This is an innovative approach. Some variation of this idea has been

around for a number of years, but now cost estimates have come down, and the richness and availability of the information has improved. This will help give students and families a tool to carefully target a course path at a particular institution.

(In support with concerns) A one-stop shop to provide one place for students to go is better than multiple sites but this should not be considered as a replacement for personal student advising. There is concern about where the resources will come from to support this online system.

(Opposed) Some institutions have websites on transfer that have already been paid for.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Angie Weiss, Tristan Hanon, and Gabriel Bowman, Washington Student Association; Chris Thompson, Independent Colleges of Washington; and Nova Gattman, Workforce Board.

(In support with concerns) Edward Esparza, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; and Julie Garver, The Evergreen State College.

(Opposed) Chris Mulick, Washington State University.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.