

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2651

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to creating a higher education transparency web site.

Brief Description: Requiring creation of a higher education transparency web site.

Sponsors: Representatives Hansen, Haler, Zeiger, Magendanz and Pollet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/31/14, 2/5/14 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires that the Education Data Center (EDC) include easily accessible information on revenues and expenditures for each higher education institution on the higher education dashboard.
- Requires each higher education institution and the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges to display on their websites a link to the data dashboard.

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; Gregerson, Hansen, Johnson, Magendanz, Muri, Sawyer, Scott, Sells, Smith, Tarleton, Walkinshaw, Walsh and Wylie.

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

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

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.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee created a report in 2010 called Transparency in Higher Education Data (Report). The Report found that the Legislature and others cannot easily examine expenditure and revenue information...[for] the state's four-year higher education institutions (institutions).

Currently, institutions are required to disclose on their tuition billing statement or websites the total revenue and uses of tuition revenue for the prior year. The governing board of each institution must make public its proposals for tuition and fee increases. The Services and Activities Fees Committee (Committee) at each institution must post the services and activities fees expenditures for the prior year on the institution website, including the amounts expended in all major expenditure categories.

The Education Data Center (EDC), in the Office of Financial Management, conducts analysis of higher education programs and education issues, in general. The EDC maintains an online dashboard that displays information for each four-year institution, such as data on enrollment, progression, graduation and other metrics.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) provides leadership, coordination, and services for the 32 public community and technical colleges.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

By January 1, 2015, the EDC must include easily accessible information on revenues and expenditures for each higher education institution on the higher education dashboard.

In maintaining revenue and expenditure information, the EDC must:

- ensure the website is easily accessible;
- ensure data are collected and displayed according to confidentiality and public records laws;
- wherever possible, use data from existing data sources;
- include historical data to allow year-to-year comparisons;
- analyze and display the data in order to communicate the relative size of revenues and expenditures for each institution in an easily accessible and understandable format;
- provide basic enrollment information for each institution for context; and
- update the website each year.

To the extent possible and subject to laws relating to confidentiality, and using existing data sources and system applications, each higher education institution and the SBCTC must prominently display on their institutional web sites a link to the data dashboard of the EDC.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill changes the location of the higher education transparency website to the data dashboard of the EDC. It provides that the EDC must maintain revenue and expenditure information, rather than develop and maintain a higher education transparency website. The substitute bill removes the requirements that the website provide program information and

links to audit reports. It removes the requirement that the institutions of higher education and the SBCTC provide the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) with revenue and expenditure information in the format and manner required by the WSAC.

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) The point of the bill is to create a place where parents and students can go to learn how each tuition dollar is used and the nature and size of institutional expenditures. All this information is reported or compiled by the institutions already. The categories required to be reported by this bill are those that the institutions already report. It does not matter where the information is hosted. The goal of the bill is to not require any additional work for the institutions.

(Other) Transparency and accountability are important. Aligning expenditure categories with those reported to the Office of Financial Management would be better than what is included in the bill. It might save costs to have the Education and Data Resource Center host the data.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Hansen, prime sponsor.

(Other) Paul Francis, Council of Presidents.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.