

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5557

As Reported By House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to assessment of prior experiential learning programs in higher education.

Brief Description: Creating a distance learning degree pilot program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Sutherland, Bauer, Wood, Palmer and Kohl).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/21/95, 3/24/95, 3/30/95 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Carlson, Chairman; Jacobsen, Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Benton; Blanton; Delvin; Goldsmith; Mastin and Sheahan.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Mulliken, Vice Chairman; and Mason, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Susan Hosch (786-7120).

Background: Many adult students bring with them to college learning acquired outside of the classroom. About 33 percent of the colleges in the United States offer students the opportunity to earn credits for learning they have acquired in that manner. Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) programs offer college credit for learning gained on the job and/or through travel and volunteer responsibilities.

Until recently, Eastern Oregon State College offered an APEL program to Washington residents through a self-supporting extension program. However, budget constraints have dictated a moratorium on the admission of nonresident students, so the program is no longer available to Washington residents. Eastern Oregon State College's APEL program has assisted over 2,000 Washingtonians to earn college credit in a variety of fields. The majority of these students are members of the

workforce over the age of 25. Most are either beginning a college degree program or finishing a degree that they had put on hold for years.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Higher Education Coordinating Board will contract with a public or independent institution of higher education in Washington to provide a distance learning degree that contains a credit-for-prior-learning component. The prior learning component will be based on student portfolios structured by the accreditation standards and guidelines of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges. The degree will be provided in Clark County as a two year pilot project, beginning on or before the fall 1996 academic term. The board will work with businesses and public institutions of higher education in Clark county as it develops the pilot project.

The board will monitor and evaluate the pilot project and report to the House and Senate Higher Education Committees by December 1, 1998. Elements that must be included in the report are described.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill: The pilot project will begin no later than the fall 1996 academic term, rather than fall 1995 academic term. The HECB's report on the pilot project is delayed by one year, and will be completed by December 1, 1998. The board must contract with one or more public or independent institutions within the State of Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: Creating a program that combines credit for prior learning with a distance learning degree program will expand access for placebound adult students. The combined program will be fiscally prudent and responsive to the needs of working adults. It also recognizes that skills and knowledge can be acquired in a variety of ways. The APEL programs offered by Northwest colleges are rigorous, and challenge students to reflect on the knowledge they have acquired outside the classroom.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Sutherland, prime sponsor; Dory Jackman, Carmen Anderson, and David Schlegel, Eastern Oregon State College; and Rod Anderson, Anderson Industrial, Inc. (all in favor).