

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6583

As Reported By House Committee On:

Higher Education
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to higher education.

Brief Description: Clarifying eligibility requirements for state-funded benefits for part-time academic employees of community and technical colleges.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Spanel, Bauer, Kohl, McAuliffe, Winsley, Rinehart and Smith).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/15/96, 2/23/96 [DPA];

Appropriations: 2/24/96 [DPA(APP w/o HE)s].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Carlson, Chairman; Mulliken, Vice Chairman; Mason, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Blanton; Delvin; Goldsmith; Mastin; Scheuerman and Sheahan.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7120).

Background: In the past 13 years, the ratio of part-time to full-time faculty teaching in the community and technical college system has significantly increased. Part-time faculty receive different health and retirement benefits at different institutions because, in part, there is no uniform methodology for calculating work loads for part-time instructors. For example, part-time instructors who are eligible for health benefits at one community college may be denied any benefits at another college, even though the instructors at both colleges are teaching the same subject, spending the same number of hours in class, and generating the same number of credit hours.

Summary of Amended Bill: For the purpose of establishing eligibility for state funded insurance benefits and retirement benefits under TIAA/CREF for part-time academic employees in the community and technical college system, uniform definitions are adopted. The definitions cover full-time and part-time academic work loads, in-class teaching hours, and academic employees. The definitions attempt to

standardize the definition of academic work load by basing the work load on the number of in-class teaching hours an employee must teach in order to fulfill his or her employment obligations in a given discipline in a given college.

Community colleges and technical colleges must report to the appropriate agencies the hours worked by part-time academic employees as a percentage of the part-time academic work load to the full-time academic work load in a given discipline in a given institution.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) will convene a task force to conduct an ethics audit of the community and technical college system. The task force will consist of members of the board and members of local governing boards. In performing the audit, the initial focus of the task force will be the treatment of part-time faculty. By October 31, 1997, the task force will report its initial findings to the SBCTC, local governing boards, and other interested parties. The report will include a set of ethical operating principles for the colleges to follow in their treatment of faculty, students, staff, community members, and other educational sectors. By January 5, 1998, the SBCTC will adopt and periodically update a set of ethical operating principles. The board will encourage, and to the extent possible require, all the colleges to follow the principles.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The SBCTC will convene a task force to conduct an ethics audit of the system. The task force will study the treatment of part-time faculty and will recommend a set of ethical operating principles for the system. The state board will adopt a set of principles by January, 5, 1998, and will encourage, and to the extent possible require, local colleges to adopt the principles.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: For the past decade, legislation has been introduced almost every year to improve the treatment of part-time faculty in the community colleges. However, little progress has been made. And the proportion of part-time faculty teaching in the system is steadily increasing. The issue of health benefits for part-time instructors is an especially thorny one. At some community colleges, full-time faculty must teach 15 hours per week. In order to qualify for health benefits as a half-time employee, part-time instructors at those colleges must teach 11 hours per week. At one community college, because of the way the institution defines work loads, no part-time faculty receive health benefits.

Testimony Against: Concerns were expressed that the implementation of the bill could cause budget problems in some colleges unless it is funded by the Legislature.

Testified: Senator Harriet Spanel, prime sponsor; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Federation of Teachers (pro); Lenore Vest, Washington Education Association (pro); Larry Lael, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (pro with concerns); Harold Heiner, President, Whatcom Community College; and Bev Gestrine, Centralia Community College (pro).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Appropriations and without amendment by Committee on Higher Education. Signed by 24 members: Representatives Huff, Chairman; Clements, Vice Chairman; Pelesky, Vice Chairman; H. Sommers, Ranking Minority Member; Valle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle; Carlson; Cooke; Crouse; Dyer; Foreman; Grant; Kessler; Lambert; Linville; McMorris; Poulsen; Reams; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Silver; Smith and Wolfe.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Hickel.

Staff: Jennifer Priddy (786-7118).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee on Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee on Higher Education: The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges will convene a task force to conduct a best practices audit of the treatment of part-time faculty teaching in the community and technical colleges. By August 30, 1996, the task force will recommend a set of operating principles related to the employment of part-time faculty for the board to adopt. By September 30, 1996, the board will adopt a set of operating principles, and will use these principles in its development of the 1997-99 biennial budget request. An emergency clause is added.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: The definition of full-time teaching load is bargained at each community college. This results in differing eligibility standards among community

colleges for part-time faculty to receive health and pension benefits. This bill will standardize the eligibility for benefits and prevent colleges from inflating the definition of a full-time teaching load in order to make it more difficult for part-time faculty to qualify for benefits.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Harriet Spanel, prime sponsor; Wendy Radar-Konofalski, Washington Federation of Teachers; Lenore Vest, Washington Education Association; and Larry Lael, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.