

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2813

As Reported By House Committee On:

Higher Education

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: Representatives Jacobsen, Conway, Quall, Basich, Brumsickle, Sheahan, Dickerson, Cole, D. Schmidt, Murray and Mason.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/30/96, 2/1/96 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Carlson, Chairman; Mulliken, Vice Chairman; Jacobsen, Ranking Minority Member; Mason, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Benton; Blanton; Delvin; Goldsmith; Scheurman and Sheahan.

Staff: Suzi 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 Substitute 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, definitions are adopted. The definitions cover full-time and part-time academic work loads, in-class teaching hours, and academic employees. 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.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The insurance benefits referenced in the legislation are benefits under the private TIAA/CREF retirement system. Faculty work loads will be defined in terms of in-class teaching hours. Hours will be reported as a percentage rather than ratio of part-time to full-time workloads.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 24, 1996.

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

Testimony For: Benefits laws contain some ambiguity in defining eligibility for part-time academic employees. This ambiguity has led to unequal definitions of benefits eligibility for faculty at different colleges throughout the state. The adoption of these definitions will standardize the eligibility of part-time faculty for health and retirement benefits. At one college, a part-time instructor must teach 11 credits to be eligible for health benefits as a one-half time employee. Full-time instructors teach 15 credits. The issue of benefits for part-time faculty is a problem in the public baccalaureate institutions as well. Although the definition of work load is a bargainable item, the administration of at least one college made a unilateral decision to change the way part-time faculty hours were reported when the faculty refused to accept the new methodology via contract.

Testimony Against: The definition of work load is a bargainable item under community and technical college collective bargaining laws. If the definitions described in this legislation became law, more than 600 people would become eligible for health insurance and more than 200 people would become eligible for retirement benefits under TIAA/CREF.

Testified: Representative Ken Jacobsen, prime sponsor; Vincent Troccoli and Glenn Ness, Pierce College (pro); Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Federation of Teachers (pro); Ben Meredith, Everett Community College and Olympic Community College (pro); Larry Lael, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (con); Richard Alumbaugh, Washington State University faculty senate (pro with qualifications); and Lenore Vest, Association for Higher Education, Washington Education Association (pro).