

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6583

As Passed House - Amended:

February 29, 1996

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].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 2/29/96, 91-0.

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).

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).

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 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 will convene a task force to conduct a best practices audit of employment issues affecting part-time faculty. The task force will include faculty members, members of the state board, and members of local governing boards. The types of employment issues to be included in the audit are described.

By August 30, 1996, the task force will report its findings. The report will include a set of best practices principles for the colleges to follow in their employment of part-time faculty. By September 30, 1996, the state board will adopt and periodically update a set of best practices principles. The board will use the principles in the development of its 1997-99 biennial operating budget request. The board shall encourage, and to the extent possible, require each local board to adopt and implement the principles.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: (Higher Education) 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.

(Appropriations) 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: (Higher Education) Concerns were expressed that the implementation of the bill could cause budget problems in some colleges unless it is funded by the Legislature.

(Appropriations) None.

Testified: (Higher Education) 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).

(Appropriations) 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.