

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 2637

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Higher Education, February 20, 1996

**Title:** An act relating to the joint center for higher education.

**Brief Description:** Changing provisions relating to the joint center for higher education.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives D. Sommers, Sheahan, Jacobsen, Dellwo, Schoesler, Carlson and Grant; by request of Joint Center for Higher Education).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education: 2/19/96, 2/20/96 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Bauer, Chair; Kohl, Vice Chair; Drew, Hale, McAuliffe, Sheldon, West and Wood.

**Staff:** Heather Flodstrom (786-7419)

**Background:** In 1985, the Legislature established the Joint Center for Higher Education in Spokane. The joint center's purpose is to coordinate programs offered in the Spokane area by Washington State University (WSU) and Eastern Washington University (EWU).

In 1989, the mission of the joint center was expanded. During that year, the Legislature created the Spokane Intercollegiate Research and Technology Institute (SIRTI). The institute is a multi-institutional education and research center housing programs conducted in Spokane by WSU, EWU, the community colleges of Spokane, Gonzaga University, and Whitworth College. The joint center became the administrative and fiscal agent for the institute. The joint center was also responsible for coordinating programs and activities planned for SIRTI.

During 1989, the Legislature also approved a branch campus in Spokane for WSU and the co-location of EWU in the Spokane area. The joint center's role of coordinator was retained for programs offered by the two universities in Spokane. Money was provided to acquire land and construct buildings for SIRTI, WSU, and EWU's program expansions.

In 1991, statutes related to the joint center were revised. The joint center became an independent state-funded entity which acted as the fiscal and administrative agent for the Spokane Higher Education Park and SIRTI. The joint center has oversight responsibilities for all land and facilities in the Spokane Higher Education Park and SIRTI. The park is the location for the WSU branch campus and new classroom buildings for EWU. The joint center continues to coordinate programs offered by WSU and EWU in Spokane.

The joint center's governing board has 12 voting members. Three members are trustees or regents representing each of the public higher education institutions. Six members are citizens residing in Spokane County. The citizen members are appointed by the Governor and approved by the Senate. The presidents of Eastern Washington University, Washington State University, and the Spokane Community College district are the three remaining voting members. The executive director of the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB), the president of Gonzaga University, and the president of Whitworth College serve as nonvoting members of the board.

**Summary of Bill:** The Spokane higher education park is renamed the Riverpoint higher education park.

The joint center's program coordination role is clarified. The joint center coordinates the joint degree programs between WSU and EWU, as well as the participation of WSU and EWU in joint academic degree programs with Gonzaga and Whitworth. In addition, the joint center is given the authority to mediate disputes among institutions about degree programs or courses.

The membership of the joint center's governing board is revised. The board consists of 14 rather than 12 voting members. One of the new voting members is from an independent, nonprofit university located in the Spokane area. The other is from a separate independent, nonprofit institution of higher education located in the Spokane area. The two new voting members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, and serve four-year terms. Until these new voting members are appointed, either the president or chancellor of Gonzaga University and the president of Whitworth College continue to serve as nonvoting members of the board. In addition, the president of WSU may send a designee to board meetings. The designee may be either the provost of WSU or the vice-president for research and dean of the graduate school. All gubernatorially appointed members serve four-year terms.

The responsibility of the joint center for SIRTU is clarified. The board of the joint center may hire a director and staff for SIRTU. It may delegate to the director any of its authority except its responsibility to adopt rules. The joint center must provide central administrative services for SIRTU.

The joint center is classified as an institution of higher education, and may contract with another institution of higher education for the purchase and disposal of materials, supplies, services and equipment, and for procuring printing and binding services.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** Establishment of the Riverpoint Higher Education Park has led to a renaissance of the east side of Division Street in Spokane, similar to the economic development that the World's Fair brought to the west side of Division Street. The two private college presidents are welcome as voting members.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Jim Halstrom, Momentum.