

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6280

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, January 30, 1996

Title: An act relating to higher education fiscal matters.

Brief Description: Authorizing a technology fee at public institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl, Wood, Bauer, Finkbeiner and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/16/96, 1/25/96, 1/30/96 [DPS-WM, DNS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6280 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Minority Report: Do not substitute and do not be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senator Prince.

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: According to a recent article in The Chronicle of Higher Education, colleges and universities are struggling to meet the demand for student access to computers and networks. That demand has doubled, tripled or quadrupled in some instances. Higher education institutions are considering a variety of solutions, including raising student fees, extending computer networks into dormitory rooms, requiring students to own computers, and contracting with companies to improve dial-in network access from homes and dormitories.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Once every four years, the governing boards of each public four-year institution of higher education may establish and charge a technology fee to each enrolled student. The fee is separate from tuition fees and is not to exceed \$120 in academic year 1996-97. The technology fee for part-time students is calculated as a pro rata share of the fee charged to a full-time student. The fee is to be used exclusively for technology resources for general student use.

The student government association or its equivalent must be in agreement with the governing board before any action can be taken on a technology fee including (1) the establishing and charging of the fee, and (2) any changes in the amount of the student technology fee. The student government association or its equivalent must approve the expenditure plan for the fee revenue.

The student technology fee may not be increased in excess of the fiscal growth factor. Technology fee is defined.

The technology fee may be waived for students who receive graduate service appointments.

The technology fee may be refunded or cancelled in full if the student withdraws prior to the sixth day of instruction in the term for which the fees are paid or are due.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The governing boards and the student government associations or equivalent must renew the fee once every four years. The technology fee is subject to I 601. The student government association or its equivalent shall approve the expenditure plan for the fee revenue. Technology fee is defined. The community colleges do not have the technology fee option. The technology fee for part-time students shall be calculated as a pro rata share of the fee charged to full-time students. A permissive waiver of the technology fee is allowed only for students with graduate service appointments.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 11, 1996.

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

Testimony For: The UW administration and student government association negotiated the original provisions of the bill. Access to technology is no longer a luxury when providing quality education programs. E-mail is now basic to education. All students need access. Students need access to critical information that is available through technology. It is appropriate that the students partner with the state in funding current technology that they need to gain the skills necessary for employment. Students must have access to technology and prefer paying a fee over ownership of equipment.

Testimony Against: This fee is a tuition increase. Tuition setting authority ought to remain with the Legislature. Funding gaps ought not to be filled with student dollars. A concern was expressed about the equal access to education if some institutions choose to charge a fee while other institutions do not.

Testified: PRO: Scott Morgan, SBCTC; Al Froderberg, WWU; George Durrie, EWU; Dani Chang, student, GRCC; Shawn English, student, GRCC; Garrick Heitman, student, UW; Ron Johnson, UW; Fred Campbell, UW; Sherry Burkey, UW; CON: Kim Merriman, TESC; Wendy Rader-Konafalski, WFT.