

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5921

As Passed Senate, March 8, 2001

Title: An act relating to graduate education in physical therapy.

Brief Description: Authorizing doctorate level degrees in physical therapy at Eastern Washington University.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Horn, Sheahan, McAuliffe, West, McCaslin, Carlson, Morton, Jacobsen, B. Sheldon, Shin and Parlette.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/20/01, 2/22/01 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/8/01, 46-3.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Shin, Vice Chair; Carlson, Horn, McAuliffe, Parlette, Sheahan and B. Sheldon.

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: Under current state law, the state's two research institutions, the University of Washington and Washington State University, are the only public higher education institutions authorized to offer doctoral degrees. State law specifically limits the four comprehensive institutions (Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, The Evergreen State College, and Western Washington University) to offering degrees up to the master's level only (RCW 28B.35.205 and RCW 28B.40.206). Current Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) policy also prohibits comprehensive institutions from offering doctoral degree programs. Branch campuses, created to meet the upper-division and graduate-level needs of underserved communities, are discouraged from offering doctoral degrees. The legislation was silent about the offering of doctoral degrees. The HECB and its predecessor agencies have consistently discouraged the offering of doctoral degrees with some limited exceptions.

There are two kinds of doctoral degrees: (1) professional or practice-oriented doctoral programs (e.g. Ed.D., DPT, Pharm.D., and J.D.) and (2) research-oriented doctoral programs (Ph.D.). Professional or practice-oriented doctoral programs have distinct academic missions to prepare students for professional practice and rely on practica, internships, and/or clinical experiences that may be more appropriate for urban settings. Research-oriented doctoral programs rely on extensive research facilities and equipment, library collections, computing resources, and appropriate research faculty. Whether practice-oriented or research-oriented, doctoral programs are generally more expensive than undergraduate and master's level programs.

The trend in the education of the physical therapist is the DPT as the entry-level degree; therefore, the DPT is becoming the clear choice for the student who intends to become a physical therapist. Eastern Washington University currently offers a high quality master's program with students who graduate well-prepared for a competitive job market; 100 percent of the graduates are employed. No significant additional costs are expected. The University of Washington is the other public university in the state with a physical therapy program; it offers the Ph.D.

Summary of Bill: Eastern Washington University is authorized to offer doctorate level degrees in physical therapy. As with all new programs, this professional, practice-oriented doctoral program is subject to the review and approval of the HECB.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 9, 2001.

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

Testimony For: The issue has been discussed with both COP and the consortium in Spokane. Most institutions with physical therapy programs are moving to the DPT. We know the HECB will need to approve the plan but we need your permission to bring it forward. Since the 1980s the entry level has been master's degree. The trend is now to establish the DPT as the entry level degree for the physical therapy profession. We are asking for \$50,000 per year for the next three years to enhance our faculty. The time will not be expanded. We recognize the significance of our request to add doctoral opportunities at the comprehensive institutions. We will be moving into a new Health Sciences Building in Spokane. We are beginning to lose quality students to DPT programs in other states.

The HECB wants EWU to be allowed to bring the DPT to the board for approval. The board will continue discussing the broader issue of doctoral degrees as well.

COP encouraged EWU to bring forward this very narrow, specific request for DPT authority. Anything broader will require significant policy changes.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Mike Ormsby, Chair of Bd of Trustees, EWU; Walt Erickson, Physical Therapy faculty, EWU; Peter Dual, Provost, EWU; Ron Dalla, Dean, Graduate Studies, EWU; Bruce Botka, HECB; Terry Teale, Exec. Dir., COP; Melissa Johnson, Physical Therapy Assn. of WA.

House Amendment(s): It is clarified that EWU may offer applied doctoral degrees in physical therapy, but cannot grant research doctoral degrees.