
Higher Education Committee

SSB 5007

Brief Description: Allowing public technical colleges to offer degrees that prepare students to transfer to certain bachelor degree programs.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, King, Oemig, Holmquist, McDermott, Kauffman, Pridemore, Kilmer, Hobbs, Tom, Brandland, Swecker, Shin, Franklin, Parlette and Roach).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows technical colleges to offer Associate transfer degrees that prepare students for entry into professional fields.

Hearing Date: 3/13/09

Staff: Andi Smith (786-7304)

Background:

There are 34 community and technical colleges in the state including 29 community colleges and five technical colleges. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) provides financial, academic, and information technology coordination for all 34 colleges. Technical colleges generally award degrees and certificates that prepare students for direct entry into the workforce. Students that graduate from a technical college and want to continue their education can transfer their workforce courses into specific Bachelor's of Applied Science (BAS) programs that are specifically designed to match up with the focus in the workforce degree. Otherwise, the technical coursework does not generally transfer.

The state's community colleges offer both technical degrees, similar to those offered at technical colleges, as well as academic degrees that are designed to transfer to baccalaureate institutions. Current statute does not allow technical colleges to offer academic transfer degrees.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is responsible for establishing a statewide transfer of credit policy and agreement, in cooperation with the public institutions of higher education and the SBCTC. Together these entities created the Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA). The DTA Associate degree is defined as a degree awarded by a community college to students who have completed a transfer curriculum. It is based on 90 quarter hours of transferrable credit in specified courses. Any student who completes an approved DTA Associate degree at a community college is considered to have satisfied the lower division general education requirements at a public four-year institution. These students are generally admitted as juniors when they transfer.

In the late 1990s, analysis of students' credit accumulation and graduation patterns revealed that transfer students in science, math, and other highly structured majors did not graduate as efficiently as non-transfer students. When they arrived at a four-year institution, these students needed to take additional lower division course requirements to qualify for their major.

To address this problem, the Council of Presidents, the HECB, and the SBCTC convened a workgroup to develop a statewide Associate of Science Transfer Degree (AS-T), which was adopted in 2000. Under the AS-T, students take more math and science prerequisites while at the community college, with the objective of transferring directly into a major once they reach the four-year institution.

More recently, the HECB asked that the Joint Access Oversight Group develop Major Related Programs (MRPs). A MRP is based on the DTA or AS-T but specifies the prerequisite coursework that will provide the best preparation for entry into certain competitive majors. In 2005 the workgroups completed four MRPs: nursing, elementary education, pre-engineering, and engineering technology. In 2007 the group completed additional programs in secondary education, earth and space science, and construction management. This cadre of degrees is generally characterized as preparing students for entry into professional fields.

Summary of Bill:

In addition to offering technical degrees, technical colleges are allowed to offer transfer degrees that prepare students for professional bachelor's degrees. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) must adopt rules creating consistency between community and technical colleges offering Associate degrees that prepare students for these degrees.

The definition of "occupational education" is changed to include any education and training that will prepare a student for transfer to a baccalaureate degree program in a professional field instead of just those leading to an applied baccalaureate degree. Technical college programs are no longer required to include competency-based instruction or a curriculum approved by representatives of employers and labor.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.