

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6355

As of January 19, 2010

Title: An act relating to expanding the higher education system upon proven demand.

Brief Description: Expanding the higher education system upon proven demand.

Sponsors: Senators Kilmer, Becker, Rockefeller and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/19/10.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: The 2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education clearly identifies Washington's need for a higher education system capable of delivering many more degrees, especially at the baccalaureate and graduate levels – up to 40 percent more annually. In 2009 the Legislature, faced with inconsistent information and demands regarding how to best expand the higher education system, directed the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to conduct a system design planning project with the object of defining how the current higher education delivery system could be shaped and expanded to best meet the needs of Washington citizens and businesses for high quality and accessible post-secondary education.

The HECB published the results of the system design planning project in December 2009. The System Design Plan's recommendations include: (1) making strategic use of existing capacity at the branch campuses, centers, and comprehensive institutions to broaden the geographic availability of baccalaureate education; (2) when new capacity is proposed, employing and expanding on demand philosophy, building it only when demand is clearly present; and (3) establishing a new Fund for Innovation, which would foster innovation and improvement statewide by providing support for strategies and programs with significant potential to help achieve Master Plan goals.

In 2005 the Legislature authorized four applied baccalaureate degree pilot programs at community or technical colleges. In 2008 the Legislature expanded the pilot project to include three additional colleges to develop and offer programs of study leading to an applied

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baccalaureate degree. Community and technical colleges offer eight applied bachelor degrees at seven pilot colleges.

The Washington fund for innovation and quality in higher education program is administered by the HECB and College Board to award, on a competitive basis, incentive grants to public institutions of higher education or consortia of institutions to encourage cooperative programs designed to address specific system problems. Strong priority will be given to proposals that involve more than one sector of education and to proposals that show substantive institutional commitment. Institutions are also encouraged to solicit nonstate funds.

Summary of Bill: Proposed changes in the missions of institutions of higher education may be identified by the HECB, any public institution, or by other entities. A mission change is defined as a change that: (a) Results in over 10 percent of a community or technical college's total degrees awarded to be in applied baccalaureate programs; or (b) allows an institution of higher education to offer a new level of degree, such as two-year colleges offering additional applied baccalaureate degrees or branch campuses or regional universities offering doctoral programs. Mission changes are subject to approval by the HECB. Gaining HECB approval is a two-step process. First, a needs assessment process is conducted to analyze the need for the proposed change. If the need is established, the HECB proceeds to examine the viability of the proposed mission change. The HECB's recommendations to proceed with the proposed change, proceed with modifications, or not proceed are presented to the Legislature and the Governor.

The applied baccalaureate degree is no longer a pilot project. The limitation on the number of applied baccalaureate degree programs is eliminated. Community and technical colleges may apply to the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (College Board) to develop and offer applied baccalaureate degree programs after approval by the College Board and the HECB, subject to legislative appropriation. If it is anticipated that the total number of applied baccalaureate degrees awarded at any particular college will exceed 10 percent of the total degrees awarded by the college or before the total number of applied baccalaureate degrees at any particular college is permitted to exceed 10 percent of the colleges' total number of degrees awarded, the mission change process applies.

The HECB is identified as the lead entity for the innovation and quality in higher education program and makes awards in collaboration with the College Board and other local and regional entities. The two-year time limitation of incentive grants is eliminated. The priority given to multiple sector education proposals is eliminated. The HECB is not required to establish review committees to assist in proposal evaluation. The superfluous guidelines applicable only to the 1999-01 biennium are eliminated.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The purpose of this bill is to expand educational access for Washington students. We need to make strategic investments in a rational manner to meet our strategic goals. We also need to plan carefully for the shifting demographics in Washington. The bill moderates the demand for new institutions without proof of need. This bill provides a process that will help us meet the goals of the Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education. It is in the long-term interest of the state to give our resident students more educational opportunities in the state. The applied baccalaureate programs have proven their worth and should be expanded. Applied baccalaureate degrees are bringing in new students who need more than an associate degree. Applied baccalaureates in technical subjects help prepare future teachers for the trades.

OTHER: We need to focus first on preserving the outstanding institutions that we already have. The current priorities for multiple institutional programs should be preserved. The innovation fund should include private nonprofit colleges. Applied baccalaureates at private colleges should be recognized to a greater extent.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kilmer, prime sponsor; Executive Director Ann Daley, Bill Grinstein, Neil McRenolds, HECB; Ann Anderson, CWU; Madeline Thompson, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Vicki Orrico, Bellevue College; David Mitchell, Olympic College; Jan Yoshiwara, SBCTC; Laura Hopkins, AJAC; Malcolm Grothe, South Seattle Community College.

OTHER: Mike Reilly, Council of Presidents.