

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5712

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to precollege placement measures.

Brief Description: Encouraging community colleges to use, and inform students of the use of, multiple measures to determine the need for precollege courses.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Bailey, McAuliffe, Frockt, Murray, Baumgartner and Keiser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/19/13, 3/26/13 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to encourage colleges to use multiple measures to determine whether a student must enroll in a pre-college course including, but not limited to, placement tests, the Standardized Admissions Test (SAT), high school transcripts, college transcripts, or initial class performance.
- Directs the SBCTC to require colleges to post information about available options for course placement on their websites and in admissions materials.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Seaquist, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Haler, Ranking Minority Member; Zeiger, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fagan, Hansen, Hargrove, Johnson, Magendanz, Pedersen, Riccelli, Sawyer, Scott, Sells, Smith, Tarleton, Walsh and Wylie.

Staff: Madeleine Thompson (786-7304).

Background:

General Powers and Duties of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

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.

State statute directs that the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) must have general supervision and control over the state system of community and technical colleges. The SBCTC is required to:

- review budgets and prepare one budget for the community and technical college system to submit to the Governor and the Legislature;
- establish guidelines for the disbursement of funds;
- ensure each college district offers comprehensive education, training, and services to meet the needs of the communities and students served;
- ensure each college district maintains an open-door policy;
- prepare a comprehensive master plan for the development of community and technical college education and training in the state;
- establish minimum standards to govern the operation of the colleges with respect to qualification and credentials of staff; internal budgeting, accounting, auditing, and financial procedures; the content of the curricula and other educational and training programs, and the requirements for degrees and certificates; standard admission policies; eligibility of courses to receive state-fund support; and other areas;
- establish and administer criteria and procedures for all capital construction; and
- encourage innovation in the development of new education and training program and instructional methods.

Pre-College Placement.

In 2010-11 of the 20,575 high school graduates that entered the community and technical college system, 57 percent, (11,633 students) enrolled in at least one pre-college course. Fifty-one percent (10,320 students) enrolled in a pre-college math class. Nineteen percent (3,867 students) enrolled in writing classes. Eleven percent (2,226 students) enrolled in a reading or coordinated reading and writing class. The non-college-level credits from pre-college courses do not count toward a degree.

Currently, many colleges in Washington use placement assessments to place students in the appropriate course level. The COMPASS, which is computer adapted, and the ASSET, which is paper and pencil, are assessments that evaluate a student's skill level in reading, writing skills, essay writing, mathematics, and English as a second language. The ACCUPLACER is a suite of computer adaptive assessments in English, reading, and mathematics to also help determine course placement.

A 2012 study conducted by Columbia University's Community College Research Center concluded that the relationship between high school grade point average and college grade point average is so powerful that it would seem important for colleges to more fully consider this measure in deciding on placement.

One effort by the SBCTC to reform pre-college education involves reviewing a variety of options for assessing and placing students in pre-college classes and examining how diagnostic assessments may be used to target instruction to specific needs of students.

Summary of Bill:

The SBCTC must encourage colleges to use multiple measures to determine whether a student must enroll in a pre-college course including, but not limited to, placement tests, the SAT, high school transcripts, college transcripts, or initial class performance.

The SBCTC must also require colleges to post information about available options for course placement on their websites and in admissions materials.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Some students do not need a full course of remedial instruction and could benefit from a brush up but they are often placed into a pre-college course that receives no college credit. Students in pre-college courses still have to pay tuition and the time is extended to get through their college education. Students could benefit from tutoring or other approaches that are more tailored to the student. What may be best for the student is to have some tutoring or to be in a course that is self-paced rather than in a full year program. New innovative approaches include combining pre-college work with college-level work such as pre-college English with English 101, and pre-college math with college-level science. Some colleges are already innovating using self-paced math classes, free study sessions facilitated by a tutor, and moving students through a couple of pre-college courses simultaneously rather than one after the other. The proposal requires colleges to include information in their admissions materials and on their websites so students can find out about the various ways to take pre-college courses. This approach will be less costly for students in terms of tuition and time to go through a program and is less costly for the colleges.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.