

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5836

As Reported By House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to higher education.

Brief Description: Redefining the relationship between the state and its postsecondary institutions.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Bauer, Prince, West, Drew, Jesernig, Sheldon, Snyder and Gaspard).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Higher Education, March 30, 1993, DPA.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Jacobsen, Chair; Quall, Vice Chair; Brumsickle, Ranking Minority Member; Sheahan, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bray; Carlson; Casada; Finkbeiner; Kessler; J. Kohl; Mielke; Ogden; Orr; Rayburn; Shin; and Wood.

Staff: Susan Hosch (786-7120).

Background: Under current law, the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is required to adopt a master plan for higher education by December 1, 1987. The board is also required to update the plan biennially, and present it to the governor and to appropriate legislative committees. Following public hearings, the Legislature, by concurrent resolution is required to approve the plan and the biennial updates or recommend changes to each. The plan then becomes state higher education policy unless legislation is enacted to alter the policies set forth in it.

During the last two years, the board has followed an exhaustive process to update the master plan. The process included surveying more than 1000 state residents to determine the critical challenges facing Washington education. In addition, nine regional meetings were held with community leaders across the state. The board also discussed issues with college and university presidents and the heads of various state agencies.

Through that process, the board identified five critical challenges. They include: increasing access to higher education for residents in a variety of categories; ensuring increased access contributes to the achievement of the state's social and economic objectives; and promoting excellence in undergraduate education. Two additional issues were: expanding higher education partnerships with other educational sectors, business and community service organizations; and establishing an adequate funding basis for public higher education.

At the conclusion of the process, the board adopted 14 recommendations for improving higher education. Some of the recommendations were included in a proposed new compact between the state and its colleges and universities.

Summary of Amended Bill: The relationship between the state and its public colleges and universities is redefined through a compact based on trust, evidence and a new alignment of responsibilities.

The policy of the state is to create an environment in which state colleges and universities have the authority and flexibility to help the state attain its goals and objectives for higher education. These goals and objectives include increasing access to, improving the quality of, and enhancing the accountability for the postsecondary education system. The policy includes providing adequate funds for enrollment growth and financial aid; developing new definitions of quality based on clear results and effective operations; exempting institutions from certain state level regulations; and developing a system of coordinated planning and reporting.

Colleges and universities are responsible for developing strategic plans, providing timely information, administering local financial aid programs, and operating as efficiently as feasible within institutional goals and missions.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board is responsible for coordinating the strategic planning process; preparing regular reports on program accomplishments and institutional resource use; administering statewide student financial aid programs; and helping and monitoring institutional efforts to improve efficiency.

In cooperation with the institutions, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and appropriate state agencies, the HECB may identify and assist in the implementation of methods to reduce administrative barriers to efficient institutional operations. The methods may

include waivers of statutory requirements and administrative rules.

With the four-year universities and colleges, the board will conduct a study of higher education system operations. The study will identify efficiencies designed to increase access to, improve the quality of, and reduce the cost of higher education. The elements of the study are described. In addition, the board will report regularly on the postsecondary educational system to the Legislature and the citizens of the state. In order to provide the board with data needed for the report, institutions of higher education and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges will provide the board with needed information in a uniform format. Independent institutions are encouraged to cooperate with this effort and to provide to the board information in a uniform format.

The board will update the master plan for higher education every four years rather than every two years.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill: The Higher Education Coordinating Board will report on the state's entire system of higher education. Private institutions are encouraged to provide information for the report. The responsibilities of the local community and technical colleges and their state board are clarified. The HECEB will work with colleges to reduce those administrative barriers that do not require legislation. The board will request legislation for areas that do require statutory changes.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The bill is one of two that implements the master plan update.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Jim Sainsbury, Higher Education Coordinating Board; and David Habura, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.