

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2637

As Reported By House Committee On:

Higher Education

Title: An act relating to the joint center for higher education.

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to the joint center for higher education.

Sponsors: Representatives D. Sommers, Sheahan, Jacobsen, Dellwo, Schoesler, Carlson and Grant; by request of Joint Center for Higher Education.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/23/96, 1/26/96 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Carlson, Chairman; Mulliken, Vice Chairman; Jacobsen, Ranking Minority Member; Mason, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Benton; Blanton; Delvin; Goldsmith; Mastin; Scheuerman and Sheahan.

Staff: Suzi Morrissey (786-7120).

Background: In 1985, the Legislature established the Joint Center for Higher Education in Spokane. The joint center's purpose is to coordinate programs offered in the Spokane area by Washington State University (WSU) and Eastern Washington University (EWU).

In 1989, the mission of the joint center was expanded. During that year, the Legislature created the Spokane Intercollegiate Research and Technology Institute (SIRTI). The institute is a multi-institutional education and research center housing programs conducted in Spokane by WSU, EWU, the community colleges of Spokane, Gonzaga University, and Whitworth College. The joint center became the administrative and fiscal agent for the institute. The joint center was also responsible for coordinating programs and activities planned for SIRTI.

During 1989, the Legislature also approved a branch campus in Spokane for WSU and the co-location of EWU in the Spokane area. The joint center's role of coordinator was retained for programs offered by the two universities in Spokane.

Money was provided to acquire land and construct buildings for SIRTI, WSU, and EWU's program expansions.

In 1991, statutes related to the joint center were revised. The joint center became an independent, state-funded entity which acted as the fiscal and administrative agent for the Spokane Higher Education Park and SIRTI. The joint center has oversight responsibilities for all land and facilities in the Spokane Higher Education Park and SIRTI. The park is the location for the WSU branch campus and new classroom buildings for EWU. The joint center continues to coordinate programs offered by WSU and EWU in Spokane.

The joint center's governing board has 12 voting members. Three members are trustees or regents representing each of the public higher education institutions. Six members are citizens residing in Spokane County. The citizen members are appointed by the Governor and approved by the Senate. The presidents of Eastern Washington University, Washington State University, and the Spokane Community College district are the three remaining voting members. The executive director of the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB), the president of Gonzaga University, and the president of Whitworth College serve as non-voting members of the board.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The joint center's role is clarified regarding the coordination of programs and courses offered in the Spokane area. The joint center will coordinate degree programs offered jointly by WSU and EWU. The joint center will also coordinate degree programs offered by either of the universities with Gonzaga and Whitworth. In addition, the joint center may mediate disputes among institutions about degree programs or courses.

The membership of the joint center's governing board is revised. The board will consist of 14 rather than 12 voting members. One of the new members will be from an independent, nonprofit university located in the Spokane area. The other will be from a separate independent, nonprofit institution of higher education located in the Spokane area. The two new members will be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. They will serve four year terms. Until these new members are appointed, either the president or the chancellor of Gonzaga University and the president of Whitworth college will continue to serve as non-voting members of the board. In addition, the president of WSU may send a designee to board meetings. The designee may be either the provost of WSU or the vice-president for research and dean of the graduate school.

Under certain conditions, the joint center, related boards, and institutions of higher education will be permitted to contract for services historically performed by persons in classified service: the contracts cannot result in the termination of state-funded, permanent classified employees employed on the date this legislation takes effect.

The joint center may contract with a public college or university for printing and binding services and for the purchase and disposal of materials, supplies, services and equipment.

The board of the joint center may hire a director and staff for SIRTI. It may delegate to the director any of its authority except its responsibility to adopt rules. The responsibility of the joint center for SIRTI is clarified. It will provide central administration services for SIRTI.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The joint center will continue to coordinate programs offered in Spokane by WSU and EWU. It will not have specific bonding authority, or the authority to spend rental moneys free of Office of Financial Management oversight. Two voting members from independent colleges are added to the joint center's governing board, replacing the non-voting membership of Gonzaga and Whitworth. The president of WSU is permitted to send a designee to a meeting of the joint center's board. The joint center is permitted rather than required to hire a director for SIRTI.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The Riverpoint Higher Education site is an anchor for Spokane's downtown area and an integral part of its economic development strategy. The joint center and SIRTI comprise successful consortia of public and private colleges in Spokane. The refinements contained in this legislation will assist the joint center's efforts to ensure that public and private colleges in Spokane work smoothly together.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Roberta Greene, Dave Clack, Terry Novak and Jim Halstrom, Joint Center for Higher Education (pro); and Bill Garvin, Spokane Chamber of Commerce (pro).