

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5557

As Passed Senate, March 9, 1995

Title: An act relating to assessment of prior experiential learning programs in higher education.

Brief Description: Creating a distance learning degree pilot program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Sutherland, Bauer, Wood, Palmer and Kohl).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/7/95, 2/23/95 [DPS-WM].

Ways & Means: 3/3/95 [DP2S].

Passed Senate, 3/9/95, 46-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5557 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Bauer, Chair; Kohl, Vice Chair; Drew, McAuliffe, Prince, Sheldon and Wood.

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: It is believed by some experts that access to undergraduate degree programs for the working adult population is of vital importance to the expansion of economic opportunities for individuals and families. Other states have demonstrated that the opportunity for working adult students to earn college credit for clearly demonstrating knowledge attained outside the classroom is a key element for providing access to undergraduate degree programs.

Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) programs offer college credit for demonstrated learning acquired through a number of avenues outside the traditional classroom, including but not limited to: job performance, travel experience, home and community responsibilities, and volunteer service.

Summary of Bill: The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) contracts for a pilot project in Clark County, beginning fall term 1995, providing a distance learning degree program that contains a credit-for-prior-experiential-learning component. This component is portfolio-based and is structured by the guidelines and standards of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges.

The HECB monitors and evaluates the pilot project and reports to the Senate and House of Representatives Higher Education Committees by December 1, 1997. Elements in the report include the number of students served, the number of degrees granted, the ability of the prior

learning component to be self-sustaining, and the satisfaction of the students, graduates, and the employer community.

The bill is contingent on funding being provided in the budget act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not available.

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

Testimony For: The institutions of higher education need to adapt their programs to distance learning with statewide criteria to ensure program quality. There is no need for additional brick and mortar. Technology is providing innovative ways to provide access.

TESC has offered some form of a credit-for-prior learning program since 1976. Vast knowledge is required in an area other than vocational and a demonstration of college level learning is mandatory.

Students from southwest Washington need a distance learning, credit-for-prior-learning program. The degree is relevant and meets the scheduling needs of working adults who often need a degree for the job they are already doing.

Doors at Eastern Oregon State College have closed to Washington residents eliminating the opportunity for distance learning with a credit-for-prior-learning component.

EWU has concerns about the requirement for uniformity of programs. Guidelines are already in place. The HECB service area policy will be compromised. Distance learning programs will require a review of the service area policy. Credit-for-prior-learning requires a review of transfer policy.

Historically, higher education has resisted the concept of credit-for-prior learning. However, it is time to reexamine the concept in light of the move to competency based assessment.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Dean Sutherland, prime sponsor; Kim Merriman, Gov't. Relations, TESC; Kate Crowe, PLE, TESC; Dory Jackman, EOSC; Dave Sturdevant, Clark County Commissioner; David Clark, student, EOSC; Charles Harper, 1994 graduate, EOSC; George Durrie, EWU; John Nease, EWU; Ron Crossland, SBCTC; Jane Sherman, HECB.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5557 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rinehart, Chair; Loveland, Vice Chair; Cantu, Drew, Finkbeiner, Fraser, Gaspard, Hargrove, Long, Pelz, Roach, Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Sutherland, West, Winsley and Wojahn.

Staff: Michael Groesch (786-7715)

Testimony For: This program is a means of addressing the problem of access and will provide additional educational opportunities. Tuition revenues were not included on the fiscal impact statements and should be adequate to make the program self-sufficient following the start-up.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Dean Sutherland.