

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5924

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 27, 1995

Title: An act relating to increased tuition fees for excess credits taken at institutions of higher education.

Brief Description: Creating tuition surcharges.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl, Wood, Bauer, A. Anderson, Sheldon, Prince, Drew, Quigley, McAuliffe, Fairley and West.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/21/95, 2/27/95 [DPS-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5924 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, West and Wood.

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: Legislators nationwide have expressed concern about the increasing number of years it takes to complete a baccalaureate degree. Fiscal constraints and productivity/accountability demands have been the catalysts behind the search for alternatives to shorten the time to degree completion. One of the strategies, suggested by research, that might encourage students to earn only the number of credits required for a degree is an excess-credit surcharge. Proponents of such a policy say that "lingering students are expensive to the state because they take so many courses and occupy spaces that other students need."

Summary of Substitute Bill: Resident undergraduate students who accumulate more than 115 percent of the credits required to complete their respective baccalaureate degree at a public four-year institution of higher education pay tuition fees equal to 150 percent of the standard resident undergraduate rate at their respective institution.

Nonresident undergraduate students who accumulate more than 115 percent of the credits required to complete their respective baccalaureate degree at a public four-year institution of higher education pay 150 percent of the standard nonresident undergraduate rate at their respective institution.

A number of exceptions to the excess-credit fees apply: (a) credits earned at private institutions in Washington, at public or private institutions in other states, or through advanced placement programs; (b) credits earned in excess of the credits necessary to complete an associate degree at a community college; (c) credits earned by dislocated

workers defined in statute or persons engaged in a training program under the purview of the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; (d) credits earned in institutionally established double-degree programs; (e) credits earned by certificated teachers pursuing continuing education credits under certification requirements; and (f) credit earned before the 1991-92 academic year.

The excess-credit tuition that is in excess of 100 percent of the standard rate is used for quality enhancements of direct benefit to students including: (a) increased number of offerings per term of class sections of required general education courses; (b) increased financial aid dollars available to qualified students; (c) increased undergraduate enrollment; and (d) additional opportunities for students seeking a specific vocational degree. Quality enhancements do not include dollars for faculty salaries. Under certain conditions, students may petition the institution for a waiver from the excess credit provisions.

The general fund state appropriation may not be reduced by the amount of operating fees collected for the excess credit provisions.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The governing board of each institution must create a process for students to appeal imposition of the charge for excess credits. The operating fees collected through the surcharge cannot be used as an offset for general fund appropriations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 14, 1995.

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

Testimony For: This legislation is offered as a partial answer to the access question. It encourages students to graduate in a timely fashion. The provosts are also concerned about access. Maybe this authority should be made permissive. We do not believe there are very many "lingering students," but this issue does need to be addressed.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Terry Teale, Council of Presidents.