

SENATE BILL REPORT

SCR 8428

As Passed Senate, February 7, 1996

Brief Description: Approving recommendations of the 1996 higher education master plan.

Sponsors: Senators Bauer, Wood, Kohl, Hale, Sheldon, Prince, Drew, McAuliffe and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/29/96, 1/30/96, 2/1/96 [DP].
Passed Senate, 2/7/96, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

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

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: According to statute, the purpose of the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is to "provide planning, coordination, monitoring, and policy analysis for higher education in the state of Washington. ..." The Legislature intends that the board represent the broad public interest above the interests of the individual colleges and universities.

The board must prepare a comprehensive master plan, updated every four years. The plan must be submitted to the Governor and appropriate legislative policy committees. Following public hearings, the Legislature must, by concurrent resolution, approve or recommend changes to the initial plan and subsequent updates. The plan then becomes state higher education policy unless legislation is enacted to alter the policies in the plan.

During the most recent process to update the master plan, the HECB, through a public opinion survey and public meetings, learned the public has high expectations for the postsecondary system. The board reports that the state's higher education system will need to provide opportunities for an additional 84,100 students in the year 2010.

Summary of Bill: With access to postsecondary education that will provide Washington's residents with the education and training necessary to keep pace with the demands of an ever changing world identified as a most significant challenge to the higher education system, the board recognizes that we cannot continue to conduct "business as usual." The Legislature commends the board for its dedication and commitment to the state of Washington and supports the enrollment goal of providing access to quality programs for the 84,100 students identified by the board.

The Legislature sets out seven areas of the plan update that need to be refined. A report made to the 1997 Legislature includes recommendations:

- (1) about the role of the state and the institutions with regard to remedial and developmental education;
- (2) on a process to eliminate duplicative or outdated programs;
- (3) on ways to further restructure the ways the state delivers and supports higher education;
- (4) on the governance structure and state framework for the integration of technology into the entire education enterprise;
- (5) for streamlining the program approval process, including consideration of the offerings of the independent institutions as well as changes in the process that will allow the institutions to respond rapidly to the changing needs of the state;
- (6) on the use of currently available physical capacity while taking into consideration the actual physical location of the population centers; and
- (7) on a plan to provide access by restructuring, by technology, by partnerships, or other means of providing access to quality learning at a lower cost. The plan should include enrollment and efficiency goals against which the plan can be measured.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: The master plan is a living document that raises many questions and issues many challenges. The work of the HECB will proceed more effectively thanks to the Legislature's urging to refine certain areas and the Legislature's giving priority to certain items such as the data system that will help the state reach the goal of a seamless education system. The HECB recognizes the need to be responsive to the Legislature and to encourage higher education to be more productive with the funds available. Access and quality are of equal importance. Technology is part of the answer, but because of the 84,100 additional students who will seek higher education by 2010, more money will be needed.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Marc Gaspard, Executive Director, HECB.

House Amendment(s): The House committee amendment clarifies that the Legislature commends the Higher Education Coordinating Board for its dedication and commitment to the state. The Legislature thanks the board for describing many of the challenges facing the state in its attempts to provide the postsecondary education and training needed by the state's citizens.

The Legislature approves the following recommendations in the updated plan:

- (1) by the year 2010, the state will need to provide additional higher education opportunities for 84,100 FTE students; and

- (2) solutions to the enrollment challenge may, in part, be found through technology, shifting the educational focus from teaching to learning, expanding partnerships, providing financial aid to needy and meritorious students, and using existing facilities in more effective ways.

The Legislature asks the board to refine the plan over the next year and to report to the 1997 Legislature with its refinements. As it works on the refinements, the Legislature suggests that the board consult a diverse group of people and use innovative approaches to develop further the solutions described in the updated plan. In addition, the Legislature requests that the board focus its attention on the following areas:

- (1) recommendations on a governance structure and framework for the integration of technology into the educational enterprise. The technology issues that the Legislature expects the board to address are described;
- (2) provision of an initial list of duplicative and low-productivity programs, and description of a process for examining ways to reconfigure, consolidate, or eliminate the programs;
- (3) recommendations on ways institutions can increase access while maintaining quality and reducing costs. The recommendations may, in part, be based on draft restructuring plans created by colleges and universities;
- (4) recommendations on appropriate state and institutional roles for providing remedial and developmental education;
- (5) the development of a student information system; and
- (6) a study of physical capacity in public and private colleges in the state.

The Legislature asks the 1997 Legislature to respond, by concurrent resolution, to the refinements submitted by the board.

The Legislature also requests that, by December 15, 1996, the board provide to the citizens and the Legislature a statutorily required annual report on the status of higher education expenditures, performance measures, and accomplishments.

The House floor amendments clarify that institutions of higher education are expected to submit draft restructuring plans within timelines specified by the HECB. The types of technology recommendations the HECB must present to the Legislature are described. These include a location plan for each site on the higher education telecommunications network, a governance structure for the network, a technology plan developed in cooperation with all higher education sectors, K-12, the State Library, and the Department of Information Services, and methods for integrating instructional technologies into the education enterprise.