

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1808

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to establishing standards of review in order to change lines of instruction at research universities.

Brief Description: Requiring standards of review before changing lines of instruction at research universities.

Sponsors: Representatives Kenney, Cox, Fromhold, Priest, Berkey, Jarrett, Gombosky, Morrell, Chase, McCoy and Lantz.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/19/03, 3/4/03 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes the restriction that only the University of Washington (UW) or Washington State University (WSU) may offer electrical engineering degrees.
- Requires the Higher Education Coordinating Board to examine certain information and provide an analysis to the Legislature if other higher education institutions seek approval to offer degrees in fields previously restricted to only the UW or WSU.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking Minority Member; Priest, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Buck, Clements, Condotta, Gombosky, Jarrett, McCoy and Morrell.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Boldt, Chase and Lantz.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Exclusive Lines of Study. Generally the state does not dictate which degree programs or major lines of study a public institution of higher education may offer. These decisions are left to the governing boards of each institution.

There are a few exceptions where state laws stipulate that only the UW or WSU may offer degrees in particular major lines of study:

- Offered only by the UW: Law, medicine, forest products, logging engineering, library sciences, aeronautic and astronautic engineering, and fisheries.
- Offered only by WSU: Agriculture (in all its branches and subdivisions), veterinary medicine, and economic science in its application to agriculture and rural life.
- Offered only by the UW or WSU: Pharmacy, architecture, civil engineering, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, chemical engineering, and forest management.

HECB Program Approval. The state does, however, require the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to approve the creation of a new degree program at any public four-year institution. There are no statutory criteria for this review. According to HECB guidelines, institutions are required to provide the following types of information:

- Objective data regarding the need for the program;
- Plans for how student achievement and program effectiveness will be assessed;
- Program budget and expected enrollment; and
- Assurances that expert reviewers attest to the quality of the program.

Electrical Engineering. As described above, currently only the UW and WSU may offer degree programs in electrical engineering. In 2002 WSU granted 76 bachelor's degrees in electrical and computer engineering. The UW granted about 135 degrees in electrical and 220 degrees in computer science and engineering. Both universities also have graduate programs. Independent institutions also offer electrical engineering programs: Seattle Pacific University, Walla Walla College, and Seattle University. Gonzaga University offers both electrical and computer engineering. Total enrollment in these programs is approximately 400 students.

Summary of Bill:

Electrical engineering as a major line of study is no longer restricted only to the UW or WSU.

Whenever the exclusive lines of study for both the UW and WSU are changed (including the change made in this bill), a higher education institution that requests HECB approval to offer a new degree program must submit certain information about its proposal to the

HECB.

This information includes: a) detailed evidence of why the program is justified, including the size and scope of student, employer, and community demand; b) a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis; c) projected future enrollment; and d) any other information the HECB may require regarding demand, need, and cost-effectiveness.

The HECB will submit a complete analysis of such a proposal to the House and Senate Higher Education Committees prior to making its final determination on the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 11, 2003.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill represents one way for higher education institutions to meet the concerns of business and the Legislature regarding additional graduates in high demand fields. Eastern Washington University proposes to collaborate with North Seattle Community College in devising a two-plus-two program using an existing facility in Seattle while Eastern's proposed computer and engineering building is being finished. Both institutions are experienced and have the capacity to offer the programming. Eastern is also already accredited to offer this program. Anything the Legislature can do to expand the number of trained engineers will help businesses in the state.

Testimony Against: None.

(With concerns) Electrical engineering degrees are expensive to offer. It is appropriate to have the HECB take a closer look before approving this proposal, but perhaps the cost-benefit examination should happen before the statutory change, not after. There is capacity in accredited electrical engineering programs at independent institutions. Perhaps the problem is partly low student demand for a rigorous and difficult program.

Testified: (In support) Rod Proctor, American Electronics Association; Stephen Jordan and Michael Brzoska, Eastern Washington University; Tom Griffith and Karen Demetre, North Seattle Community College; Dick Thompson, University of Washington; and Lorretta Seppanen, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

(With concerns) Violet Boyer, Washington Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

(Neutral) Bruce Botka, Higher Education Coordinating Board; and Larry Ganders,

Washington State University.