

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 2707

C 57 L 04

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Regarding higher education branch campuses.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Kenney, Priest, Sommers, Jarrett, McCoy, Chase and Hudgins).

House Committee on Higher Education
Senate Committee on Higher Education

Background:

When the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) published its first master plan for higher education in 1987, it concluded that existing upper division and graduate higher education programs did not fully meet the needs of the state. Affirming these findings, the 1989 Legislature established five branch campuses in growing urban areas, to be operated by the state's two public research universities. The University of Washington (UW) campuses are located in Tacoma and Bothell; the Washington State University (WSU) campuses are located in Vancouver, the Tri-Cities, and Spokane.

In 2002 and 2003, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) was directed to examine the current and future role and mission of the branch campuses. The Institute's interim report concluded that branch campuses have been responding to their original missions to expand access to higher education and contribute to regional economic development. However, the Institute's final report pointed out that branch campuses are influenced by significant internal and external factors that may be moving them away from their original missions. The Institute also found that each branch campus is unique with a distinct local context, including academic programs, faculty expertise, student demographics, nearby industries, and neighboring higher education institutions.

The final report identified several opportunities for future legislative direction regarding branch campuses. Topics included:

1. *The designation of each branch campus as a research institution.* The Institute found that although the level of research at each branch varies widely, the research activity of most branch campuses falls somewhere between the state's research and comprehensive institutions. Nevertheless, the state funds each branch campus as a research university.
2. *Improvement of collaboration among branch campuses and community and technical colleges.* The Institute found that collaboration occurs among branch campuses and community and technical colleges but is inconsistent. Research institutions and community colleges have markedly distinct academic programs, cultures, and students.

Although the statute references a two-plus-two model of education, it does not specifically require the institutions to work together.

3. *Role of each branch campus in offering doctoral programs.* The authorizing statute refers to graduate education being offered at branch campuses but does not specify the level of graduate education. The HECB policy originally prohibited branch campuses from offering doctoral degrees because of their costs. Over time, this policy has been relaxed. The WSU Spokane campus received HECB approval for a Doctorate in Pharmacy in 1992. Other proposals have been discussed, but some legislators have questioned adding this activity to the branches' portfolio.
4. *Whether any branch campus needs to become a four-year institution.* The prospect of becoming a four-year institution is a key topic for branch campuses, with the possible exception of WSU Spokane. Faculty reward systems, academic culture, and community interests provide pressure to create a more traditional campus. A national consultant on the Institute study indicated that branch campuses in other states have tended to respond to these pressures by becoming four-year institutions.

Summary:

The Legislature finds that branch campuses are responding to their original mission but that the policy landscape in higher education has changed. Each branch campus has evolved into a unique institution, and it is appropriate to assess this evolution to ensure that each campus is aligned with state goals and regional needs. The Legislature intends to recognize the unique nature of branch campuses, reaffirm the mission of each, and set the course for their continued future development. The Legislature also intends to identify each campus, not as a branch campus, but by its name.

The primary mission of branch campuses is stated: to expand access to baccalaureate and master's level graduate education in under-served urban areas in collaboration with community and technical colleges. However, the Legislature recognizes there are alternative models to achieve the primary mission. Some campuses may have additional secondary missions in response to regional needs. Some may be best suited to transition to a four-year comprehensive university; others should focus on continuous improvement of the two-plus-two model. At some campuses, an innovative combination of instruction and research targeted to support regional economic development may be appropriate.

Branch campuses are directed to collaborate with community and technical colleges to develop articulation agreements, dual admissions policies, and other partnerships. Other possible collaboration includes joint development of curricula and degree programs, collocation of instruction, and faculty-sharing. Representatives of local independent institutions may be invited to participate in conversations about meeting baccalaureate and graduate education needs in under-served areas. The HECB must adopt performance measures to ensure a collaborative partnership between community and technical colleges and branch campuses.

Legislative intent is stated that each branch campus be funded commensurate with its unique mission, the degree programs offered, and the combination of instruction and research, but at a level less than a research university.

In consultation with the HECB, branch campuses may propose legislation authorizing practice-oriented or professional doctoral programs if: (a) unique research facilities and equipment are located near the campus; or (b) the campus can clearly demonstrate student and employer demand in the region, linked to economic development.

WSU Spokane is no longer considered a branch campus. WSU and Eastern Washington University must collaborate with one another and with local community colleges to provide educational pathways and programs to citizens in the Spokane area. Each remaining branch campus must make a recommendation to the HECB by November 15, 2004, on the future evolution of the campus. Recommendations must address the model of education and mission that best suit the campus; data that illustrates how baccalaureate and degree production will be increased; areas for possible improvement in partnerships with community and technical colleges; and an estimate of implementation costs. The HECB will review the recommendations in the context of statewide goals and present options to the Legislature by January 15, 2005.

Three sections of law pertaining to the original creation of branch campuses in 1989 are repealed.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	95	0	
Senate	48	0	(Senate amended)
House	95	0	(House concurred)

Effective: June 10, 2004