

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5475

As Passed Senate, March 6, 2003

Title: An act relating to limiting courses of instruction that are exclusive to research institutions of higher education.

Brief Description: Limiting courses of instruction that are exclusive to research institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Senators Horn, Shin, Sheahan, Kohl-Welles, Carlson and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/6/03, 2/13/03 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/6/03, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Carlson, Chair; Schmidt, Vice Chair; Horn, Kohl-Welles, Mulliken, B. Sheldon and Shin.

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: Currently, the University of Washington and Washington State University are the only public higher education institutions allowed to offer certain professional degrees, including engineering.

According to research, the number of engineering degrees in Washington has decreased 4 percent from 1995-2000, while in the same period, high-tech employment has grown by 70 percent. Research also shows that among high-tech firms attempting to hire employees at a BA/BS level, approximately 53 percent have difficulty finding qualified applicants.

Research also indicates that the University of Washington is unable to expand its electrical engineering program.

Summary of Bill: Electrical engineering programs are no longer limited to the University of Washington and Washington State University.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: There are many exciting career opportunities for engineers and it is important for people to learn to think like an engineer. Students need additional access to

these high cost programs and they need choices among institutions. EWU and NSCC are prepared to immediately begin a new program on the NSCC campus, thus providing more opportunities in the Puget Sound region. Following the anticipated success of this program, EWU will begin to offer the same program on the EWU campus. EWU is already ABET accredited and also working with other community colleges offering technology degrees. EWU will continue to prioritize program offerings, eliminating some when necessary. Students have difficulty gaining admission to the programs currently offered “ there are not enough slots in many of the programs. Employers find it difficult to hire qualified engineers.

Testimony Against: Concerns: Spokane has a Higher Education Leadership Group which includes public and private higher education institutions. It is an appropriate place for conversations about additional electrical engineering programs and that has not happened. Existing capacity currently exists at Gonzaga in both electrical engineering and computer technology. It is difficult to find qualified and interested high school students to enter engineering fields.

Testified: PRO: Senator Jim Horn, prime sponsor; President Steve Jordan, EWU; Michael Bragska, EWU; Tuanhai Hoang, Qualitel Corporation, Board of Directors, AeA; Karen Demetre, NSCC; Myrtle Mitchell, SCCC; Concerns: Violet Boyer, WAICU.