

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2867

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Higher Education & Workforce Education

**Title:** An act relating to expanding access to baccalaureate degree programs at Washington State University Tri-Cities.

**Brief Description:** Regarding expansion of WSU Tri-Cities into a four-year institution.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Kenney, Haler, Grant, Hankins, Cox, Sells, Roberts, Fromhold, Armstrong, Walsh, Skinner and Newhouse.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Higher Education & Workforce Education: 1/24/06, 1/26/06 [DP].

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes Washington State University (WSU) Tri-Cities to expand into a four-year institution by admitting, beginning in the fall of 2007, lower-division students directly into programs beyond the biotechnology field.
- Directs WSU Tri-Cities to prepare a plan for expanding into a four-year institution and how best to use the resources and talents available in the Tri-Cities region to meet areas of need in higher education in southeastern Washington.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking Minority Member; Rodne, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dunn, Fromhold, Hasegawa, Jarrett, Ormsby, Priest, Roberts and Sommers.

**Staff:** Sarah Ream (786-7303).

**Background:**

In 1989, the Legislature established five branch campuses in growing urban areas, to be operated by the state's two public research universities. The branch campuses included Washington State University (WSU) Tri-Cities. The campuses were authorized to offer only upper-division and graduate education programs, in collaboration with local community and technical colleges which offered lower-division course work to prepare students for transfer. The mission of the branch campuses, as established by statute, is to expand access to higher

education and contribute to regional economic development through collaboration with community and technical colleges.

In 2005, the Legislature directed WSU Tri-Cities to expand its upper division capacity for transfer students and its graduate capacity and programs, while continuing to provide innovative coadmission and coenrollment options with Columbia Basin College. The Legislature also authorized WSU Tri-Cities, beginning in the fall of 2006, to begin offering lower-division courses linked to specific majors in fields not addressed by the local community colleges.

Additionally, the 2005 legislation authorized WSU Tri-Cities to develop a bachelor's degree program in biotechnology, and to admit freshman and sophomores to that program directly (as opposed to through coadmission or coenrollment agreements with community colleges). The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) must approve the biotechnology program before WSU Tri-Cities may provide it. To date, WSU Tri-Cities has not requested the HECB's approval of such a program.

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**Summary of Bill:**

The WSU Tri-Cities is directed to conduct a study, including examining resources available at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and develop a plan regarding: (1) areas of need in higher education that exist in southeastern Washington, and (2) how WSU Tri-Cities may best develop into a four-year institution. The WSU Tri-Cities must submit its plan to the Legislature by November 30, 2006.

Beginning in the fall of 2007, WSU Tri-Cities may admit lower-division students directly into programs beyond the biotechnology field that were identified in the campus' plan as being of high need in southeastern Washington. Any new programs must be approved by the HECB. By adding new programs and admitting lower division students, WSU Tri-Cities shall develop into a four-year institution.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 21, 2006.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Testimony For:** (In support) This bill allows for the expansion of scientific education and educational opportunities in the Tri-Cities region and in Washington. There is a growing population in the Tri-Cities area. The expansion of Washington State University (WSU) Tri-Cities into a four-year institution is a key component for economic development in the area. It is also an opportunity for the Hispanic community in the region to obtain greater access to education. A goal is for the Tri-Cities campus to be a "destination" campus. The proximity of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory provides tremendous resources, including over

2,000 world-class scientists, with which to help grow the campus. This bill will allow the continuing strengthening of ties between WSU Tri-Cities and Columbia Basin College. The Tri-City community strongly supports the expansion of WSU Tri-Cities into a four-year institution, and has never been as unified around an issue as they are unified around this issue. With the cleanup effort of the Hanford Nuclear site approaching completion, the Tri-Cities needs to build a new economic future; the expansion of the campus into a four-year institution will help build this future.

(Neutral) The HECB has not had time to review the proposed expansion of WSU Tri-Cities into a four-year institution, so it has no official position yet. However, the HECB supports the development of a plan for expanding higher education in Washington.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Kenney, prime sponsor; Representative Haler; Representative Hankins; V. Lane Rawlins, Washington State University; David Lemack, Washington State University Tri-Cities; Lee Thornton, Columbia Basin College; Carl Adrian, Tri-City Industrial Development Council; Lura Powell, Holographic Ultrasound; Katie Denslow; Douglas Ray, Battelle; Carol Moser, City of Richland; Bob Hammond, City of Kennewick; Rufus Friday, Tri-City Herald; and Kris Johnson, Tri-City Chamber.

(Neutral) Andrea Smith, Higher Education Coordinating Board.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.