

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 3113

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, February 24, 2006
Ways & Means, February 27, 2006

Title: An act relating to expanding access to higher education in north Snohomish, Island, and Skagit counties using the university center model.

Brief Description: Expanding access to higher education using the university center model.

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Sells, Kenney, Strow, McCoy, Haler, Dunshee, B. Sullivan, Lovick, Roberts and Hasegawa).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/09/06, 90-8.

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 2/23/06, 2/24/06 [DP-WM].

Ways & Means: 2/27/06 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Higher Education; Weinstein, Vice Chair, Early Learning & K-12; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Berkey, Carrell, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Shin.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Kohl-Welles, Parlette, Pflug, Pridemore, Rasmussen, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Paula Faas (786-7449)

Background: In 1996, the Legislature directed the Higher Education Coordination Board (HECB) to develop a plan for increasing higher education services in the North Snohomish, Island, and Skagit counties area. The HECB recommended that multiple institutions collaborate to provide instruction and degree programs on four community college campuses throughout the region and at one unidentified "hub" location. In 1999, the Legislature authorized funds to enable the North Snohomish, Island, and Skagit (NSIS) Consortium to

tailor leased space for educational purposes in a new transit station in Everett. Participating institutions began teaching classes at the Everett Station in March 2002.

In the Fall of 2004, 670 students enrolled in classes offered by two community colleges and four universities at the Everett Station. Most program offerings were for associate degree or master's degree students. There were also several professional certificates offered. However, it is not possible to complete a bachelor's degree at the Everett Station.

In 2005, the Legislature passed House Bill 1794, which found that the NSIS Consortium did not meet the needs of the region. The bill further stated that the university center model of service delivery, centered on a community college campus with a single point of accountability, has proven more effective in developing degree programs and attracting students.

The state therefore assigned management and leadership responsibility for the NSIS Consortium to Everett Community College, and requested the college develop a plan for the region. Preliminary recommendations were due December 1, 2005.

Everett Community College submitted a report, "Higher Education Opportunity in the NSIS region (Preliminary Report)" to the Legislature on December 1, 2005. The report describes a vision for a new "University Center of North Puget Sound," which would sponsor bachelor's and graduate degree programs offered by a variety of different universities. The University Center of North Puget Sound would be located at Everett Station through 2008, and then relocate to Everett Community College in January of 2009, with the opening of a new undergraduate education center on the college campus. Depending on enrollment growth, the report states that additional space may be required beyond 2011.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature accepts the preliminary report "Higher Education Opportunity in the NSIS region (Preliminary Report)" as representative of the needs for higher education in the NSIS region.

The Legislature intends to provide funding for a minimum of 250 full-time equivalent (FTE) students at the upper-division and graduate levels for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2007. The funding will support fields of study including, but not limited to, engineering, technology, nursing and health professions, environmental sciences, education, interdisciplinary studies, and other areas of study based on student and employer demand.

By July 1, 2007, Everett Community College, with the assistance of Edmonds Community College, Skagit Valley College, and the universities participating in offering enrollment will submit a report to the Legislature. The report will describe the number of enrollments and degrees resulting from the new FTE funding and the effect of those enrollments and degrees on the local communities.

The act is null and void if specific funding for the purposes of this bill is not appropriated.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed except section 1, relating to legislative findings and a report requirement, which takes effect on July 1, 2006. However, the bill is null and void if not funded in the budget.

Testimony For: This bill responds to the Everett Community College's NSIS report, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges' report, and the Higher Education Coordinating Board report that the NSIS region is under-served. The region is very large, and so is the want and need for the opportunity to attend college. The House budget does have funding for the 250 student FTEs that are in this bill. Both budgets provide funding for the capital costs at the Everett and the Skagit Community Colleges. The courses would be offered using the university center model with Everett Community College as the host partner and a four-year university, probably University of Washington-Bothell, as other partner. The bill targets degree subject areas where we have the most acute shortages of graduates. Businesses desperately need these graduates for skilled employees to compete. The Legislature will get a report on how this is working.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Representative Sells, prime sponsor; Michael Kerns, Everett Community College; Christine Kerlin, Everett Community College; Loretta Seppanen, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Chris Thompson and Randy Spaulding, Higher Education Coordinating Board, Louise Stanton-Masten, Everett Area Chamber of Commerce; Crystal Donner, Perteet, Inc.; Ann Anderson, Central Washington University.