

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5969

As of January 17, 2014

Title: An act relating to awarding academic credit for military training.

Brief Description: Providing for awarding academic credit for military training.

Sponsors: Senators O'Ban, McCoy, Schoesler, Hobbs, Hatfield, Brown, Conway, Rolfes, Braun, McAuliffe and Benton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/16/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Eric Wolf (786-7405)

Background: Prior Learning Definition. Prior learning is defined as the knowledge and skills gained through work and life experience; through military training and experience; and through formal and informal education and training from in-state and out-of-state institutions including foreign institutions.

Prior Learning Assessment. Legislation enacted in 2011 directs the Washington Student Achievement Council (Council), the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), the Council of Presidents of the four-year public baccalaureate institutions, the private independent higher education institutions, and the private career schools to collaborate to increase the number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning that counts toward their major, degree, or certificate, while ensuring credit is awarded only for high-quality, course-level competencies. Statute specifically charges the agencies and institutions to:

- increase the number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning that counts toward their major or toward earning their degree, certificate, or credential, while ensuring that credit is awarded only for high-quality, course-level competencies;
- increase the number and type of academic credits accepted for prior learning;
- develop transparent policies and practices in awarding academic credit for prior learning;
- improve prior learning assessment practices;

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- create tools to develop faculty and staff knowledge and expertise in awarding credit for prior learning, and to share exemplary policies and practices among institutions of higher education;
- develop articulation agreements when patterns of credit for prior learning are identified for particular programs and pathways;
- develop outcome measures to track progress on goals; and
- report progress annually.

The Council and SBCTC jointly staff the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) workgroup. In 2013, the PLA workgroup completed a draft statewide policy for prior learning assessment that provides an operational definition and guidance on tracking credits earned through the PLA workgroup that would apply to public two-year and four-year institutions of higher education. In addition, the PLA workgroup was added to an existing reciprocity agreement between community and technical colleges. The expanded agreement allows for individual courses that meet certain requirements at the sending college to be considered to meet the requirements at the receiving college for a similar transfer degree.

Guides for Awarding Credit for Military Training. There are three national associations that develop guidelines for acceptance of military training and experience for transfer and the award of credit:

- the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers;
- the American Council on Education (ACE); and
- the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Colleges and universities in Washington use the ACE Military Guide recommendations as a starting point to evaluate the award of credit toward certificates and degrees.

Summary of Bill: Each public institution of higher education must adopt a policy to award academic credit to individuals for certain military training courses or programs before December 31, 2015. The individual must be enrolled in a public institution of higher education and have successfully completed any military training course or program as part of the individual's military service that:

- is recommended for credit by a national higher education association that provides credit recommendations for military training courses and programs;
- is included in the individual's military transcript issued by any branch of the armed services; or
- is documented military training or experience that is substantially equivalent to any course or program offered by the institution of higher education.

Each public institution of higher education must:

- develop a procedure for receiving the necessary documentation to identify and verify the military training course or program that an individual is claiming for academic credit;
- provide a copy of their policy to award academic credit for military training to any enrolled students who listed prior or present military service in their application; and
- develop and maintain a list of military training courses and programs that qualified for academic credit.

Each public institution of higher education must submit its policy for awarding academic credit for military training to the PLA workgroup. The PLA workgroup must evaluate each policy and make recommendations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Veterans between age 18 and 24 currently have a 21.4 percent unemployment rate, versus nonveterans at 14 percent. This bill will help veterans access training and education that will increase employment opportunities. Upward of 13,000 veterans will relocate to Washington upon their separation from the service, making this bill especially important. Student veterans support the bill because many have prior military training that relates to their chosen educational path. Veterans already submit military transcripts to see if there is a possibility of credit transfer, so this bill will make it easier for veterans to benefit from their prior training. This bill aligns with the Council's strategies for increasing educational attainment.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Scott Copeland, SBCTC; Mark San Souci, Dept. of Defense; Ted Wicorek, Veterans Legislative Coalition; Joseph Shadwick, Student Veterans Assn. of UW Bothell; Stephanie Shadwick, UW student veteran; Dr. Gene Sharratt, WA Student Achievement Council; Bob Rudolph, Veterans and Military Families for Progress.