
Higher Education Committee

HB 1500

Brief Description: Concerning a study of higher education cost drivers.

Sponsors: Representatives Zeiger, Haler, Pollet, Manweller, Bergquist, Condotta, Magendanz and McCaslin.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Joint Higher Education Committee (Committee) to conduct a study of higher education costs at the state universities, regional universities, and The Evergreen State College that describes the cost drivers for each institution and for students.
- Requires the Committee to convene an advisory panel to meet four times to provide guidance, data, and recommendations to the Committee.
- Requires the Committee to report its findings to the Legislature by November 1, 2016.

Hearing Date: 2/3/15

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

Joint Higher Education Committee (Committee).

The Committee was created in 2012 with the purpose of reviewing the work of the Student Achievement Council (Council), providing feedback, and engaging with the Council and the higher education community to create greater communication, coordination, and alignment between the higher education system and the expectations of the Legislature. The committee must provide recommendations for higher education policy to the higher education and fiscal committees of the Legislature. The Committee consists of four members from the House of Representatives and four members from the Senate. The Committee is required to meet at least twice annually after legislative session each year.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Global Challenge (GC) States.

The GC States are considered top performing states in higher education to compare Washington to. The list of GC States is determined by the new economy index published by the Progressive Policy Institute which ranks states based on indicators of their potential to compete in the new economy. The list is reviewed every five years by the Office of Financial Management to determine if it is still appropriate. The Legislature uses the sixtieth percentile of resident undergraduate tuition at similar institutions of higher education in the GC States as a limit for Washington resident undergraduate tuition levels. The Legislature also uses the sixtieth percentile of total per-student funding for comparable institutions of higher education in the GC States as a goal for state funding.

2013 Joint Transportation Project Efficiencies and Cost Drivers.

In 2013, the Legislature required the Joint Transportation Committee to analyze transportation cost drivers in Washington, compare the Washington State Department of Transportation costs to comparable projects elsewhere, identify best practices and inefficiencies, and recommend changes to improve efficiency and save money. The study included an advisory panel to help provide recommendations.

Summary of Bill:

The Committee must conduct a study of higher education costs at the state universities, the regional universities, and The Evergreen State College using the 2013 Joint Transportation Cost Driver study as a model. The Committee must convene an advisory panel with members from the Committee and representatives from the Office of Financial Management, the Student Achievement Council, the Council of Presidents, the State Auditor's Office, the largest labor union at the regional universities, and the faculty of the state universities to meet four times to provide guidance, data, and recommendations.

The study must describe the cost drivers for each institution and for the students over the most recent 20-year period. The study must compare the cost drivers in Washington to the cost drivers for institutions and students in the GC States and other comparable states. The cost drivers to be considered include:

- research;
- faculty and staff salaries;
- administration;
- health care and benefits;
- capital;
- student services;
- textbooks; and
- student housing.

The Committee must report the findings of the study to the legislative higher education committees by November 1, 2016. The study section of the bill expires July 1, 2017.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/29/15.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.