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## College & Workforce Development Committee

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### HB 1950

**Brief Description:** Establishing the Washington free to finish college program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Hansen, Springer, Stanford, Valdez, Thai, Bergquist and Pollet.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the Free to Finish College Program, which provides grants for students to return to college to complete their certificate or degree if the student had left a few credits short of completing two or more years ago.

**Hearing Date:** 2/13/19

**Staff:** Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

#### Background:

Programs that entice students back to college after the student withdrew a few credits short of graduating are often referred to as recapture programs. An example of a recapture program was Western Washington University's (Western) Destination Graduation program. The program helped students who dropped out of Western in good academic standing return to Western to graduate by reducing barriers to reentry. The program targeted students who earned at least 140 credits prior to leaving who did not complete their degree elsewhere. Western estimated that more than 1,200 students fit this criteria left before graduating. The program helped over 181 students return to Western and complete their degree.

#### Summary of Bill:

The Washington Free to Finish College Program is established to encourage Washingtonians who attended a postsecondary institution, but left a few credits short of completing, to return to college to finish their degree. The Washington Student Achievement Council must administer

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the Free to Finish College Program and award grants to cover tuition and services and activities fees to eligible students. To be eligible, students need to meet the following:

- be a resident student;
- not have previously earned a postsecondary degree or certificate;
- be admitted to the institution of higher education that the student last attended two or more years ago;
- enroll in an institution of higher education on at least a part-time basis;
- be considered to have satisfactory academic standing; and
- submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid or the Washington Application for State Financial Aid.

A student who meets the eligibility requirements and is confirmed by the institution of higher education they are enrolled in to have no more than 15 quarter credits, or the equivalent, left to finish a certificate or degree may receive a Free to Finish College grant.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy must complete an evaluation of the Free to Finish College Program and submit a report to the Legislature by November 1, 2025. The evaluation must include a cost-benefit analysis of the Free to Finish College Program and an assessment of student support services provided to participants.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 11, 2019.

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