

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6542

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, February 4, 2020

Title: An act relating to adopting a uniform statewide automatic admissions policy at the four-year institutions of higher education.

Brief Description: Adopting a uniform statewide automatic admissions policy at the four-year institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Senators Liias, Holy, Randall, Stanford, Carlyle, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Saldaña and Wilson, C.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/30/20, 2/04/20 [DP-WM].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a pilot program to assess the impact of providing certain information to high school students on college-going.
- Convenes an advisory committee to develop a statewide automatic admissions policy.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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

Signed by Senators Randall, Chair; Stanford, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Member; Brown and Liias.

Staff: Kellee Gunn (786-7429)

Background: Automatic Admissions Policies. Automatic admissions policies allow state universities to automatically admit students to their institutions based on certain statewide minimum admissions requirements. These policies may be enacted through legislation, a state education board rule, or school system policy. Common admissions requirements used

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to determine whether a student qualifies for automatic admission are class rank, GPA, and SAT/ACT score.

Summary of Bill: Next Step Pilot Program. The Next Step pilot program is created under the authority of the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC). The purpose of the program is to provide information on automatic admissions policies and financial aid to high school students and measure and assess the impact on college attendance rates. WSAC, with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), must identify two school districts, one on each side of the Cascade mountain range, to participate in the Next Step pilot program. Resources and materials for the pilot program must be developed by the school districts with assistance by WSAC.

Schools participating in the pilot program must collect data on the college attendance rate of students and provide it to WSAC annually. School district selections must occur prior to the 2020-21 school year. Each school district must participate for at least four years.

Next Step Advisory Committee. WSAC, in consultation with OSPI, must convene the Next Step Advisory Committee. The committee must develop recommendations to the Legislature on a uniform statewide automatic admissions policy for first-time freshman undergraduates at the four-year higher education institutions.

The advisory committee must consider automatic admissions policies in other states, the impact of the Next Step pilot program, and feedback from higher education admissions professionals. The advisory committee must report on their progress annually. A final report with the advisory committee's findings and recommendations, including draft legislation establishing a uniform automatic admissions policy, is due to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2024.

The advisory committee shall consist of representatives from:

- each of the four-year institutions;
- OSPI;
- WSAC;
- the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC);
- the Office of the Lieutenant Governor;
- two student representatives chosen by WSAC and the SBCTC, each from an institution on opposite sides of the Cascade mountain range; and
- a representative from the business community.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This is about building a college-going culture. We need to figure out how to reduce barriers. The state of Idaho has a comprehensive

automatic admissions policy. This bill would take those best ideas and learn how we can make a policy that is best for our students. Making the next step to higher education easier and more visible will help all students in Washington.

OTHER: Over the past two decades, faculty has partnered with students on the admissions process at the University of Washington. It ensures our admissions process reflects our values. Our incoming classes are diverse in backgrounds and talents. Our holistic approach brings a significant number of first-generation students. Using an index, based on grades or GPA does not allow for a holistic review. As you look at admissions policies, please consider the UW's holistic admissions review. This bill does not address the issue of capacity. This bill would anticipate additional demand. Central Washington has an automatic admissions policy, as does WSU. There is space at the four-years. OSPI and WSAC leading the advisory committee should be reconsidered. This bill might reduce the ability of institutions to use holistic admissions, incentivize students to take less demanding classes, or move to less rigorous high schools.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Marko Liias, Prime Sponsor.

OTHER: Dan Ratner, University of Washington; Pau Francis, Council of Presidents; Steve Bollens, Council of Faculty.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.