
Higher Education Committee

HB 1909

Brief Description: Creating a pilot project for competency-based transfer in higher education.

Sponsors: Representatives Jarrett, Kenney, Cox, Fromhold, Chase, Berkey, Pearson, McCoy, Gombosky, Lantz, Clements, Talcott, Buck, Rockefeller, Pflug, Moeller, Priest, Edwards and Santos.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a pilot project between a four-year higher education institution and at least two community or technical colleges to create standards and processes for transfer based on defined student competencies.

Hearing Date: 2/25/03

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Since the passage of Washington's education reform law in 1993, the K-12 education system has been working to define and measure student performance based on state-defined Basic Education goals and Essential Academic Learning Requirements. The theory behind Washington's education reform (and that of other states) is that students should earn a high school diploma by demonstrating competency in meeting the state's education standards, rather than by completing a specified number of courses or credits.

Some work has been done in the state's higher education system to define desired educational outcomes on the basis of student competencies. For example, starting in 1995, the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) began to develop a competency-based approach for college admission. The HECB has translated current minimum admissions standards into competencies for English, math, world languages, and science.

The community and technical colleges have been working for some time to develop skill standards for career-technical programs, based on the knowledge and skills demanded by employers and national standards in a given industry. Individual four-year institutions are incorporating learning objectives into course descriptions or syllabi; particular degree

programs (such as teacher preparation) have defined expected performance in terms of what students should know and be able to do.

For the most part, however, transfer between two and four-year institutions of higher education remains governed by the courses and credits students accumulate toward their desired degree program.

Summary of Bill:

The HECB, in consultation with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and the Council of Presidents, will recruit a four-year institution and at least two community or technical colleges to participate in a pilot project to define transfer standards in selected academic disciplines on the basis of student competencies.

The participants, along with the HECB, will submit a work plan and time lines for the project to the higher education committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2003.

Under the project participants will develop standards, definitions, and quality assurance procedures. The Legislature's intent is that the transfer system in the project permits the four-year institution to define the knowledge, skills, and abilities students should possess in order to enter an upper division program in a particular academic discipline. The institutions providing lower division preparation are responsible for certifying that a student meets the standards, but have flexibility in determining how to assess student competencies.

The participants and the HECB report to the Legislature on their progress by December 1, 2004, including identifying any barriers encountered and making recommendations for the next steps in developing a competency-based transfer system.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 18, 2003.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed and expires on June 30, 2005.