

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 2382

---

As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Higher Education, February 23, 2004

**Title:** An act relating to improving articulation and transfer between institutions of higher education.

**Brief Description:** Improving articulation and transfer between institutions of higher education.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Kenney, Cox, Fromhold, Nixon, Anderson, Ruderman, Chase, Schual-Berke, Miloscia, Hudgins, Wood, Morrell, Santos, Moeller and Kagi).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education: 2/19/04, 2/23/04 [DPA].

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Carlson, Chair; Schmidt, Vice Chair; Horn, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, B. Sheldon and Shin.

**Staff:** Heather Lewis-Lechner (786-7448)

**Background:** The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is responsible for establishing a statewide transfer of credit policy and agreement, in cooperation with the public institutions of higher education and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). Together, these entities have created the Direct Transfer Agreement, or DTA. Any student who completes an approved DTA associate degree at a community college is considered to have satisfied the lower division general education requirements at a public four-year institution. These students are generally admitted as juniors when they transfer.

**Transfer Associate Degrees:** In the late 1990's, analysis of students' credit accumulation and graduation patterns revealed that when transfer students in science, math, and other highly structured majors arrived at a four-year institution, they needed to take additional lower division course requirements to qualify for entry into their major.

To address this problem, the Council of Presidents (COP), the HECB, and the SBCTC convened a work group to develop a statewide Associate of Science Transfer Degree (AS-T), which was adopted in 2000. Under the AS-T, students take more math and science prerequisites at the community college, with the objective of transferring directly into a major once they reach a four-year institution.

Over the last two years, work groups have been developing other specialized transfer associate degrees in elementary education, secondary education for math and science teachers, and business administration.

**Course Equivalency:** Outside of DTA associate degrees, each four-year institution determines how courses earned at another college or university meet general education requirements, apply toward requirements for a major, or count toward a baccalaureate degree. At some institutions this determination is made by faculty within each college or department. To assist students, each institution has created guides to illustrate course equivalency: which courses from which institutions are considered equivalent to which courses at the receiving institution. There is no statewide system of course equivalency in Washington. In 2001, the Education Commission of the States reported that 26 other states had statewide systems of course equivalency.

**Access for Transfer Students:** In 1994, the public four-year institutions agreed to continue to accept the same proportion of transfer students from community and technical colleges as they did in 1992. The institutions have since met or exceeded this proportion. In mid-2003, however, the University of Washington and Washington State University announced that because of rising student applications and limited additional state dollars for new enrollment, they plan to limit admission of transfer students back to 1992 levels.

The 2003-05 biennial operating budget allocated \$6.2 million to increase the capacity of four-year institutions to accept junior-level transfer students. The Office of Financial Management distributed the funds among the institutions based on their applications.

**Summary of Amended Bill: Transfer Associate Degrees:** The HECB will convene work groups to develop transfer associate degrees for specific academic majors. Work groups include representatives from the SBCTC, COP, and faculty from two- and four-year institutions. Work groups may include representatives from independent four-year institutions. A transfer associate degree must enable a student to complete the lower-division courses or competencies required for general education and preparation for a specific major. Completion of a transfer associate degree does not guarantee the student admission into an institution, or into a major that has competitive requirements. The HECB must monitor four-year institutions' implementation of the degrees to ensure compliance.

During 2004-05, the work groups will develop degrees for elementary education, engineering, and nursing. Each year thereafter, work groups will develop additional degrees with a priority for majors in high demand by transfer students, or majors where the current general associate transfer degree does not adequately prepare students.

The HECB makes biennial progress reports beginning January 10, 2005. The first report includes measurable indicators of improvement and baseline data. Subsequent reports monitor the indicators and provide other data on improving transfer efficiency. The HECB, in collaboration with the Intercollege Relations Commission, will collect and maintain lists of courses that fall within the associate degrees.

**Course Equivalency:** The HECB must create a statewide system of course equivalency for public higher education institutions, so that courses from one institution can be transferred and applied toward academic majors and degrees in the same manner as equivalent courses at the receiving institutions.

A work group convened by the HECB will identify equivalent courses among all public and two- and four-year institutions and develop strategies for communicating course equivalency

to students, faculty, and advisors. The work group may include representatives from independent four-year institutions. The work group must take into account the unique curriculum of The Evergreen State College in developing the course equivalency system.

The HECB makes a progress report by January 10, 2005, including options and cost estimates for ongoing maintenance of the system.

Policies adopted by public four-year institutions of higher education regarding transfer of lower-division credits must treat students transferring from community colleges the same as students transferring from public four-year institutions.

**Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:** Language is added that requires that policies adopted by public four-year institutions of higher education regarding the transfer of lower-division credits must treat students transferring from community colleges the same as students transferring from public four-year institutions.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** The policies and procedures regarding transfer of courses and credits need to be improved and this bill provides those needed improvements and addresses the significant problems in the current system. Increasing the number of students that can obtain advanced degrees is necessary for our state's economic vitality and this bill helps improve the process for students and better enables them to figure out how to take the needed courses for transferring and make fewer mistakes. The current system is complex and confusing for students. This bill is a way to give clear direction to the Higher Education Coordinating Board, help transfer students get the education they desire and improve higher education in this state. We need the information that will be obtained from the gap analysis required by this bill. There is some ambiguity in the current language regarding what the HECB is required to do regarding the statewide system of course equivalency that could be cleared up with some clarifying language.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Rep. Kenney, prime sponsor; Bruce Botka, HECB; Terry Teale, COP; Loretta Seppanen, SBCTC.