

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2707

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 26, 2004

Title: An act relating to higher education branch campuses.

Brief Description: Regarding higher education branch campuses.

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Kenney, Priest, Sommers, Jarrett, McCoy, Chase and Hudgins).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/19/04, 2/26/04 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

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

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: When the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) published its first master plan for higher education in 1987, it concluded that existing upper division and graduate higher education programs did not fully meet the needs of the state. Affirming these findings, the 1989 Legislature established five branch campuses in growing urban areas, to be operated by the state's two public research universities. The University of Washington (UW) campuses are located in Tacoma and Bothell; the Washington State University (WSU) campuses are located in Vancouver, the Tri-Cities, and Spokane.

In 2002 and 2003, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) was directed to examine the current and future role and mission of the branch campuses. The Institute's interim report concluded that branch campuses have been responding to their original missions to expand access to higher education and contribute to regional economic development. However, the Institute's final report pointed out that branch campuses are influenced by significant internal and external factors that may be moving them away from their original missions. The Institute also found that each branch campus is unique with a distinct local context, including academic programs, faculty expertise, student demographics, nearby industries, and neighboring higher education institutions.

The final report identified several opportunities for future legislative direction regarding branch campuses. Topics included:

1. *The designation of each branch campus as a research institution.* The Institute found that, although the level of research at each branch varies widely, the research activity of

most branch campuses falls somewhere between the state's research and comprehensive institutions. Nevertheless the state funds each branch campus as a research university.

2. *Improvement of collaboration among branch campuses and community and technical colleges.* The Institute found that collaboration occurs among branch campuses and community and technical colleges, but is inconsistent. Research institutions and community colleges have markedly distinct academic programs, cultures, and students. Although current statute references a two-plus-two model of education, it does not specifically require the institutions to work together.
3. *Role of each branch campus in offering doctoral programs.* Current statute refers to graduate education being offered at branch campuses, but does not specify the level of graduate education. HECB policy originally prohibited branch campuses from offering doctoral degrees because of their costs, but this policy has been relaxed over time. WSU Spokane campus received HECB approval for a Doctorate in Pharmacy in 1992. Other proposals have been discussed, but some legislators question adding this activity to the branches' portfolio.
4. *Whether any branch campus needs to become a four-year institution.* The prospect of becoming a four-year institution is a key topic for branch campuses, with the possible exception of WSU Spokane. Faculty reward systems, academic culture, and community interests provide pressure to create a more traditional campus. A national consultant on the Institute study indicated that branch campuses in other states have tended to respond to these pressures by becoming four-year institutions.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Legislature finds that branch campuses are responding to their original mission, but that the policy landscape in higher education has changed. Each branch campus has evolved into a unique institution, and it is appropriate to assess this evolution to ensure each campus is aligned with state goals and regional needs. The Legislature intends to recognize the unique nature of branch campuses, reaffirm the mission of each, and set the course for their continued future development. The term "branch" will no longer apply to the University of Washington Tacoma, the University of Washington Bothell, WSU Vancouver or WSU Tri-Cities.

The primary mission of branch campuses is stated: to expand access to baccalaureate and master's level graduate education in under-served urban areas in collaboration with community and technical colleges. However, the Legislature recognizes there are alternative models to achieve the primary mission and some campuses may have additional secondary missions in response to regional needs. Some may be best suited to transition to a four-year comprehensive university; others should focus on continuous improvement of the two-plus-two model. At some campuses, an innovative combination of instruction and research targeted to support regional economic development may be appropriate.

Branch campuses are directed to collaborate with community and technical colleges to develop articulation agreements, dual admissions policies, and other partnerships. Private postsecondary institutions are invited to participate in the conversations about meeting the needs of under-served communities. Other possible collaboration includes joint development of curricula and degree programs, collocation of instruction, and faculty-sharing. HECB must

adopt performance measures to ensure a collaborative partnership between community and technical colleges and branch campuses.

Legislative intent is stated that each branch campus be funded commensurate with its unique mission, the degree programs offered, and the combination of instruction and research, but at a level less than a research university.

In consultation with HECB, branch campuses may propose legislation authorizing practice-oriented or professional doctoral programs if: a) unique research facilities and equipment are located near the campus; or b) the campus can clearly demonstrate student and employer demand in the region, linked to economic development.

WSU Spokane is no longer considered a branch campus. WSU and Eastern Washington University must collaborate with one another and with local community colleges to provide educational pathways and programs to citizens in the Spokane area. Each remaining branch campus must make a recommendation on future evolution to the HECB by November 15, 2004. Following review in the context of statewide goals, the HECB will provide policy options along with the original campus recommendations to the higher education and fiscal committees of the Legislature by January 15, 2005, on the future evolution of the campus. Recommendations must address the model of education and mission that best suit the campus; data that illustrates how baccalaureate and degree production will be increased; and an estimate of implementation costs. HECB will develop parameters and a standard format for the evaluation.

Three sections of law pertaining to the original creation of branch campuses in 1989 are repealed.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The term "branch" will no longer apply to the UW Tacoma, UW Bothell, WSU Vancouver, or WSU Tri-Cities. Private colleges and universities are invited to participate in their communities' conversations about meeting baccalaureate and master's level needs of under-served communities. Campus recommendations on their future evolution go first to the HECB by November 15, 2004. The HECB reviews each campus' recommendations in the context of statewide higher education goals and presents options to the higher education and fiscal committees of the Legislature by January 15, 2005. The campuses must include in their examination programs offered in partnership with community and technical colleges and areas for possible improvement in these working relationships.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Regional differences and flexibility are encouraged as each campus may have a unique role in its local community. Legislative goals will help direct the work of the institutions as they determine their own niche. Attracting businesses and meeting the work force needs of the communities are goals for the upper division campuses in Washington. The local evolution of the campuses will continue while the issue of doctoral degrees now has some legislative direction. As the campuses develop, it is important for them to acknowledge

both statewide needs and access. Smooth transition and collaboration among institutions is important to all of us.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Rep. Phyllis Kenney, prime sponsor; Loretta Seppanen, SBCTC; Bruce Botka, HECB; Randy Hodgins, UW; Larry Ganders, WSU; Michelle Johnson, President, Pierce College; Jim McLaughlin, President, Lower Columbia College.