

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## E2SSB 5135

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Requiring policies regarding the efficient use of instructional resources.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Carlson, West, Horn, Schmidt and Rossi).

**Senate Committee on Higher Education**  
**Senate Committee on Ways & Means**  
**House Committee on Higher Education**

**Background:** Legislators nationwide have expressed concern about the increasing number of years it takes to complete a baccalaureate degree. Fiscal constraints and productivity/accountability demands have been the catalysts behind the search for alternatives to shorten the time to degree completion. One of the strategies, suggested by research, that might encourage students to earn only the number of credits required for a degree, is an excess-credit surcharge. Proponents of such a policy say that "lingering students are expensive to the state because they take so many courses and occupy spaces that other students need."

Generally, tuition is less than what the state spends to educate an undergraduate. Thus, a public subsidy exists and its value is tabulated annually for Washington by the Higher Education Coordinating Board. Subsidies vary but range on average from \$3,773 at two-year colleges to \$4,950 a year for those taking classes from a state research university to \$5,228 a year for those enrolled at a regional, comprehensive university to \$8,578 a year for an upper-division course from one of Washington's five research university branch campuses. Together with operation fees paid by enrolled students, these resources support the delivery of college-level instruction to citizens who participate.

**Summary:** Each state baccalaureate institution and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges must develop policies to ensure enrolled undergraduates complete degree and certificate programs in a timely manner. Institution-based policies must address, at a minimum, students who (a) accumulate more than 125 percent of the credits necessary to graduate; (b) drop more than 25 percent of their class load during a term; and (c) are on academic probation for longer than one term. State higher education institutions may assess a tuition surcharge for continued enrollment of such students as a matter of local policy.

Each baccalaureate institution and the State Board must report to the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) by January 30, 2004 on resource-efficient, capacity-conscious degree completion policies and provide baseline data about affected students. Institutional reports must describe actions taken to improve graduation efficiency, particularly reduction of barriers to enrollment in courses required for a degree major.

The HECB must summarize institutional policies and baseline student data, and report back to the higher education policy committees of the Legislature by March 1, 2004. As part of

its report to the Legislature, the HECB shall recommend whether increased tuition and fees should be uniformly charged to students attending public colleges and universities as an additional incentive for the timely completion of degrees and certificate programs.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	28	21	
House	97	1	(House amended)
Senate	37	11	(Senate concurred)

**Effective:** July 27, 2003