
Higher Education Committee

SSB 6328

Brief Description: Enhancing campus security.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Kohl-Welles, Shin, Schoesler, Kilmer, Delvin, McAuliffe and Rasmussen; by request of Governor Gregoire).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires institutions of higher education to:
 - (1) create emergency management and response plans;
 - (2) develop agreements with local jurisdictions which delineate responsibilities and include the shared use of equipment and technology;
 - (3) establish task forces to review safety planning processes; and
 - (4) submit to the Higher Education Coordinating Board and State Board for Community and Technical Colleges respectively concerning:
 - (a) a study assessing each institutions' ability to ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff; and
 - (b) a plan to maximize program effectiveness based on the findings of the self study. This plan must be updated every two years.
- Requires reports biennially on the efforts of each institution regarding campus safety.

Hearing Date: 2/20/08

Staff: Andi Smith (786-7304).

Background:

Campus safety planning can be broken down into five major components:

- Mental health services: including the availability of mental health counselors, psychiatrists, and mental health outreach programs;
- Communications: including public address systems, sirens, instant warning systems,

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intercoms, etc.;

- Police: including commissioned and noncommissioned officers and other first responders, including training;
- Campus planning and awareness: violence prevention programs, campus safety assessments and review, campus safety advocates, emergency management coordinators; and
- Building mapping and access: including key card systems, campus mapping, security cameras, etc.

The Council of Presidents conducted a survey of the public Baccalaureate institutions to compile basic background information on the policies and procedures that are in place to respond to campus security issues. The Baccalaureates agreed that responding to emergencies is "highly episodic and circumstantial" and that institutions require flexibility to evaluate, assess, and respond according to the best judgment on hand at the moment.

Responses from the Baccalaureate institutions indicate that each has established procedures to make the university community and public aware of emergency preparedness policies, has some means of alerting students, faculty, and staff to emergency situations, has "mapped" campus buildings to include floor plans, utility diagrams, and the location of hazardous materials. The survey also indicates that public Baccalaureate institutions have entered into mutual aid agreements with emergency management agencies, law enforcement agencies and other partners in addition to the commissioned police forces they employ.

There is not as much consistency in baseline policy and practice within the community and technical college system. While the colleges have each developed emergency preparedness plans and have identified mechanisms for public alert, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges estimates that only 10 percent of colleges have extensive "mapping" of campus buildings. Because community and technical colleges do not typically have commissioned police forces, they are also more reliant on local law enforcement and emergency management organizations to provide emergency response.

Currently, each institution annually updates and distributes a report that includes crime statistics for the prior three-year period. In addition, each institution provides every student and new employee with information regarding enrollments, campus non-student workforce profiles, the number of campus security personnel, and the arrangements with state and local police.

Summary of Bill:

Each institution makes available to students, faculty, and staff an emergency management and response plan. Other interested people may obtain the plan upon request. At a minimum, the plan includes: (1) data regarding campus enrollments, campus non-student workforce profiles, and the number of campus security personnel; (2) policies, procedures, and programs for preventing and responding to violence and campus emergencies, setting the weapons policy on campus, applying to controlled substances, and governing student privacy; (3) information about where to view campus policies on complaints and contact information for the individual to whom complaints may be directed in cases of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and sexual harassment; and (4) mutual assistance agreements, access methods and options to programs for persons with disabilities, available mental health and counseling services, and emergency management plans.

For the most recent academic year, the emergency management and response must include: (1) a description of programs and services offered by the institution and student organizations providing crime prevention and counseling; and (2) security policies and programs at student housing facilities.

Each institution enters into memoranda of understanding that outlines institutional and local jurisdiction responsibilities during campus emergencies. Institutions also enter into mutual aid agreements with local jurisdictions regarding equipment and technology sharing in the case of campus emergencies. Institutions already have task forces to annually examine campus safety issues. These task forces must annually review the emergency management and response plans and make suggestions for improvement. A specific individual must be designated for monitoring and coordinating the institution's compliance with the campus safety laws.

By October 30, 2008, each institution submits a self-study, assessing its ability to ensure campus safety and an evaluation of its ability to provide an appropriate level of mental health services, to its respective state governing board; plans to address unmet safety needs of each campus must also be submitted. In October of each even-numbered year, each institution also submits updated safety plans. The Higher Education Coordinating Board and the SBCTC report to the Governor and higher education committees biennially on compliance and recommendations on measures to ensure campus safety and security.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 12, 2008.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.