

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5276

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to increasing the availability of engineering programs in public universities.

Brief Description: Increasing the availability of engineering programs in public universities.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Schoesler, Jarrett, Oemig, Shin and Holmquist).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/18/09, 3/20/09 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Removes the restriction that only the University of Washington (UW) and Washington State University may offer civil, mechanical, and chemical engineering.
- Removes the restriction that only the UW may offer aeronautic and astronautic engineering.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Wallace, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Anderson, Ranking Minority Member; Schmick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Carlyle, Driscoll, Grant-Herriot, Haler and White.

Staff: Andi Smith (786-7304)

Background:

Exclusive Lines of Study.

State laws stipulate that only the University of Washington (UW) or Washington State University (WSU) may offer degrees in particular major lines of study:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

- Offered only by the UW: Law, medicine, forest products, logging engineering, library sciences, aeronautic and astronautic engineering, and fisheries.
- Offered only by WSU: Agriculture (in all its branches and subdivisions), veterinary medicine, and economic science in its application to agriculture and rural life.
- Offered only by the UW or WSU: Pharmacy, architecture, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, chemical engineering, and forest management.

In 2003 the restriction that only the UW or WSU could offer electrical engineering was lifted. In 1985 restrictions with respect to lines of study in liberal arts, pure science, mining, home economics, commerce, journalism, and marine engineering were removed. At the same time, a new major line restriction was added so that only the UW could offer astronautic engineering.

Higher Education Coordinating Board Program Approval.

Creation of a new degree program at a public four-year institution requires approval by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB). In its evaluation process, the HECB must use clear guidelines and objective decision-making criteria and must review and consult with the institution and other interested agencies and individuals. Institutions seeking approval must demonstrate that the proposal is justified by the HECB's needs assessment and show how the proposal aligns with or implements the statewide Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education.

Subsequent to the 2003 removal of the major lines restriction with respect to electrical engineering, Eastern Washington University (EWU) applied for and received HECB approval to offer electrical engineering. The EWU began offering coursework in electrical engineering in the fall of 2005.

Summary of Bill:

Civil engineering, mechanical engineering, and chemical engineering are no longer exclusive major lines at the UW and WSU. Aeronautic and astronautic engineering are no longer exclusive major lines at the UW. Undergraduate or graduate degrees in these lines of study may be offered at any institution of higher education in Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is a companion bill so you've seen the measure and you understand the merits. This is a good bill that was made better with a better title in the Senate.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Schoesler, prime sponsor; and David Buri, Eastern Washington University.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.