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## Higher Education Committee

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### SSB 6357

**Brief Description:** Requiring policies for academic recognition of certain formal and informal learning experiences.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Kilmer, Becker, Shin, Rockefeller, McAuliffe and Roach).

#### Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Tasks the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), in consultation with numerous other persons and entities, with developing policies for awarding academic credit for learning from work and military experience, military and law enforcement training, career college training, internships and externships, and apprenticeships.
- Requires the SBCTC to submit these policies, along with recommendations, to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2010.

**Hearing Date:** 2/17/10

**Staff:** Cece Clynch (786-7195).

#### Background:

According to *State Policies to Bring Adult Learning into Focus: A Companion Guide*, prepared by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), in partnership with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), the United States cannot reach necessary educational attainment levels by focusing solely upon strategies related to traditional-aged students. Educating adults must be part of the solution. The 2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education in Washington specifically identifies working adults and non-traditional students as demographic groups whose engagement in higher education opportunities should be encouraged.

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*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.*

In their guide, CAEL and NCHEMS provide a range of policy recommendations for improving adult learning: (1) Address Affordability: Reduce the Cost of Postsecondary Learning for Adults; (2) Address Accessibility: Put Postsecondary Learning within Reach of Adults; (3) Raise Awareness about the Need for Adult Learning; (4) Make the Right Connections: Career Pathways, Education Pathways, Articulation and Credentialing; and (5) Let Data Drive the Process.

Promoting the assessment of prior learning for college credit is one way of addressing the second recommendation with respect to accessibility and putting postsecondary learning within reach for adults. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) or the Assessment of Prior Learning are two terms used by institutions of higher education to describe the process of earning college credit from learning obtained from past work, training, volunteer, and personal life experiences. The CAEL and NCHEMS guide suggests that, "States can promote the use of PLA by surveying institutions to determine the state of the practice in offering PLA, and through training, conferences and other initiatives that support this practice."

### **Summary of Bill:**

Findings are made that students at higher education institutions frequently bring with them a wealth of formal and informal learning experiences, many of which may represent learning outcomes equivalent or superior to those achieved by students in more traditional academic settings. Intent is expressed that Washington institutions of higher education develop reliable, transparent, and consistent policies regarding academic recognition for prior significant life and learning experiences.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), in consultation with others, must develop policies for awarding academic credit for learning from work and military experience, military and law enforcement training, career college training, internships and externships, and apprenticeships. In so doing, the SBCTC must consult with:

- the Higher Education Coordinating Board;
- the Council of Presidents;
- representatives from Washington's institutions of higher education;
- representatives from two and four-year faculty;
- representatives from private career schools; and
- representatives from business and labor.

These policies must address, but are not limited to, issues regarding verification, accreditation, transfer of academic credit, licensing and professional recognition, and financial aid. To the extent possible, the policies must provide for consistent application by all institutions of higher education and a basis for accurate and complete academic counseling.

By December 31, 2010, the SBCTC must submit these policies, along with recommendations, to the appropriate committees of the Legislature.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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