

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5625

As of February 19, 2009

Title: An act relating to creating a state college.

Brief Description: Creating a state college in Snohomish county.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Berkey, Hobbs, Shin and Ranker.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/06/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: A number of studies have been undertaken over the past decade to determine the higher education needs of north King, Snohomish, Island, and Skagit Counties. In November 2006 a consultant team final report found that the needs of about 10,800 full-time equivalent students would be unmet by 2025 if students from those counties participated in baccalaureate and graduate degree programs at the 1998 national average for all adults. The consultant report recommended investment in a four-year university with a polytechnical focus.

After receiving this report, the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) issued its assessment of the higher education needs of Snohomish, Island, and Skagit (SIS) counties in December 2006. The HECB recommended: (1) that the state's first priority should be to increase core funding and enrollment at the existing public colleges and universities; (2) that future decisions about creation of a new four-year campus should be made when the existing institutions reached their maximum capacity; and (3) that planning for a new four-year campus in the SIS region should continue in order to more fully describe the requirements, costs, and system impacts of creating a new campus.

In 2008 the Legislature directed the HECB to assist these parties in coming to an agreement on the location of the potential campus and to issue a report to the appropriate legislative fiscal and policy committees by December 1, 2008. A consultant was retained. While there was agreement that the region needed a four-year institution, no consensus was reached on where a campus should be located.

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.

Summary of Bill: A college is established in Snohomish County to provide baccalaureate and graduate level programs. The priorities of the college will be: (1) preparing students for careers in high employer demand fields such as science, technology, and engineering; (2) preparing students for careers in clean energy, clean energy technology, sustainable energy and smart grid technologies, and green building design and architecture; and (3) developing an atmosphere of innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic development by encouraging relationships with the business community and providing on-campus or near-campus locations for the development of incubator projects and businesses.

The college will provide upper division capacity for transfer students and may offer lower division courses linked to specific majors in fields not addressed at local community colleges. The college will admit students through coadmission or coenrollment agreements with a community college emphasizing access for transfer students.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: We have done enough studies to document the higher education needs of the people in this area. It is time to commit to building the next public research college. Whether it is a branch or independent college does not matter, we need to act. We can determine the exact site after we commit to the effort. This bill has the flexibility to work. The tribes in the area support this effort and would be able to provide opportunities for students to work and gain experience.

OTHER: There is a documented need for more post-secondary educational opportunities in this area, but given the present budget projections, we should very carefully plan our future and consider the progress we have already made. The state has significantly extended educational opportunities in the area over the last 20 years. In this time of very limited resources, we should be careful not to spread them too thin. The HECB is working on a new unified state planning model, including guiding principles, for the development of higher education opportunities throughout the state. This needs to be completed this year before we make new investment decisions. Our system has a tradition of cooperation, quality, and careful planning that we need to preserve.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor; Aaron Reardon, Snohomish County Executive; Linda Byrnes, City of Arlington; Carolyn Erickson, Arlington School District # 16; Al Aldrich, Marysville Tulalip Chamber of Commerce; Mike Cooper, Snohomish County Council; Mayor Dennis Kendall, City of Marysville; Mel Sheldon, Tulalip Tribes.

OTHER: Ann Daley, Executive Director, HECB; Terry Teale, Executive Director, Council of Presidents.