

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2651

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 25, 2014

Title: An act relating to creating a higher education transparency web site.

Brief Description: Requiring creation of a higher education transparency web site.

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Hansen, Haler, Zeiger, Magendanz and Pollet).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/11/14, 97-1.

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/20/14, 2/25/14 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chair; Becker, Vice Chair; Kohl-Welles, Ranking Member; Frockt and Tom.

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: Currently institutions are required to disclose to undergraduate resident students on tuition billing statements or their web site the source of all institutional revenue and uses of tuition revenue for the prior year. Additionally, each governing board of the four-year institutions of higher education must make public its proposal for tuition and fee increases before adoption and allow opportunity for public comment.

In 2007 the Legislature created an education data center, referred to as the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC), within the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and required OFM to work jointly with the Legislative Education and Accountability Program Committee in conducting collaborative analyses of early learning, K-12, and higher education programs and issues.

In 2011 the Legislature required the four-year institutions to begin reporting annually on specific performance data to the ERDC and for the data to be displayed on OFM's web site, in a uniform dashboard format (dashboard).

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 (Recommended Amendments): In conjunction with OFM, all branch campuses must display required data on the dashboard by December 1, 2014. The data displayed for a branch campus must not be considered separately from the main campus for the purpose of performance goals in higher education.

When data suppression is necessary to protect student privacy, the ERDC must avoid redacting data to the maximum extent possible, using alternatives such as combining data groupings or using the percentage of students in place of a specific number of students.

By January 1, 2015, OFM must create a web site with accessible information on revenues and expenditures for each public institution of higher education.

In maintaining revenue and expenditure information, OFM must:

- ensure the web site is easily accessible;
- use data from existing data sources, wherever possible;
- include historical data to allow year-to-year comparisons;
- analyze and display the data in order to communicate the relative size of revenues and expenditures for each institution of higher education in an easily accessible and understandable format;
- provide basic enrollment information for each institution; and
- update the web site each year.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Amendments): Directs OFM, rather than the ERDC, to create a web site with accessible information on revenues and expenditures. Removes confidentiality and public records language. No longer requires the institutions to place a link on their web sites to the dashboard. Removes all new language from the ERDC's statute and places it in a new section in OFM's chapter.

Requires all branch campuses to display specific data on OFM's dashboard for four-year institutions of higher education by December 1, 2014. Specifies that data displayed for branch campuses will not be considered separately from their main campuses for the purpose of performance goals. Directs that when data suppression is necessary to protect student privacy, the ERDC must avoid redacting data to the maximum extent possible.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on February 17, 2014.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Substitute House Bill: OTHER: OFM would prefer that the ERDC not host these reports.

Persons Testifying: OTHER: Paula Moore, OFM.