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**HOUSE BILL 1303**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Haler, Pollet, Zeiger, and Bergquist

AN ACT Relating to a state four-year degree production incentive program; adding a new section to chapter 44.28 RCW; and adding a new chapter to Title 28B RCW.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  It is the intent of the legislature to incentivize the production of certain higher education degrees by paying the regional universities and The Evergreen State College for producing these degrees. The legislature is particularly interested in incentivizing the production of degrees awarded to resident students who are low income, first generation, or who earn a degree in science, engineering, math, technology (STEM), or other high employer demand fields.

The legislature intends to distribute thirty million dollars of general fund—state moneys per year to the state four-year institutions of higher education based on certain degree production and completion metrics.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The degree production incentive program is created. The purpose of the program is to incentivize the regional universities and The Evergreen State College to increase the production of degrees awarded to resident undergraduate students who are low income, first generation, or who earn a degree in science, engineering, math, technology (STEM), or other high employer demand fields.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "First generation" means students whose parents did not achieve more than a high school diploma.

(2) "Low income" means students who are from low-income families as defined by the education data center in RCW 43.41.400.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The degree production incentive account is created in the custody of the state treasurer to be used solely and exclusively for the degree production incentive program in this chapter.

(2) All receipts from funds appropriated by the legislature for the degree production incentive program must be deposited into the account.

(3) Expenditures from the account must be used only for degree production incentive purposes as identified in section 5 of this act and distributed based on a formula described in section 5 of this act.

(4) Only the executive director of the student achievement council or the executive director's designee may authorize expenditures from the account.

(5) The account is subject to allotment procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW, but an appropriation is not required for expenditures.

(6) Any moneys remaining in the account at the end of the biennium must be accumulated and do not revert to the general fund.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Expenditures from the degree production incentive account must be used for the purpose of providing incentives to the regional universities and The Evergreen State College to meet degree production goals to increase:

(1) Undergraduate degrees awarded;

(2) Undergraduate degrees awarded in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), and high employer demand fields;

(3) Degrees awarded to low-income undergraduate students;

(4) Degrees awarded to first-generation undergraduate students; and

(5) The acceptance rate of in-state students.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The student achievement council must disburse annually degree production incentive moneys to each of the regional universities and The Evergreen State College, according to the total number of points earned by the institution in subsection (3) of this section. The moneys disbursed to an institution in one biennium under this section must be added to the base appropriation of that institution in each subsequent biennium.

(2) An institution of higher education earns one point:

(a) For each undergraduate degree awarded;

(b) For each undergraduate degree awarded in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), and high employer demand fields;

(c) For each undergraduate degree awarded to a low-income student;

(d) For each undergraduate degree awarded to a first-generation student.

(3) The total number of points earned by an institution of higher education must equal the sum of points earned by the institution under subsection (2) of this section multiplied by the acceptance rate of in-state students.

(4) The student achievement council shall use the data collected by education data center under RCW 43.41.400 for the higher education data dashboard under RCW 28B.77.090 to determine the total number of points earned by an institution for degree production incentive purposes under section 5 of this act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 44.28 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The joint committee shall conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of the degree production incentive program created in section 2 of this act in meeting its stated goals.

(2) The joint committee shall report to the appropriate committees of the legislature the results of its findings and any recommendations for changes to the program by December 1, 2016, and by December 1st each even year thereafter.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Sections 1 through 6 of this act constitute a new chapter in Title 28B RCW.

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