
Higher Education Committee

HB 1812

Brief Description: Creating an informational program to increase applications from high-achieving low-income high school students to selective institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Representatives Hansen, Magendanz, Hargrove, Haler, Zeiger, Carlyle, Tharinger and Pollet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Student Achievement Council (Council) to design and implement, by the fall of 2016, a program that provides information to high-achieving, low-income high school students with the purpose of increasing the number of applications from this group of students to four-year institutions of higher education and independent, nonprofit baccalaureate degree-granting institutions in the state.
- Requires the Council to partner with the a national entity that offers aptitude tests for the purpose of predicting college success, consult with the public baccalaureate institutions and the independent, nonprofit baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, and work with a third party evaluator.
- Describes key elements of the packet to be mailed to the students.

Hearing Date: 2/10/15

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

Several national studies have found that only a small portion of high-achieving, low-income students apply to selective colleges and universities compared to the number of high-achieving, high-income students that apply to selective institutions. This occurs despite the finding that high-achieving, low-income students who apply are also admitted, enroll, progress, and graduate at the same rates as high-income students with similar test scores and grades. Studies have also found that for high-achieving, low-income students, the net costs are often lower at selective

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institutions than at less selective institutions because of financial aid options available at selective institutions. In addition, most application fees for selective institutions and national aptitude testing fees can be waived for low-income students.

Researchers from Stanford University and the University of Virginia designed an experiment, known as the Expanding College Opportunities project (ECO) to test whether high-achieving, low-income students would change their behavior if they knew more about colleges. Also, the experiment was to test whether there was a cost-effective method to inform such students of their college opportunities. The ECO combined application guidance, customized information about the net cost of attending different colleges, and no-paperwork application fee waivers in a packet that was mailed to students that cost \$6 per student. The intervention was found to increase the number of applications and enrollments of low-income students to selective institutions.

Summary of Bill:

The Washington Student Achievement Council (Council) must design and implement a program that provides information to high-achieving, low-income high school students through the mail, or electronically if deemed appropriate, with the purpose of increasing the number of applications from this group of students to four-year institutions of higher education and independent, nonprofit baccalaureate degree-granting institutions in the state.

In order to design, develop, and implement the program, the Council is required to partner with a national entity that offers aptitude tests and consult with the four-year institutions and the independent, nonprofit baccalaureate degree-granting institutions. High-achieving students from low-income families are to be identified by a method the Council deems appropriate, such as aptitude test scores, scores on Advance Placement tests, or running start. Low-income students are to be identified based on methods the Council deems appropriate, including eligibility for free and reduced priced lunch or participation in federal and state programs for low-income students.

A key element of the program is to send a customized information packet to high-achieving, low-income students. The packet must include, at a minimum:

- materials to help students choose colleges;
- an application guidance booklet;
- application fee waivers, if they are available, that allow the student to apply to four-year institutions and independent, nonprofit baccalaureate degree-granting institutions free of fees;
- information on college affordability and financial aid that includes the net cost of attendance for each four-year institution and each nonprofit baccalaureate degree-granting institution;
- information on merit and need-based aid from federal, state, and institutional sources; and
- a personally addressed cover letter signed by the Governor, all the presidents of the four-year institutions, and the presidents of the independent, nonprofit baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.

The Council is directed to implement the program no later than the fall of 2015, giving consideration to spring mailings in order to capture early action decisions offered by institutions of higher education and nonprofit baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 02/03/15.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.