
Higher Education Committee

HB 2825

Brief Description: Concerning student services for students with disabilities.

Sponsors: Representatives Frame, Zeiger, Walkinshaw, Stambaugh, Fitzgibbon, Haler, Tarleton, Pollet, Reykdal, McBride, Kagi, Kilduff, Morris, Ryu and Stanford.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the creation of a uniform disabilities application form to be used by institutions of higher education in determining a student's eligibility for core services or other accommodations at the institution.
- Requires institutions of higher education to notify transfer students with disabilities of their eligibility to receive the same core services that the student received at previous institution of higher education.

Hearing Date: 2/2/16

Staff: Trudes Tango (786-7384).

Background:

In general, federal and state laws prohibit discrimination against students on the basis of disability. Postsecondary schools are required to provide equal access to education to students with disabilities through academic adjustments and auxiliary aids and services, such as extending time allowed for taking tests and providing sign language interpreters. In addition, postsecondary schools must ensure physical access to buildings on campus.

Under the state's "core services" law, each public institution of higher education must ensure that students with disabilities are reasonably accommodated within that institution. The institution must provide students with disabilities with the appropriate core service or services necessary to ensure equal access. The student is entitled to receive a core service if the service is reasonably needed to accommodate the student's disability. The student must make a reasonable request for

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core services in a timely manner and the institution must respond reasonably and in a timely manner. Core services include:

- flexible procedures in the admissions process and early registration;
- sign language, or other interpreter services;
- textbooks and other education materials in large print, braille, electronic format or audiotape;
- provision of a reader, note taker, scribe or proof reader;
- ongoing coordination of efforts to improve campus accessibility;
- facilitation of physical access;
- access to adaptive equipment;
- referral to appropriate campus resources;
- flexibility in test taking arrangements; and,
- notification of the higher education's policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of disability.

Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities must be provided as appropriate for all aspects of college and university life, including recruitment, applications, enrollment, registration, financial aid, coursework, research, academic counseling, housing programs, and nonacademic services.

Summary of Bill:

By December 31, 2016, the Washington Student Achievement Council and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges must draft and adopt a uniform disabilities application for determining a student's or prospective student's eligibility for disability services at any of the institutions of higher education. The application must include:

- questions used to identify the applicant;
- questions necessary to determine if the applicant has a physical or mental impairment as defined by the federal Americans with Disabilities Act or any other applicable state law;
- questions necessary to determine if the applicant is eligible for core services or other accommodations from any of the institutions of higher education; and
- information regarding any supporting documentation that an applicant must submit as part of the application.

The institutions of higher education must each adopt the uniform disabilities application before the start of the 2017-18 academic year. The institutions must use the application as the sole application for determining a student's (including transfer and prospective students) eligibility for core services or other disability-related accommodations at the institution. The institutions of higher education must post the uniform disabilities application on its admissions web page and any web page containing resources for students with disabilities.

Each institution must notify transfer students of their eligibility for receiving the same core services or reasonable accommodations that were provided at their previous in-state institution. Institutions of higher education must provide all students who transfer from another institution of higher education and who had received a core service or reasonable accommodation at their prior institution, with at least the same core services or reasonable accommodation at the new institution, without having to reapply for the services or accommodations.

The uniform application must be submitted to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by January 1, 2017.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested.

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