

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 2769

As of February 23, 2016

Title: An act relating to creating a pilot program for community and technical colleges to offer bachelor degrees.

Brief Description: Creating a pilot program for community and technical colleges to offer bachelor degrees.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Senn, Zeiger, Bergquist, Haler, Reykdal, Frame, Rossetti, Kilduff and Goodman).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/15/16, 68-29.

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/23/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Evan Klein (786-7483)

Background: In 2005, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) was given authority to select four community or technical colleges to develop and offer programs of study leading to applied baccalaureate degrees on a pilot basis. An applied baccalaureate degree is a baccalaureate degree awarded by a community or technical college which expands on the curriculum from an associate of applied science degree, or its equivalent, and incorporates both theoretical and applied knowledge and skills in a specific technical field. In 2010, the pilot status and limitation on the number of colleges was removed. In order for a college to offer an applied baccalaureate degree, the college must receive approval from the SBCTC by demonstrating:

- resource capacity;
- that the college has the appropriate faculty;
- that there is student and employer demand; and
- that the program would fulfill a gap in options available for students because the program is not offered by a public four-year institution of higher education in the college's geographic area.

All programs must be approved by the SBCTC. The community and technical colleges do not have authority to offer bachelor degrees.

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.

In 2014-15, there were 15 colleges offering applied baccalaureate degrees, and 1037 students enrolled in applied baccalaureate degree programs in the community and technical college system.

Summary of Bill: The SBCTC must select up to five community or technical colleges to develop and offer programs of study leading to bachelor degrees in high-demand fields of study. Interested colleges must submit an application, and the SBCTC must review the applications and select the pilot colleges using the following criteria:

- demonstrates the capacity to make a long-term commitment of resources;
- has, or can readily engage, qualified faculty;
- can demonstrate demand for the proposed program from a sufficient number of students within the college's service area to make the program cost-effective and feasible to operate;
- can demonstrate employer demand for the level of technical training proposed within the program, making it cost-effective for students to seek the degree; and
- can demonstrate the proposed program fills a skills gap in the local area or in the state's workforce.

Priority will be given to colleges submitting applications designating support from the faculty, unless the college has already received funding from the Legislature to develop a bachelor degree program.

Colleges selected for the pilot program may develop the curriculum for and design and deliver courses leading to a bachelor degree. The colleges selected are allowed to award baccalaureate degrees and are authorized to charge tuition fees above the associate degree level, but not at rates that exceed the tuition fee rates at the regional universities.

Degree programs developed under the pilot program are subject to approval by the SBCTC before a college may enroll students in upper-division courses. A selected pilot college may not enroll students in upper-division courses before fall 2017, unless the college has funding from the Legislature to develop a bachelor degree program, in which case the program may enroll students in upper-division courses once the program is approved by the SBCTC and accredited. This program will count as one of the five pilots.

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), in collaboration with the SBCTC and the statewide faculty unions, must study the impacts of allowing community and technical colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees. The study must analyze baccalaureate degree demand compared to the populations served by current baccalaureate degree programs. The study must also discuss alternatives regarding pricing and cost models for tuition and state support, adequate student advising and support services, accreditation and academic quality, regional demand for additional baccalaureate degrees, and other factors deemed relevant. The WSAC must conduct the study within existing resources, but may contract with a third-party organization or request assistance from faculty and graduate research students from the public institutions for the research and analysis. A report on the study is due to the Legislature by November 1, 2018.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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: Last session, the Legislature awarded Bellevue College money to offer a baccalaureate science degree. Currently CTCs cannot offer these degrees, so this bill would open up bachelor degree programs for up to five CTCs, including Bellevue. Offering these degrees will allow CTC students to fill niche positions in high demand fields. In order for a CTC to offer a baccalaureate, the school would have to be accredited by the same group that accredits four-year institutions. This program would benefit students by placing people practicing in these fields of study as professors in the classrooms. Allowing five pilot schools would help open this program to the whole state and open this program up to additional high-demand fields. This bill would increase access to bachelor degrees. CTCs have graduated nearly 1100 students with applied baccalaureate degrees already. However, applied bachelor degrees are not enough for students in today's economy. There are many gaps in today's workforce, further increasing the need for bachelor degrees. The state has identified a large gap between employer demand and what our schools currently offer. The four-year institutions currently lack the capacity to handle all of the students seeking bachelor degrees in Washington. CTCs also better serve "place-bound" students who need to remain in their local community while attending school. CTCs can also offer baccalaureate degrees at an affordable price.

OTHER: There are faculty staffing issues not resolved by this bill. If we are asking students to pay university tuition, those students deserve comparable quality and staff deserves the same level of compensation. This may also change the overall mission of the CTCs. The public baccalaureates continue to produce more graduates. The four-year sector also maintains the capacity to enroll more students in bachelor programs. This bill is a substantial change in public policy. This proposal should be advanced in a way that doesn't divert limited resources from the four-year institutions. The mission of the CTCs is to apply a gap in options that are not offered by four-year institutions.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Senn, Prime Sponsor; Marty Brown, SBCTC; David Rule, President/CEO.

OTHER: Carla Nacarrato-Sinclair, Spokane Community Colleges-Association President; Paul Francis, Council of Presidents.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.