
College & Workforce Development Committee

E2SSB 5227

Brief Description: Concerning diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism training and assessments at institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Randall, Nobles, Das, Lovelett, Wilson, C., Hasegawa, Hunt, Keiser, Kuderer, Lias, Nguyen and Stanford).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill

- Requires public institutions of higher education to provide professional development training focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism (DEIA) for new faculty and staff by the 2022-23 academic year.
- Requires public institutions of higher education to provide a mandatory DEIA program to students beginning with the 2024-25 academic year.
- Requires the four-year institutions of higher education and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to conduct campus climate assessments to understand the current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the learning, working, and living environment on campus for students, faculty, and staff.

Hearing Date: 3/10/21

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Each of the public four-year institutions of higher education have diversity officers, except for Western Washington University. Diversity officers are executive-level positions tasked with establishing and maintaining a campus culture that values diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). There are 20 community and technical colleges (CTCs) that have Diversity and Equity Officers as a part of the Diversity and Equity Officers Commission, a newly formed group leading strategic equity efforts across the community and technical college sector.

At the public four-year institutions of higher education, required training for faculty varies. The Evergreen State College is the only institution that requires a mandatory annual DEI training for faculty. Some of the CTCs have required DEI training as well.

Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill:

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Antiracism Programs for Faculty, Staff, and Students.

Beginning with the 2022-23 academic year, each institution of higher education (IHE) must provide a mandatory professional development program focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism (DEIA) for all new faculty and staff. Other faculty and staff may participate in the DEIA professional development program as needed or required by their IHE. Beginning with the 2024-25 academic year, each IHE must provide a mandatory DEIA program to all enrolled students. The programs' purpose is to eliminate structural racism and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) while improving outcomes for students from historically marginalized communities. The programs must be developed in partnership with the institution's administration, faculty, staff, and student leadership groups. The programs should be developed and delivered by individuals with innate and acquired experience and expertise in the field of DEI. The programs' content framework must be posted on each IHE's public website for parents and community members.

The IHEs must create an evaluation for the professional development program and each participant must complete an evaluation. The evaluations must capture a participant's level of satisfaction with the program, the degree to which the learning objectives were achieved, and how the knowledge gained may be applied to the participant's work. The IHEs must share the evaluations annually with either the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) or the Council of Presidents (COP), depending on the IHE. Each IHE must develop a goal of at least 80 percent completion of the professional development program by all faculty and staff over a two-year period. The IHE must report to either the SBCTC or the COP on the progress towards meeting their goal. The IHEs must also create evaluations for student participants, that at a minimum, capture a student's level of satisfaction with the program and how they will apply the program to their education.

The SBCTC and the COP may conduct further analysis of the programs to determine promising practices. The SBCTC and the COP must post a list of model standards and promising practices for programs on their public websites.

The IHEs must each adopt rules to implement the DEIA programs.

Campus Climate Assessments.

The four-year IHEs and the SBCTC must conduct campus climate assessments to understand the current state of DEI in the learning, working, and living environment on campus for students, faculty, and staff. The assessments should occur every five years, at a minimum. The assessment results must be used to inform the professional development and student programs. Existing campus climate assessments may be used to meet this requirement, but the assessment design must involve students, college and university diversity officers, faculty, and staff. The assessment must include, at a minimum, an evaluation of student and employee attitudes and awareness of campus DEI issues. The assessment must not be standardized or uniform, but rather be designed for the unique and diverse community it is assessing.

The IHEs must, at a minimum, conduct annual DEI listening and feedback sessions for the entire campus community during periods between assessments.

Beginning July 1, 2022, the IHEs must report findings or progress on completing their campus climate assessments, and when applicable, information on their listening and feedback session, to either the SBCTC or the COP. The results from the assessments or the listening and feedback sessions must also be posted annually on the IHE's website. The SBCTC or the COP may request an IHE to repeat their campus climate assessment.

Reporting Requirements.

The SBCTC and the COP must each develop a report to the higher education committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2024, and biennially thereafter on:

- the professional development programs; and
- a summary of each campus climate assessment, the results, and other relevant information.

By December 31, 2026, and biennially thereafter, the SBCTC and the COP must begin reporting on the student DEIA programs as well.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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