
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5401

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2021 Regular Session

By Senate Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Nguyen, Rivers, Cleveland, Das, Dhingra, Gildon, Hasegawa, Holy, Keiser, Kuderer, Lias, Lovelett, Mullet, Saldaña, Stanford, Wellman, and Wilson, C.)

READ FIRST TIME 02/10/21.

1 AN ACT Relating to degrees in computer science; amending RCW
2 28B.50.825; and creating a new section.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds it essential that
5 Washington students, especially low-income students and students of
6 color, have the necessary credentials to secure the high-demand jobs
7 of the future. Washington is fortunate to be home to a large, and
8 growing, technology sector. The technology sector in Washington
9 currently has more than 24,000 job openings, most of which require a
10 four-year bachelor of science degree in computer science. The
11 legislature also finds that the state imported four times as many
12 computer science graduates than it produced in state. The legislature
13 also finds that the state can do a better job of training Washington
14 residents to secure these living wage jobs of the future.
15 Additionally, of the 1,883 computer science degrees awarded in
16 Washington during the 2018-19 school year, only 3.8 percent were
17 awarded to African American students, 5.6 percent to Hispanic
18 students, and less than 1 percent to Native Americans. The
19 legislature further finds that Washington's competitiveness in the
20 global economy requires the state to ensure companies are able to
21 hire a qualified workforce of Washington residents. To achieve the

1 goals set forth in the workforce education investment act,
2 specifically 70 percent postsecondary credential attainment, the
3 legislature finds that we need to expand access to the high-demand
4 field of computer science, especially to students of color.

5 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28B.50.825 and 2016 sp.s. c 33 s 1 are each amended
6 to read as follows:

7 (1) Subject to approval by the college board, (~~Bellevue college~~
8 ~~is~~) community colleges and technical colleges are authorized to
9 offer bachelor of science degrees in computer science.

10 (2) (~~Bellevue college~~) Community colleges and technical
11 colleges may develop the curriculum for and design and deliver
12 courses leading to a bachelor of science degree in computer science.

13 (3) Degree programs developed under this section are subject to
14 approval by the college board under RCW 28B.50.090 before a college
15 may enroll students in upper-division courses.

16 (4)(a) Colleges may submit an application to the college board.
17 The college board shall review the applications and select the
18 colleges using objective criteria including, but not limited to:

19 (i) The college demonstrates the capacity to make a long-term
20 commitment of resources to build and sustain a high quality program;

21 (ii) The college has or can readily engage faculty appropriately
22 qualified to develop and deliver a high quality curriculum at the
23 baccalaureate level;

24 (iii) The college can demonstrate demand for the proposed program
25 from a sufficient number of students within its service area to make
26 the program cost-effective and feasible to operate;

27 (iv) The college can demonstrate that employers demand the level
28 of technical training proposed within the program, making it cost-
29 effective for students to seek the degree; and

30 (v) The proposed program fills a gap in options available for
31 students because it is not offered by a public four-year institution
32 of higher education in the college's geographic area or if there is a
33 shortage of programs demanded by industry and workforce.

34 (b) Applications may not be submitted earlier than December 1,
35 2021.

1 (5) A community college offering a bachelor of science degree in
2 computer science on the effective date of this section is exempt from
3 the requirements of subsection (4) of this section.

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