

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5397

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As of February 6, 2025

**Title:** An act relating to establishing limits on the percentage of courses taught by faculty without tenure track status at community and technical colleges.

**Brief Description:** Establishing limits on the percentage of courses taught by faculty without tenure track status at community and technical colleges.

**Sponsors:** Senators Ramos, Slatter, Cortes, Cleveland, Hasegawa, Krishnadasan, Nobles and Stanford.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/06/25.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires community and technical colleges to adopt a policy by July 1, 2026 that, at a minimum, no more than 45 percent of courses offered annually may be taught by faculty without tenure track status on or after July 1, 2030.
- Requires the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to submit a report to the Legislature by July 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, that details the steps taken to meet this requirement as well as the most recent calculated percentage of courses taught by faculty without tenure track status.

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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**Staff:** Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

**Background:** Tenure grants a professor permanent employment with certain job and salary

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*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.*

security. With respect to community and technical colleges (CTC) under state law, tenure means a faculty appointment for an indefinite period of time which may be revoked only for adequate cause and by due process.

In order to receive tenure, professors must undergo a probationary appointment period, during which they are evaluated by a review committee. Each CTC board of trustees must promulgate rules and regulations providing for the award of faculty tenure. A tenured faculty member and a faculty member holding a probationary faculty appointment cannot be dismissed except for sufficient cause.

**Summary of Bill:** No later than July 1, 2026, the CTCs must each adopt a policy concerning the percentage of courses that may be taught at each respective college without tenure track status. At minimum, the policy must require that no more than 45 percent of courses offered annually be taught by faculty without tenure track status on and after July 1, 2030.

By July 1, 2025, and annually thereafter, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges must submit a report to the Legislature that details the steps CTCs have taken to meet the requirements under the bill. The report must include the most recent calculated percentage of courses taught by faculty without tenure track status at each institution as well as any relevant data.

For the purposes of the bill, tenure track status is defined as a probationary faculty employee having an opportunity to be reviewed for tenure or a faculty employee who has been awarded tenure.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 23, 2025.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: There is a good reason for adjunct faculty, including costs and flexibility. However, adjunct professors are not as able to create connections with students. The bill takes a look at the current shape of faculty in Washington and provides time for institutions to meet the policy. Adjunct professorship has increased over recent years. Many adjunct professors have to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. This bill is about equity for adjunct professors. These positions are separate and unequal. Adjunct professors do not have stability and receive less compensation than their peers. Many adjunct faculty have long experience in CTCs and have to work at multiple institutions. Even after the problem was identified 30 years ago, institutions rely scandalously on part-time faculty. Adjunct faculty make up to 65 or 70 percent of faculty at

some colleges. We rely too heavily on a fragile, underpaid workforce to help our CTC students.

OTHER: Requirements under this bill will make it more difficult to adjust faculty and schedules to student needs. The bill comes with a significant cost due to salary and office space requirements under collective bargaining agreements. Individual colleges are better determined to address their own needs, including through bargaining.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Bill Ramos, Prime Sponsor; Karl Bailey, Clark College Association of Higher Education/WEA; Kirstyn Joy, Highline College Association of Higher Education/WEA; Kathleen Brown, AFT (American Federation of Teachers )Washington; Shari Arnesen.

OTHER: Julie Huss, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

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