

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5663

As of February 11, 2025

Title: An act relating to establishing a virtual campus for all Washingtonians.

Brief Description: Establishing a virtual campus for all Washingtonians.

Sponsors: Senators Slatter, Nobles, Frame, Lovick and Valdez.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/13/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to provide a website for students to search online course offerings offered by community and technical colleges (CTCs).
- Establishes a work group to develop a virtual campus for entirely online courses offered by CTCs by academic year 2028-29.
- Allows for CTCs to distribute information on their respective colleges outside of their district when it pertains to entirely online course offerings.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Kellee Gunn (786-7429)

Background: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) advocates, coordinates and directs Washington State's system of 34 public community and technical colleges (CTCs). The SBCTC is led by a nine-member Governor-appointed board.

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.

Prohibition of Distributing Course and Enrollment Information Outside of Community and Technical College District. By rule, CTCs may not promote their programs beyond their designated service districts.

California Virtual Campus. In 2017, the California Legislature passed AB 637 which created the California Virtual Campus (CVC). The CVC is a systemwide resource for the 116 California Community Colleges (CCC), which, among other things, allows students to cross-enroll through entirely online course offerings and matriculate from a home college. Cost of attendance is determined by the home college. Since 2013, California had been working on expanding the delivery of higher education courses online, with the Online-Exchange Initiative (OEI). The OEI Course Exchange provided students who were enrolled at a community college and could not find the courses they needed to complete their degree or transfer the opportunity to find and take that course at a different CCC through the OEI.

Summary of Bill: Community and Technical Colleges. CTCs may distribute information on their respective colleges outside of district when it pertains to entirely online course offerings.

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. By the start of academic year 2026-27, the SBCTC must establish and maintain a website for students to easily search entirely online course offerings offered by all CTCs with the intention to use this as a foundation for a virtual campus for all Washingtonians. The virtual campus must allow for cross enrollment by students.

Virtual Campus Work Group. The SBCTC, the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), and an association representing faculty at the CTCs, shall develop a plan for a virtual campus. The plan must:

- review and develop policies that ensure students have:
 1. access to view all courses provided entirely online by each respective CTC;
 2. the option to simultaneously enroll in courses at the student's home college and courses provided entirely online by another college without formal admission, and without payment of additional fees or tuition; and
 3. the ability to electronically transfer all relevant enrollment data from another college to the student's home college;
- provide a timeline with explicit dates for when agreements among participating institutions need to be in place to allow for cross enrollment;
- ensure that courses available on the virtual campus are accessible to students;
- lay out a fair and reasonable method for calculating the head count or full-time equivalent of students enrolled through the virtual campus;
- establish policies regarding the cost of tuition for nonresident and international students; and
- require a student to enroll in a home college, which is where the student is matriculated.

By December 1, 2026, the SBCTC shall report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature on its plan, including recommendations for legislation, for establishing a virtual campus by academic year 2028-29.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 4, 2025.

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

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