

SENATE BILL REPORT

SCR 8405

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, FEBRUARY 26, 1993

**Brief Description:** Commending the Higher Education Coordinating Board and approving goals of the update of its master plan for higher education.

**SPONSORS:** Senators Bauer, Prince, Drew, Sheldon, West and Jesernig

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Bauer, Chairman; Drew, Vice Chairman; Jesernig, Prince, Quigley, Sheldon, von Reichbauer, and West.

**Staff:** Jean Six (786-7423)

**Hearing Dates:** February 24, 1993; February 26, 1993

**BACKGROUND:**

The Higher Education Coordinating Board, created in 1985, was required to adopt a master plan for higher education by December 1, 1987. The board is required to update the plan biennially, and present it to the Governor and the appropriate legislative committees. Following public hearings, the Legislature, by concurrent resolution, is required to approve the plan and the biennial update or recommend changes. The plan then becomes state higher education policy unless legislation is enacted to alter the policies set forth in it.

During the last two years, the board followed an exhaustive process to update the master plan. The process included surveying more than 1000 state residents to determine the critical challenges facing Washington education. Nine regional meetings were held bringing community leaders together across the state. The board also discussed issues with college and university presidents and the heads of various state agencies.

Through that process, the board identified five critical challenges: (1) increasing access to higher education for residents in a variety of categories; (2) ensuring that the increased access contributes to the achievement of the state's social and economic objectives; (3) promoting excellence in undergraduate education; (4) expanding higher education partnerships with other educational sectors, business, and community service organizations; and (5) establishing an adequate funding base for public higher education.

At the conclusion of the process, the board adopted 14 recommendations for improving higher education. Those recommendations became the backbone of A COMMITMENT TO

OPPORTUNITY: 1992 Update of the Master Plan for Higher Education.

**SUMMARY:**

The Legislature approves the 14 goals of the update of the master plan for higher education. The goals include:

**Access:** Washington will continue to expand educational opportunities for all residents, striving to achieve enrollment opportunities that equal the 90th percentile in national participation rates for the entire higher education system, and the 70th percentile for upper division and graduate enrollments. Access will also be expanded for students of color, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and residents living in geographically isolated communities who seek upper division programs. In addition, higher education will attempt to ensure that the state has a highly educated, skilled, and flexible work force capable of meeting the challenges of a changing economy.

**Quality:** The basic responsibility of colleges and universities is to offer an education of the highest quality to undergraduate students. Therefore, the state will require evidence of improvements in undergraduate education at all institutions of higher education. In addition, the state will support expansion of program and student assessment efforts, and expansion of higher education partnerships with the common schools, community service organization, and the business community. Finally, the postsecondary education system has an obligation to contribute to reform at all educational levels.

**Public Investment:** The state will provide a stabilized budget base for postsecondary education that incorporates provisions to accommodate population growth. The institutions and state level higher education agencies will identify measures to increase institutional efficiencies. In addition, the Higher Education Coordinating Board will produce and disseminate an annual report on postsecondary education.

**Studies:** The board will submit a report on tuition and fee policies to the 1994 Legislature. A citizen-legislator task force will conduct a comprehensive study on funding policies and revenue sources for postsecondary education. The task force will include at least two members from each caucus of the House and the Senate. The Director of the Office of Financial Management, a member of the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and up to six citizens selected by the Governor will also participate on the task force. By June 1, 1994, the findings and recommendations of the task force will be submitted to the Governor, the Legislature, and the board. In addition, the findings and recommendations will be included in the 1995-97 operating budget for postsecondary education.

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:**

The intent of the Legislature is clarified and the goal of the master plan is to increase access across all sectors of the higher education system.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** none requested

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

The Higher Education Coordinating Board is to be commended for the exhaustive process undertaken in the preparation of the master plan update. Access to quality higher education is fundamental to the prosperity of Washington State.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:** None

**TESTIFIED:** Terry Teale, Executive Director, Council of Presidents; Dave Habura, Deputy Executive Director, SBCTC; Al Froderberg, WWU; George Drurie, EWU; Laurel Wilkening, Provost, UW; Steve Seward, HECB