

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 1370

As Passed House
February 21, 1997

Title: An act relating to the merger of technical and community colleges.

Brief Description: Adopting recommendations of the state board for community and technical colleges regarding the 1991 merger of community and technical colleges.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Carlson, Talcott, Linville and Wensman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/6/97, 2/7/97 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/21/97, 95-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Carlson, Chairman; Radcliff, Vice Chairman; Mason, Ranking Minority Member; Kenney, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Butler; Dunn; O'Brien; Sheahan and Van Luven.

Staff: Suzi Morrissey (786-7120).

Background: In 1991, the state's five technical colleges were removed from the jurisdiction of local school boards and merged with the community college system. The service areas created for the technical colleges overlapped service areas of nearby community colleges. In order to diminish the potential for program duplication and to preserve the workforce mission of the technical colleges, the legislation that created the merged system addressed both issues.

At the time of the merger, the technical colleges had an exclusive mission to prepare persons 16 years of age and older for the workforce. In most respects, they operated under an educational model in which the basic and technical skills needed to succeed in a particular occupation were all provided by the instructor of the technical or occupational program in which a student was enrolled. The legislation that created the merged system attempted to preserve the exclusive workforce preparation and basic skills mission of the technical colleges by restricting the types of programs that technical colleges may offer. Technical colleges may offer only non-baccalaureate

technical degrees, certificates, or diplomas for occupational courses of study. The two technical colleges in Pierce County were permitted to offer the non-baccalaureate associate of technical or applied arts degrees only in conjunction with a community college in Pierce County.

In Whatcom County, the authority to offer transfer level academic support and general education became the exclusive jurisdiction of Whatcom Community College. Bellingham Technical College was not permitted to offer classes in those areas.

The legislation that created the merged system required the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to prepare and distribute a report evaluating the successes and difficulties associated with the merger. The report was due by December 1, 1996. In the report, the state board recommended retaining the exclusive workforce preparation and basic skills mission of the technical colleges. It also recommended lifting the restrictions specifically directed to technical colleges in Pierce and Whatcom Counties.

Summary of Bill: Technical colleges may offer only technical degrees whose primary purpose is preparation for employment in a specific occupation. Technical colleges may not offer transfer degrees.

Technical colleges in Pierce County may offer non-baccalaureate associate of technical or applied arts degrees without the agreement of a community college in the county. All technical colleges may offer transfer level academic support courses that are required of all students seeking a particular certificate or degree.

The technical colleges will abide by any rules adopted by the state board concerning these authorities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The merger of the technical colleges and community colleges into one system has had many positive outcomes. The merger has resulted in increased cooperation among technical colleges and community colleges in overlapping service areas. Some of the language in the legislation that created the merged system has made it difficult for three of the five technical colleges to offer the types of support courses and workforce programs needed by their students. The passage of this legislation will remove that language and will help those colleges better serve the needs of their students.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: David Prince, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (pro); Al Green, Clover Park Technical College (pro); Don Fowler, Lake Washington Technical College (pro); and Desmond McCardle, Bellingham Technical College (pro).