

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Representative Don Carlson, Chair

BILL ANALYSIS
SSB 6655

Changing the Spokane intercollegiate research and technology institute.

Background: In 1988, the Legislature appropriated \$800,000 for the purchase of a site in Spokane for an intercollegiate institute for research and technology. In 1989, the Legislature created the Spokane Intercollegiate Research and Technology Institute (SIRTI) designed as a cooperative venture of Eastern Washington University (EWU), Gonzaga University, Whitworth College, the community colleges of Spokane, and Washington State University (WSU). Through the SIRTI, the member institutions collaborate in the offering of education and training, applied and developmental research, and business resource and support that is specifically aimed at the economic development of the Spokane area. A \$15 million, five-year grant through the federal Advanced Research Project Agency allowed the SIRTI to launch and operate programs in manufacturing, healthcare/biomedical, and environmental technologies.

Summary: The Spokane Intercollegiate Research and Technology Institute (SIRTI) is separated from the administration and oversight of the Joint Center for Higher Education (JCHE). The SIRTI building and other assets are transferred from the JCHE to the SIRTI. The Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (DCTED) is made responsible for contracting with the SIRTI for the expenditure of state-appropriated funds for the operation of the institute. The mission of SIRTI continues to be the performance and commercialization of research that benefits the economic vitality of eastern Washington and the Spokane area.

SIRTI continues to be operated as a multi-institutional education and research center providing leading edge collaborative research and technology transfer opportunities as well as direct involvement for both undergraduate and graduate students in research and industry interactions. Washington State University (WSU) is made the senior research partner. Research staff are provided from among the cooperating institutions through cooperative agreements. The Higher Education Coordinating Board must approve the establishment of education programs and any facility acquisition.

Non-state support for research activities is emphasized including the receipt of federal funds and private gifts or grants. Staff for SIRTI are employees of SIRTI.

Administration is by a board of directors including nine members representing the general public, at least six of whom have broad business experience and an understanding of high-technology, the Executive Director of the Washington Technology Institute, the Provost of Washington State University, the Provost of Eastern Washington University, the Provost of Central Washington University, the Provost of the University of Washington, an academic representative of the Spokane community colleges, and one member each representing Gonzaga University and Whitworth College.

Duties of the board of directors are defined:

- Developing operating policies
- Appointing an executive director
- Approving the annual operating budget of SIRTI
- Establishing research priorities and guaranteeing the greatest potential return on the investment
- Approving and allocating funding
- Developing, in cooperation with DCTED, a biennial work plan and five-year strategic plan consistent with statewide technology development and commercialization goals
- Coordinating the work of all collaborating institutions
- Assisting DCTED in the development of state policies regarding science and technology
- Reviewing annual reports on funded research projects
- Providing an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature
- Submitting an annual report to DCTED

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 18, 1998.

*Prepared for the House Higher Education Committee
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Office of Program Research
May 17, 2006*