

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Representative Don Carlson, Chair

BILL ANALYSIS

ESSB 6717

Providing for the transfer of the Spokane Riverpoint campus to Washington State University and eliminating the joint center for higher education.

Background: Over time, a number of studies have been conducted that looked at the higher education needs of the city of Spokane. The Report of the Study Committee on Coordination in Higher Education delivered to the 1985 Legislature "found a pattern of expansionism and competition among institutions in the Spokane area." The report therefore recommended the creation of "a joint center responsible for all off-campus programs offered by Washington State University (WSU) and Eastern Washington University (EWU) in Spokane." Rather than merging the governing boards as the report recommended, the 1985 Legislature created the Joint Center for Higher Education (JCHE), an entity that has become the fiscal agent for the Riverpoint Higher Education Park.

In the same legislation that created the JCHE, the 1985 Legislature also created the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) as the agency "to provide planning, coordination, monitoring, and policy analysis ... represent[ing] the broad public interest above the interests of the individual colleges and universities." The HECB has not only provided and updated a Master Plan for higher education in Washington, it has also recommended through that planning process, the creation of branch campuses of the public research institutions "to expand upper-division and graduate educational opportunities in the state's large urban centers."

The 1989 Legislature created a number of branch campuses including the Spokane branch campus of Washington State University. The Spokane branch campus legislation allows for collocation of EWU in Spokane. Programs offered by all branch campuses are required to go before the HECB for approval. However, any program offered in Spokane also must seek the approval of the JCHE.

Recently, EWU has suffered a decline in enrollment and has been required to go through a special enrollment planning and HECB approval process for release of funds. The President and the Provost have resigned. At the request of the Governor, the HECB has undertaken a comprehensive review of higher education opportunities in Spokane and has provided

preliminary recommendations on February 13, 1998.

Summary: Washington State University, through the operation of its Spokane branch campus, is made responsible for providing upper-division and graduate higher education programs in Spokane. Eastern Washington University is no longer collocated in Cheney and Spokane. Based on the February 13, 1998 preliminary HECB recommendations, a number of assessments and plans will be delivered to the HECB and to the appropriate legislative committees.

The Joint Center for Higher Education is eliminated. The authority to approve program offerings rests with the HECB as it does in all areas of the state of Washington.

All of the assets at the Riverpoint Higher Education Park, with the exception of the real property designated as belonging to the Spokane Intercollegiate Research and Technology Institute, are transferred to Washington State University. Parking fees at Riverpoint are made the responsibility of the regents of WSU.

The president of a public four-year institution is provided housing or a housing allowance only when residing in the location where the institution is designated in statute.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 18, 1998.