

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5503

As Passed Senate, March 11, 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: Senators Anderson, Kohl, Winsley, Bauer, Hale, Wood, McAuliffe, Goings, Spanel and Patterson; by request of State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/13/97, 2/20/97 [DP].
Passed Senate, 3/11/97, 48-1.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Wood, Chair; Winsley, Vice Chair; Bauer, Hale, Kohl, Patterson, Prince and Sheldon.

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

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 nonbaccalaureate technical degrees, certificates, or diplomas for occupational courses of study. The two technical colleges in Pierce County were permitted to offer the nonbaccalaureate 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 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 nonbaccalaureate associate of technical or applied arts degrees without the agreement of a community college in the county. All technical colleges may offer transfer level support courses that are required of all students seeking a particular certificate or degree.

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

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 30, 1997.

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

Testimony For: The creation of the technical colleges has turned out to be a beneficial action. The college system has provided individual boards of trustees that we do not ever want to lose. Pierce County cooperation is at an all-time high. We still need to raise the level of awareness of the quality of the technical colleges. The changes in statute requested by this bill will help our students. Whatcom County institutions have always worked cooperatively and do compliment each other. Changes will give us the autonomy we need to better serve all of our students.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: David Prince, SBCTC; President Des McArdle, Bellingham TC; President Al Green, Clover Park TC.

House Amendment(s): The type of transfer level support courses that technical colleges may offer is clarified. The colleges may offer transfer level academic support courses needed by all students seeking a particular degree or certificate.