

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5921

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to graduate education in physical therapy.

Brief Description: Authorizing doctorate level degrees in physical therapy at Eastern Washington University.

Sponsors: By Senators Kohl-Welles, Horn, Sheahan, McAuliffe, West, McCaslin, Carlson, Morton, Jacobsen, B. Sheldon, Shin and Parlette.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/21/01 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the Board of Trustees of Eastern Washington University to offer a doctorate level degree in physical therapy subject to review and approval by the Higher Education Coordinating Board.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Cox, Republican Co-Chair; Kenney, Democratic Co-Chair; Gombosky, Democratic Vice Chair; Jarrett, Republican Vice Chair; Dunn, Fromhold, Lantz and Skinner.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

Currently, statute allows the regional universities, including Eastern Washington University (EWU), to offer bachelor's and master's level degrees. Washington State University and the University of Washington are authorized to offer bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees.

The University of Washington offers both master's and doctorate degrees in physical therapy. Their doctorate degree is a Ph.D. which is a post-professional degree. The

only other university in Washington that offers a physical therapy program is the University of Puget Sound, and they currently offer a master's level degree.

The national accrediting association for physical therapy has announced that the profession is moving to a doctorate (DPT) as the entry-level degree.

Regionally, Pacific University, Idaho State University, the University of Montana, the University of Colorado, and Northern Arizona University are planning to convert to a doctorate degree or are already in stages of conversion.

Summary of Bill:

This bill authorizes the Board of Trustees at Eastern Washington University to offer a doctorate degree in Physical Therapy. They propose to offer the DPT, a professional degree. The program must meet the program approval requirements of the Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: While research institutions are generally the appropriate place to offer a doctorate degree, the proposed DPT is a professional degree and the Higher Education Coordinating Board must review the proposal before the degree can be offered. The University of Puget Sound has been contacted and if they elect to offer a DPT degree, the demand for physical therapists is high enough that both programs could offer the degree without problems of competition.

The bill is specific to offering a DPT in physical therapy and is subject to HECB approval. The bill has support from the other four-year institutions and also has the support of the Leadership Council in Spokane. It is occasioned by the announcement of the national accrediting association the DPT will become an entry-level requirement, therefore we seek this degree to be competitive. The University of Puget Sound is discussing whether or not they will offer a DPT and agree that it is necessary with the national accrediting associations announcement.

Physical therapy is a high demand area and currently EWU has 30 slots in its program. Eventually 40 slots will be available when the program moves to the new health sciences building next fall. Because of the new space in this building, there are no infrastructures costs associated with the program. The startup costs are mainly for an electronic library

and for some faculty training, and EWU will cover these costs. It is also possible to integrate the DPT program in a way that will not take any longer to complete the program.

Practitioners in Washington state support this move as the national accrediting association has announced the move to a DPT as an entry-level degree.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; George Durrie, Eastern Washington University; and Melissa Johnson, Physical Therapy Association of Washington.