
Higher Education Committee

SSB 6626

Brief Description: Requiring the Washington state institute for public policy to review and evaluate whether branch campuses are fulfilling their intended role.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Kohl-Welles, Carlson, Shin, Jacobsen, Parlette, Horn, B. Sheldon and McAuliffe).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- The Washington State Institute for Public Policy is directed to conduct a study of the original mission of branch campuses and determine if it meets current and future needs.

Hearing Date: 2/26/02

Staff: Antonio Sanchez (786-7383).

Background:

In 1989 the Legislature established branch campuses in Washington. The legislation was based on findings that: Insufficient and inequitable access to upper-division baccalaureate and graduate education existed in urban areas; place-bound, financially needy, working students lacked sufficient educational opportunities to complete baccalaureate and graduate degrees; and local businesses benefitted from access to the research and teaching capabilities of higher education institutions.

Consistent with legislative intent, branch campuses were established in five under-served urban areas across the state. The original legislation held the University of Washington responsible for the development and operation of two branch campuses in the Central Puget Sound area, including campuses in Tacoma and the Bothell/Woodinville region. This was amended in 1994 to specifically provide for the collocation of a branch campus with Cascadia Community College in the Bothell/Woodinville area. Washington State University was responsible for the development and operation of three branch campuses in Spokane, southwest Washington, and the Tri-cities area. The Legislature specifically intended that four-year institutions and community colleges work as cooperative partners, operating branch campuses as models of a two plus two educational system.

There has been no official review of branch campuses since they were originally established. In 1990 the Higher Education Coordination Board adopted and submitted a report to the Governor called, *Design for the 21st Century: Expanding Higher Education Opportunity In Washington*. This report was a template for the orderly and long-term development of our branch campus system and set out the following set of policies governing branch campus programs:

- Establish the primary mission of branch campuses as instruction in upper division and master's level degree programs;
- Prohibit Doctoral degrees at branch campuses;
- Limit research and community services projects to those that contribute to instructional programs in a significant way;
- Develop policies and use telecommunication for branch construction; and
- Evaluate the effectiveness of branch campuses.

The report called for the board to review branch campus enrollment and budget requirements every even-numbered year beginning in 1992 in keeping with the biennial budget process. The board was also directed to carry out an in-depth review of the mission, role, and effectiveness of branch campuses in 1995.

During the 2001 interim, hearings were held at all branch campuses. The hearings raised questions about branch campuses responsiveness to local community educational needs, the amount of administrative flexibility branch campuses have, concerns with articulation, transfer, and dual admissions, workforce needs, and applied degrees.

One goal of branch campuses was to increase Washington's national ranking for enrollment participation in upper-division and graduate education. Results, however, show that Washington's rank dropped over the past 10 years.

Summary of Bill:

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy is directed to review and evaluate the original mission of branch campuses and determine if they are meeting that mission and if the mission meets current educational needs. The review is also required to identify student demographics, demand for upper division and graduate higher education; local labor market trends, local community colleges, and experiences in other states. The study is also required to identify policy and procedural changes that could be made to the branch campus mission to respond to current educational needs.

The report is due December 12, 2002.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available on original bill.

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