

FINAL BILL REPORT

SB 5921

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Synopsis as Enacted

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

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

Senate Committee on Higher Education

House Committee on Higher Education

Background: Under current state law, the state's two research institutions, the University of Washington and Washington State University, are the only public higher education institutions authorized to offer doctoral degrees. State law specifically limits the four comprehensive institutions (Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, The Evergreen State College, and Western Washington University) to offering degrees up to the master's level only (RCW 28B.35.205 and RCW 28B.40.206). Current Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) policy also prohibits comprehensive institutions from offering doctoral degree programs. Branch campuses, created to meet the upper-division and graduate-level needs of underserved communities, are discouraged from offering doctoral degrees. The legislation was silent about the offering of doctoral degrees. The HECB and its predecessor agencies have consistently discouraged the offering of doctoral degrees with some limited exceptions.

There are two kinds of doctoral degrees: (1) professional or practice-oriented doctoral programs (e.g. Ed.D., DPT, Pharm.D., and J.D.), and (2) research-oriented doctoral programs (Ph.D.). Professional or practice-oriented doctoral programs have distinct academic missions to prepare students for professional practice and rely on practica, internships, and/or clinical experiences that may be more appropriate for urban settings. Research-oriented doctoral programs rely on extensive research facilities and equipment, library collections, computing resources, and appropriate research faculty. Whether practice-oriented or research-oriented, doctoral programs are generally more expensive than undergraduate and master's level programs.

The trend in the education of the physical therapist is the DPT as the entry-level degree; therefore, the DPT is becoming the clear choice for the student who intends to become a physical therapist. Eastern Washington University currently offers a high quality master's program with students who graduate well-prepared for a competitive job market; 100 percent of the graduates are employed. No significant additional costs are expected. The University of Washington is the other public university in the state with a physical therapy program; it offers the Ph.D.

Summary: Eastern Washington University (EWU) is authorized to offer doctorate level degrees in physical therapy. As with all new programs, this professional, practice-oriented

doctoral program is subject to the review and approval of the HECB. EWU cannot grant research-oriented doctoral degrees.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	46	3	
House	82	10	(House amended)
Senate	43	3	(Senate concurred)

Effective: July 22, 2001