

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2382

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to improving articulation and transfer between institutions of higher education.

Brief Description: Improving articulation and transfer between institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Representatives Kenney, Cox, Fromhold, Nixon, Anderson, Ruderman, Chase, Schual-Berke, Miloscia, Hudgins, Wood, Morrell, Santos, Moeller and Kagi.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/20/04, 1/21/04 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

Requires the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to:

- Convene work groups to develop transfer associate degrees that meet lower division prerequisites or competencies for specific academic majors at public four-year institutions.
- Develop a statewide system of course equivalency among all public institutions.
- Conduct a gap analysis of supply and demand of enrollment capacity for transfer students at public institutions and recommend ways to expand capacity.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking Minority Member; Priest, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boldt, Chase, Condotta, Jarrett, McCoy, Morrell and Ormsby.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Direct Transfer Agreement: The HECB is responsible for establishing a statewide transfer of credit policy and agreement, in cooperation with the public institutions of higher education and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). Together, these entities have created the Direct Transfer Agreement, or DTA. Any student who completes an approved DTA associate degree at a community college is considered to have satisfied the lower division general education requirements at a public four-year institution. These students are generally admitted as juniors when they transfer.

Transfer Associate Degrees: In the late 1990's, analysis of students' credit accumulation and graduation patterns revealed that when transfer students in science, math, and other highly structured majors arrived at a four-year institution, they needed to take additional lower division course requirements to qualify for entry into their major.

To address this problem, the Council of Presidents (COP), the HECB, and the SBCTC convened a work group to develop a statewide Associate of Science Transfer Degree (AS-T), which was adopted in 2000. Under the AS-T, students take more math and science prerequisites at the community college, with the objective of transferring directly into a major once they reach a four-year institution.

Over the last two years, work groups have been developing other specialized transfer associate degrees: in elementary education, secondary education for math and science teachers, and business administration.

Course Equivalency: Outside of DTA associate degrees, each four-year institution determines how courses earned at another college or university meet general education requirements, apply toward requirements for a major, or count toward a baccalaureate degree. At some institutions this determination is made by faculty within each college or department. To assist students, each institution has created guides to illustrate course equivalency: which courses from which institutions are considered equivalent to which courses at the receiving institution. However, there is no statewide system of course equivalency in Washington. In 2001, the Education Commission of the States reported that 26 other states had statewide systems of course equivalency.

Access for Transfer Students: In 1994, the public four-year institutions agreed to continue to accept the same proportion of transfer students from community and technical colleges as they did in 1992. The institutions have since met or exceeded this proportion. In mid-2003, however, the University of Washington and Washington State University announced that because of rising student applications and limited additional state dollars for new enrollment, they plan to limit admission of transfer students back to 1992 levels.

The 2003-05 biennial operating budget allocated \$6.2 million to increase the capacity of four-year institutions to accept junior-level transfer students. The Office of Financial Management distributed the funds among the institutions based on their applications.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Transfer Associate Degrees: The HECB will convene work groups to develop transfer associate degrees for specific academic majors. Work groups include representatives from the SBCTC, COP, and faculty from two- and four-year institutions. Work groups may include representatives from independent four-year institutions. A transfer associate degree must enable a student to complete the lower-division courses or competencies required for general education and preparation for a specific major. Completion of a transfer associate degree does not guarantee the student admission into an institution, or into a major that has competitive requirements. The HECB must monitor four-year institutions' implementation of the degrees to ensure compliance.

During 2004-05, the work groups will develop degrees for elementary education, engineering, and nursing. Each year thereafter, work groups will develop additional degrees with a priority for majors in high demand by transfer students, or majors where the current general associate transfer degree does not adequately prepare students.

The HECB makes biennial progress reports beginning January 10, 2005. The first report includes measurable indicators of improvement and baseline data. Subsequent reports monitor the indicators and provide other data on improving transfer efficiency. The HECB, in collaboration with the Intercollege Relations Commission, will collect and maintain lists of courses that fall within the associate degrees.

Course Equivalency: The HECB must create a statewide system of course equivalency for public higher education institutions, so that courses from one institution can be transferred and applied toward academic majors and degrees in the same manner as equivalent courses at the receiving institutions.

A work group convened by the HECB will identify equivalent courses among all public and two- and four-year institutions and develop strategies for communicating course equivalency to students, faculty, and advisors. The work group may include representatives from independent four-year institutions. The work group must take into account the unique curriculum of The Evergreen State College in developing the course equivalency system.

The HECB makes a progress report by January 10, 2005, including options and cost estimates for ongoing maintenance of the system.

Access for Transfer Students: The HECB must conduct a gap analysis of upper division capacity in the public higher education system to accommodate transfer students. The analysis must examine the full range of options, including costs, to close the gap between demand and supply of upper division capacity. A progress report is due January 10, 2005 and a final report is due December 10, 2006, with recommendations on how to

expand capacity in various locations.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Language is revised to clarify that a transfer associate degree must enable a student to complete the lower-division courses or competencies required for general education and preparation for a specific major. The HECB, in collaboration with the Intercollege Relations Commission, will collect and maintain lists of courses that fall within the associate degrees. The work groups that develop transfer and associate degrees and the statewide system of course equivalency may include representatives from independent four-year institutions.

Common course numbering is no longer required as part of the statewide course equivalency system. The course equivalency system applies not only to courses between two- and four-year institutions, but also to courses among four-year institutions. The work group must take into account the unique curriculum of The Evergreen State College in developing the course equivalency system.

The final report on upper division capacity is due December 10, 2006, not 2005.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 14, 2004.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Original bill) The bill builds on current work to develop major-specific transfer degrees. For transfer students, the associate degree itself is not the goal; readiness for the major is the goal. This bill requires both greater efficiency within the higher education system and a plan for growth to address the state's need for greater access to baccalaureate education. Transfer by major is a very strong tool to improve time-to-degree and increase access for students. A mandate from the Legislature endorses this work, provides support, and holds our feet to the fire to improve transfer.

Students need to know how courses transfer to different institutions. Course equivalency adds clarity to the advising process. We can use technology to solve these problems. Common course numbering would help students and parents immensely. Right now it is difficult to track equivalent courses among institutions.

A more detailed analysis is needed of how big the access problem is for transfer students. This must be sorted out by region and by major. With limited resources, the state must be thoughtful about how it invests access dollars.

(Concerns with original bill) The current language could be interpreted to require each community college to develop a separate associate degree for each major and for each four-year institution, which is not the intent. The idea of course equivalency is student-focused and wonderful; the requirement for common course numbering is institution-focused and not the best solution. Requiring common numbers creates an inflexible bureaucracy. Independent colleges would like to be part of the discussion about developing pathways to degrees.

Testimony Against: Students do not have a problem transferring to The Evergreen State College and they already graduate efficiently. The Evergreen State College does not have different majors; instead, more than 300 upside-down degrees have been developed with community and technical colleges. Courses change constantly and the interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum makes course equivalency not relevant.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Dennis Long, Intercollege Relations Commission; Crystal Manring, Washington Student Lobby; Bruce Botka, Higher Education Coordinating Board; Madeleine Thompson, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; and James Huckabay and Gail Stygall, Council of Faculty Representatives.

(With concerns) Terry Teale, Council of Presidents; Jan Yoshiwara, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Jane Sherman, Washington State University; Tim Washburn, University of Washington; and Violet Boyer, Independent Colleges of Washington.

(Opposed) Edie Harding, The Evergreen State College.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.