

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HCR 4416

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Brief Description: Commending the higher education coordinating board for its work in preparing the 2004 Interim Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education.

Sponsors: Representatives Kenney, Cox and Morrell; by request of Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/3/04, 2/6/04 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- The Legislature requests that the final 2004 strategic master plan for higher education from the Higher Education Coordinating Board include additional analysis regarding its goal for increased enrollment and specific recommendations for how to meet the goal.
- The Legislature concurs with most of the general strategies in the interim plan, but suggests a more limited number and more specificity on how they will be accomplished.
- The final plan must include measurable performance indicators and benchmarks, as well as recommendations for specific actions to achieve the plan's goals.

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:

Every four years, the HECB is required to develop a comprehensive master plan for the state's higher education system. After the plan is adopted by the HECB, it is submitted to the Governor and Legislature. The first plan was approved in 1988, with subsequent updates in 1993, 1996, and 2000.

Legislation enacted in 2003 intended to reaffirm and strengthen the HECB's strategic planning role. Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2076 elaborated the topics to be addressed in a master plan, directed institutions of higher education to align their institution-level plans with the state plan, and created a legislative work group during the 2003 interim to guide development of the 2004 plan. The HECB submitted an interim plan to the Legislature in December 2003. By law, the Legislature must, by concurrent resolution, approve or recommend changes to the plan. The HECB will publish a final report that incorporates any legislative changes by June of the year in which the Legislature approves the concurrent resolution.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Legislature recognizes the need for Washington to provide affordable access to higher education for nearly 35,000 additional students. As a result, the strategic master plan must be comprehensive and include specific data and recommendations. The Legislature also acknowledges that accountability for achieving the goals in the plan rests with all parties: higher education institutions, education agencies, and the Legislature.

The final 2004 strategic master plan should be a platform for enhanced advocacy and a tool for coordinated planning, funding, and building to meet demand for higher education. The final plan should include additional analysis regarding the HECB's goal to increase by 20 percent the total number of students who earn college credits and job training credentials by 2010. The analysis should include enrollment demand by education sector and region; the current service delivery model and its capacity, proposed changes to the model, and the potential consequences of change; economic demand for education and training in specific fields and at various levels of education; and estimated costs, with alternative scenarios depending on the service delivery model. The plan should also contain specific recommendations for how the state can best meet the HECB's goal.

The Legislature concurs with the interim plan's general strategies to improve educational efficiency, promote innovation in service delivery, improve higher education's responsiveness to the state's economic needs, and improve K-12/higher education linkages to promote student success in college. However, the HECB should target a limited number of strategies and provide more specificity in how they will be accomplished.

The final plan is to recognize that the Legislature maintains tuition setting authority for resident undergraduate students. Within the current governance structure, the HECB,

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), and Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) should improve communication and minimize duplication.

The final plan is to contain measurable performance indicators, targets, and benchmarks, as well as recommendations for specific actions by institutions, education agencies, and the Legislature, so that each can be held accountable.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Rather than directly concur with the mission, vision, core values, and goals contained in the HECB's interim master plan, the Legislature recognizes the need for additional affordable access to higher education and acknowledges that accountability for achieving the goals in the plan rests with all parties. As a result, the strategic master plan must be comprehensive and include specific data and recommendations. Furthermore, the final plan should be a platform for enhanced advocacy and a tool for coordinated planning, funding, and building to meet demand. The Legislature requests that the final plan contain additional analysis and specific recommendations.

Rather than concur with each strategy and each proposed action contained in the interim master plan, the Legislature concurs with most of the interim plan's general strategies and suggests that the HECB should target a limited number of them and provide more specificity in how they will be accomplished.

Rather than concur with recommendations in the interim plan to provide enrollment funding at average peer institution rates, unrestricted tuition-setting authority for institutions, and additional funding for financial aid, the Legislature directs the final plan to recognize that the Legislature maintains tuition setting authority for resident undergraduate students.

Rather than concur with the recommendation that the state review governance options and consider consolidating the higher education functions of three boards into one state governing board, the Legislature directs the HECB, the SBCTC, and the Workforce Board to make improvements within the current governance structure.

In the final plan, the HECB is not directed to articulate options for state action or provide guidance to the institutions of higher education for carrying out the strategies contained in the interim plan, but is directed to recommend specific actions by institutions, education agencies including the HECB, and the Legislature, so that each can be held accountable.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: (In support to original bill) The HECB strongly supports the interim strategic master plan and its clear goals for increased enrollment access and improved economic responsiveness. The HECB believes these are the right goals and the right strategies. The resolution from the Legislature indicates continued support for the collaborative process between legislators and the HECB that was established in House Bill 2076. The plan recognizes the need to establish goals and outcomes and the need to make ongoing investments in high demand fields and adult literacy. The additional recommendation regarding K-12 connections and linkages is to be commended. The mission, goals, and vision articulated in the plan are good, as is the recognition that the state is on a collision course in its ability to meet increased demand.

(With concerns to original bill) The reference to changing governance in higher education should be deleted. Talk about governance is not a substitute for real policy direction. Important elements are missing, such as worker retraining and analysis of labor market needs as compared to baccalaureate degree production. Better analysis is needed of high, medium, and low enrollment growth scenarios. The plan supports access but lacks clear analysis, a direction for how and where students will be served, or a funding plan. The reality of how the proposed numbers of students would be served is entirely lacking. Increased access is important, but the only funding mechanism proposed is increased tuition. The plan should reference utilization of existing capacity at independent institutions. There should be more recognition of the added value of the "broadly educated" student in the economy and society. Faculty quality or salaries are not addressed at all. There should be recommendations for broadcasting the accomplishments of higher education. This would benefit the system more than additional accountability or yet another plan.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support to original bill) James Sulton and Gene Colin, Higher Education Coordinating Board.

(With concerns to original bill) Ellen O'Brien Saunders, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Jeff Gombosky, Eastern Washington University; Ann Anderson; Central Washington University; Judy McNickle, Western Washington University; Brady Horenstein and Peter Graves, Washington Student Lobby; Tom Parker, Independent Colleges of Washington; Don Bantz, The Evergreen State College; Sandy Wall, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Jim Huckabay, Council of Faculty Representatives; Ruth Windhover, Washington Education Association; and Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Federation of Teachers.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.