

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5475

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to limiting courses of instruction that are exclusive to research institutions of higher education.

Brief Description: Limiting courses of instruction that are exclusive to research institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Senators Horn, Shin, Sheahan, Kohl-Welles, Carlson and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/28/03, 4/4/03 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- Removes the restriction that only the University of Washington (UW) or Washington State University (WSU) may offer electrical engineering degrees.
- Requires the Higher Education Coordinating Board to examine certain information and provide an analysis to the Legislature if other higher education institutions seek approval to offer degrees in fields previously restricted to only the UW or WSU.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking Minority Member; Priest, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Boldt, Buck, Chase, Clements, Condotta, Gombosky, Jarrett, Lantz, McCoy and Morrell.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Exclusive Lines of Study. Generally the state does not dictate which degree programs or major lines of study a public institution of higher education may offer. These decisions

are left to the governing boards of each institution. The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) must also approve the creation of a new degree program at any public four-year institution.

There are a few exceptions where state laws stipulate that only the University of Washington (UW) or Washington State University (WSU) may offer degrees in particular major lines of study. One example is electrical engineering.

Electrical Engineering. In 2002 WSU granted 76 bachelor's degrees in electrical and computer engineering. The UW granted about 135 degrees in electrical engineering and 220 degrees in computer science and engineering. Both universities also have graduate programs. Independent institutions also offer electrical engineering programs: Seattle Pacific University, Walla Walla College, and Seattle University. Gonzaga University offers both electrical and computer engineering. Total enrollment in these programs is approximately 400 students.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Electrical engineering as a major line of study is no longer restricted only to the UW or WSU.

Whenever the exclusive lines of study for both the UW and WSU are changed (including the change made in this bill), the HECB must conduct an independent analysis of a request by a higher education institution to offer a new degree program.

The analysis includes information from a variety of sources, including that submitted by the institution. Such information includes: a) detailed evidence of why the program is justified, including the size and scope of student, employer, and community demand; b) the feasibility and cost of using existing public or private capacity for the program; c) projected future enrollment; and d) any other information the HECB may require regarding demand, need, and cost-effectiveness.

The HECB will submit a complete analysis of such a proposal to the House and Senate Higher Education Committees at least one meeting prior to making its final determination on the program. However, the HECB's final action is not contingent on legislative approval.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Whenever the exclusive lines of study for both the UW and WSU are changed, the HECB must conduct an independent analysis of a request by an institution to offer a new degree program. The analysis includes information from a variety of sources, including evidence justifying demand for the program; the feasibility and cost of using existing program capacity; projected enrollment; and any other information the HECB may

require. The HECB will submit a complete analysis of such a proposal to legislative committees before making its final determination on the program, but the HECBs final action is not contingent on legislative approval.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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

Testimony For: This is a creative response to a clearly articulated need in a high demand field. The state should create opportunities for students to enter the engineering field. Students are more likely to enroll if programs are available where they currently live, and the public programs on the Western side of the state are at capacity. In addition the program at the UW does not offer non-traditional hours for working students. The electronics industry has experienced a great demand for engineers over the last decade and more are needed for the industry to innovate and spur economic recovery. There are underserved populations in the urban areas who could not afford to attend a private university, but who are prime targets for the "two-plus-two" program being proposed.

(Concerns) Independent colleges have existing capacity for electrical engineering and could enroll at least an additional 100 students. The Legislature should undertake an analysis of demand and capacity before authorizing this change, not after. Such an analysis would show that electrical engineers are underemployed in this state and there is no need to open a new and very expensive program. One of the reasons demand for engineering programs is soft is the extensive pre-requisites for students. A student who wishes to become an engineer must make that decision immediately as a college freshman in order to graduate in a timely manner.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Senator Horn, prime sponsor; George Durrie, Eastern Washington University; and Nancy Atwood, Washington Council of American Electronics Association.

(With concerns) Father Stephen Sundborg, Seattle University; and Violet Boyer, Washington Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.