

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5914

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to higher education.

Brief Description: Studying potential higher education opportunities in Vancouver.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Carlson and Kohl-Welles).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/25/04, 2/27/04 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)**

- Directs the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to develop evaluation criteria and identify data necessary for a rigorous and objective study of the feasibility of creating additional baccalaureate and graduate education opportunities in underserved areas.
- The first study will be in Southwest Washington with findings submitted to the Legislature by December 15, 2004.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking Minority Member; Boldt, Chase, Condotta, McCoy, Morrell and Ormsby.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

In 1989, the Legislature directed Washington State University (WSU) to operate a branch campus in the Vancouver area. WSU Vancouver currently enrolls 1,219 full-time equivalent students and offers a variety of degree programs, with enrollment concentrated in business, education, and social sciences. Most students transfer from two community

colleges: Clark College in Vancouver and Lower Columbia College in Longview.

To attract greater numbers of students in high demand fields and support regional economic growth, the three institutions have been developing an Engineering and Science Institute (Institute) where students enroll jointly at WSU Vancouver and a community college as freshmen. According to a recent study of branch campuses, community leaders are energized by the Institute, although the concept means different things to different people. Some see it as a first step toward WSU Vancouver becoming a four-year institution; others see it as a way to improve transfer and lend prestige to the two-plus-two model of education. The 2003 Legislature provided \$2.7 million in support of this initiative for the 2003-05 biennium, and WSU Vancouver received an additional \$663,000 for high demand enrollments for the 2004-05 academic year.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The Legislature recognizes the educational and economic development needs of Southwest Washington, but finds that other areas of the state could also potentially benefit from expanded baccalaureate and graduate education opportunities. A thorough and objective examination is necessary.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) must develop evaluation criteria and identify data necessary to conduct a feasibility study for creating additional baccalaureate and graduate opportunities in underserved areas. Such a study must be rigorous, objective, applicable to various regions of the state, and involve consultation with community leaders. The study criteria include:

1. Regional analysis of demand and supply of degree programs;
2. Regional population and demographic projections;
3. Potential regional economic development, including educational and workforce training needs of businesses;
4. Evaluation of alternative education delivery models, including expansion of current partnerships with community and technical colleges;
5. The possible role and mission of new or modified higher education institutions in a region, including the possibility of an innovative combination of instruction and research;
6. Short and long-term operating and capital costs; and
7. A balance between local or regional interests and statewide needs.

Once the criteria, data, and methodology are developed, the WSIPP will conduct the first feasibility study in Southwest Washington and submit its findings to the higher education and fiscal committees of the Legislature by December 15, 2004.

The bill is null and void unless specific funding is provided by June 30, 2004 in the

omnibus appropriations act.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill:

The Legislature recognizes the educational and economic development needs of Southwest Washington, but finds that other areas of the state could also potentially benefit from expanded baccalaureate and graduate education opportunities. Before conducting a feasibility study for additional baccalaureate and graduate education in Southwest Washington, the WSIPP must first develop evaluation criteria and identify the data necessary to conduct a study that is rigorous, objective, and could be applied in various regions of the state. A balance between local or regional interests and statewide needs is added to the list of analyses that are part of the study. Once the criteria, data, and methodology are developed, the WSIPP will conduct the first study in Southwest Washington. The bill is null and void unless specific funding is provided in the omnibus appropriations act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 27, 2004.

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

Testimony For: Citizens, businesses, and educators are anxious to identify and help expand opportunities for baccalaureate and graduate study in Southwest Washington. The three public institutions in the area have been working hard to develop co-admission and innovative programs to attract students and enable them to complete their education in the area. Each region must find creative and innovative solutions. A study could provide additional ideas and suggest ways to replicate them in small communities.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Jim McLaughlin, Lower Columbia Community College.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.