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## Higher Education Committee

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### HB 2382

**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 Summary of Bill

Requires the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to:

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

**Hearing Date:** 1/20/04

**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.

One way to communicate course equivalency is through a common course numbering system. At least eight other states have developed common course numbering among their higher education institutions.

***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 four-year institutions based on their applications.

### **Summary of 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. A transfer associate degree must meet all lower division course requirements at any public four-year institution for that specific major. The degree must also enable a transfer student to complete the same proportion of lower division general education requirements as a non-transferring student. 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.

***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 the institutions; develop strategies for communicating course equivalency to students, faculty, and advisors; and develop and implement a common course numbering 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, 2005, with recommendations on how to expand capacity in various locations.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 14, 2004.

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