

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 1808

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, April 3, 2003
Ways & Means, April 7, 2003

Title: An act relating to establishing standards of review in order to change lines of instruction at research universities.

Brief Description: Requiring standards of review before changing lines of instruction at research universities.

Sponsors: Representatives Kenney, Cox, Fromhold, Priest, Berkey, Jarrett, Gombosky, Morrell, Chase, McCoy and Lantz.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 3/24/03, 4/3/03 [DP].
Ways & Means: 4/7/03 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Carlson, Chair; Schmidt, Vice Chair; Horn, Kohl-Welles, B. Sheldon and Shin.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Mulliken.

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Rossi, Chair; Hewitt, Vice Chair; Zarelli, Vice Chair; Doumit, Hale, Honeyford, Johnson, Roach, Sheahan, B. Sheldon and Winsley.

Staff: Karen Barrett (786-7711)

Background: Currently, the University of Washington (UW) and Washington State University (WSU) are the only public higher education institutions allowed to offer certain professional degrees, including engineering. More often, the state does not dictate which degree programs may be offered by any single public college or university. Those decisions are made by governing boards of the respective institutions. 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 as they are referred

to, one of which is electrical engineering. There are also private institutions in Washington who presently offer electrical engineering degree programs.

The state requires the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to approve the creation of a new degree program at any public four-year institution. There are no statutory criteria for this review. Presently, the HECB requires the petitioning school to provide the following type of information: (a) objective data regarding the need for the program, (b) plans for the assessment of student achievement and program effectiveness, (c) program budget and expected enrollment, and (d) assurances that expert reviewers attest to the program's quality.

In 2002, WSU granted 76 bachelors degrees in electrical and computer engineering. The UW granted about 135 degrees in electrical and 200 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. According to research, the number of engineering degrees in Washington decreased 4 percent from 1995-2000, while in the same period, high-tech employment grew by 70 percent. Among high-tech firms attempting to hire employees at a BA/BS level, approximately 53 percent claim difficulty finding qualified applicants.

Summary of Amended Bill: Petitions to offer a degree in what was once an exclusive major line of instruction for either state research university requires an independent program analysis by the Higher Education Coordinating Board who must consider certain factors. The board's review must draw from various sources beyond the petitioner and specifically examine: (a) evidence that program expansion is justified by the size and scope of student, employer and community demand; (b) the feasibility and cost of using existing public or private capacity; (c) projected future enrollment; and (d) any other information the board may request about program demand, need, and cost-effectiveness. When such circumstances arise, the board must submit its analysis to legislative committees with jurisdiction before proceeding to make a final determination regarding approval of the new degree program. The board is further required to apply these new review standards and to examine whether the UW and WSU should retain an exclusive line of public instruction in electrical engineering.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Bill: The amended bill does not contain the section which removed electrical engineering from the list of exclusive major lines of public instruction for state research universities. A study of the policy in question is assigned to the Higher Education Coordinating Board. The board must apply newly codified "standards of review" and provide the legislature with its analysis and findings by December 2003.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For (Higher Education): Institutions must apply to the HECB for permission to offer the new programs. We need to establish a strategic plan so that we do not make decisions in isolation. It is important for the Legislature to be clear about what questions it

expects the HECB to explore. EWU supports the language in EHB 1808; we always expected to go before the HECB. EWU is concerned about the submission of the report to the Legislature and the vagueness of the language. A time limit is suggested for the legislative response. EWU compares it to the process they used for the Pharm D. Program. The Senate language would work. The CCs prepare more students to enter the EE programs than the programs can accommodate if the student wants to attend a public institution.

AeA supports the language of either bill. We always expected to go before the HECB for new program approval. The vague legislative language is a concern.

Concerns: The four accredited programs in private institutions are suffering from low demand, so there is capacity to serve 100 additional students. Opening a public program will cause two of ours to close. The privates already work collaboratively with the CCs. Marketing of the programs is underway. Please be sure that all unused capacity is used prior to starting a new program.

Testimony Against (Higher Education): None.

Testified (Higher Education): PRO: Representative Phyllis Kenney, prime sponsor; Steve Jordan, President, EWU; Nancy Atwood, AeA; Violet Boyer, WAICU (concerns).

Testimony For (Ways & Means): Lifting the restriction does not guarantee that another public institution will be granted approval to offer degree programs in electrical engineering. Pass the original measure, not the striking amendment. New program offerings are now and would continue to be subject to the approval of the Higher Education Coordinating Board whose independent review duties are clarified and strengthened. Waiting another year for "study" has economic implications. This bill enables regional and research universities to leverage available state money to meet the challenge and respond to the skilled demands of employers in a high-cost field of study where graduates are in short supply and firms are importing workers. Eastern Washington University and North Seattle Community College would like to partner in the preparation of electrical engineers using existing facilities with the potential for direct transfer to baccalaureate studies in Cheney but not before 2006. The University of Washington is the only accredited public option for students in the King County metropolitan area. The AeA reports that the UW was asked but is presently unable to expand its engineering school or entertain the faculty resources required to execute a 2 2 arrangement. Electrical engineers are the drivers of new product development and industry members prefer a home-grown workforce seeking to depend less on skilled persons working in our country under visas as Washington moves forward in time. Forty-five percent of residents graduating with an electrical engineering degree started at a state community or technical college. Surveying academic transfer and associate degree students at Bellevue Community College, there is evidence to suggest more applicants than openings to apply earned science and math credits toward an engineering degree from the UW.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): Independent colleges are concerned. Enrollment in electrical engineering programs are cyclical with new hire prospects among firms. These professional programs are expensive to start and sustain through periods of soft demand like today. The timing of this policy change is questioned. The state should consider and leverage "unused" capacity between four of its accredited private universities (Gonzaga, Walla Walla College and Seattle University) who together could admit 100 more full-time

equivalent students. Further, instructional access is not subsidized by state taxpayers. Why forego this market arrangement?

Testified (Ways & Means): Pro referred bill: Representative Phyllis Kenney, sponsor; Stephen Jordan, President of Eastern Washington University; Loretta Seppanen, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Nancy Atwood, American Electronics Association (AeA). With concerns, as referred: John Eschleman, Provost, Seattle University; Tom Parker, Washington Association of Independent Colleges & University (WAICU).