

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHCR 4416

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 26, 2004

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

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Kenney, Cox and Morrell; by request of Higher Education Coordinating Board).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/23/04, 2/26/04 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

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

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: Every four years, the Higher Education Coordinating Board (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 Amended 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. Using the enrollment capacity of the independent colleges and universities is encouraged.

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. Strategies will address alignment of high school standards and assessments with college admission and placement practices, as well as a process for developing a master plan prekindergarten through university.

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, and Workforce Training and Education Coordinating 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. The board must address quality by providing funding options that allow Washington to recruit and retain the highest quality faculty.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: Using the enrollment capacity of the independent colleges and universities is encouraged. Strategies will address alignment of high school standards and assessments with college entrance and placement practices as well as a process for developing a master plan for prekindergarten through university. The HECB is to address quality by providing funding options that allow Washington to recruit and retain the highest quality faculty.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: It is vital that the HECB conduct additional analysis while demanding accountability and maintaining the current governance structure. The Legislature should be giving the HECB specific direction for the final plan that is due in June. The House believes it is important for the Legislature to maintain control over the level of tuition for resident undergraduate students. The SBCTC maintains its position that tuition levels ought to be set by the Legislature. Students request a full debate regarding tuition policy. The HECB says that tuition and financial aid must both be high in order to hold the students harmless. While the interim plan is a good start, concern exists regarding HECB leadership. It is important that tuition, financial aid, and general fund support be "in sync."

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Rep. Phyllis Kenney, prime sponsor; Brady Horenstein, WSU, WSL; Jim Sulton, HECB; Jim Huckabay, CWU, CFR; Gail Stygall, UW, CFR; Wendy Rader-Konafalski, WFT; Sandy Wall, SBCTC.