

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5914

As Passed Senate, February 13, 2004

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: 2/3/04, 2/5/04 [DPS-WM].

Ways & Means: 2/9/04 [DP2S].

Passed Senate: 2/13/04, 47-2.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5914 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5914 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Zarelli, Chair; Hewitt, Vice Chair; Parlette, Vice Chair; Carlson, Doumit, Fairley, Fraser, Hale, Honeyford, Regala, Roach, Sheahan, B. Sheldon and Winsley.

Staff: Richard Ramsey (786-7412)

Background: The Legislature directed Washington State University (WSU) to operate a branch campus in the Vancouver area. The WSU Vancouver campus currently enrolls 1219 FTE 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 development, the three institutions have been developing an Engineering and Science 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 Engineering and Science Institute, although it appears the concept means different things to different people. Some see it as a first step toward WSU Vancouver becoming a four-year institution while 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 the WSU Vancouver branch campus received an additional \$663,000 for high demand enrollments for the 2004-05 academic year.

Summary of Bill: The Washington State Institute for Public Policy conducts a feasibility study for the creation of additional baccalaureate and graduate opportunities for public higher education in Vancouver. The study includes: (1) a detailed regional analysis of student demand and supply of degree programs, including potential economic development and consultation with community leaders, (2) consideration of alternative models for providing education in the region, (3) examination of the possible role and mission of a four-year university, including the possibility of an innovative combination of instruction and research to meet the region's need for student access and expansion of the region's economic viability, and (4) a comparison of short- and long-term costs. The study design may be used to explore baccalaureate access in Washington as a whole.

Findings from the study are due December 15, 2004.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For (Higher Education): There is substantial growth in Southwest Washington resulting in an ever increasing number of placebound students finding it difficult to meet their higher education needs. The success of Clark College means there are too many students prepared to transfer for WSU Vancouver to receive them all. The focus of the study must be on Southwest Washington, though the study methodology as developed by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy might be applied across the state. Structure the decision process so it can be successful in addressing the state's baccalaureate needs. Building new institutions and increasing capacity may not necessarily be the same thing. There are many questions that need to be answered. Be careful – if you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there.

The study should also look at the economic needs of the Longview/Kelso area and maybe that is where a new four-year college ought to be located. Without higher education and economic development, many communities are falling prey to the "feel good" drug culture. Families need hope that comes with family wage jobs.

Any analysis will demonstrate significant need throughout Southwest Washington. Doctoral programs and research capabilities must be a part of the equation.

Testimony Against (Higher Education): None.

Testified (Higher Education): Senator Don Carlson, prime sponsor; Earl Hale, SBCTC; Bruce Botka, HECB; Dennis Weber, Longview City Council; Larry Ganders, WSU; Candy Bennett, Clark College.

Testimony For (Ways & Means): This study represents the kind of planning we should do for determining expansion of higher education in Washington. This includes evaluating the long-term cost implications.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): None.

Testified (Ways & Means): Jan Yoshiwara, SBCTC (pro).