

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SCR 8406

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As of March 21, 2003

**Brief Description:** Creating a legislative work group to reach consensus regarding the master plan for higher education.

**Sponsors:** Senators Kohl-Welles, Carlson and Winsley.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education: 3/27/03.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Staff:** Jean Six (786-7423)

**Background:** The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is charged with providing planning, coordination, monitoring, and policy analysis for higher education in the state of Washington. Specifically, the board is responsible for preparing a comprehensive master plan which includes but is not limited to assessments of the state's higher education needs; recommendations on enrollments and other policies and actions to meet those needs; and guidelines for continuing education, adult education, public service, and other higher education programs. The board is directed to consult institutions and other segments of postsecondary education as it carries out these responsibilities.

By statute, the board must update the master plan every four years and submit it to the Governor and appropriate legislative policy committees. Following public hearings, the Legislature must, by concurrent resolution, approve or recommend changes to the initial plan and subsequent updates. The plan then becomes state higher education policy unless legislation is enacted to alter policies in the plan. Following debate of the 2000 update of the master plan, the HECB was directed to implement the plan but at the same time to reexamine the methods and assumptions underlying the estimates of the operating and capital budgets needed to support its recommended level of enrollment growth. The reexamination was completed and delivered to the Legislature in 2001.

A 2002 review of the HECB by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that while the planning and coordination functions of the HECB are valued, there is room for improvement.

The next update of the master plan is currently being developed and is due by December 1, 2003.

**Summary of Bill:** A work group of legislators including members of both policy and fiscal committees is formed to work with the HECB and its staff to reach consensus on policy parameters and priorities for the 2004 higher education master plan. The HECB and the work group may consider advancing the master plan timeline to June 2004.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.