

SENATE BILL REPORT

SCR 8421

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 5, 2004

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

Sponsors: Senators Carlson, Kohl-Welles, Schmidt, Berkey and Winsley; by request of Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/29/04, 2/5/04 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 8421 be substituted therefor, and the substitute concurrent resolution do pass.

Signed by Senators Carlson, Chair; Schmidt, Vice Chair; Horn, Pflug and B. Sheldon.

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: The 1985 Legislature created the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to "provide planning, coordination, monitoring, and policy analysis for higher education in the state of Washington...." The Legislature created the board to represent the broad public interest above the interests of the individual colleges and universities. In addition, the board is responsible for the development and update of a comprehensive master plan for the future of the state's higher education system. The board is expected to consult with institutions and other segments of post-secondary education as it carries out these responsibilities. The first plan was adopted by the Legislature in 1988 with subsequent updates in 1993, 1996, and 2000.

The 2003 Legislature created a Higher Education Strategic Master Plan Work Group to guide the development of a strategic master plan and directed the HECB to submit an interim plan in December 2003, with the final plan to be completed in June 2004. The work group met a number of times during the interim and defined legislative expectations as well as provided policy direction to the board. The interim plan is to provide a framework for the development of budget and policy proposals by the institutions, the Governor, and the Legislature. Following public hearings, the Legislature must, by concurrent resolution, approve or recommend changes to the plan. The HECB then publishes a final report incorporating any legislative changes by June of the year in which the Legislature approves a concurrent resolution adopting the plan.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Legislature commends the Higher Education Coordinating Board for its dedication in the creation of the 2004 Strategic Master Plan for Higher

Education: Interim Plan and thanks the board for their future incorporation of legislatively directed changes to the plan to be published in June.

The Legislature concurs in the board's goals for higher education: (1) increase by about 20 percent the total number of students who earn college degrees and job-training credentials, and (2) respond to the state's economic needs. The Legislature also concurs in the proposed strategies for achieving the goals by 2010: (1) increase public college and university enrollment, (2) increase educational efficiency, (3) promote innovation in service delivery, (4) address higher education budget needs through various means such as unrestricted tuition-setting authority, (5) create an ongoing program to identify high demand fields and recognize higher educational costs, and (6) improve K-12/higher education linkages.

The final 2004 strategic master plan articulates options for state action and provides measurable performance indicators and benchmarks to gauge progress toward the statewide goals. The board evaluates and reports to the Governor and the Legislature on the alignment of the 2005-07 operating and capital budgets with the statewide strategic master plan and also works with the public higher education institutions to ensure alignment of individual strategic plans with the statewide plan.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The Legislature encourages the use of the enrollment capacity of the independent colleges and universities. With SBCTC approval, the community colleges may offer limited upper-division coursework to meet specific program and economic development needs of the community. The Legislature also encourages the community colleges to explore limited baccalaureate programs through a pilot project approved by the HECB. The governance study is deleted.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 28, 2004.

Testimony For: The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB) supports the connection of higher education to the state's economic vitality and can provide valuable labor market information about such things as high demand programs and access. The WTECB agrees with the prime sponsor that the higher education boards should remain separate entities.

It is important to continue building the 2+2 system and also to encourage collegial efforts by the faculty to provide opportunities for students on both the two-year and the four-year campuses. It will be important to use existing capacity at both the private and proprietary institutions.

The earlier work session on the Strategic Master Plan was much appreciated by the members of the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) and they look forward to continuing collaboration leading to the final Plan in June. There are unique needs throughout various regions of the state and the Master Plan will address those through conversations with business and civic leaders. Partnerships among institutions are critical as is an on-going process to address high demand enrollments and programs.

Concerns: The HECB recognizes the opposition to the consolidation of the three boards but still believes governance should be part of the conversation while acknowledging the

Legislature only weakly supports them. Does the governance conversation allow people to avoid the policy discussion? The HECB is known to be exclusive not collaborative. The SMP ought to be more explicit with regard to institutional missions and state goals. A needs analysis is called for with regard to growing demand for higher education and degree production. Where will enrollments go? Should the plan also address the compensation issue? The SBCTC does not want local control of tuition – but asks for a policy that looks at the relationship between tuition, financial aid, and general fund state support. Students also oppose local tuition setting authority asking for a comprehensive tuition policy that moves beyond yearly decisions. The students also want more detailed specifics in this plan that they see as too general and others call incomplete. Where is the funding plan? Some see performance contracts as the answer while EWU calls for an allocation system similar to California.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Don Carlson, prime sponsor; Gay Selby, member of the HECB; Bruce Botka, HECB; WITH CONCERNS: Ellen O'Brien Saunders, WTECB; Sandy Wall, SBCTC; Brady Horenstein, WSU, WSL; Jim Huckabay, CWU, CFR; Violet Boyer, ICW; Don Bantz, TESC; Judy McNickle, WWU; Ann Anderson, CWU; Jeff Gombosky, EWU.