

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 3113

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Education

Title: An act relating to expanding access to higher education in north Snohomish, Island, and Skagit counties using the university center model.

Brief Description: Expanding access to higher education using the university center model.

Sponsors: Representatives Sells, Kenney, Strow, McCoy, Haler, Dunshee, B. Sullivan, Lovick, Roberts and Hasegawa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education & Workforce Education: 1/27/06, 1/31/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Accepts report submitted to the Legislature on December 1, 2005, as representing the needs for higher education in the North Snohomish, Island and Skagit Counties region.
- States legislative intent to provide funding for 250 full-time equivalent students.
- Requires a report to include enrollments and degrees due to the Legislature by July 1, 2007.
- Includes a clause making the act null and void if specific funding for the purposes of this bill are not appropriated.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking Minority Member; Rodne, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buri, Fromhold, Hasegawa, Jarrett, Ormsby, Priest, Roberts and Sommers.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Dunn.

Staff: Nina Oman (786-7152).

Background:

The North Snohomish, Island and Skagit (NSIS) Counties Higher Education Consortium was meant to provide students in the NSIS region with opportunities to access higher education from a variety of higher education institutions offering classes through one location, the Everett Station. House Bill 1794, passed in 2005, subsequently found that the NSIS Consortium did not meet the needs of the region. The bill further stated that the university center model of service delivery, centered on a community college campus with a single point of accountability, has proven more effective in developing degree programs and attracting students.

The state therefore assigned management and leadership responsibility for the NSIS Consortium to Everett Community College, and requested a plan for the region to include preliminary recommendations, due to the Legislature December 1, 2005.

Everett Community College submitted a report titled "Higher Education Opportunity in the NSIS region (Preliminary Report)" to the Legislature on December 1, 2005. This report describes the vision for a new "University Center of North Puget Sound," which would sponsor bachelor's and graduate degree programs offered by a variety of different universities. The University Center of North Puget Sound would be located at Everett Station through 2008, and then relocate to Everett Community College in January of 2009 with the opening of a new undergraduate education center on the college campus. Depending on enrollment growth, the report states that additional space may be required beyond 2011.

The preliminary report submitted by Everett Community College describes projections of the population to the year 2025. In the Snohomish area, the total population is projected to expand by 39 percent, in the Island region by 35 percent, and in the Skagit region by 46 percent. Low baccalaureate participation rates and low transfer rates are attributed to the lack of a baccalaureate institution in the region. Student interest in baccalaureate opportunities in the NSIS region was documented through a survey conducted by the University of Washington. Of the students surveyed, 83 percent of community college students said they wanted to continue beyond an associate degree. A follow-up survey conducted by Everett Community College found that half of all people surveyed said they would complete a bachelor's degree if the program of their choice was available in the Everett area. Employer needs in the area, as stated in the report, include interest in educational options for employees who already have earned a technical associate degree, but who need a bachelor's degree to strengthen their skills.

The report also describes goals which include serving between 450 and 620 full-time equivalent (FTE) students by the year 2011, and 700 to 1,500 FTEs by the year 2015. The range of needed FTEs will depend on when new programs can be added, and whether new opportunities for participation in higher education will successfully meet the needs of the expected population growth in the area.

The need for higher education enrollment in the NSIS region has been documented in a study required by a 2005 Capital Budget Proviso. This proviso directs the Higher Education Coordinating Board to undertake a higher education needs assessment of the Snohomish, Island and Skagit Counties region. An interim report was due to the Legislature on January

15, 2006, and a final report is due December 1, 2006. The interim report projects unmet need at the upper-division level to 4,141 FTEs, and unmet need at the graduate/professional level to 2,397 FTEs by the year 2025.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Legislature accepts the preliminary report "Higher Education Opportunity in the NSIS region" as representative of the needs for higher education in the NSIS region. The Legislature finds unmet need in the area and intends to support enrollment growth as represented in the report.

The Legislature intends to provide funding for a minimum of 250 FTEs at the upper-division and graduate levels for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2007, to meet the higher education needs of the NSIS region. The funding will include support fields of study including but not limited to engineering, technology, nursing and health professions, environmental sciences, education, interdisciplinary studies, and other areas of study based on student and employer demand.

Everett Community College, with the assistance of Edmonds Community College and Skagit Valley College, and the universities participating in offering enrollment will submit a report to the Legislature due July 1, 2007. The report will describe the number of enrollments and degrees resulting from the new FTE funding, as well as the effect of those enrollments and degrees on local communities.

The act is null and void if specific funding for the purposes of this bill is not appropriated.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The act is null and void unless funding is appropriated.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except for section 1, relating to legislative findings and a report requirement, which takes effect on July 1, 2006. However, the bill is null and void if not funded in the budget.

Testimony For: All of the NSIS region is growing. Snohomish County is one of the most underserved areas in the state. This bill gives us a chance to respond to higher education needs in all of the NSIS counties. The work required by House Bill 1794 has laid the groundwork for this bill, with a plan that is regionally focused.

There is a lack of higher education opportunity in the region. People don't want to drive for higher education. The area needs a four-year university presence. Face-to-face education is important. A community college/university partnership with funded FTEs offering bachelor's degrees is a viable way to respond to the needs in the area. Employers want workers who are locally trained. The Everett Chamber of Commerce took a poll, and 90 percent of those polled want to see baccalaureate degrees offered in town.

Existing university centers have worked through challenges associated with the model and could serve as examples. Enrollments and degree approval processes will need to happen quickly to meet the deadlines in the bill.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Sells, prime sponsor; Representative Dunshee; Patrick McLain, City of Everett; Ann Anderson, Central Washington University; Jack O'harah, Edmonds Community College; Christine Kerlin, Nancy Truitt Pierce, and Michael Kerns, Everett Community College; and Loretta Seppanen, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.