
**Higher Education & Workforce
Education Committee**

SSB 6464

Brief Description: Expanding the baccalaureate degree program at WSU, Tri-Cities.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Delvin, McAuliffe, Hewitt, Pridemore and Rasmussen).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes Washington State University Tri-Cities, beginning in the fall of 2006, to admit lower-division students directly and expand into a four-year institution.

Hearing Date: 2/21/06

Staff: Sarah Ream (786-7303).

Background:

In 1989, the Legislature established five branch campuses in growing urban areas, to be operated by the state's two public research universities. The branch campuses included Washington State University (WSU) Tri-Cities. The campuses were authorized to offer only upper-division and graduate education programs, in collaboration with local community and technical colleges which offered lower-division course work to prepare students for transfer. The mission of the branch campuses, as established by statute, is to expand access to higher education and contribute to regional economic development through collaboration with community and technical colleges.

In 2005, the Legislature authorized WSU Tri-Cities to expand its upper-division capacity for transfer students and its graduate capacity and programs, while continuing to provide innovative coadmission and coenrollment options with Columbia Basin College. The Legislature also authorized WSU Tri-Cities, beginning in the fall of 2006, to begin offering lower-division courses linked to specific majors in fields not addressed by the local community colleges.

Additionally, the 2005 legislation authorized WSU Tri-Cities to develop a bachelor's degree program in biotechnology, and to admit freshman and sophomores to that program directly (as opposed to through co-admission or co-enrollment agreements with community colleges). The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) must approve the biotechnology program before WSU Tri-Cities may provide it. To date, WSU Tri-Cities has not requested the

HECB's approval of such a program.

Summary of Bill:

Beginning in the fall of 2006, WSU Tri-Cities may admit lower-division students without the limitation of co-admission and co-enrollment with Columbia Basin College. The campus will develop into a four-year institution of higher education by simultaneously admitting freshman and sophomores, increasing transfer enrollment, co-admitting transfer students, and expanding graduate and professional programs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.