

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2591

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to the acquisition and dissemination of data regarding institutions of higher education.

Brief Description: Regarding the acquisition and dissemination of data pertaining to institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Representatives Wallace, Sells and Jarrett.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/17/08, 1/30/08 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Higher Education and Coordinating Board (HECB) and the Education Data Center (EDC) to work together to post and populate an informational "dashboard" which organizes and presents specified information in a manner which is easily accessible to the public.
- Directs the dashboard to be displayed on the EDC Web site.
- Directs the HECB and the EDC to convene a workgroup to develop the dashboard template, a set of common data definitions for certain measures, a set of workforce measures, and a set of financial cost measures.
- Assigns implementation deadlines to the HECB and EDC in two phases: the first set of data display via the dashboard is due December 1, 2008, and the second by July 1, 2009.
- Removes some of the specific reporting requirements for most measures.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Wallace, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Anderson, Ranking Member; Hankins, Hasegawa, Jarrett, McIntire, Schmick and Sommers.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Roberts.

Staff: Andi Smith (786-7304).

Background:

Public institutions of higher education are required by various state and federal laws to publish and report particular information. For instance, under the state work study program, the institutions report annually to the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) according to requirements adopted by the HECB. Institutions are required to report periodically to the Legislature regarding the costs and benefits of tuition waivers. The federal Student Right-To-Know and Campus Security Act requires institutions to disseminate information related to financial assistance as well as criminal activity on campus.

There is no requirement that disparate information – such as enrollment figures, transfer rates, number of degrees awarded, student/faculty ratios – be gathered and presented in a uniform format which is easily accessible to the public or which allows comparisons between institutions to be easily made.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

"Dashboard" is defined as a visual display of information consolidated and arranged on a computer screen in an easy to read fashion so that the information can be seen at a glance.

The HECB, in conjunction with the Education Data Center (EDC) must work together to post and populate an informational "dashboard" which organizes and presents specified information in a manner which is easily accessible to the public. The performance data will be displayed in two phases. The first will include performance data regarding enrollments, degrees and certificates awarded, financial aid awards, and data on programs such as English as a Second Language (ESL), remedial education, and high school dual credit programs.

The HECB and the EDC also must convene a work group to: (1) develop a uniform template for the dashboard; (2) develop a common set of workforce measures; (3) develop a common set of data definitions shared among institutions of higher education regarding performance data such as transfer rates, admission rates, retention rates, and measures of faculty engagement; and (4) develop a set of financial cost measures including cost of instruction and cost of attendance.

The first phase of performance data must be posted in the dashboard format by December 1, 2008. Phase two reporting that includes performance measures agreed upon by the workgroup must be posted by July 1, 2009.

The HECB, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and the EDC are required to work with the institutions to annually update the information on the EDC dashboard. The bill also requires creation and use of a link from the homepage of each institution to the EDC homepage. The HECB must also prominently post on its homepage a link to the EDC's homepage.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Creating and populating the dashboard template is broken into two phases in the substitute bill. The first phase requires the HECB and the EDC to work together to post performance data including enrollments, degrees and certificates awarded, financial aid awards, and data on programs such as ESL, remedial education, and high school dual credit programs by December 1, 2008.

The second phase of implementation requires that the HECB and EDC jointly convene a workgroup to: (1) develop a uniform template for the dashboard by December 1, 2008; (2) develop a common set of workforce measures; (3) develop a common set of data definitions shared among institutions of higher education regarding performance data such as transfer rates, admission rates, retention rates, and measures of faculty engagement; and (4) develop a set of financial cost measures including cost of instruction and cost of attendance. This group of performance data must be published in the dashboard by July 1, 2009.

The substitute bill directs the dashboard to be displayed on the EDC Web site rather than on the HECB's Web site.

The substitute bill also removes some of the specific reporting requirements for most performance measures and gives the agencies and workgroup more control over the best measures to be displayed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: New fiscal note requested on substitute bill on January 30, 2008.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Institutions are collecting a lot of data but it isn't displayed in one place that is easily accessed by the public. This information should be used by legislators, students, and the administrators at our institutions to guide our decision making.

(In support with concerns) We are supportive of the notion of disclosing public information to the public and support the notion of transparency. There are questions about the intended audience for the dashboard: Is it students? Researchers? The general public? There are also questions about how it adds value. Institutions are also a little nervous about the level of specificity required in the performance measures. People want the opportunity to work

through this with the committee and maybe with a workgroup to make sure that the data display aligns with the system's strategic goals. Some are concerned that showing certain information to students would dissuade them from choosing higher education.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Wallace, prime sponsor.

(In support with concerns) Terry Teale and Jan Yoshiwara, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; and Brian Jeffries, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.