

FINAL BILL REPORT

2SHB 1096

C 277 L 07

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Creating postsecondary opportunity programs.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Kenney, Priest, Quall, Wallace, Conway, Haler, Morris, Ormsby, Linville, Jarrett, Dickerson, Hunt, Walsh, P. Sullivan, Darneille, Appleton, Morrell, Williams, Dunn, Schual-Berke, Fromhold, Hasegawa, Chase, Upthegrove, McCoy, Green, O'Brien, Hudgins, Sells, Springer, Moeller, Goodman, Barlow, Eddy, Santos, Simpson, Haigh, Lantz, Kagi and Rolfes).

House Committee on Community & Economic Development & Trade

House Committee on Higher Education

House Committee on Appropriations

Senate Committee on Higher Education

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

Employer Worker Needs.

Regular surveys of employers conducted by the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB) show that employers in the state consistently report difficulty finding workers for jobs with mid-level skills that require some postsecondary education, but less than a bachelor's degree. The WTECB projects job openings for new workers with mid-level skills in Washington at 31,000 annually between 2009 and 2012. The WTECB estimates that to meet this demand, an additional 1,170 full-time equivalent (FTE) workforce education students are needed annually, in addition to increases tied to student-age population growth.

Unmet Financial Needs of Students.

In 2006-2007, the average cost of community and technical college attendance is \$12,900 per year when tuition and fees, books, living expenses and transportation are included. Seven different state agencies administer 18 state and federally-funded workforce programs in Washington. Low-income students may apply for existing state and federal need-based aid. However, not all low-income students are eligible for need-based aid, and there is no guarantee that a student will receive aid to cover all of his/her costs.

A 2006 budget proviso required the WTECB to conduct a study on financial aid and access issues for workforce education students. The study found that during 2004-05, after accessing traditional student aid and aid from workforce development programs, the remaining unmet need for students was \$97 million per year. The study found financial need to be the biggest barrier to increased student access and retention in workforce programs.

Opportunity Grants Pilot Program.

The 2006 operating budget provided \$4 million for the community and technical college system to develop and implement the Opportunity Grants Pilot Program, which was designed to test strategies for increasing access to postsecondary education for low-income students in job-specific programs. As of December 2006, 436 students were participating in the 10 colleges selected from across the state to participate in the pilot. A preliminary report by the SBCTC stated that:

- 68 percent of Opportunity Grant participants are parents;
- the average household income for Opportunity Grant participants is less than \$11,000 per year, with an average household size of three;
- 97 percent of students who began in one of the pilot programs remain engaged and on their chosen career pathway;
- Opportunity Grant students are enrolled at all educational levels, from adult basic skills to college-level coursework;
- 51 percent of Opportunity Grant participants are enrolled in healthcare related pathways; and
- more than half of Opportunity Grant participants received a combination of Opportunity Grant awards and other forms of financial aid.

Summary:

Creation of the Opportunity Grant Program.

Subject to appropriations, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) will develop and implement the Opportunity Grant Program. Students enrolled in the program will be eligible to receive funding for tuition and fees at the public community and technical college rate, plus \$1,000 per academic year for books, tools, and supplies (both are prorated if the credit load is less than full time).

The program will be available to Washington residents enrolled in "opportunity grant-eligible programs of study" at community and technical colleges, private career schools and Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council-approved apprenticeship programs.

To qualify, a student's income must not exceed 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and the student must have financial need.

A student must make satisfactory progress and maintain a cumulative 2.0 grade point average for continued eligibility. Funding is limited to 45 credits or the equivalent or three years, whichever comes first.

Public colleges will receive an enhancement of \$1,500 per full-time equivalent student enrolled in the Opportunity Grant Program. These funds will be used for individualized support services necessary for student success. The SBCTC is accountable for student retention and program completion. It will set and monitor performance and must reduce funding at institutions that do not meet targets.

The SBCTC and the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) must work together to ensure that students participating in the Opportunity Grant Program are informed of other state and federal financial aid to which they might be entitled.

Creation of Opportunity Partnerships.

The SBCTC, in partnership with business, labor, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB), will:

- identify high demand training programs offered by qualified postsecondary institutions that lead to a credential, certificate, or degree;
- gain recognition of the credentials, certificates, and degrees by Washington's employers and labor organizations, and designate them as "opportunity grant-eligible programs of study;" and
- market the credentials, certificates, and degrees to potential students, businesses, and apprenticeship programs.

Subject to appropriations, the WTECB will receive funding on behalf of the opportunity partnerships. In partnership with business, labor, and the SBCTC, the WTECB will determine criteria and distribute funds for the program. Community and technical colleges and local workforce development councils will partner to develop the Opportunity Partnership Program, which will provide mentoring to opportunity grant students. Participating students will be matched with a business or labor mentor employed in their field of study. The mentor will help the student explore careers and employment options through any combination of tours, informational interviews, job shadowing, and internships.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	96	0	
Senate	45	0	(Senate amended)
House	94	1	(House concurred)

Effective: July 22, 2007