

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6295

As Amended by House, March 11, 2008

Title: An act relating to workplace-based electronically distributed learning.

Brief Description: Creating workplace-based electronically distributed learning opportunities.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Kilmer, Rockefeller, Hobbs, Shin, Franklin, Marr, Rasmussen, Kastama, Kauffman, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Hatfield, Berkey and Regala).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/21/08 [DP-WM].

Ways & Means: 2/11/08, 2/12/08 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/18/08, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Shin, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair; Delvin, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Schoesler and Sheldon.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6295 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, Hatfield, Hewitt, Hobbs, Honeyford, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Oemig, Parlette, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Tom.

Staff: Tim Yowell (786-7435)

Background: More than 34 percent of Washington residents age 18 to 64 have only a high school diploma. The 2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education in Washington identifies the role that the higher education system can play in addressing this issue and preparing Washington's workforce. The Master Plan recognizes the need to create more friendly career pathways among the two-year and four-year degree programs. Specifically,

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the Master Plan cites the need for more portable and flexible options for promoting and financing skill upgrade training and professional development.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill: The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB) selects up to eight public or private institutions of higher education, including at least four community or technical colleges, to develop and offer pilot projects providing employer workplace-based educational programs with distance learning components. Institutions apply to become pilot colleges and are selected based upon established criteria. By September 2008, the WTECB selects employers, using established criteria. They have the ability to offer employment and workplace-based educational programs with distance learning components in cooperation with selected higher education institutions. The pilot program is funded using a matching fund strategy and is evaluated by December 1, 2012 after which the pilot program expires.

The WTECB identifies and evaluates current national private employer workplace-based educational programs with distance learning components provided by higher education public institutions. The results of the study are reported to the Legislature by December 1, 2008.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Higher Education): PRO: It is difficult for workers raising families to travel to college campuses to obtain the training they need. This will encourage continuing employee development. The benefits will accrue to both employers and employees. The community and technical college system is committed to educating working adults and this would aid that effort. The concept fits in well with Washington State University's vision for a global electronic campus. This encourages cooperation between two-year and four-year colleges. It will particularly be of help to small and medium size employers who can't otherwise afford in-house training.

OTHER: The WTECB is committed to lifelong training and education. This will provide greater accessibility for working adults.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education): Senator Kilmer, prime sponsor; Carolyn Cummins, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Larry Ganders, Washington State University; Amber Carter, Association of Washington Business.

OTHER: Eleni Papadakis, WTECB.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Ways & Means): OTHER: The legislation would be stronger if the state's independent non-profit colleges and universities were added as an additional eligible grantee.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): OTHER: Gregg Scheiderer, Independent Colleges of Washington.

House Amendment(s): A workgroup is jointly convened by the WTECB and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, to take the following actions related to electronically distributed learning in addition to the study outlined in the original bill: (1) review and establish standards and best practices; (2) recommend methods to increase student access as well as identify barriers to participation and completion; (3) determine methods to increase the supply of open course materials; (4) recommend methods to increase the availability of digital open textbooks; and (5) review and report demographic information on programs of study including enrollments, retention, and completion. Participation requires a demonstrated commitment from workplaces applying for the grant.