

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5043

As of February 2, 2009

Title: An act relating to creating a higher education coordination board work group to develop a single, coordinated student access portal.

Brief Description: Convening a work group to develop a single, coordinated student access portal for college information.

Sponsors: Senators Kilmer, Kauffman, Shin, Rockefeller, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Jarrett, Tom and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/30/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Wendy Malkin (786-7434)

Background: The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) maintains a website where students and parents can obtain information about financing a college education. The HECB and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges are currently working on an academic guidance and planning system (Academic GPS) that uses web-based technology to provide an online, statewide system for degree planning and advising. The proposed system includes planning tools to help students transfer among the state's colleges and universities.

Several states have created one-stop college access web portals for prospective and current college students and their families. The portals provide information on how to plan, pay, and apply for college. Portals may also include career centers. Some states claim that web portals are demonstrably useful to students and parents. The most sophisticated of these websites serve as one-stop portals to all public post-secondary institutions in the state.

Summary of Bill: The HECB convenes a work group to develop a plan to create a one-stop, web-based portal for students and families planning, preparing, and applying for, as well as those attending, postsecondary education. The purpose of the portal is to provide comprehensive information and applications regarding financial, academic, and career planning.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The work group investigates similar ongoing efforts in other states including what information and services are typically offered, what planning stages and budgets are associated with portals, and whether the states' efforts are increasing postsecondary participation. The portal must be student-centered and must not presuppose a sophisticated understanding of postsecondary education. The portal must utilize existing infrastructure whenever possible. The final report of the work group along with proposed enabling legislative and administrative solutions is due to the Legislature by December 1, 2009.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2009.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: It is necessary to have a single website to access information about all colleges, universities, and career schools in our state for several reasons. Students who do not have families to guide them through preparing for college, choosing a college, and financing a college education have a very difficult time knowing where to get necessary information. A single web portal that contains all of this information will help equalize access to information. The website will improve access to higher education for every Washingtonian by making it easier and faster to access information.

It is necessary to have a study group because thought needs to go into what information and features are included in the portal. In addition, it will take some planning to figure out how to integrate systems such as Academic GPS and checkoutcollege.com, which have been developed separately.

The career colleges are pleased to be included in the bill, and these colleges would like to continue to participate in the development.

There was a demonstration of information available on checkoutcollege.com, a website developed for the community and technical colleges.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kilmer, prime sponsor; Cynthia Torres-Jimenez, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Bob Billings, HECB; Steve Lindstrom, Northwest Career Colleges Federation; Logan Bahr, Washington Student Lobby.