

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 6355

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Expanding the higher education system upon proven demand.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Kilmer, Becker, Rockefeller and Shin).

Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development
House Committee on Higher Education

Background: The 2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education identifies Washington's need for a higher education system capable of delivering many more degrees, especially at the baccalaureate and graduate levels. In 2009 the Legislature, faced with inconsistent information and demands regarding how to best expand the higher education system, directed the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to conduct a system design planning project with the object of defining how the current higher education delivery system could be shaped and expanded to best meet the needs of Washington citizens and businesses for high quality and accessible post-secondary education.

The HECB published the results of the system design planning project in December 2009. The System Design Plan's recommendations include: (1) making strategic use of existing capacity at the branch campuses, centers, and comprehensive institutions to broaden the geographic availability of baccalaureate education; (2) when new capacity is proposed, employing and expanding on demand philosophy, building it only when demand is clearly present; and (3) establishing a new Fund for Innovation, which would foster innovation and improvement statewide by providing support for strategies and programs with significant potential to help achieve Master Plan goals.

In 2005 the Legislature authorized four applied baccalaureate degree pilot programs at community and technical colleges. In 2008 the Legislature expanded the pilot project to include three additional colleges to develop and offer programs of study leading to an applied baccalaureate degree.

The Washington fund for innovation and quality in higher education program is administered by the HECB and State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to award incentive grants to public institutions of higher education or consortia of institutions to encourage cooperative programs designed to address specific system problems.

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.

Summary: Proposed changes in the missions of institutions of higher education may be identified by the HECB, any public institution or by a state or local government. A mission change is defined as a change that allows an institution of higher education to offer a new level of degree not currently authorized in statute. Major expansion means expansion of the system that requires significant new capital investment and would result in a mission change. Mission changes and major expansions are subject to approval by the HECB. Gaining HECB approval is a two-step process. First, a needs assessment process is conducted to analyze the need for the proposed change. If the need is established, the HECB proceeds to examine the viability of the proposed mission change or major expansion. The HECB's recommendations to proceed with the proposed change, proceed with modifications, or not proceed are presented to the Legislature and the Governor.

The applied baccalaureate degree is no longer a pilot project. The limitation on the number of applied baccalaureate degree programs is eliminated. Community and technical colleges may apply to SBCTC to develop and offer applied baccalaureate degree programs after approval by SBCTC and the HECB.

The HECB is identified as the lead entity for the innovation and quality in higher education programs and makes awards in collaboration with SBCTC and other local and regional entities. Grants may be awarded to state public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education and consortia of institutions. The two-year time limitation of incentive grants is eliminated. Washington Fund for Innovation and Quality grants may be used for development of educational technology and accelerated academic programs.

The HECB is required to rank major capital projects at four-year institutions in a single list by priority order. The University of Washington is authorized to use alternative contracting methods for highly specialized medical spaces. The HECB is required to consider the strategic and operational use of technology as part of the needs assessment process.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	47	0	
House	96	0	(House amended)
			(Senate refused to concur)
House	97	0	(House receded/amended)
Senate	44	0	(Senate concurred)

Effective: June 10, 2010