

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6357

As Passed Senate, February 11, 2010

Title: An act relating to policies for the academic recognition of prior learning.

Brief Description: Requiring policies for academic recognition of certain formal and informal learning experiences.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/19/10, 1/27/10 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/11/10, 46-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6357 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Kilmer, Chair; Kastama, Vice Chair; Becker, Ranking Minority Member; Hewitt, Jacobsen, McAuliffe, Pflug, Shin, Stevens and Tom.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (College Board) sets policy direction for the community and technical college system. The College Board is required to provide "general supervision and control over the state system of community and technical colleges." Among its specific responsibilities, the College Board must: (1) ensure that each college district offers thoroughly comprehensive educational, training, and service programs to meet the needs of both communities and students; (2) provide for basic skills and literacy education, occupational education, and technical training at technical colleges; (3) provide or coordinate related and supplemental instruction for apprentices at community and technical colleges; and (4) allow for the growth, improvement, flexibility, and modification of the community colleges and their education, training, and service programs as future needs occur.

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.

Many students enroll at Washington institutions of higher education after first gaining significant life experiences and training in alternative learning settings. The 2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education in Washington specifically identifies working adults and non-traditional students as demographic groups whose engagement in higher education opportunities should be encouraged.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The College Board, in consultation with the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB), the council of presidents, the workforce training and education coordinating board, representatives from Washington institutions of higher education, representatives from two- and four-year faculty, representatives from private career schools, and representatives from business and labor must develop policies for awarding academic credit for learning from work and military experience, military and law enforcement training, career college training, internships and externships, and apprenticeships. The policies must address, but are not limited to, issues regarding verification, accreditation, transfer of academic credit, licensing and professional recognition, and financial aid.

Policies developed by the College Board, along with recommendations, are submitted to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2010.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available on original bill.

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: PRO: This issue was identified by a number of community college administrators who said that a systematic approach to credit recognition would be helpful. Other states appear to be more proactive in identifying prior learning experiences that can be used for academic credit. Accrediting agencies often impose transfer credit caps on how much credit can be granted. Decisions regarding whether to grant credit are highly individualized. This is part of the strategic master plan for workforce development.

OTHER: Accreditation is outcome based and the faculty are ultimately responsible for assessing outcomes. If students want credit for prior learning and the knowledge they bring, they can always challenge a course. We do not want to sacrifice degree integrity.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kilmer, prime sponsor; Michelle Andreas, SBCTC; Amy Goings, Pierce College; Greg Brazil, Pierce College; Steve Lindstrom, NW Career Colleges; Donna Steward, AWB; Madeline Thompson, WTECB; Nicole Grant, IBEW; Mike Bogatay, Washington Student Association.

OTHER: Jim Fridley, UW faculty.