
Higher Education Committee

HB 1525

Brief Description: Regarding recognition of common course numbering at institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Representatives Orwall, Probst, Maxwell, Reykdal, Zeiger, Jinkins, Darneille and Moscoso.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establishes a work group to create a single set of common course numbers and common course descriptions for all common lower division courses at all public institutions of higher education.

Hearing Date: 1/31/11

Staff: Madeleine Thompson (786-7304).

Background:

Common courses are first and second year courses numbered between ninety-nine and three hundred. Common course numbering requires each college to use a common number for courses that have similar descriptions and does not require standardizing course content.

The purpose of common course numbering is to make course transfer between and among institutions of higher education as easy as possible for students, advisors, and receiving institutions. Common course numbering assists students transferring to baccalaureate institutions through clearly defined course equivalencies that can be used for both general transfer and within Major Related Program agreements.

In 2003, the presidents of Washington's community and technical colleges asked the Instruction and Student Services Commissions to study options and make recommendations for improving course transfer among community and technical colleges. The study found that a growing

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number of students attend multiple two year colleges to complete degrees and certificates and that each college manages its own curriculum and numbers courses differently.

The study identified problems related to course transfer among community and technical colleges, examined practices in other states, and recommended that the state pursue common course numbering.

The project focused on creating common course numbers for all academic programs at community and technical colleges and has resulted in the creation of a Common Course Database. This database included over 300 academic programs and is available to students, faculty advisers and the public on the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges' web site. The effort did not include creating common course numbers for workforce programs, Adult Basic Education or remedial education.

Summary of Bill:

The Higher Education Coordinating Board and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges must convene a work group including all public institutions of higher education to establish a single set of common course numbers and common course descriptions. Common course numbers are to be established for all common lower division courses at the institutions. A course must be identified as common between institutions of higher education if the course descriptions in the official college course catalogs are similar enough to be accepted as equivalent for transfer purposes to meet degree requirements.

Each institution of higher education is required to adopt common course numbers and identify them in all course catalogs and publications by August 2013. Courses with equivalents at some but not all institutions must have common course numbers. Any courses that are common but have limitations must be noted in course catalogs and publications.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.