

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 1822

C 146 L 11
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Establishing the first nonprofit online university.

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Kenney, Parker, Seaquist, Pettigrew, Dickerson and Zeiger).

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

Background:

The Western Governors University (WGU) is a private, not-for-profit, online degree-granting university. The WGU offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs in business, teacher education, information technology, and health professions, including nursing. The university was founded in 1997 by a group of 19 western governors, including Governor Mike Lowry. The WGU enrolled its first student in 1999. While the WGU receives grants from state and federal agencies as well as corporations and foundations, it does not rely on direct state or federal funding for its operations.

The WGU is regionally accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The WGU is nationally accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, the Commission for Collegiate Nursing Education, and the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education.

The WGU degrees are competency-based rather than credit-based. Each student is assigned a mentor and graduation specialists are available to support student success.

Summary:

The Legislature expresses its intent to partner with the WGU to establish the WGU-Washington and provide enhanced access to post-secondary education for all Washington students, including dislocated workers and place bound students. The WGU-Washington is recognized as a Washington baccalaureate degree granting institution that is self-supporting.

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 Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) may recognize and endorse online, competency-based education, work to eliminate unnecessary barriers to the delivery of online, competency-based education, and work with a regionally accredited not-for-profit online baccalaureate degree granting institution of higher education to integrate its academic programs and services into state policy and strategy. The HECB may work with that institution to create data-sharing processes and performance assessments. Modifications in contractual terms or relationships, changes in not-for-profit status, or any internal restructuring of the institution requires consultation and approval by the HECB. The HECB must adopt rules for this purpose.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	70	26
Senate	40	7

Effective: July 22, 2011