

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1522

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As of March 15, 2011

**Title:** An act relating to academic credit for prior learning.

**Brief Description:** Regarding academic credit for prior learning.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Kenney, Haler, Maxwell, Probst, Haigh, Hasegawa, Frockt, Santos, Reykdal, Goodman, Ormsby and Moscoso).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/02/11, 97-0.

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education & Workforce Development: 3/15/11.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Staff:** Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

**Background:** A 2008 report of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, in partnership with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, recommended addressing accessibility to postsecondary education for adults by promoting the assessment of prior learning for college credit. The Governor's Higher Education Task Force Report of 2010 also recommends requiring universities to strengthen policies for awarding credit for prior learning experiences with demonstrated competencies through proficiency exams and to make information about proficiency exams to earn college credit consistent and widely available.

The 2010 Legislature enacted Substitute Senate Bill 6357 directing the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to consult with stakeholders and 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...[to] provide for consistent application by all institutions of higher education and a basis for accurate and complete academic counseling" and report back to the Legislature. The SBCTC submitted recommendations to the Legislature in December 2010.

The SBCTC found that there was a lack of clarity concerning policies and guidelines and a wide variance in institutional and individual assessor's practices. As recommended, an ongoing workgroup is currently working to facilitate the implementation of revisions to

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policies and practices, and to improve consistency in prior learning assessment (PLA) practices across the institutions of higher education.

**Summary of Bill:** The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB), the SBCTC, the Council of Presidents, the institutions of higher education, private higher education institutions, and private career schools are required to collaborate to:

- increase the number of students who receive credit for prior learning and increase the types of credits for prior learning that are awarded;
- improve consistency in policies and practices for PLA among institutions;
- develop tools to share exemplary practices;
- develop agreements when common patterns for granting credit for prior learning are identified; and
- develop outcome measures and report progress to the Legislature annually.

An ongoing workgroup, staffed by the HECB, is established to support the effort. The Office of Financial Management must track the number of students receiving academic credit for prior learning and the type of credits awarded. A definition for prior learning is established that includes education and training, work experience, military training, and education received in other states and countries.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**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: Recognition of prior learning helps students transition to new careers and shortens the time to degree. Students with prior learning credits are more likely to persist in school. This state needs a coordinated approach for the recognition of prior learning. Recognition of prior learning reduces the cost per degree for students and the institutions.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Kenney, prime sponsor; Carolyn McKinnon, WTECB; Holly Moore, South Seattle Community College; Steve Lindstrom, NW Career College Federation; Gail McGaffick, Corinthian Colleges.