

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5636

As Amended by House, April 9, 2011

Title: An act relating to expanding opportunities in higher education in north Puget Sound.

Brief Description: Concerning the University Center of North Puget Sound.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen, Harper, Shin and Delvin).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/15/11, 2/18/11 [DPS-WM, w/oRec].

Ways & Means: 2/25/11 [DP2S, DNP, w/oRec].

Passed Senate: 3/02/11, 39-9.

Passed House: 4/09/11, 66-31.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5636 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Shin, Vice Chair; Baumgartner, Becker, Kastama, Kilmer and White.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Tom, Chair; Hill, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5636 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Murray, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Baumgartner, Brown, Hatfield, Hewitt, Holmquist Newbry, Kastama, Keiser, Pflug, Pridemore and Schoesler.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Conway, Fraser, Honeyford and Rockefeller.

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.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Parlette, Ranking Minority Member Capital; Baxter.

Staff: Maria Hovde (786-7710)

Background: A number of studies have been undertaken over the past decade to determine the higher education needs of North King, Snohomish, Island, and Skagit Counties. In November 2006 a consultant team's final report found that the needs of about 10,800 full-time equivalent students would be unmet by 2025 if students from those counties participated in baccalaureate and graduate degree programs at the 1998 national average for all adults.

The mission of the University Center of North Puget Sound (University Center) is to develop partnerships with other colleges and universities for the purpose of providing baccalaureate and graduate degrees for the residents of North Snohomish, Island and Skagit Counties and to provide the services and facilities that deliver these educational opportunities. The University Center offers on-line and in-class courses from Washington State University (WSU), University of Washington (UW)-Bothell, Western Washington University (WWU), Central Washington University, The Evergreen State College, Hope International University, and Saint Martin's University. Instruction is delivered in various formats including web-based distance education, two-way interactive video, technology supported classrooms and combinations of these. In 2005 the legislature named consortium member Everett Community College (ECC) as manager of the University Center and in March, 2009 the University Center moved to the new Undergraduate Center in Gray Wolf Hall on the main campus.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill: WSU assumes management and leadership for baccalaureate and graduate degree production at the University Center. The Director of the University Center reports to the President of WSU and implements decisions of the Coordinating and Planning Council (council). The council is established to provide long-range strategic planning, facilitate collaborations, and resolve internal disputes. The membership of the council is specified, but may be modified by agreement.

The council must establish a plan addressing the academic needs of the region and for an engineering degree program. The plan must specifically address expansion of the range of regional educational opportunities, include specified strategies, and establish a process for program development. It must be completed by July 1, 2013.

WSU's leadership role begins by July 1, 2014. University Center expansion needs and capital facility funding are reviewed annually by WSU in cooperation with ECC. WSU designs, constructs, and manages any facility developed at the University Center with the exception of facilities design efforts utilizing ECC capital funding. WSU is responsible for infrastructure development and maintenance with costs shared equitably.

The act will take effect only after the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) determines whether a needs assessment and analysis is required and, if so, conducts a needs assessment and viability determination and recommends that this should move forward. The Office of Financial Management, the Legislature, and the Code Reviser shall be notified of the HECB's recommendations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Higher Education & Workforce Development): PRO: Snohomish County is the fastest growing county in the state without a four-year university. WSU is the right match. WSU already has a presence in the area. Snohomish County needs a university. Many employers in the area need engineers to replace retirees. This idea sets the foundation to put a research university in a leadership position in the county. If not now, when? Students will have access to excellent internship opportunities. The Snohomish County Council passed a resolution in favor of this effort. WSU is responding to an invitation from the community. WSU has a long history of working cooperatively with other institutions of higher education.

CON: This effort will not benefit students, taxpayers, or employers. The current University Center is a success. Previously, WSU had expressed concerns about its ability to offer programs at the University Center. The University Center has eight partners already and also offers engineering programs. The plan does not provide for legislative approval. The last thing we need now is another governance structure. The idea has not gone through the HECB mission change process enacted just last year. This will have a chilling effect on institutions who may want to create partnerships in the future. The idea does not increase state production of baccalaureate degrees. Give us a WSU branch, but leave the University Center alone. WWU wants to continue contributing to the University Center. UW is working through the HECB process for program expansion in the area.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education & Workforce Development): PRO: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor; Ray Stephanson, Mayor, City of Everett; Crystal Donnet, Perteet Engineering; Matt Smith, Snohomish County EDC; Briahna Taylor, Snohomish County; John Gardner, Larry James, WSU; Brian Pitcher, WSU-Spokane.

CON: Sandra Schroeder, American Federation of Teachers - WA; David Beyer, President, ECC; Christine Kerlin, Director, University Center of North Puget Sound; Charlie Earl, Exec. Dir., State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC); Gene Chase, Trustee, ECC; Pete Crane, Trustee Association of Community Colleges; Sherry Burkey, WWU; Margaret Shepherd, UW.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Recommended First Substitute (Ways & Means): PRO: This bill is collaborative and will lay the foundation for serving an unmet need for over 7500 students by 2025, including development of an engineering degree to support the aerospace industry. This is a modest step toward tackling a big problem. WSU is modeling this effort after the Riverpoint Campus in Spokane. WSU has developed an efficient engineering degree program in collaboration with Olympic College. This bill makes any permanent change subject to the HECB's design review process.

CON: There is a problem with the principle here. There is no benefit to the students with this bill, and this is following an unfortunate pattern of diverting higher education resources from the many and then giving those resources to the one.

OTHER: This bill effectively has WSU taking over ECC's very successful University Center. This is highly unusual for legislation to direct this to occur on a very successful enterprise. The second substitute is intended to require legislative approval of the HECB's recommendation, and we appreciate that clarification. ECC enrolls 500 students and will graduate 200 students this year. We do offer mechanical, civil, and electrical engineering programs and we operate with both public and private institutions. This plan is premature and future demand is yet to be determined. It is difficult to understand how this is a collaborative process when WSU is designated as administrator of the University Center when ECC has been an effective manager for four years. UW currently offers a nursing program and the University Center and will be establishing an electrical engineering program in the fall. There are cost implications for current and future programs at the University Center, and there will be significant costs associated with development of a branch campus. WWU is the largest provider of degree programs at the University Center and has over 400 students with nine degree programs. The current model is efficient and nimble and is able to provide programs that one university cannot provide. Any plan that is developed should come back before the Legislature for approval.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Doug Levy, City of Everett; Chris Mulick, WSU.

CON: Anthony Flinn, faculty of Eastern Washington University and on behalf of faculty of WWU.

OTHER: Charlie Earl, SBCTC; Christine Kerlin, ECC; David Byer, President, ECC; Margaret Shepherd, UW; Sherry Burkey, WWU.

House Amendment(s):

- The membership of the Council is changed to eliminate one of the two representatives from a higher educational institution currently offering a degree at the center and adding a student representative.
- Adds a July 1, 2012, due date for the needs assessment and recommendations by the HECB.
- The strategic plan that is developed by the Council must be submitted to the Legislature for review by December 1, 2012, instead of July 2013. If the Legislature does not act, the strategic plan is considered approved. The plan must include a multi-biennium budget that addresses operating and capital expenses to effectively implement the plan.
- WSU must include an initial and ongoing emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs in addition to the specified engineering programs.