

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5654

As of November 30, 2011

Title: An act relating to recognition of lower division courses at institutions of higher education.

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

Sponsors: Senators Keiser, White, Chase and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/15/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: Common course numbering is the relabeling of equivalent college courses with the same three-digit course IDs and titles. It is designed to reduce the number of repeated courses students take when transferring between colleges. Washington community and technical colleges began implementation of common course numbering in 2007.

Common course numbering does not require faculty to change or standardize their course content. Faculty members within a discipline determine whether a course is common or unique.

Summary of Bill: The Higher Education Coordinating Board and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) convene representatives from each of the institutions of higher education, to establish a single set of common course numbers and common course descriptions for all common lower division courses at all institutions of higher education. A course is identified as common between institutions 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. Once identified as common, a course must have the same course number and be accepted as equivalent at each institution.

By August 2013, each institution of higher education must formally adopt the common course numbers and specifically identify them in all course publications. Unique courses with no equivalent at another institution or at some but not all institutions must have common

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course numbers at all institutions that do have equivalent courses and the limitations must be noted in all course catalogs and publications.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 8, 2011.

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: Students are having difficulty transferring from a community college to a four-year institution without losing credits. Unless you have a transfer associate degree, it is difficult to get through the bureaucracy. The current situation is wasteful for students and faculty. There is no good reason to take the same course twice.

CON: All community and technical college distribution credits already transfer. Setting up this type of course structure does not work at The Evergreen State College (TESC).

OTHER: Community and technical colleges would be required to start from scratch to include the universities. The universities would need to adopt the SBCTC policies. The effort should include the career colleges.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Keiser, prime sponsor; Bernal Baca, American Federation of Teachers WA; Corry Forbes, ASGICC; Steve Lindstrom, NW Career Colleges Federation.

CON: Mike Reilly, Council of Presidents; Julie Garver, TESC.

OTHER: Michelle Andreas, SBCTC.