
HOUSE BILL 1954

State of Washington 62nd Legislature 2011 Regular Session

By Representatives Zeiger, Carlyle, Warnick, Haler, and Fagan

Read first time 02/14/11. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to public interest degrees; amending RCW
2 28B.76.020, 28B.76.230, and 28B.15.068; and creating new sections.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature recognizes that
5 strategic investment in higher education is a matter of public
6 interest, and that certain baccalaureate programs are in the public
7 interest.

8 (2) The legislature finds that:

9 (a) The subsidized, public higher education system should increase
10 production of degrees that are in the public interest;

11 (b) State policy goals and strategies should focus on degree
12 production that best meet the public interest; and

13 (c) Students need specific incentives to select and complete
14 degrees which are in the public interest.

15 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28B.76.020 and 2010 c 245 s 4 are each amended to read
16 as follows:

17 The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter
18 unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

1 (1) "Board" means the higher education coordinating board.

2 (2) "Four-year institutions" means the University of Washington,
3 Washington State University, Central Washington University, Eastern
4 Washington University, Western Washington University, and The Evergreen
5 State College.

6 (3) "Major expansion" means expansion of the higher education
7 system that requires significant new capital investment, including
8 building new institutions, campuses, branches, or centers or conversion
9 of existing campuses, branches, or centers that would result in a
10 mission change.

11 (4) "Mission change" means a change in the level of degree awarded
12 or institutional type not currently authorized in statute.

13 (5) "Public interest degrees" means associate, baccalaureate, or
14 graduate degrees in the following fields: Biological science, computer
15 engineering, computer science, electrical engineering, information
16 technology, mathematics, mechanical engineering, and physical science.

17 **Sec. 3.** RCW 28B.76.230 and 2010 c 245 s 5 are each amended to read
18 as follows:

19 (1) The board shall develop a comprehensive and ongoing assessment
20 process to analyze the need for additional degrees and programs,
21 additional off-campus centers and locations for degree programs, and
22 consolidation or elimination of programs by the four-year institutions.
23 Board recommendations regarding proposed major expansion shall be
24 limited to determinations of whether the major expansion is within the
25 scope indicated in the most recent strategic master plan for higher
26 education or most recent system design plan. Recommendations regarding
27 existing capital prioritization processes are not within the scope of
28 the evaluation of major expansion. Major expansion and proposed
29 mission changes may be proposed by the board, any public institution of
30 higher education, or by a state or local government.

31 (2) As part of the needs assessment process, the board shall
32 examine:

33 (a) Projections of student, employer, and community demand for
34 education and degrees, including liberal arts degrees, on a regional
35 and statewide basis;

36 (b) Current and projected degree programs and enrollment at public

1 and private institutions of higher education, by location and mode of
2 service delivery;

3 (c) Data from the workforce training and education coordinating
4 board and the state board for community and technical colleges on the
5 supply and demand for workforce education and certificates and
6 associate degrees; and

7 (d) Recommendations from the technology transformation task force
8 created in chapter 407, Laws of 2009, and institutions of higher
9 education relative to the strategic and operational use of technology
10 in higher education. These and other reports, reviews, and audits
11 shall allow for: The development of enterprise-wide digital
12 information technology across educational sectors, systems, and
13 delivery methods; the integration and streamlining of administrative
14 tools including but not limited to student information management,
15 financial management, payroll, human resources, data collection,
16 reporting, and analysis; and a determination of the costs of multiple
17 technology platforms, systems, and models.

18 (3) Every two years the board shall produce, jointly with the state
19 board for community and technical colleges and the workforce training
20 and education coordinating board, an assessment of the number and type
21 of higher education and training credentials required to match employer
22 demand for a skilled and educated workforce. The assessment shall
23 include the number of forecasted net job openings at each level of
24 higher education and training and the number of credentials needed to
25 match the forecast of net job openings.

26 (4) Prior to enrolling students each academic year, the board shall
27 identify which programs qualify as public interest degrees in RCW
28 28B.76.020 for which students may enroll at reduced tuition rates in
29 RCW 28B.15.068.

30 (5) The board shall determine whether certain major lines of study
31 or types of degrees, including applied degrees or research-oriented
32 degrees, shall be assigned uniquely to some institutions or
33 institutional sectors in order to create centers of excellence that
34 focus resources and expertise.

35 ((+5)) (6) The following activities are subject to approval by the
36 board:

37 (a) New degree programs by a four-year institution;

38 (b) Creation of any off-campus program by a four-year institution;

1 (c) Purchase or lease of major off-campus facilities by a four-year
2 institution or a community or technical college;

3 (d) Creation of higher education centers and consortia;

4 (e) New degree programs and creation of off-campus programs by an
5 independent college or university in collaboration with a community or
6 technical college; and

7 (f) Applied baccalaureate degree programs developed by colleges
8 under RCW 28B.50.810.

9 ~~((+6))~~ (7) Institutions seeking board approval under this section
10 must demonstrate that the proposal is justified by the needs assessment
11 developed under this section. Institutions must also demonstrate how
12 the proposals align with or implement the statewide strategic master
13 plan for higher education under RCW 28B.76.200.

14 ~~((+7))~~ (8) The board shall develop clear guidelines and objective
15 decision-making criteria regarding approval of proposals under this
16 section, which must include review and consultation with the
17 institution and other interested agencies and individuals.

18 ~~((+8))~~ (9) The board shall periodically recommend consolidation or
19 elimination of programs at the four-year institutions, based on the
20 needs assessment analysis.

21 ~~((+9))~~ (10) In the case of a proposed major expansion or mission
22 change, the needs assessment process under subsection (2) of this
23 section constitutes a threshold inquiry. If the board determines that
24 the need for the proposed major expansion or mission change has not
25 been justified, the inquiry is concluded. If the board determines that
26 the need for the proposed major expansion or mission change has been
27 sufficiently established, the board, in consultation with any directly
28 involved institutions and other interested agencies and individuals,
29 shall proceed to examine the viability of the proposal using criteria
30 including, but not limited to:

31 (a) The specific scope of the project including the capital
32 investment requirements, the number of full-time equivalent students
33 anticipated, and the number of academic programs planned;

34 (b) The existence of an efficient and sustainable financial plan;

35 (c) The extent to which existing resources can be leveraged;

36 (d) The current and five-year projected student population,
37 faculty, and staff to support the proposed programs, institution, or
38 innovation;

1 (e) The plans to accommodate expected growth over a twenty-year
2 time frame;

3 (f) The extent to which new or existing partnerships and
4 collaborations are a part of the proposal; and

5 (g) The feasibility of any proposed innovations to accelerate
6 degree production.

7 ~~((+10))~~ (11) After the board completes its evaluation of the
8 proposed major expansion or mission change using the needs assessment
9 under subsection (2) of this section and viability determination under
10 subsection ~~((+9))~~ (10) of this section, the board shall make a
11 recommendation to either proceed, modify, or not proceed with the
12 proposed major expansion or mission change. The board's recommendation
13 shall be presented to the governor and the legislature.

14 **Sec. 4.** RCW 28B.15.068 and 2009 c 540 s 1 are each amended to read
15 as follows:

16 (1) Beginning with the 2007-08 academic year and ending with the
17 2016-17 academic year, tuition fees charged to full-time resident
18 undergraduate students, except in academic years 2009-10 and 2010-11,
19 may increase no greater than seven percent over the previous academic
20 year in any institution of higher education. Annual reductions or
21 increases in full-time tuition fees for resident undergraduate students
22 shall be as provided in the omnibus appropriations act, within the
23 seven percent increase limit established in this section except as
24 provided in RCW 28B.76.020. For academic years 2009-10 and 2010-11 the
25 omnibus appropriations act may provide tuition increases greater than
26 seven percent. To the extent that state appropriations combined with
27 tuition and fee revenues are insufficient to achieve the total per-
28 student funding goals established in subsection ~~((+2))~~ (3) of this
29 section, the legislature may revisit state appropriations, authorized
30 enrollment levels, and changes in tuition fees for any given fiscal
31 year.

32 (2) Tuition fees charged to full-time resident undergraduate
33 students who enroll or are accepted to be enrolled in public interest
34 degrees in RCW 28B.76.020, may increase no greater than five percent
35 over the previous academic year in any institution of higher education,
36 except in academic years 2009-10 and 2010-11.

1 (3) The state shall adopt as its goal total per-student funding
2 levels, from state appropriations plus tuition and fees, of at least
3 the sixtieth percentile of total per-student funding at similar public
4 institutions of higher education in the global challenge states. In
5 defining comparable per-student funding levels, the office of financial
6 management shall adjust for regional cost-of-living differences; for
7 differences in program offerings and in the relative mix of lower
8 division, upper division, and graduate students; and for accounting and
9 reporting differences among the comparison institutions. The office of
10 financial management shall develop a funding trajectory for each four-
11 year institution of higher education and for the community and
12 technical college system as a whole that when combined with tuition and
13 fees revenue allows the state to achieve its funding goal for each
14 four-year institution and the community and technical college system as
15 a whole no later than fiscal year 2017. The state shall not reduce
16 enrollment levels below fiscal year 2007 budgeted levels in order to
17 improve or alter the per-student funding amount at any four-year
18 institution of higher education or the community and technical college
19 system as a whole. The state recognizes that each four-year
20 institution of higher education and the community and technical college
21 system as a whole have different funding requirements to achieve
22 desired performance levels, and that increases to the total per-student
23 funding amount may need to exceed the minimum funding goal.

24 ~~((+3))~~ (4) By September 1st of each year beginning in 2008, the
25 office of financial management shall report to the governor, the higher
26 education coordinating board, and appropriate committees of the
27 legislature with updated estimates of the total per-student funding
28 level that represents the sixtieth percentile of funding for comparable
29 institutions of higher education in the global challenge states, and
30 the progress toward that goal that was made for each of the public
31 institutions of higher education.

32 ~~((+4))~~ (5) As used in this section, "global challenge states" are
33 the top performing states on the new economy index published by the
34 progressive policy institute as of July 22, 2007. The new economy
35 index ranks states on indicators of their potential to compete in the
36 new economy. At least once every five years, the office of financial
37 management shall determine if changes to the list of global challenge

1 states are appropriate. The office of financial management shall
2 report its findings to the governor and the legislature.

3 ~~((+5))~~ (6) During the 2009-10 and the 2010-11 academic years,
4 institutions of higher education shall include information on their
5 billing statements notifying students of tax credits available through
6 the American opportunity tax credit provided in the American recovery
7 and reinvestment act of 2009.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1)(a) The joint select legislative task
9 force on public interest degrees is established, with members as
10 provided in this subsection.

11 (i) The president of the senate shall appoint two members from each
12 of the two largest caucuses of the senate.

13 (ii) The speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint
14 members from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of
15 representatives.

16 (iii) The governor shall appoint four members representing the
17 higher education coordinating board, the state board for community and
18 technical colleges, the employment security department, and the
19 workforce training and education coordinating board.

20 (b) The task force shall choose its cochairs from among its
21 legislative membership.

22 (2) The task force shall review and make recommendations on the
23 following:

24 (a) Modifications to public interest degrees in RCW 28B.76.020; and

25 (b) Policies that increase the ability of public and private
26 institutions of higher education to prepare Washington citizens with
27 the higher education qualifications that are in the public interest.

28 (3) The senate's committee services and the house of
29 representatives' office of program research shall provide staff support
30 for the task force.

31 (4) Legislative members of the task force are reimbursed for travel
32 expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120. Nonlegislative members,
33 except those representing an employer or organization, are entitled to
34 be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and
35 43.03.060.

36 (5) The expenses of the task force must be paid jointly by the

1 senate and the house of representatives. Task force expenditures are
2 subject to approval by the senate facilities and operations committee
3 and the house executive rules committee, or their successor committees.

4 (6) The task force shall report its findings and recommendations to
5 the governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature by
6 November 30, 2011.

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