
Higher Education Committee

HB 1736

Brief Description: Concerning higher education operating efficiencies.

Sponsors: Representatives Zeiger, Seaquist, Haler, Pollet, Ryu, Sawyer, Bergquist, Magendanz and Farrell.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Office of Financial Management to work with institutions of higher education, the Department of Enterprise Services, the Department of Commerce, and the Department of Transportation to review the reporting requirements of institutions of higher education with the purpose of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations, and report recommendations by December 1, 2013.
- Permits institutions of higher education and state higher education agencies to use or accept electronic signatures, as defined, for any human resource, benefits, or payroll processes that require a signature.
- Permits the Washington Student Achievement Council to negotiate and enter into interstate reciprocity agreements with other state or multistate entities regarding the operations of degree-granting institutions in the state.
- Permits the Washington Student Achievement Council to enter into certain agreements for the purposes of ensuring consistent consumer protection in interstate distance delivery of higher education.

Hearing Date: 2/13/13

Staff: Madeleine Thompson (786-7304).

Background:

Reporting Requirements.

Similar to other state agencies, institutions of higher education are required to submit a variety of reports to the Governor, the Legislature, the Office of Financial Management, or other state

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agencies to demonstrate compliance with certain state laws or rules, or report progress toward certain state goals.

Electronic Signatures.

State agencies are permitted to use electronic signatures for certain operations. For example, legislation enacted in 2009 authorized the Department of Social and Health Services and the Health Care Authority to accept electronic signatures for all programs the agencies administer.

Authorization of Degree-Granting Institutions.

The Washington Student Achievement Council is responsible for authorizing degree-granting institutions to operate in the state. This mainly applies to out-of-state institutions that wish to advertise their programs in Washington to recruit students, operate a physical teaching site in Washington, or include an internship, an externship, clinical training, or a practical component that must take place in Washington. The following higher education institutions do not fall under the Council's authorization requirements: the state's public colleges and universities, longstanding private institutions, and higher education institutions whose degree programs are wholly religious in nature.

Summary of Bill:

The Office of Financial Management (Office) is directed to work with institutions of higher education, the Department of Enterprise Services, the Department of Commerce, and the Department of Transportation to review the reporting requirements of institutions of higher education with the purpose of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations. Reporting requirements specified relate to the following:

- state energy code building standards;
- high performance public buildings;
- motor vehicle transportation services;
- the Washington State Patrol retirement fund;
- air contaminants; and
- greenhouse gas emissions.

By December 1, 2013, the Office must report to the Governor and the higher education committees of the legislature with recommendations for coordinating and streamlining reporting, and promoting the most efficient use of state resources at institutions of higher education.

Public institutions of higher education and state higher education agencies are permitted to use or accept electronic signatures for any human resource, benefits, or payroll processes that require a signature. For these purposes electronic signature is defined as a signature in electronic form attached to, or logically associated with, an electronic record including, but not limited to, a digital signature.

The Washington Student Achievement Council (Council) is authorized to negotiate and enter into interstate reciprocity agreements with other state or multistate entities regarding the operations of degree-granting institutions in the state. The Council is permitted to enter into agreements with degree-granting institutions based in Washington that are otherwise exempt from adhering to the minimum standards for degree granting institutions set by the Council, for the purposes of ensuring consistent consumer protection in interstate distance delivery of higher education.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 8, 2013.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.