
Higher Education Committee

SB 5712

Brief Description: Encouraging community colleges to use, and inform students of the use of, multiple measures to determine the need for precollege courses.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Bailey, McAuliffe, Frockt, Murray, Baumgartner and Keiser.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to encourage colleges to use multiple measures to determine whether a student must enroll in a pre-college course including, but not limited to, placement tests, the SAT, high school transcripts, college transcripts, or initial class performance.
- Directs the SBCTC to require colleges to post information about available options for course placement on their websites and in admissions materials.

Hearing Date: 3/19/13

Staff: Madeleine Thompson (786-7304).

Background:

General Powers and Duties of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

State statute directs that the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) must have general supervision and control over the state system of community and technical colleges. The SBCTC is required to:

- review budgets and prepare one budget for the community and technical college system to submit to the Governor and the Legislature;
- establish guidelines for the disbursement of funds;
- ensure each college district offers comprehensive education, training, and services to meet the needs of the communities and students served;
- ensure each college districts maintains an open-door policy;

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- prepare a comprehensive master plan for the development of community and technical college education and training in the state;
- establish minimum standards to govern the operation of the colleges with respect to qualification and credentials of staff; internal budgeting, accounting auditing, and financial procedures; the content of the curriculums and other educational and training programs, and the requirements for degrees and certificates; standards admission policies; eligibility of courses to receive state fund support, among others; and
- establish and administer criteria and procedures for all capital construction; and
- encourage innovation in the development of new education and training program and instructional methods.

Pre-College Placement.

In 2010-11, of the 20,575 high school graduates that entered the community and technical college system, 57 percent, (11,633 students) enrolled in at least one pre-college course. Fifty-one percent (10,320 students) enrolled in a pre-college math class. Nineteen percent (3,867 students) enrolled in writing classes. Eleven percent (2,226 students) enrolled in a reading or coordinated reading and writing class. The non-college-level credits from pre-college courses do not count toward a degree.

Currently, many colleges in Washington use placement assessments to place students in the appropriate course level. The COMPASS, which is computer adapted, and the ASSET, which is paper and pencil, are assessments that evaluate a student's skill level in reading, writing skills, writing essay, mathematics, and English as a Second Language. The ACCUPLACER is a suite of computer adaptive assessments in English, reading, and mathematics to also help determine course placement.

A 2012 study conducted by Columbia University's Community College Research Center concluded that the relationship between high school grade point average and college grade point average is so powerful that it would seem important for colleges to more fully consider this measure in deciding on placement.

One effort by the SBCTC to reform pre-college education involves reviewing a variety of options for assessing and placing students in pre-college classes and examining how diagnostic assessments may be used to target instruction to specific needs of students.

Summary of Bill:

The SBCTC must encourage colleges to use multiple measures to determine whether a student must enroll in a pre-college course including, but not limited to, placement tests, the SAT, high school transcripts, college transcripts, or initial class performance.

The SBCTC must also require colleges to post information about available options for course placement on their websites and in admissions materials.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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