

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5969

As Passed House:
March 7, 2014

Title: An act relating to awarding academic credit for military training.

Brief Description: Providing for awarding academic credit for military training.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators O'Ban, McCoy, Schoesler, Hobbs, Hatfield, Brown, Conway, Rolfes, Braun, McAuliffe and Benton).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/21/14, 2/25/14 [DP];

Appropriations Subcommittee on Education: 2/27/14 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/7/14, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires each public institution of higher education to adopt a policy to award academic credit for military training courses or programs before December 31, 2015, and submit the policy to the Prior Learning Assessment workgroup for evaluation.
- Requires each public institution of higher education to provide a copy of their policy to award academic credit for military training to enrolled students who have listed prior or present military service in their application.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Seaquist, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Haler, Ranking Minority Member; Zeiger, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Gregerson, Hansen, Hargrove, Johnson, Magendanz, Muri, Reykdal, Sawyer, Scott, Sells, Smith, Tarleton, Walkinshaw, Walsh and Wylie.

Staff: Madeleine Thompson (786-7304).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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.

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Fagan, Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Dahlquist, Haler, Lytton, Pettigrew, Seaquist, Sullivan and Wilcox.

Staff: Catrina Lucero (786-7192).

Background:

Prior Learning Definition.

Prior learning is defined as the knowledge and skills gained through work and life experience, through military training and experience, and through formal and informal education and training from in-state and out-of-state institutions, including foreign institutions.

Prior Learning Assessment.

Legislation enacted in 2011 directs the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), the Council of Presidents of the four-year public baccalaureate institutions, the private independent higher education institutions, and the private career schools to collaborate to increase the number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning that counts toward their major, degree, or certificate, while ensuring credit is awarded only for high-quality, course-level competencies. The agencies and institutions are specifically charged to:

- increase the number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning that counts toward their major or toward earning their degree, certificate, or credential, while ensuring that credit is awarded only for high-quality, course-level competencies;
- increase the number and type of academic credits accepted for prior learning;
- develop transparent policies and practices in awarding academic credit for prior learning;
- improve prior learning assessment practices;
- create tools to develop faculty and staff knowledge and expertise in awarding credit for prior learning, and to share exemplary policies and practices among institutions of higher education;
- develop articulation agreements when patterns of credit for prior learning are identified for particular programs and pathways;
- develop outcome measures to track progress on goals; and
- report progress annually.

The WSAC and the SBCTC jointly staff the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) workgroup. In 2013 the PLA workgroup completed a draft statewide policy for prior learning assessment that provides an operational definition and guidance on tracking credits earned through prior learning assessment that would apply to public two-year and four-year institutions of higher education. In addition, prior learning assessment was added to an existing reciprocity agreement between community and technical colleges. The expanded agreement allows for individual courses that meet certain requirements at the sending college to be considered to meet the requirements at the receiving college for a similar transfer degree.

Guides for Awarding Credit for Military Training.

There are three national associations that develop guidelines for acceptance of military training and experience for transfer and the award of credit:

- the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers;
- the American Council on Education (ACE); and
- the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Colleges and universities in Washington use the ACE Military Guide recommendations as a starting point to evaluate the award of credit toward certificates and degrees.

Summary of Bill:

Each public institution of higher education must adopt a policy to award academic credit to individuals for certain military training courses or programs before December 31, 2015. Academic credit awarded for prior military training must be granted only for training that is applicable to a student's certificate or degree requirements.

The individual must be enrolled in a public institution of higher education and have successfully completed any military training course or program as part of the individual's military service that is:

- recommended for credit by a national higher education association that provides credit recommendations for military training courses and programs;
- included in the individual's military transcript issued by any branch of the Armed Forces; or
- documented military training or experience that is substantially equivalent to any course or program offered by the institution of higher education.

Each public institution of higher education must:

- develop a procedure for receiving the necessary documentation to identify and verify the military training course or program that an individual is claiming for academic credit;
- provide a copy of their policy to award academic credit for military training to any applicants who listed prior or present military service in their application; and
- develop and maintain a list of military training courses and programs that qualify for academic credit.

Each public institution of higher education must submit its policy for awarding academic credit for military training to the PLA workgroup.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Higher Education):

(In support) Thirty-five states are carrying out proposals that are similar to this one in order to increase the higher education credit awarded for military training. Since last year, the

Department of Defense has worked with all the Armed Forces to develop the Joint Services Transcript, that is a uniform transcript. This transcript includes a description of courses and course hours, and will help institutions to assess credit more quickly. The community and technical college system serves more than 22,000 veterans and active duty military and all community and technical colleges have military credit policies. The substitute bill requires students to be notified of an institution's military credit policies at the time of applying, rather than at the time of enrollment, and that the credit is applied toward the degree they are pursuing. This is a safety valve for our students and will ensure that students are not unintentionally limited from financial aid due to time-frame issues of enrolling in classes that award credits not relevant to their military training. The bill is in direct alignment with one of the key Roadmap strategies related to encouraging more adults to earn a postsecondary credential. Providing tailored information about how adults can earn credit for learning that occurred on the job or in the military is a critical step towards reaching the state's higher education attainment goals. The PLA workgroup is a strong partnership of colleges, universities, business representatives, and military stakeholders. Some of the accomplishments include the development of policies and crosswalks between industry training. The PLA workgroup has made it a priority to focus on awarding credit for military training. This is a good policy. This proposal allows veterans who come to higher education institutions to save time since they will not have to take classes that are redundant.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations Subcommittee on Education):

(In support) There is going to be growth in the number of returning veterans and individuals separating from the military as a result of the Afghanistan withdrawal. We need to be thinking about ways to keep these individuals in the state. They bring with them many skills and have a lot to offer our community. One way to attract and keep them in the state is to offer them the types of opportunities provided in this bill. The community and technical colleges (CTCs) currently serve about 22,000 veterans. All of the CTCs have a military academic credit policy. This bill will help students move through the system and complete a program of study more efficiently. Students will be able to transfer and enter the workforce more quickly. This bill aligns with the work that Central Washington University is already doing. It is important to consider the Prior Learning Assessment as a way of efficiently supporting students to earn degrees.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education): Senator O'Ban, prime sponsor; Mark San Souci, Department of Defense; Scott Copeland, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Becca Kenna-Schenk, Washington Student Achievement Council; Steve DuPont, Central Washington University; and Matthew Pattie, Associated Students of Central Washington University.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations Subcommittee on Education): Senator O'Ban, prime sponsor; Scott Copeland, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Mark San Souci, Department of Defense State Liaison; and Steve DuPont, Central Washington University.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Higher Education): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations Subcommittee on Education): None.