

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1614

As of March 15, 2013

Title: An act relating to applied doctorate level degrees in audiology at Western Washington University.

Brief Description: Authorizing applied doctorate level degrees in audiology at Western Washington University.

Sponsors: House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Reykdal, Lytton, Seaquist, Pollet, Zeiger, Sells, Springer, Roberts, Maxwell, Ryu and Stanford; by request of Western Washington University).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/04/13, 91-6.

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 3/14/13.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: One of the primary purposes of regional universities is to offer undergraduate and graduate education programs through the master's degree. The regional universities are specifically authorized by law to grant any degree through the master's degree to any student who has completed a program of study in an area determined by the faculty and the institution's board of trustees to be appropriate for granting a degree.

Currently, Eastern Washington University (EWU) is the only regional university that has been authorized to offer a graduate degree above a master's. EWU has the authority to offer applied, but not research, doctorate-level degrees in physical therapy and an educational specialist degree, which is an advanced degree for people who already have a master's degree with a teaching or educational focus.

According to the Academy of Doctors of Audiology (Au.D.), the Au.D. is the designator for the professional doctorate, a degree that replaces the master's degree as the standard entry level qualification for the profession of audiology. The transitioning period is complete by 2012, at which time the Au.D., a four-year post-baccalaureate program, is required to enter the practice of audiology.

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.

Summary of Bill: The board of trustees of Western Washington University (WWU) is authorized to offer applied, but not research, doctorate-level degrees in audiology.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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: The House bill removes language "subject to review." Currently, no governing board reviews degree programs and it is appropriate for it to be completely up to WWU. Some have expressed concerns over degree creep, but there is a huge demand for this degree. A clinical doctorate is now the entry-level degree for audiology. With an aging population, veterans returning with hearing loss, and increased numbers of infants with hearing needs, this degree is necessary. WWU has the resources to provide the degree.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Reykdal, prime sponsor; Sherry Burkey, WWU.