

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5472

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Higher Education, February 7, 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:** Senators Bailey, Ranker, Kohl-Welles and Becker; by request of Western Washington University.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education: 2/05/13, 2/07/13 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chair; Becker, Vice Chair; Baumgartner, Frockt, Kohl-Welles, Ranking Member; McAuliffe and Tom.

**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

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2012, at which time the Au.D., a four-year post-baccalaureate program, is required to enter the practice of audiology.

**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: Audiologists work with patients with hearing loss or balance issues. WWU's strength is in training audiologists and has a strong faculty and staff with top-notch equipment and facilities. As the population increases and medical advances increase the life span for adults, hearing loss will also increase. The increased survival rates of trauma victims and premature infants has also increased the need for hearing screening. According to the Department of Veteran's Affairs, hearing damage is the number one disability for veterans who have returned from the recent wars. The University of Washington is only institution in state that offers the Au.D. and currently receives 85 applications for 12 spots. WWU's goal is to respond to the need and maximize their use of existing faculty and resources.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Sherry Burkey, WWU.