

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5559

As Passed Senate, March 4, 2013

Title: An act relating to educational specialist degrees at regional universities and the state college.

Brief Description: Authorizing educational specialist degrees at Central Washington University, Western Washington University, and The Evergreen State College.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Bailey, Kohl-Welles, Tom and McAuliffe).

Brief History:

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

Passed Senate: 3/04/13, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5559 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

In 2011, legislation was enacted authorizing Eastern Washington University (EWU) to offer an educational specialist degree (Ed.S.). An Ed.S. is an advanced degree for people who already have a master's degree with a teaching or educational focus. It is an intermediate degree between a master's and a doctorate. Some common Ed.S. specialties include school psychology, curriculum and instruction, special education, and educational administration.

Currently, EWU is the only regional university that has been authorized to offer a graduate degree above a master's.

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 Substitute Bill: The boards of trustees of Central Washington University (CWU), Western Washington University (WWU), and The Evergreen State College (TESC) are authorized to offer Ed.S. degrees.

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 on Original Bill: PRO: EWU sought authority to offer the Ed.S. in 2011. WWU and CWU are seeking the same authority. The Ed.S. is designed for educational practitioners to deepen their knowledge and the emphasis is on applied learning as opposed to research. There are no other opportunities in northwest region of the state for educators to get the Ed.S., and they are not likely to relocate because they are employed as teachers. The universities need to remain competitive nationally. School psychology programs are becoming Ed.S programs not just master's programs. This about equity for students, who are taking the rigor of an Ed.S. program without being able to earn the degree.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Sherry Burkey, WWU; Steve DuPont, CWU.