

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5712

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 21, 2013

Title: An act relating to precollege placement measures.

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 History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/19/13, 2/21/13 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: 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: In 2010-11, of the 20,575 high school graduates that entered the community and technical college system, 57 percent, a total of 11,633, of these students enrolled in at least one precollege course. Fifty-one percent enrolled in a pre-college math class. Nineteen percent enrolled in writing classes. Eleven percent enrolled in a reading or coordinated reading and writing class. The non-college-level credits from precollege 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.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) has general supervision and control over the state system of community and technical colleges. Currently, SBCTC has a number of initiatives in place to reform precollege education. One effort includes

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looking at a variety of approaches and options for an assessment and placement system into precollege classes.

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

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.

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: More students are entering the community and technical colleges in need of remedial instruction, which is a high cost to colleges. SBCTC has made a major effort to study and review precollege efforts and best practices for placing students in remedial courses. However, there is nothing in statute and we need to provide transparency for students. Research shows multiple assessments for multiple populations is showing more results. Thus, colleges are working to use multiple assessments, such as high school grade point average, as a predictor of college success. Colleges are working with local high schools and mapping course-taking patterns to determine placement. Faculty to faculty collaboration is making a huge difference because curriculum is aligning. Colleges have not clearly posted options for multiple measures, but we are happy to do so.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; Michelle Andreas, SBCTC.