

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SSB 5969

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Synopsis as Enacted

**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).

**Senate Committee on Higher Education**

**House Committee on Higher Education**

**House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Education**

**Background:** Prior Learning Definition. Prior learning in Washington 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 (Council), 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. Statute specifically charges the agencies and institutions 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

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*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.*

- report progress annually.

The Council and 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 the PLA workgroup that would apply to public two-year and four-year institutions of higher education. In addition, the PLA 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:** 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;
- is included in the individual's military transcript issued by any branch of the armed services; or
- is 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.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate 48 0  
House 97 0

**Effective:** June 12, 2014