

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6083

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, February 6, 2014

Title: An act relating to precollege placement measures.

Brief Description: Concerning precollege placement measures.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Bailey, Frockt and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/28/14, 2/06/14 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

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

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: In the 2012-13 school year, 1017 students took pre-college courses from Central Washington University (CWU) and Eastern Washington University (EWU). While 670 students took a precollege math course and 154 students took English, 193 students enrolled in both math and English.

Currently CWU uses a two-pronged approach that begins with the SAT or ACT scores for incoming freshmen. If the score is not high enough, students can take a placement test in order to further determine competency. College transcripts are used to determine placement for transfer students. EWU also uses SAT or ACT scores to assess whether students need additional placement testing. For math, EWU uses ALEKS, computer-based assessment software. ALEKS provides students with an initial assessment, followed by a prep and learning module, and then a final assessment to determine class placement.

Under current law, the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) must collaborate with appropriate state agencies and stakeholders to improve student transitions and success, which includes but is not limited to setting minimum college admissions standards.

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.

In 2013 under SB 5712, the Legislature directed the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to encourage colleges to use multiple measures to determine whether a student must enroll in a precollege course. Additionally, SBCTC must require colleges to post information about available options for course placement on their website and in admissions materials.

Summary of Bill: State universities, regional universities, and The Evergreen State College may 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. These institutions must also post information about available options for course placement on their websites and in admissions materials.

WSAC must encourage the use of multiple measures to determine precollege placement when setting minimum college admissions standards.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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 Legislature has grappled with remediation for a long time because it can be very costly to students and families. Last year the Legislature encouraged colleges to post their multiple measures options on their websites. During interim a president at a four-year institution recommended such legislation be done for the baccalaureates. One of the 12 strategies within WSAC's ten-year roadmap for increasing educational attainment is to ensure all high school graduates are career and college ready. This strategy includes the recommendation to encourage the use of alternative assessments to determine readiness, which is the focus of this bill. Research promotes the concept of multiple measures in addition to traditional placements to gauge college readiness.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; Becca Kenna-Schenk, WA Student Achievement Council.