

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6482

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

Title: An act relating to the dashboard for four-year institutions of higher education.

Brief Description: Concerning the display of campus information on the statewide public four-year dashboard.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/04/14, 2/06/14 [DPS-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6482 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: In 2011 under E2SHB 1795, the Legislature created an accountability monitoring and reporting system for four-year institutions of higher education to measure progress toward the achievement of long-term performance goals in higher education. Beginning December 1, 2011, the four-year institutions must report each year on performance data that aligns with the National Governor's Association Complete to Compete metrics as well as the following: graduate and professional degrees; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics participation; student debt load; and disaggregation of measures based on various student demographics, including socio-economic status and income level.

This data must be displayed on the Office of Financial Management (OFM) website, in a uniform dashboard format (dashboard). The information can be tailored to meet the needs of various audiences such as students and researchers. Currently, the metrics available are organized into three categories: student enrollment, student progress, and degrees and graduates.

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 Bill (Recommended Substitute): The Legislature finds that the data available on the dashboard is useful to prospective students and their families when making decisions about which schools to apply to and attend. Therefore, the Legislature intends to include data about branch campuses as well as main campuses on the dashboard.

In conjunction with OFM, all branch campuses must display required data on the dashboard by December 1, 2014. The data displayed for a branch campus must not be considered separately from the main campus for the purpose of performance goals in higher education.

When data suppression is necessary to protect student privacy, the Education Data and Research Center must avoid redacting data to the maximum extent possible, using alternatives such as combining data groupings or using the percentage of students in place of a specific number of students.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Clarifies that branch campuses will not be considered separately from their main campuses for the purpose of performance goals.

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: Information for students about branch campuses is not always readily available. Demographic information may be of interest to some families and prospective students. For issues of privacy, information is not provided when there is a small number of students. However, The Evergreen State College is similar in size to a branch campus. Percentages can be used instead of numbers. And groups can be combined instead of redacting all information. We want to enable students to make the best decisions for themselves.

OTHER: One issue to flag is that a number of students move from one campus to another and we want to make sure completion and performance metrics are not harmed as a result. We have data that we are happy to display. However, because branch campuses recently became four-year institutions there will not be as many four-year cohorts on the dashboard. When the University of Washington comes up with performance objectives, it does so as one campus.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor.

OTHER: Chris Mulick, WA State University; Margaret Shepherd, University of WA.