
Higher Education Committee

HB 1238

Brief Description: Concerning affordable tuition planning.

Sponsors: Representatives Pollet, Haler, Bergquist, Hargrove, Sells, Fitzgibbon, Fey and Tarleton.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) to outline strategies to meet affordability and access goals in the Roadmap by evaluating and proposing strategies to return tuition to a level that does not exceed ten percent of the state median household income at institutions of higher education and to base financial aid policies on the total cost of attendance, provided these strategies do not harm institutional quality.

Hearing Date: 1/28/15

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC).

The Higher Education Coordinating Board was abolished in 2012, and the WSAC was created in its place. The WSAC provides strategic planning, oversight, advocacy, and programs to support students and higher education in the state. The WSAC is statutorily required to propose educational attainment goals and priorities to meet the state's higher education needs. The WSAC is then required to identify strategies to meet those educational attainment goals and priorities by producing a short-term Strategic Action Plan every two-years and a ten-year plan known as the Roadmap.

The Ten-Year Roadmap.

The WSAC develops the Roadmap in collaboration with multiple stakeholders to encompass all sectors of higher education. The Roadmap must include strategies that address strategic planning

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for multiple goals, including, but not limited to: long-term degree production; expanding access, affordability, quality, efficiency, and accountability among institutions of higher education; finance planning and strategic investments; and data and analysis. The 2013 Roadmap established two educational attainment goals for 2023 that the Legislature adopted in 2014. These goals are:

- All adults in Washington, ages 25-44, will have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- At least 70 percent of Washington adults, ages 25-44, will have a postsecondary credential.

The Roadmap focuses on three strategies to achieve these educational attainment goals: ensure access, enhance learning, and prepare for future challenges. The ensure access strategy includes elements such as making sure cost is not a barrier for low-income students and making college affordable.

Cost of Tuition.

In 2011, the Legislature granted tuition setting authority to the four-year institutions for all students for the 2011-12 through 2018-19 academic years. This authority will revert back to the Legislature in the 2019-20 academic year. Tuition at the community and technical colleges is set within caps by the Legislature in the operating budget. The cost of tuition at Washington's public institutions of higher education has steadily increased. Since 2010-11, the tuition at the public institutions has increased on average about 31 percent.

Resident undergraduate tuition for the 2014-15 academic year at the Washington public baccalaureate institutions and the community and technical colleges is as follows:

2014-15 Resident Undergraduate Tuition per Academic Year			
	Tuition	Tuition and Fees	Total Cost of Attendance*
University of Washington	\$11,305	\$12,394	\$27,112
Washington State University	\$11,396	\$12,398	\$28,176
Central Washington University	\$7,245	\$9,017	\$21,045
Eastern Washington University	\$7,372	\$8,133	\$22,245
Evergreen State College	\$7,845	\$8,447	\$22,355
Western Washington University	\$7,503	\$8,965	\$23,222
Community and Technical Colleges	\$4,000	\$4,000+	N/A

*The total cost of attendance is an estimate for single, undergraduate students without dependents who are living away from their parent's home or undergraduate married students without dependents whose spouses are also students.

+ While tuition for the community and technical colleges is set by the Legislature, the fees vary by college and location.

Financial Aid Calculations.

The WSAC administers the majority of Washington's student financial aid programs. Ninety-nine percent of the state's financial aid programs are need-based. Need is calculated based on the student's family's household income. According to the Office of Financial Management, Washington's projected median household income for 2013 was \$58,577. Household income is determined by including the income of all individuals 15 years old or older who reside in the household. Washington financial aid calculations adjust the median household income for family size.

Washington's two largest financial aid programs, the State Need Grant (SNG) and the College Bound Scholarship (CBS), award money to cover a portion of tuition and fees for low-income students. While a student's financial aid package is presented using an estimated total cost of attendance, which includes the cost for books, room, board, transportation, and personal miscellaneous expenses, the SNG and CBS awards are based on a representative average of tuition, service, and activity fees at the comprehensive universities. The CBS also includes a \$500 book allowance.

Summary of Bill:

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) is required to outline strategies to meet affordability and access goals in the Roadmap by evaluating and proposing strategies, including increased state support, to return tuition to a level that does not exceed 10 percent of the state median household income at institutions of higher education and to base financial aid policies on the total cost of attendance, provided these strategies do not harm institutional quality.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/23/15.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.