

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1439

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Higher Education

**Title:** An act relating to an online alternative credit model at Central Washington University.

**Brief Description:** Establishing an online alternative credit model at Central Washington University.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Sawyer, Zeiger, Reykdal, Gregerson, Manweller and Tarleton.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Higher Education: 2/4/15, 2/10/15, 2/11/15 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the Central Washington University (Central) to establish and host an online alternative credit model for baccalaureate degree attainment designed for a variety of students with untraditional backgrounds.
- Requires Central to consult with community, business, and other K-20 education providers to identify and develop needed programs and a flexible delivery model that is different from the traditional instructional model.
- Requires Central to develop an online Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education as a part of the model.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Gregory, Hargrove, Holy, Reykdal, Sells, Stambaugh, Tarleton and Van Werven.

**Staff:** Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

**Background:**

Traditional and Alternative Educational Models.

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The traditional model for higher education delivery involves progression towards a degree by accumulating a prescribed number of time-based units, often referred to as "credit-hours." Some innovations in higher education delivery are now basing their model on measuring what a student knows and is able to do, instead of how long a student is in class or where the learning takes place. This alternative approach is often termed "competency-based education." Some forms of competency-based assessments that award credit have been employed for over a decade at institutions of higher education in Washington, including assessments of prior learning, challenge exams, and national tests such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and the College Level Examination Program (CLEP).

State law enacted in 2011 directs the Washington Student Achievement Council (Council) to:

- recognize and endorse online, competency-based education as an important component of Washington's higher education system;
- eliminate unnecessary barriers to the delivery of online competency-based education; and
- work with Western Governors University-Washington to integrate its academic programs and services into Washington's higher education policy and strategy.

#### Central Washington University.

Central Washington University (Central) is a state regional university with its main campus located in Ellensburg, Washington. Central also has seven university center locations in addition to their resident campus in Ellensburg and offers more than 150 majors. In 2014-15 Central enrolled 10,139 students, and the university graduates about 3,000 students each year. The university also offers online programs for certificates and minor, undergraduate, and graduate degrees. Central has eight online bachelor degrees.

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#### **Summary of Bill:**

Central is in charge of hosting the online alternative credit model that awards degrees. The online alternative credit model is developed to target:

- early learning providers;
- veterans returning to civilian life;
- transfer students;
- high school students who are college bound;
- individuals with academic credits already earned;
- individuals who have completed education and training by an employer;
- individuals with knowledge and work experience from a job or internship; and
- individuals with some postsecondary credits, but who have circumstances that prevent postsecondary completion in a traditional setting.

To develop the model, Central must communicate with local community and business leaders to identify, launch, and deliver needed curricula and programs. Central also must evaluate and offer credit for student learning acquired outside of academic settings and develop a delivery model that provides for flexibility for working students. Central must also

coordinate with other K-20 education providers and identify strategies to enhance baccalaureate aspirations in underserved communities.

Central must consult with the Department of Early Learning in developing programs and targeting students who are early learning providers. As a part of the online alternative credit model, Central must develop and launch a Bachelor of Arts degree (B.A.) in Early Childhood Education.

Central must report to the higher education committees of the Legislature by December 1 of each year regarding the progress of the online alternative credit model and recommendations for improvement or expansion.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This bill was heard last year, and the only difference is it forces Central to develop a B.A. in Early Childhood Education. This model was worked on as a way to address a new outcome. This is the shortest, cheapest, and most efficient way to get people degrees. It is innovative, impactful, and revolutionary. If the state is going to meet its ambitious educational attainment goals, then the state needs to take advantage of innovative methods. The high school population will not be enough to meet the education attainment goals. Working age adults who have some college but no degree are a good target audience. The Council did a study where they found that there are 700,000 adults with some college but no degree living in the state. These are people who are stuck in terms of geography and time commitments. This model better serves non-traditional students as it reduces the time and the cost of earning a degree. It gives people the capacity, access, and quality. Central is a cheaper university to achieve the access standards, and there are a lot of non-traditional students and veterans. It benefits veterans by allowing them to earn credit for military training, and it allows people to complete a degree at their own pace. If apprenticeship models are good enough for lawyers and plumbers, there should be a push for this with early childhood education too. If the state is going to demand higher quality early childhood education, then the state needs to address higher education so early childhood providers have the capacity to go to school. Since the B.A. in Early Childhood Education will be online, it will be a statewide program. This bill helps the state meet its early learning objectives.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Sawyer, prime sponsor; Steve DuPont and Tracy Pellett, Central Washington University; Alex Hur, Service Employees International Union 925;

Maddy Thompson, Washington Student Achievement Council; and Trevor Justin, Associated Students of Central Washington University.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.