

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1482

As Reported by House Committee On: Higher Education

Title: An act relating to an analysis of regional higher education capacity to meet educational attainment goals.

Brief Description: Requiring an analysis of regional higher education capacity to meet educational attainment goals.

Sponsors: Representatives Pollet, Zeiger, Stanford, Haler, Bergquist and Tarleton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/3/15, 2/10/15, 2/11/15 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Student Achievement Council (Council) to conduct a study to assess the gap between current availability of certificate and degree programs in various regions of the state and the capacity needed of higher education institutions to meet the state's educational attainment goals.
- Allows the Council to hire a consultant to conduct all or part of the study.
- Requires the Council to submit a status report to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 2015, and the initial report by December 1, 2016, that includes the results of the study and options for capacity expansion.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill 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:

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.

Washington's Institutions of Higher Education.

There are six public baccalaureate institutions in Washington, and each of those six institutions have branch campuses. There are 34 community and technical colleges that have an open door policy in which anyone, regardless of academic background, may attend. Of those, seven are located on the eastern side of the Cascade Mountain Range. In addition to the public institutions, there are over 70 for-profit and nonprofit private institutions. There are also over 300 licensed private career schools that offer programs of two years or less.

Educational Attainment Goals.

The Student Achievement Council (Council) provides strategic planning, oversight, advocacy, and administers programs to support students and higher education in the state. The Council is statutorily required to propose educational attainment goals and priorities to meet the state's higher education needs. In 2013 the Council established two educational attainment goals for 2023 that the Legislature adopted in 2014:

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

According to the National Center for Higher Education, which uses data from the 2011 American Community Survey, approximately 45 percent of Washington's population in the age group of 25-44 has a postsecondary credential. A postsecondary credential includes certificates and every level of degree.

To reach the second educational attainment goal, approximately 1.42 million individuals in 2023 would have to have a post secondary credential, an increase of approximately 56,123 credentials each year. In 2014 94,554 postsecondary credentials were earned in Washington.

Enrollments.

Enrollments at the public institutions of higher education have steadily increased about 1 percent annually. According to data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, there were more than 249,000 full-time equivalent students attending public institutions of higher education in the 2013-14 academic year. Of those, 143,292 were enrolled at a community or technical college. In addition, the private two-year and four-year institutions enrolled just over 68,000 full-time equivalent students.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Council must conduct a study to assess the gap between the current availability of high school, certificate, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate higher education in various regions of the state and the capacity needed of higher education institutions to meet the state's educational attainment goals. The Council must collaborate with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (State Board), the public and private four-year institutions of higher education, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, and the Office of Financial Management in conducting the study. The Council may also hire a consultant to do all or part of the study.

The study must include an assessment of the:

- projected student demand for postsecondary education through 2023 in various geographical regions of the state;
- ability to meet the statewide educational attainment goals in different regional areas of the state; and
- lack of accessible public baccalaureate degree granting institutions to serve the demand in regional areas of the state.

The projected student demand assessment must consider:

- multiple educational pathways;
- student demographic, economic, and educational backgrounds;
- the mix of degrees and credentials needed;
- current trends; and
- improvements in educational delivery.

The Council must use data provided by the State Board and the public four-year institutions of higher education.

The Council must submit a status report by December 1, 2015, and an initial report by December 1, 2016, to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature. The initial report must recommend options for meeting regional capacity deficiencies and additional resources needed to meet the educational attainment goals. The options for higher education capacity expansion may include:

- increasing capacity at existing institutions;
- allowing branch campuses to become regional institutions;
- establishing new regional institutions;
- expanding partnerships between community and technical colleges and the public four-year institutions;
- allowing community and technical colleges to grant traditional and applied baccalaureate degrees; and
- the impact of additional student e-learning opportunities.

The act will expire July 1, 2017.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill:

- replaces the requirement for the study to assess demand for higher education in various regions of the state to assessing the current availability of high school, certificate, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate higher education in various regions of the state;
- adds private four-year institutions of higher education to the list of entities the Council must collaborate with;
- removes the requirement to assess the operational and physical capacity at institutions of higher education;
- clarifies that consideration of student backgrounds includes demographic, economic, and educational backgrounds; and

- requires the Council to include the impact of additional e-learning opportunities as an option for expansion.
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Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) How is Washington going to ensure that every citizen has the opportunity to achieve a postsecondary credential? How is Washington going to meet the educational attainment goals and achieve a twenty-first century education workforce? These are great aspirational goals, yet there is no roadmap to get us from the existing capacity to where we need to go. Many people struggle to get a degree because they have ties in their community and cannot move to where the institution is. The Council has already scoped what Washington needs to do, but it has not been mapped out where Washington needs to go. Washington needs to know where to invest and in what degrees and certificates to invest. This is a state plan to guide investments for every resident in the state. It is a small investment for a big vision.

(In support with amendment(s)) It is important to look at how higher education can serve more people, and the bill's focus on student demand and regional focus is appreciated. A regional demand focus leads to a more collaborative approach. The study should de-emphasize physical capacity and instead focus on the impact of e-learning. In the community and technical college system 20 percent of enrollment is in e-learning. Another approach would be to assume the current capacity with the current physical capacity.

(In support with concerns) The core intent of the bill is supported because of the question of unmet higher education needs in the state. The study would be valuable, and it is good that the bill calls out a wide variety of outcomes. The concern is that the study focuses on capacity, and this has been done before. These studies get sucked into a hole of defining what capacity is since no one can agree on its definition. Instead, the study should address three main questions: (1) who needs higher education; (2) where is the need; and (3) what is needed with a focus on the types of programs.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Pollet, prime sponsor; and Marc Webster, Washington Student Achievement Council.

(In support with amendment(s)) Jan Yoshiwara, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

(In support with concerns) Jane Sherman, Council of Presidents.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.