
Higher Education Committee

HB 2691

Brief Description: Concerning Central Washington University's fifth year promise.

Sponsors: Representatives Pollet, Manweller, Sells, Zeiger, Tarleton, Haler and Kilduff.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes Central Washington University (CWU) to offer a program that promises a free fifth year for a student enrolled in a four-year baccalaureate degree program who is unable to graduate in four years, as long as the student meets certain requirements.
- Requires CWU to purchase a degree-planner software package that provides an online interface to track degree requirements; student progress; and forecasts personnel, lab, and classroom space needs.

Hearing Date: 1/27/16

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

Central Washington University.

Central Washington University (CWU) is a state regional university located in Ellensburg, Washington. In fall of 2015-16, CWU enrolled 10,912 students. According to the Education Research and Data Center's Statewide Public Four-Year Dashboard, the 2013-14 average undergraduate time to degree for a CWU student direct from high school was 4.42 years and for a CWU transfer student it was 2.6 years. The median undergraduate time to degree for a CWU direct from high school student was 4.25 years, whereas the CWU transfer student was 2.25 years.

Degree-Planner Software.

Degree-planner software provides students with online planning tools, which include degree search tools and planned pathways with sequenced degree requirements. Once a student selects a degree pathway, the student will only be allowed to register for classes that fulfill their degree

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requirements. The software also tracks a student's course and degree progress and makes the information available to the student's advisor. If a student gets off track, the student's advisor is notified. In addition, since degree-planner software allows a student to plan for future schedules, that information is communicated to the university or college to assist in planning academic and resource needs.

Summary of Bill:

The CWU is authorized to offer a program that promises that a student enrolled in a four-year baccalaureate degree program will graduate in four years or CWU will allow the student to enroll in his or her remaining courses for free in the student's fifth year. To be eligible, the student must:

- commit to following a degree pathway developed in conjunction with his or her advisor and degree-planner software;
- attempt to enroll in required courses for his or her degree program when the courses are offered and pursuant to the plan developed by the advisor and degree-planner software; and
- maintain satisfactory academic progress.

The CWU must use local funds to support the program. Subject to funding provided, the CWU must purchase a degree-planner software package that provides: an online interface to track degree requirements; student progress; and forecasts personnel, lab, and classroom space needs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Received.

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