

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2691

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to Central Washington University's fifth year promise.

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

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/27/16, 2/3/16 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes Central Washington University (Central) 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 Central 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.
- Authorizes Central to waive tuition and fees for students eligible for the free fifth-year program.

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, Frame, 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.

Central Washington University.

Central Washington University (Central) is a state regional university located in Ellensburg, Washington. In the fall of 2015-16, Central 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 Central student direct from high school was 4.42 years and for a Central transfer student it was 2.6 years. The median undergraduate time to degree for a Central direct from high school student was 4.25 years, whereas the Central 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 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 Substitute Bill:

Central 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 Central 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.

Central must use local funds to support the program, but is given authority to waive all or a portion of tuition fees, and services and activities fees, for students in the program. Subject to funding provided, Central 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.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Central is given authority to waive all or a portion of the tuition fees, and services and activities fees, for students qualifying for the program.

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) This is a visionary model and only a few places around the world have tried this. This could be a national model, and the Legislature should put it in statute to support the commitment to get a degree in four years. The degree-planner software helps to engage the student early on and helps overcome the freshman-to-sophomore retention hurdle. By providing a student with a clear pathway, they can see the direction they are headed. In addition, depending on how early the student is engaged, the university also receives the information and can map out future resource needs. The only downside is getting a student locked into a pathway too early, but the software allows them to move things around and see different pathways. Central becomes responsible for a free fifth year, but it is only for a class or two, not an entire year or quarter necessarily.

This program has a lot of potential for growth. Central brings in a lot of transfer students from the community and technical colleges, and this could be moved out to the colleges with transfer modules built in. Phase three could be to push the model out to high schools so guidance counselors and students could see different pathways.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Pollet, prime sponsor; and James Gaudino, Central Washington University.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.