
College & Workforce Development Committee

SSB 5401

Brief Description: Authorizing community and technical colleges to offer bachelor degrees in computer science.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Nguyen, Rivers, Cleveland, Das, Dhingra, Gildon, Hasegawa, Holy, Keiser, Kuderer, Lias, Lovelett, Mullet, Saldaña, Stanford, Wellman and Wilson, C.).

<p>Brief Summary of Substitute Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Authorizes community and technical colleges to offer Bachelor of Science degrees in computer science.
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Hearing Date: 3/11/21

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

Applied baccalaureate degrees are different from traditional baccalaureate degrees. An applied baccalaureate degree is awarded by a community or technical college and expands upon the curriculum from an associate of applied science degree, or its equivalent. An applied baccalaureate degree incorporates both theoretical and applied knowledge and skills in a specific technical field. In 2005 the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) was authorized to implement a pilot program in which four colleges could develop and offer applied baccalaureate degrees. In 2010 the authorization was made permanent, and the limitation on the number of colleges offering applied baccalaureate degrees was removed. In order for an applied baccalaureate degree program to be approved by the SBCTC, the college must demonstrate that it has the resources, faculty, and student and employer demand to produce a high-quality, cost-

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effective, and feasible program. The college must also demonstrate that the proposed program fills a gap because there is either a workforce shortage or there is not a similar program offered by a four-year institution of higher education nearby. In the 2020-21 academic year, there were 28 colleges offering applied baccalaureate degrees. In 2016 Bellevue College was authorized to offer a Bachelor of Science (BAS) degree in computer science and is the only community or technical college authorized to offer a baccalaureate degree program.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Community and technical colleges are authorized to offer BAS degrees in computer science. A college that wishes to offer a BAS in computer science may submit an application to the SBCTC beginning December 1, 2021. The SBCTC must review applications and select colleges using criteria that includes whether the college demonstrates:

- resource capacity to build and sustain a high-quality program;
- it can readily engage faculty appropriately qualified to develop and deliver high-quality curriculum at the baccalaureate level;
- sufficient student demand within its service area to make the program cost-effective and feasible to operate;
- employer demand; and
- that the proposed program fills a need because comparable programs are not offered by a public four-year institution of higher education in the college's geographic area or due to a shortage of programs demanded by industry and workforce.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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