SENATE BILL REPORT
SB 5401

As of February 3, 2021

Title: An act relating to degrees in computer science.

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

Sponsors: Senators Nguyen, Rivers, Cleveland, Das, Dhingra, Gildon, Hasegawa, Holy, Keiser, Kuderer, Liias, Lovelett, Mullet, Saldaña, Stanford, Wellman and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/04/21.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the state board to approve bachelor's degree programs in computer science at the community and technical colleges.

- Establishes requirements for authorization by the state board of new bachelor's degree programs in computer science.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

Background: In 2005, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) was given authority to select four community or technical colleges to develop and offer programs of study leading to applied baccalaureate degrees on a pilot basis.

An applied baccalaureate degree is a baccalaureate degree awarded by a community or technical college which expands on the curriculum from an associate of applied science degree, or its equivalent, and incorporates both theoretical and applied knowledge and skills

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in a specific technical field. In 2010, the pilot status and limitation on the number of colleges was removed. Before offering an applied baccalaureate degree, a college must receive approval from the SBCTC by demonstrating:

- resource capacity;
- the college has the appropriate faculty;
- there is student and employer demand; and
- the program would fulfill a gap in options available for students because the program is not offered by a public four-year institution of higher education in the college's geographic area.

All applied baccalaureate programs must be approved by the SBCTC. Under current law, Bellevue College is the only institution within the community and technical college system authorized to offer a bachelor's degree in computer science.

In 2020-21, there were 28 colleges offering applied baccalaureate degrees.

Summary of Bill: Subject to approval by the SBCTC, the community and technical colleges are authorized to offer Bachelor's degrees in computer science.

The degree programs must be approved by the college board. Prior to approval, the college must submit a proposal for approval which includes:

- demonstrated demand from student populations that are low-income or people of color; and
- a plan demonstrating financial sustainability of the program using internal funds, investments from the workforce education investment act, or philanthropic funds.

The proposal must be submitted after December 1, 2021. The existing Bachelor's degree in computer science at Bellevue College is exempt from the requirements in this bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 3, 2021.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.