

Week 4 Legislative Update

February 2 - 6, 2015

Proposal Directing WSAC to Assess Regional Needs Heard in House Higher Education

A proposal sponsored by Representative Pollet, Vice Chair of the House Higher Education Committee, [HB 1482](#), requires the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) to conduct a regional study. The study would assess the gap between higher education demand and the capacity of higher education institutions to meet demand. Representative Pollet asked how Washington is going to ensure that every resident has the opportunity to access our higher education system.

Jane Sherman, the Associate Director for Academic Policy, spoke in support of the bill. She stated that one of the most important contributions WSAC can make is to seriously wrestle with the question of our state's unmet higher education needs. Sherman articulated a concern about defining capacity that was echoed by Jan Yoshiwara, Deputy Director for the Education Division of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. Yoshiwara suggested that instead of emphasizing capacity, all higher education institutions should be challenged to identify what they can do collaboratively to meet the needs of students in various regions of the state. Marc Webster, WSAC Senior Fiscal Policy Advisor, noted that the bill is focused on two very important questions:

1. What would a system that is prepared to meet the challenges of the attainment goals look like?
2. How do we change, and what policies are needed to meet the ambitious state attainment goals?

Costs, Transparency and Efficiency

Two proposals by Ranking Leader of the House Higher Education Committee, Representative Zeiger, focus on costs and expenditures in higher education. During the hearing on [HB 1500](#), concerning a study of higher education cost drivers, Representative Zeiger commented that when we are looking at complex, large state systems, we have to know what's driving costs.

Representative Zeiger's second proposal focuses on expenditures. [HB 1400](#) would require the Education Research & Data Center (ERDC) at the Office of Financial Management to post additional information on its data dashboard require ERDC to post the department-level budget of each public higher education institution, including budget planning and expenditures.

A bill sponsored by Representative Haler, [HB 1147](#), directs the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to conduct a study on transitioning to a three-track admission system for public institutions of higher education on a semester calendar; and a four-track admission system for public institutions of higher education on a quarter calendar. The proposal is based on Brigham Young University-Idaho's transition to a three-track admission system.

Substitute Bill related to College Bound Signatures Referred to Rules

An amended version of a bill sponsored by Representative Ortiz-Self, [SHB 1236](#) passed out of the Higher Education Committee and has been referred to Rules. The substitute bill maintains the parent or guardian witness requirement for the College Bound Scholarship pledge, but allows a school administrator or counselor to witness the pledge when a parent or guardian is unavailable.

Senate Work Session on Independent College of Washington

The Senate Higher Education Committee held a work session with the Independent Colleges of Washington on February 3rd. Tom Fitzsimmons, Vice President of the Independent Colleges of Washington (ICW), stated that the ten universities represented by ICW enroll nearly 40,000 students each year. The ICW schools confer 20 percent of Washington's baccalaureate degrees on an annual basis. and they also have the capacity to serve about 20 percent more students over the next 8 years, which would be an additional 4,000 students. Fitzsimmons noted the importance of the State Need Grant and State Work Study program within their system.

STEM Work Session

The Senate Trade and Economic Development committee held a work session on STEM education initiatives. Randy Spaulding of WSAC presented with Dave Wallace of the Workforce Board and Tina Bloomer of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges on the need for individuals with higher education credentials. These needs were assessed for the WSAC and Workforce Board joint-agency report, *A Skilled and Educated Workforce*. Caroline King of Washington STEM presented on her non-profit organization and also the Governor's STEM Innovation Alliance.

Hearing on Veterans Residency Bills

The Senate Higher Education Committee held a hearing on Governor-request bill [SB 5355](#), which would modify the definition of "resident student" to comply with the federal requirements established by the veterans Choice Act of 2014.

Dual Credit

A substitute of [HB 1031](#) passed out of the House Education committee and has been referred to Rules. The bill expands the dual-credit program, College in the High School (CHS), beyond grades 11 and 12 to grade 10. It also requires participating school districts to provide general information about CHS programs to students in grade 9 and their parents. The substitute bill adds a provision that CHS course credit must apply toward degree requirements at the Evergreen State College.

A public hearing was held in the House Education Committee on the OFM-Request bill [HB 1546](#)—Concerning dual-credit opportunities provided by Washington state's public institutions of higher education. During the hearing, representatives of Central Washington University, Eastern Washington

University and the Tacoma School District expressed concerns that the proposal would diminish opportunities to offer dual credit through the Running Start in the High School model. Representatives of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Workforce Board, WSAC and the League of Education Voters were supportive of the options. WSAC's Maddy Thompson noted that the proposal was less expansive than WSAC's original proposal but still represented a step forward. Among other provisions, OFM's proposal would prioritize low-income students to receive college credit for College in the High School programs. The Senate companion bill ([SB 5086](#)) has not yet passed out of committee.

Inside Olympia Interview with House Higher Education Leaders

TVW's Austen Jenkins interviewed House Higher Education Committee Chair Representative Drew Hansen and Ranking Leader Representative Hans Zeiger for Inside Olympia. They discussed their higher education priorities and the need for new investments in higher education.

Representative Hansen noted, "We are going to be making major investments in keeping tuition low, in high demand degrees—particularly computer science—and in innovations to help students to get through college, like in college and career advising." When Jenkins asked whether keeping tuition flat and investing in higher education was realistic, Hansen said it was realistic if there is a willingness to consider revenue options. "If we want a world class education system, if we want affordable education then you have to pay for it," Hansen stated.

Representative Zeiger referenced the large decreases in higher education funding in 2009 of \$500 million and again in 2011 of \$600 million. He noted that in 2013 the Legislature froze tuition and increased funding by 12 percent, but stated that many middle class families are continuing to struggle to pay their higher education bills.

The [full interview](#) is available online. Watch

Please see our [Week 5 Schedule](#) for upcoming committee meetings and hearings.