

Week 1: January 13-18, 2014

Session begins

Last week, the Legislature convened for its short, 60-day session of the 63rd Biennium last week, and issues related to K-12 and postsecondary education are already defining the agenda for the supplemental session that is scheduled to end on March 13th. You can find the 2014 Cutoff Calendar [here](#).

“Dream Act” and differential tuition bill pass House

On Monday, the House moved quickly to pass [ESHB 1817](#), a measure expanding State Need Grant eligibility to undocumented resident students, also known as the “Washington Dream Act.” The bill passed 71-23, and is now in the Senate Higher Education Committee, where it has not yet been scheduled for a public hearing. As the agency administrator for most of the state’s financial assistance programs, the Washington Student Achievement Council would be the lead agency for implementation if the measure were to become law.

On Friday, with a nearly unanimous vote of 90-2, the House passed [HB 1043](#), which would permanently prevent public postsecondary institutions from setting differential tuition rates for resident, undergraduate programs. Differential tuition-setting authority was established under HB 1795 in 2011, but it has been temporarily suspended in the 2011-13 and 2013-15 biennial budgets.

State of the State

Governor Inslee delivered his [State of the State](#) address to members of the Legislature and other elected officials on Tuesday, again, with a key focus on investments in education, along with the transportation package and a call to increase the minimum wage. Referencing the recent court finding that the state has failed to make adequate progress toward the necessary investments in basic education as required under the *McCleary* decision, Inslee said that “the Supreme Court has forced us all to look anew at funding our education system this year.” In response, Inslee is calling for a \$200 million investment in K-12 education this session.

Hearings on Governor’s proposed budget

The budget committees of the House and Senate held public hearings on the Governor’s proposed supplemental budget ([HB 2185](#) / [SB 6002](#)) this week, where Council staff testified in support of the proposed appropriation of \$11.2 million for the College Bound Scholarship program that will ensure all eligible students are served through the 2014-15 academic year.

House Higher Education Committee

This week, the House Higher Education Committee focused on the Council's goals for increasing educational attainment. On Tuesday, Council Chair, Maud Daudon, and Gene Sharratt, Executive Director, presented the Ten-Year Roadmap to the Committee, with a focus on the attainment goals. Their presentation was followed by a panel examining the changing demographics in the state, which included a presentation from Randy Spaulding, Director of Academic Affairs and Policy. Later in the week, the committee heard from representatives of public baccalaureate institutions, public community and technical colleges, and independent private four-year institutions on how each sector plans to respond to the Council's attainment goals.

Senate Higher Education Committee

The Senate Higher Education Committee began the week with a work session dedicated to the higher education portion of the budget and state financial assistance. Mason Burley from the Washington Institute for Public Policy presented the Institute's recent [study](#) on the State Need Grant program. Rachelle Sharpe, Director of Student Financial Assistance, provided the committee with an overview of student financial aid and access programs.

On Thursday, the Committee held a work session on [academic credit for prior learning](#), which was co-presented by Council staff Jim West and Noreen Light, along with the co-chairs of the Prior Learning Work Group that is convened by the Student Achievement Council. The committee also held a work session on helping veterans transition to the workforce. Finally, the committee held public hearings on several bills, including two measures that the Council publically supported in testimony:

- [SCR 8409](#): Approving the workforce training and education coordinating board's high skills high wages plan.
- [SB 5969](#): Providing for awarding academic credit for military training.