

## **Border County Pilot Project: Review and Recommendations**

December 2001

### **INTRODUCTION**

This report reviews the history and experiences of the “Border County Pilot Project” enacted by the 1999 Legislature (SHB 1016) and modified by the 2000 Legislature (HB 2904). The bill requires the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to submit a report to the Governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature on the results of the pilot project.

### **INTENT OF THE BORDER COUNTY BILL**

On a three-year pilot basis, the border county bill provides reduced tuition options for Oregon residents at several community colleges and one university in southwest Washington. The pilot project is designed to provide reduced tuition for Oregon residents, similar to that provided to Washington residents at Oregon institutions.

The bill also states this project intends to help regional planning for higher education in southwest Washington and the bordering areas in Oregon.

### **INSTITUTION PARTICIPANTS IN WASHINGTON**

The bill designates three community colleges and one branch campus as participants. Community colleges include Clark College, Lower Columbia College, and Grays Harbor College. Washington State University (WSU) at Vancouver also is designated in the bill.

### **ELIGIBLE STUDENTS**

The bill states that residents of several Oregon counties (located near the border of Washington) may participate. Students must be eligible to pay in-state tuition at Oregon institutions, and must have resided for at least 90 days in one or more of the following Oregon counties: Columbia, Multnomah, Clatsop, and Washington. The Washington Legislature added Clackamas County in 2000.

The bill further specifies that all Washington institutions participating in the pilot project must give priority program enrollment to Washington residents.

## TUITION PROVISIONS

### Community Colleges

Washington community colleges designated in the bill may enroll Oregon students (from the five Oregon counties named in the bill) at Washington resident tuition rates. The bill places no restrictions on the number of credits an Oregon resident may take at a community college. Therefore, eligible Oregon students may enroll full-time or part-time at in-state tuition rates.

### WSU Vancouver

WSU Vancouver, which concentrates on upper-division and graduate level course work, may enroll Oregon students (from the five specified Oregon counties) – who are taking eight credits or fewer – at Washington resident tuition rates. If an individual Oregon student takes nine or more credits, he/she does not qualify to participate in the border county pilot project.

## TIMELINE

The pilot project began in 1999, and institutions began enrolling students in summer or fall of 1999 under the provisions of the bill. The pilot project expires June 30, 2002, and by that date will have been in effect for three years. Because the due date for this report occurs several months before the end of the project, data will be presented for the first two years of the pilot and for the current fall 2001 term.

## OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS OF THIS REPORT

This is a brief summary of the findings and recommendations on the border county pilot project. Subsequent sections of this report provide additional detail.

### Participation Levels

- Numbers of student who enrolled under the border county project are as follows: 359 in fall 1999, 476 in fall 2000, and 355 in fall 2001 (data are headcount enrollments).
- Cumulatively, over the entire period of the pilot project, approximately 1,300 individual students have enrolled for at least one term as border county participants.
- Border county participants make up a small percentage (between one percent and four percent) of total enrollments at each participating Washington institution.
- Two-thirds of border county students enrolled at Washington institutions are from Oregon's Multnomah and Columbia counties.
- In Washington, Clark and Lower Columbia community colleges enroll the largest numbers of Oregon residents in the pilot project.

- Grays Harbor College has not participated, to date, in the pilot project.
- Border county students enroll in many different types of programs; these students earned more than 100 degrees and certificates while in the border county pilot project.
- Besides the border county policies, both Washington and Oregon have additional tuition reduction programs for residents of the other state – such as the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE). And most community colleges in both states enroll nonresidents at reduced tuition rates.

### **Evaluation of the Pilot Project**

- Staff at Washington schools report the project has been successful and positive.
- Washington residents have not been adversely affected by Oregon enrollments in the border county pilot; Washington students continue to be able to access desired courses and programs.

### **Recommendations**

- Due to the experience of the pilot project, HECB recommends that the border county project be continued – possibly made permanent – as long as Washington residents continue to be able to access desired courses and programs.
- WSU Vancouver has recommended a minor modification regarding raising the eight-credit limit to nine credits.

## **FALL ENROLLMENTS BY COUNTY, BY INSTITUTION**

The number of students enrolled is a major indicator of use of the border county pilot project. According to data from the institutions, the following shows the number of students enrolled for the fall term during the three years of the pilot project. Although students enrolled for the entire year, data for the three fall terms provide an indication of trends in use. As shown in the table, there was an enrollment increase between fall 1999 and fall 2000. And in fall 2001, enrollments have leveled somewhat.

Data in the table on the following page show numbers of individual students enrolled. At the community colleges, students can enroll on a part-time or full-time basis, but at WSU Vancouver only part-time study (eight credits or fewer) qualifies for participation in the pilot project. Although the table starts with fall 1999, when the program became fully operational, Lower Columbia College began enrolling students in summer 1999 with a total of 42 students participating. Also, it should be noted that Grays Harbor College did not use provisions of the border county pilot project.

**Fall Quarter 1999: Headcount Enrollment**

By County of residence in Oregon

Institution:	Clackamas	Clatsop	Columbia	Multnomah	Washington	TOTAL
Clark College		2	6	98	28	134
Lower Columbia		82	105	5		192
WSU Vancouver		1	2	22	8	33
TOTAL		85	113	125	36	359

**Fall Quarter 2000: Headcount Enrollment**

By County of residence in Oregon

Institution:	Clackamas	Clatsop	Columbia	Multnomah	Washington	TOTAL
Clark College	20	1	5	121	21	168
Lower Columbia	2	84	149	3	8	246
WSU Vancouver	6	2	5	37	12	62
TOTAL	28	87	159	161	41	476

**Fall Quarter 2001: Headcount Enrollment**

By County of residence in Oregon

Institution:	Clackamas	Clatsop	Columbia	Multnomah	Washington	TOTAL
Clark College	9	1	3	112	19	144
Lower Columbia	4	53	91	0	0	148
WSU Vancouver	7	2	6	34	14	63
TOTAL	20	56	100	146	33	355

Students from Multnomah County and Columbia County are the most extensive users of the border county provisions; about two-thirds of participants are from these two counties. Two community colleges, Clark and Lower Columbia, enroll the largest numbers of students.

**Border County Enrollments as a Proportion of Total Institution Enrollments**

It is informative to examine overall institution enrollments and the proportion of those who are residents of other states. More specifically, what portion of nonresidents are border county recipients? This analysis shows only a small percentage of any institution's enrollment is attributable to border county participation.

**Clark College** (along with most community colleges in Washington) enrolls a very high proportion of Washington residents. In fall 2001, Clark's total headcount was 12,555, including 622 nonresidents. In percentage terms, nonresidents comprise less than five percent of the total enrollment. Of these nonresidents, 245 are from Oregon – i.e., about two percent of all enrollments are Oregon residents. Most students from Oregon receive some form of tuition reduction or waiver, but border county tuition reductions are the most prevalent: specifically, 144 students from Oregon received border county benefits in fall 2001. In percentage terms, one

percent of all students at Clark College are enrolled with the assistance of the border county pilot project.

**Lower Columbia College** enrolls a total of 3,834 students in fall 2001; about nine percent are nonresidents. The number of students from Oregon studying in the border county pilot project is 148 – about four percent of the total enrollment at the college.

**WSU Vancouver** also enrolls a small percentage of students under the border county pilot project. In fall 2001, a total of 1,681 students are enrolled at WSU Vancouver; 152 are nonresidents – i.e., nine percent are nonresidents. Of the nonresidents, most (108) are from Oregon, and most receive some sort of tuition reduction or waiver, with border county participation being the most common. In fall 2001, 63 Oregon residents received border county tuition reductions – which is four percent of the total enrollment.

## **TOTAL ENROLLMENTS DURING THE TIME PERIOD OF THE BORDER COUNTY PILOT PROJECT**

The above tables and discussion review headcount enrollments for fall quarter only. It is also interesting to look at the total numbers of students who have participated since the beginning of the pilot project. That is, how many individual students have enrolled – whether they enrolled for one quarter, or up to 10 quarters, or whether they were full-time or part-time.

- At Clark College, about 530 individuals enrolled for at least one quarter between fall 1999 and fall 2001.
- At WSU Vancouver, 150 individuals enrolled for at least one term under border county auspices. As discussed above, WSU enrollments are limited to eight credits or fewer for border county participation.
- At Lower Columbia College, it is estimated that 700 individuals have used the provisions of the border county bill since summer 1999.

Overall, the number of Oregon residents using the border county bill, at a point in time, is relatively small. Cumulatively, in the period covered by the border county pilot project, an estimated 1,300 students have used the pilot project's tuition reduction benefits.

## **TYPES OF PROGRAM ENROLLMENTS**

Overall, border county participants enroll in a wide range of program offerings at the institutions. A few programs, such as community college coursework leading to an associate's degree applicable for transfer, and nursing at both the community college and four-year level, are popular among students. [NOTE: This analysis uses the total time period of the pilot project (as did the preceding section). Enrollment numbers reflect distinct individuals who enrolled for one or more quarters or semesters – including summers – during the entire period of the border county pilot project covered by this report. If an individual enrolls for one, two, three or more

terms, he/she is counted only once. Two institutions were able to provide this type of program-level data.]

**Clark College:** For the time period of the border county pilot project (fall 1999 through fall 2001), 530 individuals have enrolled for one or more terms, either part-time or full-time. Participants in the pilot project chose a wide variety of programs and many have not chosen a particular field.

- 25 percent of students (about 150 individuals) are classified as “undecided.”
- 40 percent (about 250 students) are in academic transfer programs; most who intend to transfer have not specified a particular area of concentration, but some have chosen fields such as business, education, sciences, health, etc.
- The remaining 35 percent of students (about 130 individuals) enrolled at Clark College under the border county project have directed their efforts toward a wide variety of vocational fields:
  - Nursing has a large enrollment with about 70 students.
  - The culinary arts program enrolls about 50 students.
  - Additional fields of study include business, computers, telecommunications and networking, automotive and machine technologies, dental hygiene, and more.

**WSU Vancouver:** During the period of the border county pilot project, approximately 150 individual students enrolled for one or more semesters. And, as noted earlier, border county students must enroll part-time – eight credits or fewer.

- About 50 percent of WSU Vancouver enrollments (75 students) have been in graduate programs.
- About 30 percent (50 students) are in undergraduate programs.
- The remaining 20 percent have been non-degree students (25 students).
- Nursing is one of the programs with the highest enrollments, with about 30 students in this field. Most are graduates.
- In other fields of graduate study, several students enroll each term in business (including MBA) programs, as well as public affairs and education.
- At the undergraduate level, enrollments are spread among several fields, including general studies, English, business, biology, nursing and many who are classified as “undecided.”

## **STUDENT OUTCOMES FOR THOSE USING THE BORDER COUNTY BILL**

In addition to enrollments, the extent to which students complete programs of study is another useful indicator of the project’s effectiveness. Although the pilot project has been in place for less than three years, a number of students have received degrees or certificates. In many cases, these students have not enrolled entirely under the border county bill, but for at least one quarter or semester, they received tuition reductions under the pilot project. Therefore, the border county pilot contributed to their acquisition of a degree or certificate.

Furthermore, many students leave a program of study without a degree or other award, but nevertheless have accomplished their goals – such as skill development or personal enrichment. Many students currently enrolled under the border county project will continue their enrollment in subsequent terms.

The following is an overview of degrees and certificates received by those who have participated in the pilot project since its inception in 1999.

**Numbers of Awards Received by Border County Participants (1999-2001)**

(Participants: those enrolled at least one term under border county pilot project)

	Academic Associate Degrees*	Vocational Associate Degrees	Certificates (all types)	Bachelor's Degrees	Master's Degrees
Clark College	23	29	4		
Lower Columbia	13	18	25		
WSU Vancouver				15	20

\*Applicable for transfer to a baccalaureate institution.

**Clark College:** In many cases, the “academic associate degrees” carry the designation of DTA – i.e., meeting the requirements of the Direct Transfer Agreement to a four-year institution to pursue a baccalaureate degree. Of the “vocational” degrees, more than half are awarded in the field of nursing; other fields include paralegal, dental hygiene, automotive technician, and culinary arts. “Certificates” are mainly for practical nursing.

**Lower Columbia College:** “Academic associate degrees” are designed for transfer purposes. “Vocational” associate degrees cover a range of program areas – nursing and business administration have the highest numbers of awards at four each. In addition, vocational degrees are awarded in medical assistance, secretarial, legal, accounting, and mechanics – among others. Of the “certificates” awarded, more than half are in nursing or medical assistance.

**WSU Vancouver:** Since border county students at WSU Vancouver may only enroll for eight credits or fewer, many (possibly all) earned credit toward degrees outside their border county participation. Although no specific information has been gathered, it is likely that many students took courses at reduced tuition to finish degree programs started earlier. Of the 15 bachelor’s degrees awarded, nursing and general social science had the highest numbers of recipients (four and five respectively), with other awards in a variety of fields (English, humanities, communication, and psychology). Master’s degrees (20) earned by border county participants were concentrated in the fields of teaching/education, business, and nursing (plus two in technology fields).

## ASSESSMENT OF THE BORDER COUNTY PILOT PROJECT BY THE PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

Overall, staff at the institutions reported that the project had been successful. Following are some specific comments.

**WSU Vancouver** staff report that, overall, the impact of the border county pilot project has been positive. One benefit relates to the pilot project's intent to match Washington's tuition policies with Oregon's ongoing policies. This may help to ensure that Washington residents at Oregon's institutions continue to receive tuition reductions. Another benefit that has emerged is joint planning efforts between Washington and Oregon institutions. (And, in fact, the possibility of joint planning was included in the intent language of the Border County bill.) In this regard, WSU Vancouver and Portland State University are beginning a joint master's program in history, and examining possible joint programs in public affairs and education. In addition, including students from Oregon has increased the diversity of the student body at WSU Vancouver.

Staff note that even though some classes, in some programs, are full at times, no qualified Washington residents are denied admission in favor of Oregon residents. That is, Washington residents are not displaced and have not encountered problems in securing desired classes due to Oregon student enrollments.

One concern noted by staff relates to Oregon students taking only eight credits under border county provisions – but most courses are offered for three credits each. Therefore, many students take two courses for a total of six credits, but cannot reach the allowable eight-credit limit since an additional class would result in nine credits.

**Clark College** staff characterize the program as positive and very successful. People in the area often see the border (i.e., the Columbia River) as an artificial boundary they cross regularly to work and live. Therefore, Clark College's ability to charge resident tuition to students from either side of the border responds to the needs of the people of the area. The accessibility to courses and programs for Washington residents has not been adversely affected.

Staff noted one area of concern: Students encounter some confusion about residency requirements in the border county bill compared to standard residency requirements for those moving into Washington. The border county bill states that students must be eligible for in-state Oregon tuition, and be residents of one of the specified Oregon counties for at least 90 days. Therefore, after 90 days, an Oregon student can attend a Washington border county college at in-state tuition rates – if he/she lives in Oregon. However, if the same student moves to Washington, he/she would have to live in Washington for 12 months before becoming a resident for tuition purposes.

**Lower Columbia College** staff report that the program was successful, and that no Washington residents were denied enrollments because of the border county bill.



**Grays Harbor College** staff believe the concept of the border county bill is valuable. However, the college is not readily accessible to residents of Oregon. The main campus requires a 90-minute drive from the Oregon border. The branch campus at Ilwaco is small; if the program were to expand in the future, a larger program may attract more students from across the border. At this point, Grays Harbor College has not enrolled any students under the border county bill.

## **A WIDER PERSPECTIVE ON TUITION-REDUCTION PROGRAMS IN WASHINGTON AND IN OREGON**

Part of the impetus for the border county pilot project was an interest in encouraging policies in Washington that correspond to those in Oregon. Therefore, in addition to the border county bill, it is important to look at the wider range of tuition-reduction programs on both sides of the border. In the past, Oregon and Washington negotiated formal reciprocity agreements that specified numbers of students who would receive waivers in each state. Although formal reciprocity has been discontinued, the border county pilot project – along with other programs – maintains opportunities for students to cross the border to access higher education at reduced tuition.

The discussion below describes examples of other programs in Washington, followed by a brief description of tuition-reduction opportunities in Oregon. (Note: this discussion focuses on the larger programs; other tuition-reduction options may be available at various institutions in each state.)

### **Examples of Other Tuition-Reduction Programs Available in Washington Institutions**

- **WUE:** The Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) program allows students from 15 western states to enroll in other state institutions at 150 percent of in-state tuition rates. Both Oregon and Washington participate in this program; Oregon's participation is discussed below.

In Washington, three institutions (Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, and Washington State University) offer WUE benefits in selected programs. In 2000-2001, 60 Oregon residents enrolled under the WUE program (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, "The Statistical Report," Academic Year 2000-2001).

- **Nonresident waiver at community colleges:** Recognizing that community college students are mobile, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges has authorized colleges to waive nonresident tuition. That is, colleges may waive the "operating fees" portion of nonresident tuition (operating fees are the largest component of tuition). U.S. citizens and immigrants are eligible for this waiver. Although most community colleges use this nonresident waiver, about half impose additional restrictions regarding those who qualify and/or limit the amount of the waiver.

During the 2000-2001 academic year, nearly 3,300 individual students received tuition reductions under the nonresident waiver program at Washington community colleges. These students enrolled, either full-time or part-time, for at least one quarter during the 2000-2001 year. Recipients of the nonresident waiver can be from any state. It is likely that many are from Oregon, although the exact number of Oregon recipients cannot be determined.

**Examples Of Tuition-Reduction Programs For Washington Residents At Oregon Institutions**

- **Eight credits or fewer at four-year colleges/universities:** Several public four-year Oregon institutions charge in-state tuition to nonresidents taking eight credits or fewer. Under this arrangement, the largest enrollment of Washington students is at Portland State University with about 80 percent of the enrollment, but also participating are: Oregon Institute of Technology, Oregon State University, Southern Oregon University, University of Oregon, and Western Oregon University. (In a sense, Eastern Oregon University participates in a larger capacity because it charges in-state rates to all undergraduate students – both resident and nonresident, full- or part-time.) The following shows Washington enrollments in the fall term for the last few years:

**Fall Term Enrollments of Washington Residents at Oregon Institutions**  
(Students paying in-state tuition – taking eight credits or fewer)

	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
Washington Participants:	174	185	211	195	244

(Data provided by Oregon University System office, October 5, 2001)

- **WUE:** Like Washington, Oregon also participates in this exchange program. According to summary data, 167 Washington residents enrolled at Oregon four-year institutions during 2000-2001, paying tuition charged at 150 percent of in-state resident tuition (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, “The Statistical Report,” Academic Year 2000-2001).
- **Community colleges:** According to data from the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development, several thousand Washington residents enroll in Oregon community colleges each year – at in-state tuition rates. In 1999-2000, for example, more than 8,000 Washington residents enrolled at Oregon community colleges for at least one term, either full- or part-time. All were charged Oregon resident tuition rates.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Because the border county pilot project is generally viewed as successful, HECB recommends that the pilot be continued, or made permanent, as long as Washington residents continue to be able to access desired courses and programs.

Furthermore, the Legislature may wish to consider a change in the **eight-credit limit** at WSU Vancouver. Under provisions of the current border county bill, Oregon students are restricted to eight credits or fewer to be eligible for Washington resident tuition. Because most courses are offered for three credits, raising the border county limit to **nine credits** at WSU Vancouver might allow students to progress more quickly through their programs.

**RESOLUTION NO. 01-41**

WHEREAS, The Border County Pilot Project is in the third year of its operation; and

WHEREAS, The Border County Pilot Project will expire June 30, 2002; and

WHEREAS, Participating Washington higher education institutions report that Oregon residents have successfully enrolled in various programs; and

WHEREAS, Participating Washington institutions report that Washington residents continue to access courses and programs and have not been adversely affected by border county enrollments; and

WHEREAS, Oregon higher education institutions continue to enroll Washington residents at reduced tuition rates;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Higher Education Coordinating Board accepts the report on the Border County Pilot Project and recommends that the project be continued, or made permanent, as long as Washington residents continue to be able to access desired courses and programs. In addition, the Legislature may wish to consider changing the credit limit at Washington State University Vancouver to nine credits.

Adopted:

December 13, 2001

Attest:

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Bob Craves, Chair

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Gay Selby, Vice Chair