

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5636

As of February 15, 2011

Title: An act relating to expanding opportunities in higher education in north Puget Sound.

Brief Description: Concerning the University Center of North Puget Sound.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Harper, Shin and Delvin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/15/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: A number of studies have been undertaken over the past decade to determine the higher education needs of North King, Snohomish, Island, and Skagit Counties. In November 2006 a consultant team's final report found that the needs of about 10,800 full-time equivalent students would be unmet by 2025 if students from those counties participated in baccalaureate and graduate degree programs at the 1998 national average for all adults.

The mission of the University Center of North Puget Sound (University Center) is to develop partnerships with other colleges and universities for the purpose of providing baccalaureate and graduate degrees for the residents of North Snohomish, Island and Skagit Counties and to provide the services and facilities that deliver these educational opportunities. The University Center offers on-line and in-class courses from Washington State University (WSU), University of Washington-Bothell, Western Washington University, Central Washington University, The Evergreen State College, Hope International University, and Saint Martin's University. Instruction is delivered in various formats including web-based distance education, two-way interactive video, technology supported classrooms and combinations of these. In 2005 the legislature named consortium member Everett Community College (ECC) as manager of the University Center and in March, 2009 the University Center moved to the new Undergraduate Center in Gray Wolf Hall on the main campus.

Summary of Bill: WSU assumes management and leadership for baccalaureate and graduate degree production at the University Center. The Director of the University Center

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reports to the President of WSU and implements decisions of the coordinating and planning council (council). The council is established to provide long-range strategic planning, facilitate collaborations, and resolve internal disputes. The membership of the council is specified, but may be modified by agreement.

The council must establish a plan addressing the academic needs of the region and for an engineering degree program. The plan must specifically address expansion of the range of regional educational opportunities, include specified strategies, and establish a process for program development. It must be completed by July 1, 2013.

WSU's leadership role begins by July 1, 2014. University Center expansion needs and capital facility funding are reviewed annually by WSU in cooperation with ECC. WSU designs, constructs, and manages any facility developed at the University Center with the exception of facilities design efforts utilizing ECC capital funding. WSU is responsible for infrastructure development and maintenance with costs shared equitably.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Snohomish County is the fastest growing county in the state without a four-year university. WSU is the right match. WSU already has a presence in the area. Snohomish County needs a university. Many employers in the area need engineers to replace retirees. This idea sets the foundation to put a research university in a leadership position in the county. If not now, when? Students will have access to excellent internship opportunities. The Snohomish County Council passed a resolution in favor of this effort. WSU is responding to an invitation from the community. WSU has a long history of working cooperatively with other institutions of higher education.

CON: This effort will not benefit students, taxpayers, or employers. The current University Center is a success. Previously, WSU had expressed concerns about its ability to offer programs at the University Center. The University Center has eight partners already and also offers engineering programs. The plan does not provide for legislative approval. The last thing we need now is another governance structure. The idea has not gone through the HECB mission change process enacted just last year. This will have a chilling effect on institutions who may want to create partnerships in the future. The idea does not increase state production of baccalaureate degrees. Give us a WSU branch, but leave the University Center alone. Western Washington University (WWU) wants to continue contributing to the University Center. The University of Washington (UW) is working through the HECB process for program expansion in the area.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor; Ray Stephanson, Mayor, City of Everett; Crystal Donnet, Pertect Engineering; Matt Smith, Snohomish County EDC; Briahna Taylor, Snohomish County; John Gardner, Larry James, WSU; Brian Pitcher, WSU-Spokane.

CON: Sandra Schroeder, American Federation of Teachers - WA; David Beyer, President, Everett Community College; Christine Kerlin, Director, University Center of North Puget Sound; Charlie Earl, Exec. Dir., State Board of Community and Technical Colleges; Gene Chase, Trustee, Everett Community College; Pete Crane, Trustee Association of Community Colleges; Sherry Burkey, WWU; Margaret Shepherd, UW.