

Legislative News

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges



Monday, March 3, 2014

Budgets released, CTCs present in hearings

With less than two weeks remaining in this year's regular session, last week was busy as legislators released proposed budgets, another mandated cutoff date passed, and plenty of committee action took place. Bills impacting community and technical colleges continue to move through the legislative process. In addition, discussions have already begun around planning legislative interim work after the session ends.

Senate, House release supplemental budget proposals

Since the beginning of session, the possibility of a supplemental budget has been in question. With the February revenue and caseload forecasts being relatively flat, both the Senate and House released their budget proposals for this supplemental legislative session.

Senate

The Senate released operating and capital budget proposals last Monday, Feb. 24. Taking a modest approach and making few new investments, the Senate proposals impact community and technical colleges in the following ways:

Operating

Approximately just under half of the overall increase for the 2013-15 Biennium is required to pay for caseload driven programs (such as K-12, Correctional Facility inmates, and Medicaid recipients). At the policy level, there are modest investments made for higher education:

- \$410,000 for the MESA Community College Program.
- Tuition: no higher education institution may increase tuition levels for fiscal year 2015.
- Financial aid
 - \$12.3 million for the College Bound Program.
 - \$25 million for the Opportunity Scholarship Program.

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About

Legislative News is published weekly during the legislative session by the staff of the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to highlight issues impacting the two-year college system.

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- Paraeducator development: funding is provided to implement the requirements under [Senate Bill 6129](#).
- Transfer University Center of North Puget Sound to WSU: this item is the same as our requested transfer amount.
- Employer contributions for employee health insurance (PEBB): monthly contribution rates for employees will move to \$703 per employee, from the current \$763.
- Skagit Valley College's Lewis Hall maintenance and operations funding request was not funded.
- Audit:
 - All higher education institutions' tuition and local fee accounts are subject to a third-party audit. Due January 2015, the cost of the audit is to be recovered from the institutions of higher education.

Capital

The Senate proposed capital supplemental budget impacts community and technical colleges in the following ways:

- Centralia College: the remainder of the design is funded.
- Lower Columbia College: authorizes the two alternatively financed projects as requested.
- Olympic College Instruction Center is not funded.

In addition, the Senate proposal provides new building fee funding for Minor Program Improvements of \$2,139,000. As you'll recall in last year's budget, 85 percent of the CTC request for Minor Program Improvements was funded; this brings the funding level up to 95 percent of the CTC biennial request.

[Link to additional Senate operating and capital budget details.](#)

House

The House released their operating and capital budget proposals on Wednesday, Feb. 26. Similar to the Senate, the House took a modest approach to their supplemental budget proposals.

Operating

More than half of the House operating budget proposal is needed to cover additional maintenance level expenditures in caseload driven programs like the Senate (e.g. K-12, Correctional Facility inmates, and Medicaid recipients). The House operating budget proposes some additional funding for its policy priorities:

- \$410,000 for the MESA Community College Program.
- Tuition: no higher education institution may increase tuition levels for fiscal year 2015.
- \$12.3 million for the College Bound Program.
- Paraeducator development: funding is provided to implement the

requirements under [Substitute House Bill 2365](#).

- Transfer University Center of North Puget Sound to WSU: this item is the same as our requested transfer amount.
- \$300,000 in planning funding for a health care training center at the Pacific Medical Center.
- \$350,000 for the Year Up pilot project to 'imbed' this model within the CTC system.
- Employer contributions for employee health insurance (PEBB): monthly contribution rates for employees will move to \$658 per employee, from the current \$763.
- Skagit Valley College's Lewis Hall maintenance and operations funding request was not funded.

Capital

Similar to the Senate capital budget proposal, the House proposed capital supplemental budget impacts community and technical colleges in the following ways:

- Centralia College: the remainder of the design is funded.
- Lower Columbia College: authorizes the two alternatively financed projects as requested.
- Olympic College Instruction Center is not funded.

[Link to additional House operating and capital budget details.](#)

Education in prison topic of Senate Hearing

A measure to allow higher education in prisons received public testimony on Tuesday, Feb. 25 before the **Senate Human Services & Corrections Committee**.

[2SHB 2486](#) sought to allow the Department of Corrections to use existing state funds for college-level courses along with the usual basic skills, vocational, and high school diploma or equivalent programs. The department would have set admission criteria and issued a report to the Legislature by December 2014.

Gina McConnell, a Longview Community College student and 11-year prison inmate, shared how prison education turned her life around.

"I believed my destiny was to die a statistic and drug addict. It wasn't until some of the programs that were offered through the Department of Corrections that I realized that I actually had some potential," McConnell said. "I am now just finishing up my AA degree in hopes of earning my bachelor's at WSU... We [prisoners] punish ourselves. We also realize that we don't want to come back, that we want to do something different, and education is the key. We do have importance."

Stephanie Delaney, Seattle Central Community College dean of extended learning, said the measure would allow the college to enroll more inmates in correspondence courses.

Pamela Transue, Tacoma Community College president, pointed out

that prison education saves money and reduces recidivism. “Prison inmates who participate in education programs have a 43 percent lower recidivism rate than those who do not participate,” Transue said, citing a Rand Corporation study. “When you consider the per-person cost of incarceration that makes prison education a great investment.”

Marty Brown, SBCTC executive director, also spoke in favor of the measure.

[Link to testimony \(begins at 1:13:40\).](#)

Construction Center of Excellence represented at work session

Shana Peschek, Construction Center of Excellence director, joined a work session on foreign direct investments before the Senate Trade and Economic Development Committee on Tuesday, Feb. 25.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges created centers of excellence to fill workforce needs in specific sectors with industry leaders, she said. Economic initiatives in the construction sector include:

- Developing a “leadership for the trades” certificate that will teach in-demand supervisory skills. The certificate will be “stackable,” meaning it will build toward an associate degree that can then lead into an applied bachelor’s degree in applied management or applied sustainable building. Several community and technical colleges are working to develop the applied bachelor’s degrees.
- Partnering with Pacific Northwest Economic Region, British Columbia Resource Training Organization, and Washington State Labor and Industries to put on a regional Pacific Northwest Apprenticeship Education Conference April 14-15.
- Bringing free membership in the United States Green Building Council to all 34 community and technical colleges. Students in any field – not just construction -- can get free and reduced-price study materials and take the LEED green associate exam.

[Link to testimony \(begins at 1:32:08\).](#)

MESA community college program

The [Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement \(MESA\) Community College Program](#) (MCCP) was highlighted at a **House Higher Education Committee** work session on Tuesday, Feb. 25. MESA provides under-represented students academic and transfer-support services to help them excel and ultimately attain four-year degrees in science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) fields. Started in California, the program has successfully been replicated in over a dozen states.

Six colleges — **Columbia Basin College, Edmonds Community College, Highline Community College, Olympic College, Seattle Central Community College, Yakima Valley Community College** — have participated in a pilot project for the past five years partly funded

through a National Science Foundation grant. The grant expires June 30, 2015.

The House Appropriation Committee's 2014 supplemental budget proposal includes \$410,000, one year's worth of funding to continue the MCCP pilot programs at the six colleges.

James Dorsey, Washington MESA executive director explained how the dedicated support and services — especially the sense of community and connection — help students excel. Services include student orientation, advising, dedicated study centers, STEM career exploration and transfer assistance.

Jeff Wagnitz, Highline Community College vice president of academic affairs, said MESA was a great match for Highline. With 70 percent students of color, the college serves one of the most diverse communities in the state. And Highline has a long academic tradition of STEM programs and resources, including engineering and robotics, a math resource center, computer information systems and cyber-security programs, chemistry and physics labs, science seminars, and the Marine Science and Technology (MaST) Center.

Chera Amlag, Highline Community College MESA director, gave an overview of the program's academic supports, including Academic Excellence Workshops, the STEM Gateway Course, collaboration with math resource and tutoring centers, individual and group study, success seminars, scholarship, internship, and undergraduate research resources.

Kalani Plunkett, Highline MCCP electrical engineering student, said, "When I told my friends and family that I wanted to be an electrical engineer, they laughed at me."

But thanks to MCCP at Highline, he gained study skills needed to succeed and connected with university engineering programs and working professionals.

"MESA has a pay it forward philosophy," Plunkett explained. He eventually became a physics, calculus, and chemistry tutor himself, reaching back to help other students in the same way he'd been helped. He's been accepted into the engineering programs at Washington State University and University of Michigan.

Lydia Smith, Highline MCCP second year nursing student, was in the military and had been out of school for 13 years. She said the value of MESA connections goes well beyond academic support, with opportunities for scholarships, internships, and friendship.

"MESA is more than just a place to study," she said. "It's a community and family that gives us support to keep each other from falling through the cracks."

A coveted research internship at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory has sparked Smith's goal to earn a PhD in research and development of bacteriophages (viruses that infect and replicate within bacteria) as antibiotics.

[Link to testimony \(begins at 56:06\).](#)

Innovations in pre-college education

Pre-college education isn't what it used to be: Today's students are moving faster through pre-college courses and into degrees and certificates thanks to mold-breaking strategies at community and technical colleges. That was the message delivered to the **House Higher Education Committee** during a work session on Wednesday, Feb. 26.

Jan Yoshiwara, SBCTC Education Services deputy executive director, set the stage with facts about pre-college education (also known as "remedial" education).

- In 2012-13, pre-college courses were 9 percent of all state-supported full-time equivalent enrollments (FTEs). Nearly 71,000 students enrolled in pre-college courses that year.
- Most precollege students take eight credits of pre-college courses, which equates to one or two courses. The vast majority of the precollege students – 72 percent – are enrolled in math.
- More than half (55 percent) are older students well out of high school. Most 25-years-old and older.
- Lower-income students are most likely to need pre-college courses.

Yoshiwara pointed to several successful strategies, among them:

- Shifting the focus from screening students **out of** college-level courses, to screening them **into** the appropriate level. Colleges no longer use placement tests as sentries that stand in the way of college-level classes, but as ushers into the appropriate courses. Students are also given many other options to show they are college-ready, such as transcripts and past performance.
- Teaching math in the context of daily life and jobs, which means focusing on statistics and not just calculus.
- Condensing the number of pre-college courses students must take and allowing them to move forward based on competency rather than seat time. This saves students time and tuition money and reduces the possibility of content repetition.
- Offering "emporium" classes – a model where students learn general content online and then attend learning resource centers to master math with the help of instructors and tutors.

Statway and "productive persistence"

Wendy Rockhill, Seattle Central dean for science and mathematics, said Seattle Central and South Seattle community colleges offer the highly successful "Statway" math course in partnership with the Carnegie Foundation.

Statway combines pre-college math and college-level statistics so students complete both in a shorter period of time. Liberal arts (non-STEM) majors learn statistics in real-world contexts rather than being directed toward calculus, which is often the biggest hurdle and

unnecessary for many degrees.

“Students [learn] math with problems that make sense,” she said. “No talking about frogs in a pond and how many you can get, but what do they read in the newspaper: What do they hear on the news?”

Seattle Central’s emporium model has students learn general content online at their own pace and then cement their understanding in-class with instructors and tutors.

Lawrence Morales, Seattle Central math faculty member, said the college is pursuing two “high leverage” techniques to improve students’ success: encouraging “productive persistence” so perseverance actually leads to accomplishment, and a “growth mindset” that believes achievement is possible.

An innovative emporium model

Bob Mohrbacher, Big Bend Community College vice president of instruction and student services, shed light on a math emporium project that has boosted pre-college math completion rates from 48 percent to 75 percent.

Students gather in a special lab that holds up to 60 and watch videos to learn course content. They complete problems on computers with immediate feedback on their understanding of a concept. Similar to a video game, they must show they are proficient at a certain topic before they are unlocked and allowed to move onto the next topic. Instructors and tutors come to the aid of students who get stuck. Students are given a minimum “pace” calendar that pushes them forward, but they can go even faster if they’ve mastered the concepts.

Clearing the plate: what’s really needed?

Pierce College math faculty members **David Lippman** and **Chris Willett** described how Pierce College “cleared the plate” as it redesigned pre-college math programs. A team of instructors worked backwards, determining what level of math is actually needed in college-level classes and then providing targeted instruction to meet the need. The idea, they said, was to “prepare rather than remediate.”

“We had a group of 12 people get together and just start listing [precollege] topics, justifying them based on where they show up in the college-level sequence, and we came to the very early conclusion that students going into precalculus need very different preparation than those students going into statistics [for liberal arts majors].”

Pierce created two pre-college math pathways—one aimed toward precalculus and the other toward statistics. Students take a set of core classes, some in a self-paced emporium model, before embarking on their paths.

[Link to testimony \(begins at 20:15\).](#)

Bills

Gov. Inslee signed the WA Dream/Real Hope Act into law on Wednesday, Feb. 26 in front of a crowd of legislators, students, and

citizens.

Prime-sponsored by **Sen. Barbara Bailey**, R-Oak Harbor, [SB 6523](#) allows undocumented students to be eligible for state financial aid. The bill also includes \$5 million in new funding for the State Need Grant financial aid program.



[Link to bill signing.](#)

In addition, a number of bills impacting CTCs are still in play after Friday's policy committee cutoff:

- [EHB 2108](#): concerning hearing instrument fitters/dispensers (Senate Rules).
- [E2SHB 2383](#): integrating career and college readiness standards into K-12 and higher education policies and practices (Senate Ways and Means).
- [HB 2398](#): permitting community colleges that confer applied baccalaureate degrees to confer honorary bachelor of applied science degrees (Senate Rules).
- [ESHB 2546](#): decodifying, expiring, and making technical clarifications to higher education provisions (Senate Rules).
- [SHB 2613](#): creating efficiencies for institutions of higher education (Senate Ways and Means).
- [ESHB 2626](#): concerning statewide educational attainment goals (Senate Rules).
- [SSB 6362](#): creating efficiencies for institutions of higher education (House Rules).
- [SSB 5969](#): awarding academic credit for prior military training (House TBD).
- [SSB 6129](#): concerning paraeducator development (House TBD).
- [HB 2285](#): requiring a review of institution of higher education policies related to dual credit coursework (Senate Rules).

[Link to the Bill Watch List and additional bill information.](#)

Session cutoff dates

Mandated [cutoff dates](#) determine which bills will continue through the legislative process. Here is the next round of important session cutoff dates fast approaching:

- **March 3: fiscal committee cutoff** – bills in opposite house fiscal committees must receive and hearing and be passed.
- **March 7: opposite house cutoff (5 p.m.)** – bills in the opposite chamber must be passed by 5 p.m.
- **March 13: Sine Die** – last day of the regular session.

Session resources

SBCTC Government Relations provides updated legislative resources throughout session:

- The [Bill Watch List](#) – important bills being considered that may have significant impact on the CTC system.
- The [Bill Status Report](#) – all bills being tracked by SBCTC staff during session.
- The [Weekly Hearing Schedule](#) – schedule of weekly hearings where CTCs are testifying and/or monitoring bills.
- [Legislator information](#) – contact information for legislators organized by college district, committee, caucus, etc.

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