

HIGHER ED BILLS PASSED IN THE 2012 SESSION

HB 4002: Creating the Forestry Education Council. Members of the forestry industry have requested this bill to help bring stability to the School of Forestry at OSU, a program that is considered among the best in the nation, but which is continually at risk of underfunding. The industry is committed to increasing their self-assessments in order to fund a new subaccount in Treasury for the sole purpose of supporting current, new, and innovative programs at the School. The model for this public/private partnership is the highly successful Engineering and Technology Industry Council (ETIC).

Passed House 60-0

Passed Senate 30-0

HB 4056: Advancing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education in Oregon. One of the big challenges that we face as a state is too few college students being prepared to major in these disciplines, or to stay with them all the way to graduation. As a result, good-paying jobs are going unfilled or going to non-Oregonians. This bill will help focus attention and resources on this problem in an effort led by a taskforce/roundtable of business and industry representatives, educators, students, legislators, and representatives of organizations pursuing mentorships, internships, and partnerships. The bill allows staff support to come from advocacy organizations. The Oregon Business Council has received a grant from Intel that will allow the roundtable to do its work at no cost to the state.

Passed House 60-0

Passed Senate 28-1-1

HB 4057: Delays date by which State Boards of Higher Education must make report to Legislative Assembly on higher education employee retirement options and benefit plans. House Bill 4057 as introduced would have added categories of employees to the reports submitted annually by institutions of higher education on staffing ratios. The measure was gutted and stuffed with provisions delaying an Oregon University System report to the Legislature on retirement plan options from October 1 of 2012 to December 1 of 2012.

Passed House 55-0-3-

Passed Senate 30-0

HB 4058: This is the Affordable Textbook Act, an update of a bill that was submitted last session to substantial support, but which failed at the end due to timing. Its goal is to help dramatically bring down the cost of textbooks for Oregon's students. Other states are beginning to explore ways of making textbooks more affordable by encouraging the use of online resources, open-source textbooks, rentals, bulk licenses, bulk purchases, and other new technologies and practices, and so should Oregon. The bill directs the new Higher Education Coordinating Commission to assemble a group of faculty, students, bookstore managers, and other professionals to recommend practices that could be extended statewide. The effort will be supported by the Oregon Student Association, Oregon Community Colleges Association, AFT-Oregon, OEA, and AAUP, along with

commitments from individual colleges and universities, so that there will be minimal or no cost to the state.

Passed House 60-0

Passed Senate 28-1-1

HB 4059: Western Governors University and Prior Learning Assessments This bill will extend outreach to non-traditional students by directing the new Higher Education Coordinating Commission to explore a partnership with WGU (the nonprofit, proficiency-based, online university that was created by 19 governors in the mid-1990s) and extend the use of credit for high-quality prior learning assessments, freeing qualified students from having to take courses that they don't need, in subjects where they have already received training through the military, industry training, or education in their countries of origin. If they don't need the courses, they shouldn't have to pay for them, nor should the state. We see this bill as a key strategy for helping us get to the 40/40/20 goal.

Passed House 60-0

Passed Senate 29-0-1

HB 4061: Special Committee on Higher Education Governance. This bill will bring together eight House and Senate members, along with two representatives from the Oregon Education Investment Board, to address the question of institutional boards for the state's universities, as well as the relationship of the universities to the State Board of Higher Education and the colleges and universities to the new Higher Education Coordinating Commission. It assumes that universities that desire local boards should be allowed to have them, but the questions of who should sit on such boards, who appoints them, and what their specific authorities are, must be addressed with the utmost care, so as to mitigate any potential harm to the other universities and maintain the goals of access and affordability for all Oregonians. The Special Committee will use a very open, transparent, and deliberative process, consulting with national experts and all the university presidents, which will culminate in a recommendation of the right models for Oregon. The first draft of its legislative recommendations will be due in August, and the final draft due in November.

Passed House 43-13-4

Passed Senate 23-4-3

SB 1538: SB 1538 clarifies and updates portions of SB 242, which was passed last session, specifically regarding the new Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) that will commence on July 1, 2012. The bill clarifies that the HECC will be doing strategic planning and coordination for the TOTALITY of higher education in this state, public and private. It will create a big table that includes public universities and community colleges, the independent non-profit colleges and universities, the for-profit colleges and universities, and the workforce investment boards. Its initial workplan will include making it easier for students transfer from college to university, reducing textbook costs (see HB 4158), improving the use of prior learning assessments (see HB 4159), and extending higher education to the rural parts of the state.

Passed Senate 30-0

Passed House 58-0-2

SB 1581: SB 1581 expands on SB 909 from last session, elaborating on the work of the new Oregon Education Investment Board, the P-20 board overseeing state funding of all of education from Pre-K through graduate school. The OEIB is a 12-member board with 7 educators among its Governor-appointed members. SB 1581, one of Governor Kitzhaber's priorities for this session, defines the position of Chief Education Officer, overseeing the entire continuum of public education in this state. It also lays out the creation of "achievement compacts" between the state and individual school districts, community colleges and universities, based on the goals of "completion," "quality," and "connections."

Passed Senate 23-6-1

Passed House 52-8