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## Higher Education Committee

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### HB 1439

**Brief Description:** Establishing an online alternative credit model at Central Washington University.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Sawyer, Zeiger, Reykdal, Gregerson, Manweller and Tarleton.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Central Washington University (Central) to establish and host an online alternative credit model for baccalaureate degree attainment designed for a variety of students with untraditional backgrounds.
- Requires Central to consult with community, business, and other K-20 education providers to identify and develop needed programs and a flexible delivery model that is different from the traditional instructional model.
- Requires Central to develop an online Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education as a part of the model.

**Hearing Date:** 2/4/15

**Staff:** Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

#### **Background:**

##### Traditional and Alternative Educational Models.

The traditional model for higher education delivery involves progression towards a degree by accumulating a prescribed number of time-based units, often referred to as "credit-hours." Some innovations in higher education delivery are now basing their model on measuring what a student knows and is able to do, instead of how long a student is in class or where the learning takes place. This alternative approach is often termed "competency-based education." Some forms of competency-based assessments that award credit have been employed for over a decade at institutions of higher education in Washington, including assessments of prior learning, challenge exams, and national tests such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and the College Level Examination Program (CLEP).

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

State law enacted in 2011 directs the Washington Student Achievement Council to:

- recognize and endorse online, competency-based education as an important component of Washington's higher education system;
- eliminate unnecessary barriers to the delivery of online competency-based education; and
- work with Western Governors University - Washington to integrate its academic programs and services into Washington's higher education policy and strategy.

#### Central Washington University (Central).

Central is a state regional university with its main campus located in Ellensburg, Washington. Central also has seven university center locations in addition to their resident campus in Ellensburg and offers more than 150 majors. In 2014-15, Central enrolled 10,139 students, and the university graduates about 3,000 students each year. The university also offers online programs for certificates, minor, undergraduate, and graduate degrees. Central has eight kinds of online bachelor degrees.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

Central Washington University (Central) is in charge of hosting the online alternative credit model that awards degrees. The online alternative credit model is developed to target the following kinds of students:

- early learning providers;
- veterans returning to civilian life;
- transfer;
- high school students who are college bound;
- those with academic credits already earned;
- those who have completed education and training by an employer;
- those with knowledge and work experience from a job or internship; and
- individuals with some postsecondary credits, but who have circumstances that prevent postsecondary completion in a traditional setting.

To develop the model, Central must communicate with local community and business leaders to identify, launch, and deliver needed curricula and programs. Central must also evaluate and offer credit for student learning already acquired outside of academic settings and develop a delivery model that provides for flexibility for working students rather than the traditional instructional model. Central must also coordinate with other K-20 education providers and identify strategies to enhance baccalaureate aspirations in underserved communities.

Central must consult with their Department of Early Learning in developing programs and targeting students who are early learning providers. As a part of the online alternative credit model, Central must develop and launch a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education.

Central must report to the higher education committees of the legislature by December 1 of each year regarding the progress of the online alternative credit model and recommendations for improvement or expansion.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.