

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1439

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Higher Education, March 24, 2015

**Title:** An act relating to an online alternative credit model at Central Washington University.

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

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Sawyer, Zeiger, Reykdal, Gregerson, Manweller and Tarleton).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/05/15, 79-19.

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education: 3/24/15 [DP-WM].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chair; Kohl-Welles, Ranking Minority Member; Becker, Frockt, Lias and Miloscia.

**Staff:** Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

**Background:** In the 2013 operating budget, the Legislature directed Central Washington University (CWU) to develop a plan by December 1, 2013, to create an online degree-granting entity that awards degrees based on an alternative credit model.

CWU proposed the development of an Online Alternative Credit Model to streamline and widen the baccalaureate-degree education pipeline. CWU proposed the following five strategies:

- enable all state high school students to earn credits toward university and high school graduation simultaneously;
- award individuals credit for what they know or are able to do;
- enable students to complete degrees at their own pace;
- customize degree programs to meet employer needs; and
- promote early childhood education to ensure the college students of tomorrow get a good start in education.

CWU currently offers online eight bachelor degree and seven master's degree programs.

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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.*

**Summary of Bill:** CWU must host an online alternative credit model (model) that awards degrees. The model is intended to position the state to meet baccalaureate degree production goals and serve nontraditional students who have some postsecondary academic credits or life experience that can count toward a degree.

Students targeted for enrollment are early learning providers. Students encouraged to enroll include veterans returning to civilian life; transfer students; college bound high school students; students who earned dual credit in high school; individuals who have completed their employer's education and training programs; and individuals who have some postsecondary academic credit, but are unable to complete in a traditional baccalaureate setting.

In order to develop the model, CWU must:

- communicate with community and business leaders to identify and deliver needed programs;
- develop and launch curricula and programs in response to business and student needs;
- evaluate and offer credit for learning acquired outside of academic settings;
- develop a delivery system that provides flexibility for working students;
- coordinate with other K–20 education providers; and
- identify strategies to enhance baccalaureate aspirations in underserved communities.

CWU must develop and launch a Bachelor of Arts in early childhood education using the model. CWU must consult with the Department of Early Learning to target students who are early learning providers and to develop programs.

By December 1, CWU must report annually to the Legislature on the progress in implementing the model and recommendations for improvement or expansion.

The act is null and void, unless specific funding for the purposes of this act is provided in the budget.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: We need to challenge higher education system to retool how we award degrees and do it more cheaply. This is about degree efficiency. The bill launches off CWU's expertise in education. The state has a renewed and profound interest in early learning. Far too many early learning providers do not have access to the education they need to complete their degrees. An online BA in education carries forward the faculty's commitment to help students accomplish what they need to succeed.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Sawyer; Alex Hur, Service Employees International Union 925; Jim Huckabay, Faculty Legislative representative, CWU; Steve DuPont, CWU.

**Persons Signed in to Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.