

WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §18B-2B-1

§18B-2B-1. Legislative findings; intent; purpose.

(a) The Legislature hereby finds that:

(1) The goals, objectives and purposes contained in enrolled Senate Bill No. 653, passed during the two thousand regular legislative session, reflected the research findings available to the Legislature at the time; since then, however, additional research indicates that, while enrolled Senate Bill No. 653 moves in the appropriate direction of independent accreditation and meeting essential conditions for public community and technical colleges, the legislation does not take the final steps that are considered to be necessary by independent researchers. This position is clearly demonstrated by the recent research findings and recommendations cited below:

(A) "West Virginia: A Vision Shared! Economic Development: A Plan for West Virginia's Future", hereinafter cited in this article and article two-c of this chapter as the Market Street Report, is a research document commissioned by the West Virginia council for community and economic development to assess the economic competitiveness of the state. The report makes a number of findings and recommendations important to public community and technical college education:

(i) The state needs to adopt and implement a specific focus on technical education; in particular, it needs to move away from the traditionally isolated and limited vocational programming towards a systematic approach of teaching technical skills that employers need today;

(ii) The state needs to establish a strong technical education system that is separate from the university system and is responsive to the needs of business throughout the state;

(iii) The state needs to establish as a high-level priority the training and retraining of its working-age adults to help them acquire and maintain the competitive skills they need to succeed in today's economy; and

(iv) The state needs to emphasize the role of lifelong learning as a critical piece of its overall education and training system if the state is to make the transition to the new economy.

(B) The Report to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability, hereinafter cited in this article and article two-c as the McClenney Report, is a study required by provisions of enrolled Senate Bill No. 653 and conducted by Dr. Kay McClenney. The research found that:

(i) The participation rate in West Virginia community and technical college education is substantially lower than will be necessary if the state is to achieve its goals for economic

development and prosperity for its citizens;

(ii) The low visibility of the component community and technical colleges effectively restricts access for the West Virginians who most need encouragement to participate in post-secondary education and training;

(iii) It is not clear that the parent institutions of the component community colleges actually embrace the community college mission;

(iv) The community and technical college developmental education programs are underserving by far the evident needs of the population, especially as that service relates to nontraditional students;

(v) Adults over age twenty-five are under represented in the community and technical college student populations;

(vi) Technical education program development and enrollment are not at the levels necessary to serve the needs of the state;

(vii) Independent accreditation and the essential conditions required by enrolled Senate Bill No. 653 are necessary, but not sufficient alone to provide a strong enough tool to accomplish the state's goal to strengthen community and technical college education;

(viii) The community and technical college will not be able to operate optimally until they move out of the shadow of their "parent" institutions, with the flexibility and autonomy to establish a uniquely community college identity, culture, program mix, outreach capacity and approach to teaching and learning;

(ix) The development of stronger support mechanisms for the community and technical colleges should be an extension of the ongoing step-by-step process for achieving the goals for post secondary education in the state;

(x) Building on the foundations laid in enrolled committee substitute for Senate Bill No. 547 and enrolled Senate Bill No. 653, the Legislature should now establish the further systemic and policy supports that are needed for the community and technical college to thrive, perform and meet state goals;

(xi) Implementation will necessarily be incremental;

(xii) The consistent focus at the state level should be on the statewide mission of raising educational attainment, increasing adult literacy, promoting workforce and economic development and ensuring access to advanced education for the citizens of West Virginia;

(xiii) The solution must ensure a high degree of flexibility and autonomy at the local level, preserving the ability of community and technical colleges to respond rapidly and effectively to local needs;

(xiv) At the same time, there is serious and recognized need for statewide leadership, coordination and support for the work of the community and technical colleges and the advocacy for the public priorities that these institutions are charged to address;

and therefore

(xv) The state needs to create a community college support capacity at the state level that will bring leadership, coordination, technical support, advocacy and critical mass to a statewide network of local community and technical college campuses.

(C) The Report and Recommendations of the Implementation Board to the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, hereinafter cited in this article and article two-c of this chapter as the Implementation Board Report, is a study required by enrolled Senate Bill No. 653 to determine the most effective and efficient method to deliver community and technical college services in the former responsibility areas of Marshall university, West Virginia state college and West Virginia University institute of technology. The Implementation Board Report states its goals and vision for community and technical college education in the advantage valley region as one of a dynamic, vital and vibrant community college network which offers:

(i) Affordable, quality training and education to students;

(ii) Represents a recognized path of choice to success in the knowledge economy for thousands of West Virginians; and

(iii) Provides West Virginia businesses with the highly skilled workforce necessary to meet their evolving needs in the global knowledge economy.

(D) In furtherance of their goals, the Implementation Board Report recommended formation of the advantage valley community college network:

(i) To enhance economic development through coordinated leadership and a delivery system for education and training initiatives;

(ii) To provide accountability through a separate compact and through independent accreditation of each of the affected community and technical colleges; and

(iii) To enhance education opportunities for the citizens of the area and assist in overcoming the barrier of accessibility in higher education.

(b) Based on the recent research cited above, the Legislature further finds that:

(1) The recommendations of the Market Street Report clearly point out the shortcomings of the state's current approach to providing post-secondary education and programs and show the consequences of failing to change appropriately;

(2) The research, findings, vision and goals set forth in the McClenney Report and the Implementation Board Report are noteworthy and, although written, in part, to address specific institutions, have broad application statewide for community and technical colleges;

(3) The research shows that:

(A) A need exists to enhance community and technical college education in West Virginia through the delivery of services that meet the goals of this chapter and that are delivered pursuant to the process for meeting the essential conditions established in section three, article three-c of this chapter;

(B) A need exists for statewide leadership, coordination and support for the work of the community and technical colleges and for advocacy for the public priorities these institutions are charged to address;

(C) Community and technical colleges need to be efficient, avoiding duplication and the burden of bureaucracy while recognizing fiscal realities;

(D) Community and technical colleges need a high degree of flexibility and local autonomy to preserve and expand their ability to respond rapidly and effectively to local or regional needs;

(E) Community and technical colleges need state-level support and leadership that recognize differences among regions of the state and among institutions and accept the reality that institutions are at different stages in their development and have different challenges and capabilities;

(F) Clear benchmarks and regular monitoring are required to assess the progress of community and technical colleges toward meeting the established goals and for meeting the essential conditions, including independent accreditation, established in this chapter;

(G) Implementation will necessarily be incremental;

(4) Certain acts to streamline accountability, to make maximum use of existing assets to meet new demands and target funding to initiatives designed to enhance and reorient existing capacity and to provide incentives for brokering and collaboration require that the role of the joint commission for vocational-technical- occupational education be reexamined.

(c) Legislative intent. -- The intent of the Legislature in enacting this article is to address the research findings cited above by reconstituting the joint commission for vocational-technical-occupational education as the West Virginia council for community and technical college education in order to reorient the mission, role and responsibilities consistent with and supportive of the mission, role and responsibilities of the commission, the goals for post-secondary education and accountability for assisting the public community and technical colleges, branches, centers, regional centers and other delivery sites with a community and technical college mission in achieving the state's public policy agenda.

(d) Purpose. -- The purpose of this article is to provide for the development of a leadership and support mechanism for the community and technical colleges, branches, centers, regional centers and other delivery sites with a community and technical college mission to assist them in meeting the essential conditions and in the step-by-step implementation process for achieving the goals for community and technical college education as provided for in article three-c of this chapter and to promote coordination and collaboration among secondary and post-secondary vocational- technical-occupational and adult basic education programs as provided for in this chapter and chapter eighteen of this code. The focus of this leadership and support mechanism is to encourage development of a statewide mission to raise education attainment, increase adult literacy, promote workforce and economic development and ensure access to secondary and post-secondary education for the citizens of the state while maintaining the local autonomy and flexibility necessary to the success of community and technical education.