

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH  
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



**PA 11-70—sSB 858**

*Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee*

**AN ACT CONCERNING THE KIRKLYN M. KERR PROGRAM, A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, CHEFA, THE TRACKING OF UNIQUE IDENTIFIERS BY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL REVISIONS TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION STATUTES**

**SUMMARY:** This act (1) modifies the requirements of the strategic master plan for higher education required by existing law; (2) renames the Blue Ribbon Commission originally formed to develop and implement the plan as the Planning Commission for Higher Education; (3) specifies that the commission must develop the plan and ensure its implementation, rather than develop and implement it as under prior law; and (4) restates and expands some existing plan requirements while eliminating others.

Additionally, the act eliminates the repayment requirements of the Department of Higher Education's (DHE) Kirklyn M. Kerr veterinary medicine grant program for in-state residents enrolled in an accredited veterinary graduate school. Under prior law, a student in the program had to either work as a veterinarian in Connecticut for a five-year period beginning no later than six months after graduation or repay some or all of his or her award. The act also eliminates the statutory grant limits, which were up to \$20,000 per year and \$80,000 for a four-year period.

The act allows the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) to issue bonds, notes, or other obligations that may be eligible for (1) tax credits or exemptions or payments from the federal government or (2) any other desired federal income tax treatment.

The act also requires the Department of Education to require school districts to include unique identifiers or state-assigned student identifiers on student transcripts. Under existing law, such identifiers are assigned to all students tracked by the Early Childhood Information System. The act requires DHE to require public and independent higher education institutions receiving state funding to track such identifiers for all in-state students enrolled at the institution until the student graduates or is no longer enrolled.

Lastly, the act makes technical changes to the higher education statutes.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** (1) Upon passage for the provisions concerning the strategic plan and CHEFA bonds, (2) July 1, 2011 for the Kerr program, (3) August 31, 2011 for the unique identifiers, and (4) October 1, 2011 for the technical changes.

**STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN REQUIREMENTS**

## OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

The act restates existing requirements in the strategic master plan concerning degree attainment, the number of people entering the workforce, and the achievement gap. It requires the plan to establish numerical goals for 2015 and 2020 that (1) eliminate the postsecondary achievement gap between minority students and the general student population and (2) increase the number of people who (a) earn a bachelor degree, associate degree, or certificate; (b) complete coursework at community colleges; and (c) enter the state's workforce. The plan must also provide specific strategies for meeting these goals and consider the impact of education trends on higher education in Connecticut.

The act expands the existing requirement for the commission to examine higher education funding policies. It requires the commission to examine and make recommendations concerning:

1. the alignment of funding policies and practices with certain statutory goals, including an evaluation of the use of strategic and performance-based incentive funding, and
2. transparent and thorough annual reporting by the constituent units to the General Assembly and the public of their expenditures, staffing, state appropriation, personnel expenses and fringe benefits, capital improvement bonds, and state financial aid to students.

The act also allows the commission, when developing policies to measure retention and graduation rates, to consider graduation rates for students who transfer among constituent units or public higher education institutions.

The act eliminates a requirement for the strategic master plan to promote five overall goals for higher education in Connecticut. The goals relate to postsecondary access and opportunity, student achievement, economic competitiveness, and funding. Under the act, the strategic master plan addresses these issues without specifically promoting them as goals. The act also eliminates requirements for the plan to consider (1) the unique missions of each constituent unit and independent institution of higher education and (2) the report "New England 2020: A Forecast of Educational Attainment and its Implications for the Workforce of New England States."

### *Reporting Requirements*

The act requires the commission to submit (1) a preliminary report on the development of the strategic master plan by January 1, 2012 and (2) the plan by October 1, 2012. It allows the commission periodically to suggest changes to the goals as necessary and eliminates its January 1, 2021 termination date and outdated and redundant reporting requirements.

Additionally, it requires (1) annual, rather than biennial, reports on the plan's implementation and progress toward achieving the goals and (2) separate reports to the governor and legislature. Such reports must be submitted annually (1) beginning January 1, 2014, to various legislative committees and (2) beginning October 1, 2014, to the governor. Under prior law, a single report was submitted biennially.

OLR Tracking: TA:JR:VR:ts