
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 7162

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE COORDINATING COUNCIL.

SUMMARY

This bill creates the Connecticut Open Educational Resource (OER) Coordinating Council, as part of the executive branch, to establish an OER program to lower the cost of textbooks and course materials for certain courses at state higher education institutions. The bill requires the council to, among other things, identify high-impact courses for which OERs will be developed, and administer a review and approval process for the development of OERs.

Under the bill, the Office of Higher Education (OHE) executive director appoints the council's members, including the council statewide coordinator, who serves as the council chairperson. The chair must call the first meeting by October 1, 2019.

The bill requires the council, beginning by January 1, 2021, to annually report to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee on the number and percentage of high-impact courses for which OER's have been developed, among other things.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2019

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

The bill defines "open educational resource" as a college level resource made available on a website to be used by students, faculty, and the public on an unlimited basis at a lower cost than the marketing value of the printed textbook or other educational resource, including full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and other similar teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under

a creative commons attribution license that permits the free use and repurposing of such resources.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE COORDINATING COUNCIL

Council Membership and Procedure

The bill requires the OHE executive director to appoint to the council (1) a state-wide coordinator; (2) one faculty member, one administrator, and one staff member each from UConn, the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, and the independent higher education institutions; and (3) one student from any public or independent state higher education institution.

The bill requires all initial appointments to be made by September 1, 2019, and to expire on August 30, 2022, regardless of when the initial appointment was made. Succeeding appointees serve three-year terms that begin on the date of their appointment, and appointees may serve more than one term. The OHE executive director must fill any vacancies, and any vacancy occurring other than by expiration of term must be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term. The OHE administrative staff serves as the council administrative staff.

The council must meet quarterly, or as often as deemed necessary by a majority of its members. Under the bill, a majority of members constitutes a quorum for exercising the council's powers. The council members serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed for related reasonable and necessary expenses within the limits of available funds.

Council Duties

The bill requires the council to identify high-impact courses for which OERs will be developed, converted, or adopted. "High impact courses" are courses of instruction for which OERs would make a significant positive financial impact on the students taking the course due to the number of students taking the courses or the marketing value of the printed textbook or other educational resources required for such courses.

The council also must:

1. establish a competitive grants program for the faculty members of state higher education institutions for the development, conversion, or adoption of OERs for such courses, with council identified funds and within available appropriations;
2. accept, review, and approve grant applications, provided an approved faculty member must license such OER through a creative commons attribution license (i.e., a copyright crediting the author of a digital work product that allows for the free use and distribution of such product);
3. administer a standardized review and approval process for the development, conversion, or adoption of OERs;
4. establish a state-sponsored digital clearinghouse to function as a publicly accessible database for the collection, storage, and purchase of OERs; and
5. promote strategies for the production, use, and access of OERs.

The coordinator must collaborate with all higher education institutions to promote OERs and administer grants.

Report to Legislature

The bill requires the council to annually report beginning by January 1, 2021, to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee on the following:

1. the number and percentage of high-impact courses for which OERs have been developed;
2. the degree to which higher education institutions promote the use and access to OERs through the state-sponsored digital clearinghouse;
3. the amount of grants the council awarded, and the number of OERs grant recipients developed; and

4. its recommendations for any legislative changes necessary to develop OERs.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 15 Nay 7 (03/14/2019)