

SUBJECT: Requiring classrooms to be shared by public higher education institutions

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Branch, Castro, Berman, Cohen, D. Howard, Patrick, Rose

0 nays

2 absent — Alonzo, McCall

WITNESSES: None

DIGEST: HB 746 would require public higher education institutions, upon request, to make classrooms available to other public higher education institutions from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. during the week, as long as the classrooms were not scheduled for use by the institution, student organizations, or faculty. The classrooms would be used for teaching core curriculum or continuing education courses.

The host institution would be prohibited from charging for the use of a classroom as allowed by the bill.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2009.

SUPPORTERS SAY: The state currently lacks the classroom capacity to service all citizens who wish to seek advanced education. Whether it be for collegiate, technical, vocational, or continuing education, classroom space is lacking at all levels of post-secondary education. HB 746 would provide one remedy for this problem. It would allow schools to expand their educational offerings, allow access to core classes and sections that might otherwise be full or unavailable, expand opportunities for non-traditional students who have full-time day jobs, and provide more access to students than they otherwise might have at trade or technical schools.

Many municipal and regional community colleges must levy local taxes or undertake costly bond proposals in order to build enough classroom facilities to serve the educational demands of their communities. At the

same time, large numbers of prospective college students are being denied admission to state universities, with the lack of available classroom space often cited as a factor.

Currently, no core curriculum classes are offered at night, so there is no structured opportunity for students to take core classes after 6 p.m. Requiring the sharing of unused classrooms could be a solution to the immediate need for another top tier university, and could alleviate space concerns for students automatically admitted under the Top Ten Percent Law.

The bill would require visiting institutions be responsible for paying the instructor and materials fees to teach each course. The host institution only would be obligated to provide the classroom and ancillary equipment normally associated with the classroom, like desks, chairs, and computers. The needs and schedule of the host institution would hold precedent.

While it is possible that some marginal costs may be incurred by the host institution, including increased janitorial or utility costs, these expenses are trivial compared to constructing educational facilities.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 746 would have a major impact on institutions required to offer classroom space. While the use of existing facilities by other institutions may reduce the need for new or additional facilities, the bill would allow very little discretion for host institutions. The inability of the host institution to charge a fee is of great concern. Operating facilities without the ability to recover operating costs would place an unreasonable burden on the host facility.

Current law does not prohibit an institution from sharing its facilities, and this is already being done. Incentives for sharing might be a better alternative to mandating sharing in state law.

The bill would require a host institution make a room available on request, but would not remove the responsibility of the host institution to provide adequate parking, appropriate services like heating and air conditioning, lighting, sanitary and public safety services, and other essential services. Each of these has costs associated with it, and the host institution would be unable to recover fees to offset them.

Classrooms often have expensive equipment, like projectors and computers, and other equipment that could easily be damaged by those not familiar with their appropriate use. Because the bill offers no ability for the host institution to charge a fee, any damages would have to be absorbed by the host institution.