

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2011**

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HOUSE BILL 1089

Short Title: Study Online Higher Education. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative K. Alexander (Primary Sponsor).
For a complete list of Sponsors, see Bill Information on the NCGA Web Site.

Referred to: Education.

May 24, 2012

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE STUDY COMMISSION ON
ONLINE HIGHER EDUCATION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Commission established. – There is established the Joint Legislative Study Commission on Online Higher Education. The purpose of the Commission is to study the feasibility of implementing an analogue tuition rate and an online education scheme among the constituent institutions of the University System and the State's community colleges that is similar to the Western Governors University. Western Governors University is a nonprofit online university founded by the governors of 19 states that offers competency-based degree programs.

SECTION 2. Membership. – The Commission shall consist of 13 members as follows:

- (1) Five members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (2) Five members of the Senate appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- (3) The President of The University of North Carolina or the President's designee.
- (4) The President of the North Carolina Community College System or the President's designee.
- (5) One member appointed by the Governor.

SECTION 3. Duties of commission. – The Commission shall study the current online education classes, courses of study, and certificate and degree programs offered by constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina and by the State's community colleges; the tuition and fees charged for those classes, courses of study, and programs; the data regarding the accessibility, affordability, and quality of those online offerings; and the student demand for online education. The Commission shall assess the feasibility of establishing an online university, similar to the Western Governors University, that would be a separately accredited institution but that would use and build on the base of online education offerings currently provided through the State's University System and community college system. The Commission shall evaluate the role that an online university may fill with regard to the accessibility, affordability, and quality of education for students. In its study, the Commission shall consider all of the following:



- 1 (1) The type of programs and degrees that may be offered by an online
2 university and whether degree programs should be competency-based or
3 credit hour-based.
- 4 (2) The students who would be served by an online university.
- 5 (3) The governance of an online university.
- 6 (4) Funding of an online university.
- 7 (5) The role, if any, of private corporations in funding and designing an online
8 university and the curriculum for the online university.
- 9 (6) The faculty required for an online university and the role of faculty at the
10 online university.
- 11 (7) Academic program governance.
- 12 (8) Admissions and general admission requirements.
- 13 (9) The type of college readiness assessment that may be appropriate.
- 14 (10) Central library and textbook requirements of students.
- 15 (11) Student affordability of education at an online university, including tuition,
16 fees, and textbook costs.
- 17 (12) Accreditation and recognition issues.
- 18 (13) Whether an online university, if established, should be limited to the
19 resources available through North Carolina's public institutions of higher
20 education or whether an online university should be expanded to include
21 other states and their public institutions of higher education and, if so, at
22 what rate and how this type of expansion should be implemented.
- 23 (14) Any other issues the Commission deems relevant to this study.

24 **SECTION 4.** Cochairs. – The Commission shall have two cochairs, one designated
25 by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and one designated by the President Pro
26 Tempore of the Senate from among their respective appointees. The Commission shall meet
27 upon the call of the cochairs.

28 **SECTION 5.** Vacancies. – Any vacancy on the Commission shall be filled by the
29 original appointing authority. A quorum of the Commission shall be a majority of its members.

30 **SECTION 6.** Expenses of members. – Members of the Commission shall receive
31 per diem, subsistence, and travel allowances in accordance with G.S. 120-3.1, 138-5, or 138-6,
32 as appropriate.

33 **SECTION 7.** Powers of commission. – The Commission, while in the discharge of
34 its official duties, may exercise all powers provided for under G.S. 120-19 and G.S. 120-19.1
35 through G.S. 120-19.4.

36 **SECTION 8.** Meeting location. – The Commission may meet in the Legislative
37 Building or the Legislative Office Building.

38 **SECTION 9.** Staff. – With approval of the Legislative Services Commission, the
39 Legislative Services Officer shall assign professional staff to assist the Commission in its work.
40 The House of Representatives' and the Senate's Directors of Legislative Assistants shall assign
41 clerical staff to the Commission, and the expenses relating to the clerical employees shall be
42 borne by the Commission.

43 **SECTION 10.** Professional, clerical, or consultant services. – The Commission
44 may contract for professional, clerical, or consultant services as provided by G.S. 120-32.02. If
45 the Commission hires a consultant, the consultant shall not be a State employee or a person
46 currently under contract with the State to provide services.

47 **SECTION 11.** Cooperation. – Any State department, agency, or institution shall
48 furnish the Commission with any information in their possession or available to them upon
49 request of the Commission.

50 **SECTION 12.** Report. – The Commission shall submit a final report to the General
51 Assembly, no later than the convening of the 2013 General Assembly. The final report shall

1 include the Commission's findings and recommendations under this study, including any
2 legislative proposals. The Commission shall terminate upon the filing of its final report or the
3 convening of the 2013 General Assembly, whichever is earlier.

4 **SECTION 13.** Appropriation. – There is appropriated from the General Fund to the
5 General Assembly the sum of seventy thousand dollars (\$70,000) for the 2012-2013 fiscal year
6 for the expenses of the Commission.

7 **SECTION 14.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2012.