

HB 758 -- DEGREES AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

SPONSOR: Cookson

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Higher Education by a vote of 12 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill provides that community colleges may grant baccalaureate degrees if authorized by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education. The West Plains Campus of Missouri State University and the State Technical College of Missouri may also offer baccalaureate degrees if authorized by the Coordinating Board. The University of Missouri is the only state college or university authorized to offer doctor of philosophy degrees or first-professional degrees.

The Coordinating Board may approve, not approve, or provisionally approve proposed new degree programs offered by state institutions of higher education. The Coordinating Board may authorize a degree program outside of an institution's coordinating board-approved mission only when certain requirements are met as described in the bill.

The board of regents of each state college and each state teachers college have authority to confer additional degrees when authorized by the Coordinating Board, in circumstances as described in the bill. An institution may be authorized to offer nonresearch doctoral degrees in allied health professions independently if collaboration with another institution would not increase the quality of the program. The boards of state colleges and state teachers colleges have the power and authority to confer degrees in engineering only in collaboration with the University of Missouri if the collaborative agreement is approved by the governing board of each institution. In such instance the University of Missouri will be the degree-granting institution. If the University of Missouri declines to collaborate, institutions may seek approval of the program with the Coordinating Board through the board's review process.

No state college or university may seek the land grant designation held by Lincoln University and the University of Missouri or the research designation currently held by the University of Missouri. This bill repeals provisions relating to Missouri Southern State University's ability to offer specific programs and degrees in collaboration with the University of Missouri and provisions granting authority to Missouri Southern State University and Missouri Western State University to offer master's level degree programs in accountancy.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that there may be a time where an institution needs to offer a degree to meet the local needs. Thus, a need for flexibility. The community colleges across the state are in the workforce development business. There is a need for this and they are in support. This is not a new phenomenon, a lot of other states already do this. This bill would allow community colleges to meet employer demand in their region. If they are going to meet that need they need another path forward other than just collaboration with other institutions. Good fences make good neighbors, this bill will make good fences but with gates.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Cookson; Zora Mulligan, Department of Higher Education; Missouri Community College Association; and Paul Wagner, Council on Public Higher Education (COPHE).

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

This bill is the same as SB 328 (2017).