

**First Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 25-0734.01 Alana Rosen x2606

HOUSE BILL 25-1186

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Martinez and Lukens,

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

(None),

House Committees
Education

Senate Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING EXPANDING WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN**
102 **HIGHER EDUCATION.**

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)

The bill creates the work-based learning consortium pilot program (pilot program) in the department of higher education (department). The purpose of the pilot program is to develop and expand the integration of work-based learning experiences for students enrolled in higher education.

On or before July 1, 2026, or within 90 days after the department

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
*Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.*

receives sufficient funding, the department shall convene a consortium consisting of a group of representatives from institutions of higher education to:

- Share best practices on improving access to quality work-based learning opportunities for students;
- Help participating institutions of higher education meet workforce needs in Colorado and connect academic learning with real-world experiences through career preparation and skill development for students; and
- Make recommendations to the general assembly and institutions of higher education on the best practices.

Subject to available appropriations, at the end of the 3-year pilot program, the consortium shall complete and submit a report to the education committees of the house of representatives and the senate, or their successor committees. The report must include:

- A description of the consortium's findings and recommendations;
- Details on the consortium's impacts on participating institutions of higher education and the effects of creating additional work-based learning activities on students, faculty, and employers; and
- Recommendations for statutory changes, financial resources, department policy changes, and institution of higher education policy changes necessary to improve successful work-based learning opportunities for students in institutions of higher education.

Funds appropriated to the commission on higher education (commission) may be used by the commission to cover the costs of work-based learning requirements for students who are required to complete credit-bearing work-based learning requirements to graduate from an institution of higher education.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly
3 finds and declares that:

4 (a) To ensure the economic vitality of Colorado, every industry
5 needs access to a skilled workforce and every Coloradan needs access to
6 sustainable employment;

7 (b) According to the 2024 Colorado workforce development

1 council's talent pipeline report, Colorado ranks fourth among states in
2 terms of its proportion of jobs that will require postsecondary education
3 beyond high school in 2031. Of all jobs in Colorado, 73% of jobs will
4 require some postsecondary education training beyond high school in
5 2031.

6 (c) Research has shown that work-based learning leads students
7 to develop essential skills, broadening a student's social capital and
8 leading to job offers;

9 (d) There is a strong connection between internships and
10 college-level employment after graduation. Controlling for factors,
11 including gender, race, ethnicity, and institutional characteristics,
12 graduates who have had at least one internship are 48.5% less likely to be
13 underemployed than graduates who did not have an internship.

14 (e) Inequities in who can participate in work-based learning
15 persist. Students who identify as women, Black, Hispanic, and
16 first-generation are underrepresented in paid internships and
17 overrepresented in unpaid internships.

18 (f) The 2 largest barriers for students participating in an internship
19 are the competing demands of college and existing work commitments;

20 (g) Incorporating project-based and work-based learning
21 opportunities into curriculum is one way to address competing demands
22 and to reduce inequities in a student's ability to participate in a
23 work-based learning experience;

24 (h) Currently, faculty must work independently to integrate
25 work-based learning into their curriculum and to develop partnerships
26 with employers, which creates a heavy burden for faculty and results in
27 an uneven inclusion of work-based learning across multiple subjects or

1 courses; and

2 (i) Colorado does not currently collect statewide data allowing the
3 state to examine the effect postsecondary work-based learning
4 experiences have on postsecondary post-graduate outcomes.

5 (2) The general assembly finds, therefore, that to meet the current
6 and future economic demands in Colorado, it is essential to eliminate
7 barriers and create more work-based learning opportunities so students
8 and employers can participate in and benefit from the postsecondary
9 work-based learning experiences.

10 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** article 82 to title
11 23 as follows:

12 **ARTICLE 82**

13 **Work-based Learning Consortium**

14 **Pilot Program**

15 **23-82-101. Definitions.** AS USED IN THIS ARTICLE 82, UNLESS THE
16 CONTEXT OTHERWISE REQUIRES:

17 (1) "COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE" MEANS A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO
18 SHARE A COMMON CONCERN, SET OF PROBLEMS, OR AN INTEREST IN A
19 TOPIC AND WHO COME TOGETHER TO FULFILL BOTH INDIVIDUAL AND
20 GROUP GOALS.

21 (2) "CONSORTIUM" MEANS THE WORK-BASED LEARNING
22 CONSORTIUM CONVENED PURSUANT TO SECTION 23-82-102 (2)(a).

23 (3) "DEPARTMENT" MEANS THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER
24 EDUCATION CREATED AND EXISTING PURSUANT TO SECTION 24-1-114.

25 (4) "INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION" MEANS:

26 (a) A STATE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION, AS DEFINED IN
27 SECTION 23-18-102, OR AN ACCREDITED CAMPUS OF A STATE INSTITUTION

1 OF HIGHER EDUCATION;

2 (b) A PARTICIPATING PRIVATE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION,
3 AS DEFINED IN SECTION 23-18-102;

4 (c) A LOCAL DISTRICT COLLEGE, AS DEFINED IN SECTION
5 23-71-102; AND

6 (d) AN AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE, AS DEFINED IN SECTION
7 23-60-103.

8 (5) "INTERNSHIP" MEANS A FORM OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
9 THAT INTEGRATES KNOWLEDGE AND THEORY LEARNED IN THE CLASSROOM
10 WITH PRACTICAL APPLICATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN A
11 PROFESSIONAL WORKPLACE SETTING.

12 (6) "PILOT PROGRAM" MEANS THE WORK-BASED LEARNING
13 CONSORTIUM PILOT PROGRAM CREATED IN SECTION 23-82-102 (1).

14 (7) "WORK-BASED LEARNING" MEANS A CONTINUUM OF ACTIVITIES
15 THAT OCCUR, IN PART OR IN WHOLE, IN THE WORKPLACE, PROVIDING THE
16 LEARNER WITH HANDS-ON, REAL-WORLD WORK EXPERIENCE. WITHIN THE
17 WORK-BASED LEARNING CONTINUUM, PROJECT-BASED LEARNING
18 PROVIDES EXPERIENCES THAT MAY BE EMBEDDED WITHIN THE
19 EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM THAT HELP STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT WORK
20 AND INFORM CAREER DECISIONS.

21 **23-82-102. Work-based learning consortium pilot program -**
22 **created - duties.** (1) THE WORK-BASED LEARNING CONSORTIUM PILOT
23 PROGRAM IS CREATED IN THE DEPARTMENT. THE DEPARTMENT SHALL
24 ESTABLISH, IMPLEMENT, MANAGE, AND MAINTAIN THE WORK-BASED
25 LEARNING CONSORTIUM PILOT PROGRAM. THE PURPOSE OF THE PILOT
26 PROGRAM IS TO DEVELOP AND EXPAND THE INTEGRATION OF WORK-BASED
27 LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

1 (2) (a) ON OR BEFORE JULY 1, 2026, OR WITHIN NINETY DAYS
2 AFTER THE DEPARTMENT RECEIVES SUFFICIENT FUNDING FROM GIFTS,
3 GRANTS, OR DONATIONS, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CONVENE A
4 CONSORTIUM OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM EACH OF THE HIGHER
5 EDUCATION GOVERNING BOARDS, EACH FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTION OF
6 HIGHER EDUCATION, AND A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF THE
7 PARTICIPATING TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION,
8 PARTICIPATING AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGES, PARTICIPATING LOCAL
9 DISTRICT COLLEGES, AND PARTICIPATING PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS OF
10 HIGHER EDUCATION. IF SUFFICIENT FUNDING IS SECURED, THE
11 CONSORTIUM MUST MEET FOR THREE YEARS.

12 (b) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL SELECT THE PARTICIPATING
13 INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION (2)(a) OF
14 THIS SECTION BASED ON AVAILABLE FUNDING AND OTHER CRITERIA AS
15 ESTABLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

16 (c) THE MEMBERS OF THE CONSORTIUM SERVE WITHOUT
17 COMPENSATION AND WITHOUT REIMBURSEMENT FOR EXPENSES.

18 (3) (a) THE CONSORTIUM SHALL:

19 (I) SHARE BEST PRACTICES ON IMPROVING ACCESS TO QUALITY
20 WORK-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS;

21 (II) HELP PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
22 MEET WORKFORCE NEEDS IN COLORADO AND CONNECT ACADEMIC
23 LEARNING WITH REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCES THROUGH CAREER
24 PREPARATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR STUDENTS; AND

25 (III) MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND
26 INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION BASED ON THE BEST PRACTICES
27 DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION (3)(a)(I) OF THIS SECTION.

1 (b) USING A THIRD-PARTY PLATFORM, THE CONSORTIUM SHALL
2 CONNECT FACULTY WITH BUSINESSES TO EMBED WORK-BASED LEARNING
3 OPPORTUNITIES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM.

4 (c) THE CONSORTIUM SHALL SERVE AS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
5 AND SUPPORT FACULTY ON HOW TO BEST EMBED WORK-BASED LEARNING
6 OPPORTUNITIES INTO CURRENT DEGREE PATHWAYS.

7 (4) THE DEPARTMENT MAY SEEK, ACCEPT, AND EXPEND GIFTS,
8 GRANTS, OR DONATIONS FROM PRIVATE OR PUBLIC SOURCES FOR THE
9 PURPOSES OF THIS ARTICLE 82.

10 **23-82-103. Reporting - repeal.** (1) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER
11 2026, AND ANNUALLY THEREAFTER, INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
12 SHALL PROVIDE TO THE DEPARTMENT WORK-BASED LEARNING DATA ON
13 STUDENTS AND DEGREE PROGRAMS USING EXISTING DATA COLLECTION
14 MECHANISMS. THE INFORMATION MUST INCLUDE, AT A MINIMUM:

15 (a) WHETHER A COURSE INCLUDED WORK-BASED LEARNING FOR
16 EACH ENROLLED STUDENT; AND

17 (b) WHETHER A DEGREE-GRANTING PROGRAM INCLUDES A
18 WORK-BASED LEARNING COMPONENT.

19 (2) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL COLLECT DATA FROM EACH
20 INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SUBJECT TO DATA AVAILABILITY, TO
21 REPORT THE FOLLOWING:

22 (a) THE NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF DEGREE PROGRAMS THAT
23 REQUIRE A WORK-BASED LEARNING OR INTERNSHIP REQUIREMENT FOR
24 DEGREE COMPLETION BY INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND DEGREE
25 LEVEL;

26 (b) THE NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO COMPLETE
27 A CREDIT-BEARING WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCE DURING THEIR

1 POSTSECONDARY PROGRAM, DISAGGREGATED BY FIRST-GENERATION
2 STATUS, FULL- AND PART-TIME ENROLLMENT STATUS, TRANSFER STUDENT
3 STATUS, FEDERAL PELL GRANT ELIGIBILITY, RACE, ETHNICITY, AND SEX OR
4 GENDER;

5 (c) THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF CREDITS EARNED THAT ARE
6 ASSOCIATED WITH WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES,
7 DISAGGREGATED BY FIRST-GENERATION STATUS, FULL- AND PART-TIME
8 ENROLLMENT STATUS, TRANSFER STUDENT STATUS, FEDERAL PELL GRANT
9 ELIGIBILITY, RACE, ETHNICITY, AND SEX OR GENDER;

10 (d) GRADUATION RATES, AS AVAILABLE, FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVE
11 A RANGE OF CREDITS EARNED THAT ARE ASSOCIATED WITH WORK-BASED
12 LEARNING EXPERIENCES, DISAGGREGATED BY FIRST-GENERATION STATUS,
13 FULL- AND PART-TIME ENROLLMENT STATUS, TRANSFER STUDENT STATUS,
14 FEDERAL PELL GRANT ELIGIBILITY, RACE, ETHNICITY, AND SEX OR GENDER;
15 AND

16 (e) POSTGRADUATE OUTCOMES, IF AVAILABLE, FOR STUDENTS WHO
17 HAVE A RANGE OF CREDIT HOURS EARNED THAT ARE ASSOCIATED WITH
18 WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES, DISAGGREGATED BY
19 FIRST-GENERATION STATUS, FULL- AND PART-TIME ENROLLMENT STATUS,
20 TRANSFER STUDENT STATUS, FEDERAL PELL GRANT ELIGIBILITY, RACE,
21 ETHNICITY, AND SEX OR GENDER.

22 (3) BEGINNING JANUARY 2027, AND EACH JANUARY THROUGH
23 2030, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL INCLUDE THE DATA COLLECTED PURSUANT
24 TO SUBSECTIONS (1) AND (2) OF THIS SECTION AS PART OF THE
25 DEPARTMENT'S "SMART ACT" HEARING REQUIRED BY SECTION 2-7-203.

26 (4) (a) SUBJECT TO AVAILABLE APPROPRIATIONS, AT THE END OF
27 THE THREE-YEAR PILOT PROGRAM, THE CONSORTIUM SHALL COMPLETE

1 AND SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE EDUCATION COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF
2 REPRESENTATIVES AND THE SENATE, OR THEIR SUCCESSOR COMMITTEES.

3 THE REPORT MUST INCLUDE:

4 (I) A DESCRIPTION OF THE CONSORTIUM'S FINDINGS AND
5 RECOMMENDATIONS PURSUANT TO SECTION 23-82-102 (3)(a)(III);

6 (II) DETAILS ON THE CONSORTIUM'S IMPACTS ON PARTICIPATING
7 INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE EFFECTS OF CREATING
8 ADDITIONAL WORK-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES ON STUDENTS, FACULTY,
9 AND EMPLOYERS; AND

10 (III) RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATUTORY CHANGES, FINANCIAL
11 RESOURCES, DEPARTMENT POLICY CHANGES, AND INSTITUTION OF HIGHER
12 EDUCATION POLICY CHANGES NECESSARY TO IMPROVE SUCCESSFUL
13 WORK-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS IN INSTITUTIONS
14 OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

15 (b) THIS SUBSECTION (4) IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE JUNE 30, 2028.

16 **SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 23-3.3-401, **add** (4)
17 as follows:

18 **23-3.3-401. Work-study program established - requirements.**

19 (4) FUNDS APPROPRIATED TO THE COMMISSION MAY BE USED BY THE
20 COMMISSION TO COVER THE COSTS OF WORK-BASED LEARNING
21 REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE
22 CREDIT-BEARING WORK-BASED LEARNING REQUIREMENTS TO GRADUATE
23 FROM AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION. FUNDING USED FOR THE
24 PURPOSES OF THIS SUBSECTION (4) IS EXEMPT FROM THE REQUIREMENTS
25 TO USE A STUDENT EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT.

26 **SECTION 4. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act
27 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the

1 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except
2 that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V
3 of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this
4 act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take
5 effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in
6 November 2026 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the
7 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.