

June 2011

DRAFT: Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering University of Washington Bothell Change in Approval Conditions

Introduction

The University of Washington Bothell (UWB) requests that the HECB remove an enrollment cap on its BS Electrical Engineering (BSEE) program. When the Board initially approved the BSEE program, it stipulated certain conditions in Resolution 09-14. Conditions to be met prior to the program's first five-year program review or expansion of program enrollment beyond 42 average annual FTE students, whichever came first, included the following:

- University of Washington Bothell will demonstrate that it has expanded distance learning opportunities for students
- University of Washington Bothell will demonstrate that a substantial proportion of students enrolled in the program are being served outside of King County
- University of Washington Bothell will report to the HECB on the placement results of the first graduating cohort
- University of Washington Bothell will notify the HECB that it has obtained ABET accreditation for the program.

Currently, the program enrolls about 50 FTE students, and UWB has run into a timing problem. The enrollment cap of 42 FTE students is forcing UWB to turn away qualified applicants it would be able to admit had the BSEE started in Fall 2009, rather than Winter 2010. Because the program started in winter, there will be a number of second year students still enrolled this fall, which impairs UWB's ability to admit new students while the cap is in place. This document provides a rationale and asks the Board to remove the cap to accommodate the Fall 2011 entering class.

Rationale

The first two conditions in the list above relate to access, the third relates to employer demand, and the fourth relates to program quality. These conditions were intended to ensure that prior to expanding beyond a certain size, the program would demonstrate its quality as well as its ability to satisfy employer demand and increase access.

UWB has received more than 200 applications from students wishing to enter the program in Fall 2011. Of these, over one-third of the applications are from Snohomish County. This is consistent with Fall 2010, when about one-third of the 142 applicants was from Snohomish County. Because the program consistently attracts a substantial proportion of applicants from Snohomish County, removing the enrollment cap would help UWB meet the second condition, which involves increasing access outside of King County.

Program quality is particularly important in the case of this program, since it carries the UW brand name but does not share UW Seattle's ABET accreditation. UWB expects to apply for its own ABET accreditation after the program's first cohort of students graduates in August 2011. Program planners supplied evidence that they have designed the program to meet ABET standards and have been making adjustments during implementation to ensure it will do so.

To obtain additional evidence of program quality, HECB staff asked UWB to share student feedback from course evaluations. Staff also asked how UWB responded to student feedback. Student course evaluation data provided by UWB indicate that students are generally satisfied with the program. With one exception, median overall course ratings by students ranged from 3.54 to 4.83 on a scale of 0 to 5. The exception was a 200-level introduction to engineering course in which students noted technology problems and difficulty getting help with online lab work. UWB is addressing these issues by investigating alternative technology and offering students in-person as well as online access to labs.

Recommendation

After careful review of the request and supporting materials, HECB staff recommends removing the enrollment cap stipulated in Resolution 09-14 to accommodate the Fall 2011 entering class. The HECB's Education Committee discussed the request during its June 8, 2011 meeting and recommended approval by the full Board.

RESOLUTION NO. 11-17

WHEREAS, The University of Washington Bothell requests that the Higher Education Coordinating Board remove the enrollment cap stipulated in Resolution 09-14; and

WHEREAS, The enrollment cap is forcing the university to turn away qualified applicants it would be able to admit had the program started in Fall 2009, rather than Winter 2010; and

WHEREAS, The program attracts a substantial proportion of applicants from outside King County; and

WHEREAS, The removal of the enrollment cap would increase access for students, including students in Snohomish County; and

WHEREAS, The university has submitted evidence that it is ensuring program quality;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That, effective June 30, 2011, the Higher Education Coordinating Board removes the Resolution 09-14 enrollment cap to accommodate the Fall 2011 entering class.

Adopted:

June 30, 2011

Attest:

Ethelda Burke, Chair

Earl Hale, Vice Chair