



March 17, 2019

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c/o Trustee Secretariat
401 Golden Shore, Suite 136
Long Beach, CA 90802

Chancellor Timothy P. White
California State University, Office of the Chancellor
401 Golden Shore
Long Beach, CA 90802-4210

RE: Proposal to Change First-Year Admission Eligibility Requirements

Dear Chair Day and Chancellor White,

As an organization committed to ensuring college access, success and equity for California students, we write to express our strong opposition to the proposal moving forward to potentially add a fourth year of mathematics/quantitative reasoning to the admission requirements for incoming first-year students to the California State University (CSU) system.

Adding a fourth year of mathematics/quantitative reasoning to the existing rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum known as "A-G" will further exacerbate access to the CSU system during a time of significant constraint.

Our recent reports on the *State of Higher Education for Latinx and Black Californians* found that less than 40% of Black and Latinx high school graduates were given the opportunity to complete the A-G curriculum by their high schools. That means that over 60% of Black and Latinx high school graduates are already ineligible to apply to the CSU system. Requiring a fourth year of quantitative reasoning to the CSU eligibility criteria will likely have the impact of increasing this number and producing even more racial/ethnic disparity.

Students who do complete the A-G curriculum with a C or better are faced with an increasingly competitive admissions environment. Completing the A-G curriculum with a C or better today does not guarantee students a spot at the CSU given the rising number of qualified applicants and limited seats across the CSU system. Today, over half – 13 out of 23 – of the CSU campuses require higher grade point averages and standardized test scores than the established CSU eligibility criteria. This means that thousands of eligible California students are turned away from their rightful spot at a CSU.

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There has been little evidence or research presented by the CSU that a fourth year of quantitative reasoning in high school directly leads to better outcomes for CSU students. According to the CSU Chancellor's Office staff, 75% of incoming freshmen to the CSU system have completed four years of math. And, if quantitative reasoning is defined more broadly than strictly mathematics to include courses like Economics or Statistics, the CSU predicts that percentage is even higher. The University of California, the state's most selective and elite university system, does not require a fourth year of quantitative reasoning for incoming freshmen because of the high percentage of incoming freshman who have taken a fourth year of math. What rationale then, given the high percentage of CSU students taking four years of math in high school - likely more under a broader definition of quantitative reasoning - is there for intensifying admissions requirements? Has the CSU analyzed the disparate impact such a policy would have?

Furthermore, we are thrilled that the CSU's action to eliminate non-credit remedial classes and replace them with credit-bearing college level courses is demonstrating broad success. The Los Angeles Times reports that 7,800 CSU students who would have been placed in non-credit bearing remedial math were placed and passed the higher level credit bearing math class. The success of students who were previously deemed "unprepared", now successfully completing college math makes the requirement of a fourth year of quantitative reasoning unnecessary.

At a time when California continues to be plagued by wide racial/ethnic gaps in enrollment and success at public four-year universities, our higher education systems must ensure that policies do not unfairly create unnecessary obstacles for students on the way to earning a college degree.

We share the goal of the CSU to ensure more students are prepared to succeed in college but must ask what problem this proposal aims to address?

Given the proud history, tradition and mission of the CSU to serve as an open access university, further public discourse is required to prevent the escalation of selectivity. For these reasons, we ask you to not require a fourth-year of mathematics/quantitative reasoning. We will continue to champion greater enrollment funding for the CSU to serve all eligible students and urge that all our high school students regardless of race/ethnicity or income status are equitably offered and supported to complete the current A-G curriculum.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michele Siqueiros". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Michele Siqueiros
President

CC: Members, California State University Board of Trustees
Executive Vice Chancellor Loren J. Blanchard, California State University
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