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July 16, 2019

Adam Day, Chairman
California State University Board of Trustees
c/o California State University, Office of the Chancellor
401 Golden Shore
Long Beach, CA 90802

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

RE: Proposal to Change First Year Eligibility Requirements

Dear Mr. Day and Chancellor White:

We are aware of a proposal to require a fourth year of mathematics/qualitative reasoning as an admission requirement. We have significant concerns this policy will disadvantage children of color, those who live in low socio-economic areas, youth in foster care and students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

The Alliance for Children's Rights protects the rights of impoverished, abused and neglected children and youth. By providing free legal services, advocacy, and programs that create pathways to jobs and education, the Alliance levels the playing field and ensures that children who have experienced foster care are able to fulfill their potential including achieving their educational goals.

Supporting Access to Higher Education for All

We share the goals of the California State University (CSU) to ensure more students are prepared to succeed in college. However, California continues to face gaps in racial/ethnic enrollment and success for certain populations. For example, while California's foster care system has made important strides in the last five years for older youth, one area where it continues to struggle is post-secondary achievement. By age 26, just four percent of former foster youth have achieved a college degree as compared to 36 percent of the same-age population of young adults. Our public education systems must ensure that admissions policies do not disproportionately impact children of color, those who live in low socio-economic areas, youth in foster care and students with IEPs.



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As you know, students who complete the minimum “A-G” requirements are not guaranteed a seat in the CSU system. In fact, many students meeting the minimum requirements were turned away for the 2019 academic year and approximately 5,000 students have taken advantage of the redirection program to enroll in a campus to which they did not apply: an admissions program which clearly signals the CSU’s interest in maximizing opportunities for California’s students.

On its face, adding a fourth year of mathematics/quantitative reasoning to the existing rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum seems to focus on ensuring students are prepared for CSU, however it will result in additional students being limited from accessing the CSU system to achieve their educational goals. Adding a fourth year of math to the requirements means students will have fewer choices in course planning and it is particularly challenging for students who have strengths in other areas to have CSU admissions success.

Children and youth in foster care change schools an average of eight times while in care. As part of our direct representation of youth in the foster care system who are navigating high school requirements and planning for their futures, we see firsthand the struggles and challenges that arise when students are attempting to meet requirements that assume some degree of high school stability. This proposal has the effect of exacerbating these issues. Youth in foster care are working hard toward achieving their educational goals but they cannot control factors such as moving between school districts in the middle of the year, where course offerings may differ, and where inconsistent combining of courses on transcripts and awarding of partial credits may make credit accumulation especially difficult.

Further, there is little evidence or research presented by the CSU that a fourth year of mathematics/qualitative reasoning in high school directly leads to better outcomes for CSU students and does not pose a disparate impact on underrepresented students.

We encourage the Board of Trustees and the Chancellor’s Office to thoroughly analyze and report on the rationale and impacts of the proposed policy prior to any consideration of moving forward with this limitation on admissions focusing on addressing issues such as:

- What is the definitive evidence that four years of math/quantitative reasoning improves student readiness for incoming CSU students specifically?
- What is the definitive evidence that four years of math/quantitative reasoning in high school improves graduation rates for CSU students specifically?
- What is the definitive evidence that K-12 districts across the state have the will and capacity to deliver on this proposed requirement such that all students regardless of race/ethnicity and income status in every high school across the state can access a fourth year of math/quantitative reasoning equitably?
- What is the definitive evidence that this proposal will not have a disparate impact on Black, Latinx and American Indian students in CSU admissions?
- What is the definitive evidence that this proposal will not have a disparate impact on foster youth, English language learners, and students coming from low socio-economic

backgrounds (the three groups identified under the California Department of Education Local Control Funding Formula for special consideration) in CSU admissions?

The CSU was designed as a broad-access university system for all Californians. This proposal has the perhaps unintended consequence of disadvantaging and disproportionately affecting those already underrepresented in the CSU and we urge you to focus on policies that support students entering the CSU rather than disproportionately disadvantaging certain student populations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kristin Power". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Kristin Power
Senior Policy Associate