



July 19, 2019

Adam Day, Chair
California State University Board of Trustees
c/o Trustee Secretariat
401 Golden Shore, Suite 136
Long Beach, CA 90802

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

RE: Proposal to require a fourth year of high school math for admission to CSU

Dear Trustee Day and Chancellor White,

Career Ladders Project urges California State University's Board of Trustees to abandon the proposal to require high school students to complete a fourth year of math to qualify for admission.

This requirement would not achieve the stated goals—encouraging students to prepare better for college and improving their chances of succeeding at a CSU once they arrive. Instead, it is likely to limit access to college for students statewide, and it's especially likely to harm students of color, low-income students, and immigrants, who are disproportionately likely to attend high schools that don't even offer four years of math. It's important to note here that, in a minority among states, California requires only two years of math for high school graduation.

No amount of encouragement will lead students to take more math courses if they don't have access to more math classes. And few students statewide are likely to win access to more advanced math classes, given that [82 percent of California school principals surveyed in 2017 said they already were forced to hire under-prepared teachers](#), and more principals reported challenges hiring teachers for math than for any other classes, aside from bilingual Chinese. It should be clear that demanding more of high schools will not increase the supply of qualified teachers and could make the situation worse in the schools already least able to provide math instruction.

Any change of this magnitude should be based in evidence. But there is no evidence that taking more math classes in high school leads students to do better in college; there's just a correlation between these two factors. It would be more sensible to create other conditions for students that actually do seem to increase the likelihood they will succeed in college, such as tailoring student supports more carefully and contextualizing math curricula at CSU.

A change this significant also should be grounded in state policy and be made in concert with K-12 districts. Instead of putting the cart before the horse, the CSU system should work to strengthen California's high school graduation requirements, reverse the dramatic decline in its supply of high school math teachers, and help under-resourced districts expand their math offerings so that more high school students have the opportunity to take four years of math.

CLP and its staff call on CSU's board of trustees to return to seeking inclusive and evidence-based strategies in line with its decisions to (a) do away with math placement tests and (b) de-emphasize college-level algebra in favor of encouraging students to study statistics and quantitative reasoning. Both of these strategies help students

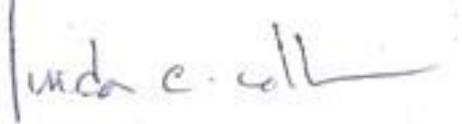
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to choose and complete math courses relevant to their interests, which are more likely to be relevant to their eventual careers.

In the meantime, CSU should stop confusing access with aptitude.

Thank you for taking our concerns into consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda C. Collins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Linda Collins
Executive Director

cc: Members, California State University Board of Trustees
Executive Vice Chancellor Loren J. Blanchard, California State University
Lande Ajose, Senior Policy Advisor to Gov. Gavin Newsom for Higher Education