



July 7, 2019

California State University Board of Trustees
c/o Trustee Secretariat
401 Golden Shore
Long Beach, CA 90802

Dear California State University (CSU) Board of Trustees,

The Desertsong Group is an educational equity advocacy firm in the Inland Empire. Among our goals is to increase college access to students of color. We are in strong opposition to the CSU's effort to add a 4th year of mathematics and/or quantitative reasoning to the eligibility requirements for incoming first-year applicants. These changes will negatively impact students coming from under-resourced high schools that offer limited A-G courses, districts that are predominantly low-income, Black, Latinx, and Native American.

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. Higher education gives us the power to change our lives and the lives of our communities through knowledge, self-exploration, and economic mobility. All California students deserve the opportunity to experience the life-changing potential of a higher education, but this change to eligibility requirements threatens that opportunity for thousands of Californians who are looking to you to save them a spot in college.

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?



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.

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 cursive script, reading "Niki Dettman". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Niki Dettman
Chief Executive Officer