

EQUAL JUSTICE SOCIETY

July 9, 2019

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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, 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,

The Equal Justice Society (“EJS”) is transforming the nation’s consciousness on race through law, social science, and the arts. A national legal organization focused on restoring constitutional safeguards against discrimination, EJS’s goal is to help achieve a society where race is no longer a barrier to opportunity. Our legal advocacy aims to broaden conceptions of present-day discrimination to include unconscious and structural bias by using cognitive science, structural analysis, and real-life experience. Challenging policies and practices likely to result in racially disparate outcomes is a critical part of our work.

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 already rigorous, “A-G” college-preparatory curriculum will further exacerbate existing access barriers to the CSU system during a time of significant constraint.

According to a recent report by the Campaign for College Opportunity on the State of Higher Education for Latinx and Black Californians, 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 increase this number and result in even more racial/ethnic disparity.

CSU has failed to show that a fourth year of math/quantitative reasoning in high school leads to better outcomes for CSU students. According to the CSU Chancellor’s Office own 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

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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. Given these facts, the CSU's proposed fourth year math requirement makes little sense especially if the CSU has failed to analyze the potential disparate impact of its proposal.

We applaud CSU's action to eliminate non-credit remedial classes and replace them with credit-bearing college level courses. The Los Angeles Times reports that since this change, 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 these students who were previously deemed "unprepared" further demonstrates that a fourth year of math or quantitative reasoning is 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 do everything in their power to close the racial and ethnic gap, not enact ill-founded potentially discriminatory policies that create additional obstacles for students seeking a college degree and the opportunities and benefits that flow from it.

Given the proud history, tradition and mission of the CSU to serve as an open access university, we urge you not to require a fourth-year of mathematics/quantitative reasoning. At the same time, we pledge our support for greater enrollment funding for the CSU to serve all of our eligible high school students regardless of race/ethnicity or income status and for policies that equitably support their their completion of the current A-G curriculum.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eva Paterson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E".

Eva Paterson
President
Equal Justice Society

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