



FIGHTING TO PRESERVE ACCESS TO THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY (CSU) AND WINNING!

OVERVIEW

Driven by claims of improved student retention and completion outcomes, the California State University (CSU) Chancellor's Office [introduced a proposal in 2019](#) that would have required first-time freshmen applicants to complete an additional year of Quantitative Reasoning (QR) in high school as a condition for admission, with intent to take effect in the fall of 2026.

The Campaign for College Opportunity [understood the serious equity consequences of this proposal](#): by adding an extra year of quantitative reasoning to California's A-G curriculum – which determines eligibility to the state's public universities – the CSU would have created an access barrier for rural, low-income, Black, and Latinx students, further perpetuating a cycle of racial and ethnic inequity in accessing higher education.

The Campaign, along with the Education Trust-West and Just Equations, [commissioned a report](#) to examine how increasing admissions requirements with an additional year of mathematics or science would impact eligibility rates.

The report found that this change in admissions requirements would reduce:

- Overall eligibility of high school graduates from 41% to 34%
- Eligibility of Black students from 31% to 24%
- Eligibility of Latinx students from 32% to 26%
- Eligibility of students in growing regions, like the Central Valley, from 34% to 27%

Sounding the alarm, the Campaign and its partners rallied a powerful coalition of over 100 state, business, civil rights, community organizations, school boards and administrators to [voice their concerns](#).

Recognizing the lack of legislative and stakeholder collaboration, the Campaign brought the issue to the attention of Assembly Higher Education Chair Jose Medina. As a staunch racial-equity advocate, Chair Medina [immediately called an oversight hearing for the CSU](#).

Together, the coalition wrote [opinion articles](#), [attended public comment sessions](#), and mobilized key leaders, including Superintendent Tony Thurmond and Lt. Governor Eleni

Kounalakis, a member of the CSU Board of Trustees. Over 500 students across the state signed a petition to stop the proposal.

"I would encourage the members not to support the implementation of a new requirement that is beyond what is required even in the [University of California] system that would impact largely those students who are coming from communities where they are already at a disadvantage," [said Lt. Governor Kounalakis](#).

"I share the goal of increasing our standards and preparing our students to succeed in college but in doing so we must engage all partners, address our teacher shortage crisis, and ensure we are not creating additional barriers for low-income students of color to pursue higher education," [said Superintendent Thurmond](#).

By November 2019, education advocates and coalition partners were calling on the CSU Board of Trustees to abandon the fourth-year quantitative reasoning proposal, arguing that there was **no causal evidence** that an additional quantitative reasoning course in high school is connected to college retention or completion, but there was evidence that this requirement would exacerbate inequities for Black, Latinx, and low-income communities. To make matters worse, K-12 partners that would be most disparately impacted by the proposal were not consulted on the proposal.

Hearing the [passionate pleas from this wide-ranging coalition](#) and the concerns from the California Legislature, the CSU Board of Trustees finally agreed to conduct an [independent analysis](#) on the impact this proposal would have on student access and success.

However, this was not enough. While Chair Medina's powerful request to take pause and consider the collaborative effort required to make such a change, he, along with the Campaign and our coalition were determined to ensure no other proposal like this ever came forth to the CSU or University of California again.

In January 2020, Chair Medina launched his official legislative effort to combat racially inequitable admissions changes. [Assembly Bill 1930](#) sent a signal to the four-year universities that no admissions change shall happen without the comprehensive input, collaboration, and intentional research required to ensure minoritized communities will not be negatively impacted.

In March 2020, the Campaign for College Opportunity mobilized a media roundtable to gather leading advocates in opposition to this proposal and to mobilize state leaders to stop this change. Ultimately, AB 1930 was held in committee as the legislature focused on responding to complications during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[The CSU Board of Trustees named a new Chancellor](#) at the end of 2020, the Campaign remained committed to ensuring this proposal to limit access to the CSU would not be

implemented. At every level, the Campaign remained engaged to ensuring that the CSU remained the People's University.

In 2021, we saw another opportunity to continue this work with [Assembly Bill 595](#) (Medina). This bill would have ensured that before adopting a change in student admissions policies, an independent impact study be conducted.

In 2022, the CSU announced they concluded their research study. The report found:

"Requiring an additional course may not solve the problem without providing better preparation, quality of instruction, and/or support systems for these students... If the goal is to ensure that more CSU students, and potentially more high school students in general, are taking more high-quality quantitative reasoning courses that explicitly prepare them for college and career success, it may make sense for the CSU system and its partners to focus on how to ensure those courses are provided with sufficient quality and quantity to all students and especially to those student groups that face disparities in college access."

In November 2022, after three long years, the Board of Trustees signaled that they would be [pivoting away from this proposal](#) to instead focus on promoting academic preparation in K-12 and meaningful collaboration with K-12 stakeholders to improve student access to the CSU.

[On Wednesday, January 25](#), the CSU Board of Trustees will take formal action to officially abandon the quantitative reasoning admissions requirement, marking the end of a years-long fight and the beginning of increasing access for all.