**CSU—Early Assessment and Academic Preparation Program**

**Goal:** To ensure that California high school graduates enter CSU fully prepared to begin college-level study.

**The Challenge:**

Over 60% of the nearly 40,000 first-time freshmen admitted to CSU require remedial education in English, mathematics or both. These 25,000 freshmen all have taken the required college preparatory curriculum and earned at least a B grade point average in high school. The cost in time and money to these students and to the State is substantial. Moreover, these students are confused by seemingly having done the right things in high school only to find out after admission to CSU that they need further preparation. Particularly important to California is that a disproportionate share of these students needing remediation are from populations who have been underrepresented in higher education.

**What is needed to meet the challenge?**

Two initiatives are needed to ensure that all students are prepared for college study:

- A joint public school-CSU assessment which will indicate to all CSU-eligible high school students on course to be CSU eligible during their junior year either as being ready in mathematics and English to begin CSU or as needing further preparation before enrolling in CSU.

- Provision of the programs and services by all public high schools, including direct CSU outreach assistance, to supplement the preparation of students during their senior year and the summer before entering CSU.

**What are the key features of this two-part CSU-public school program?**

**Early Assessment**

Recognizing the need to coordinate and streamline school testing, CSU has been working with the public schools, State Board of Education (SBE) and the California Department of Education (CDE) to connect its college entry readiness standards in English and mathematics to existing school tests. Beginning in 2001, under the guidance of SB233, CSU faculty have succeeded in piecing together the test items required to assess CSU readiness from existing school tests—namely, the 11th grade California Standards Tests (CSTs) and the corresponding Golden State Examinations (GSEs) in English and mathematics. Over 15,000 high school juniors in 98 high schools are piloting this program, in which in addition to taking the required CSTs, they also volunteer to take the GSEs as well. These students and their schools will receive three sets of scores—those
for the CSTs, GSEs, and a CSU readiness score derived from items from both the CSTs and GSEs.

The benefits of early assessment are many:

- Aligning school and CSU standards so that success in school means readiness for CSU
- Giving more meaning and force to the CSTs
- Giving school students an early signal as to their college readiness and thus the time to prepare before entering CSU
- Making the senior year a time for more direct and specific preparation for college
- Exempting CSU-ready students from taking CSU placement tests or the SATs or ACTs and therefore reducing testing time for the students
- Enabling CSU-school outreach assistance efforts to be focused on those students needing more preparation
- The sharper focus enabled by early assessment allows CSU-school outreach resources to be targeted more effectively and, consequently, to be applied across many more California high schools

**Additional College Preparation**

For the past several years CSU has collaborated with high schools to help directly high school students receive the additional preparation needed. To the extent permitted by the state budget, CSU proposes to expand its student outreach role in several ways:

- Contingent on the outcome of the 2003-04 budget, CSU will continue the kind of activities that have been offered through the CAPI-PAD program in which CSU faculty and students work directly with public school students and teachers. The implementation of the junior year early assessment will enable a more effective use of these outreach resources owing to the specific identification of students who need more preparation. This will allow CSU faculty and student outreach efforts (and those of high school teachers and staff) to focus on certain students and, more specifically, on helping those unprepared students during a defined time period—namely, the senior year. This clearer focus in the application of outreach resources will allow CSU to reach all 944 California comprehensive public high schools, not only the 180 served in the past CAPI program.
CSU also will continue its English teacher professional development program in reading in which current high school teachers are prepared to remedy reading deficiencies of 10th, 11th and 12th graders.

In addition, the CSU is convening, in collaboration with the CDE, university and high school English and mathematics faculty and staff to develop a set of senior year programs, courses and tutoring and counseling services that will be based in all high schools and will address directly the college preparation needs of those seniors assessed as eligible for admission to CSU but not ready for college-level study. The more than $30 million of state funding directed to remedial education in CSU can then be directed to true college-level study.

**Funding Needed for Early Assessment**

The junior year assessment has been developed and is being piloted in 98 high schools currently. In spring, 2004, this program will be available in all California high schools and will take its place as a key component of CSU outreach.

This early assessment is of great importance to high school students, to the public schools, and the CSU. A system will be in place that identifies whether a student is prepared for college at a point when schools and students have the lead-time to gain the needed preparation. The embedding and linking of CSU standards to existing school tests and standards helps to streamline and coordinate K-12 and college assessments, lending greater meaning to both.

Over the last two months the funding required to administer the three GSEs connected to the early assessment has been eliminated in both the Senate and Assembly budget bills; while the reasons cited, which include both the need to cut costs and to streamline public school testing are understandable, this would mean that a new vehicle would have to be developed and funded to fill the role of the GSEs.

CSU is eager to develop an alternative way to integrate its standards with the CSTs, in collaboration with the public schools, but requires $3 million in state funding to administer this revised assessment in all high schools by spring, 2004 and each spring thereafter. Of this amount, $2,020,000 is the cost for printing, distributing, collecting, processing, and scoring the test, $880,000 is for administrative costs including testing program coordination, server maintenance, analysis and technical reporting, and $100,000 to inform every student taking the test (their school, school district, CDE, and CSU) about his/her readiness for the CSU. It is anticipated that the $3 million will allow up to 133,333 or approximately one-third of the 400,000 eligible high school juniors to voluntarily take this exam.

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