THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC PREPARATION ON STUDENT SUCCESS

“More rigorous graduation requirements, particularly in math and science, can improve access to college by increasing enrollment in advanced courses, which might enhance college readiness and performance on standardized assessments.”

— “Does Raising High School Graduation Requirements Improve Student Outcomes?”  
Public Policy Institute of California, February 2021

Academic preparation is a key pillar of the California State University’s signature effort, Graduation Initiative 2025, aimed at increasing graduation rates and closing equity gaps. When students are better equipped with the knowledge and skills to succeed from their first day at the CSU, they are more likely to stay on track to earning their degree. CSU data shows that, regardless of major, an additional year of math or science increases the likelihood of a student returning for their second year and on the path to achieving their college degree.

QUANTITATIVE REASONING PREPARATION...

Makes it more likely a student returns for their second year

Makes it more likely a student graduates after 6 years

Makes it more likely a student graduates after 4 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Latinx</th>
<th>All</th>
<th></th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Latinx</th>
<th>All</th>
<th></th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Latinx</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80%</td>
<td></td>
<td>84%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Excludes San Diego data set for 2015.
CASE STUDIES: LONG BEACH AND SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD)—the fourth largest school district in the nation where 63 percent of students are socioeconomically disadvantaged and 87.5 percent are non-white—increased its quantitative reasoning course requirement six years ago to improve college readiness. Prior to changing the requirement, just 39 percent of students met the “a-g” requirements for admission to the CSU. Today, 56 percent of students meet the “a-g” requirements, and the district’s African American and Latino students graduate at higher percentages compared to their peers in the county and across the state. Despite early opposition to the change and concern that underserved students would be disadvantaged, the outcomes have demonstrated the opposite. Students of color in LBUSD are graduating and attending college at higher rates due to better quantitative reasoning preparation.

San Diego Unified School District is the second largest in California with more than 124,000 students, of which 23 percent are English Language Learners, 59 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and 77 percent are non-white. In 2011, the SDUSD Board of Education adopted new, more rigorous graduation requirements that are aligned with the minimum subject-area course requirements for CSU and University of California (UC) admission as well as the California Next Generation Science Standards. This allows for SDUSD to adjust minimum graduation requirements should UC or CSU admission requirements change so that all SDUSD graduates are college-ready.

To ensure that all California students have the access and opportunity to earn a high-quality degree that prepares them for their future, the California State University has proposed expanding its “a-g” admission requirements to include one additional course in quantitative reasoning in high school. This level of academic preparation is essential for success in college, the workforce and in life. It is also key to closing racial and gender disparities, especially in the high-demand, high-paying STEM fields. The CSU Board of Trustees, working in collaboration with a steering committee of internal and external stakeholders, is considering next steps. The proposed requirement would be applicable for fall 2027.