In January 2020, the California State University Board of Trustees approved a resolution that requested a third-party independent analysis of the potential impact of a proposed quantitative reasoning admission requirement on CSU applicants. After completing a public competitive bidding process, the CSU selected the nonprofit, nonpartisan education and social policy research organization MDRC to conduct the study.

THE RESEARCH PARTNER: MDRC

Created in 1974 by the Ford Foundation and a group of federal agencies, MDRC builds and applies evidence about changes in policy and practice that can improve the well-being of people who are economically disadvantaged. MDRC is dedicated to learning what works to improve educational programs and policies, especially those that potentially affect low-income communities. It is best known for mounting large-scale demonstrations and evaluations of real-world policies and programs. MDRC is engaged in nearly 100 projects in five policy areas: Family Well-Being and Children’s Development; K-12 Education; Postsecondary Education; Youth Development, Criminal Justice, and Employment; and Low-Wage Workers and Communities.

INITIAL RESEARCH STUDY FOCUS

MDRC proposed a focus on four primary areas:

1. Analysis of the planned implementation and potential impact of the CSU’s proposed quantitative reasoning requirement;

2. Analysis of any potential disparate impacts of the admission policy change on CSU-bound students;

3. Analysis of the potential impact of the admission policy change on CSU students’ success for all students and particular subgroups of students; and

4. A qualitative assessment of the implementation needs for the proposed change to be successful and equitable.

EXPANDING THE SCOPE

Following a progress report to the CSU Board of Trustees in March 2021, and in response to stakeholder feedback, MDRC has expanded its scope of work to reflect greater representation in survey recipients and quantitative data. These updates include the addition of both quantitative and qualitative data for the high school graduating class of 2020 and currently enrolled high school students – added in part to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students.
PROPOSED STUDY MILESTONES

The following are general milestones related to the implementation of the study and subsequent analysis and reporting of results:

- Confirmation of scope of study
- Quantitative data processing and analysis
- Qualitative data collection and synthesis
- Report development and review
- Presentation of the draft to the Board of Trustees
- Final report published online

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.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs
401 Golden Shore, Long Beach, CA 90802
www.calstate.edu/qr