California Faculty Association
Statement on the CSU Chancellor’s Proposed Expansion of the Quantitative Reasoning Admissions Requirement

The California Faculty Association (CFA) opposes the proposed expansion of the Quantitative Reasoning Admissions Requirement in its current form.

Changes in policy often come from the best of intentions, but the impact is what matters. The CSU Chancellor’s Office proposal to expand the A-G admissions requirements to include a fourth year of Quantitative Reasoning, if rushed, will have serious consequences for student access to higher education, particularly for underserved and underprivileged communities.

The proposed additional requirement will create barriers to access to the CSU and exacerbate educational disparities already existing in California communities. Without due diligence with respect to civil rights and social justice, this process will bring negative impacts on Black, Latinx, Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and poor and rural communities across the state, and will change the student demographics of the CSU, making it less reflective of California’s racial and ethnic composition and creating even more educational inequality.

Greater numeracy is a worthy goal, and perhaps an additional high school requirement is a solution. The question is one of costs in the present moment weighed against future benefits. CFA agrees with the ASCSU in the concern that “supporting student success via changes in entrance requirements could also simultaneously differentially harm students with either less access to, or lower awareness of, these more extensive preparatory elements and that any such potential effects be ameliorated as the associated policies are developed” (AS-3377-19). In order to do this, the CSU must carefully analyze all potential outcomes of this policy shift with access and equity in mind.

CFA agrees with members of the many communities who expressed their concerns to the Board of Trustees special session on this topic: This threatens college access and opportunity for the people of California; there will be particularly serious barriers for Black, Latinx, API, and Native students, working class students, and students from rural communities; and that using admissions policy to change High School curriculum and practices is the wrong approach.

CSU managers have proposed a waiver for students who cannot or do not complete this requirement “through no fault of their own.” CFA agrees with Dr. Christopher Edley’s testimony
to the Board of Trustees (8/29/2019) that this is an ineffective policy patch, and is not a solution to the very real equity and access concerns raised by this proposal. The waiver mechanism is under-specified: Will students need to apply for the waiver? Will the Chancellor’s Office maintain a list of available classes for every school district and compare every applicant’s transcript? CSU management cannot guarantee that this will not result in arbitrary exclusions, or exclusions biased by race, class, ethnicity, and geography.

Instead, the Chancellor’s Office should slow down, consider all the intended and unintended consequences of this policy shift, and work together with the California Department of Education, the K-12 districts, and CSU faculty who prepare mathematics teachers, to gather data, perform meaningful and in-depth analyses regarding the potential unintended consequences, and implement the policy change only when all concerns are addressed and negative consequences are mitigated.

Adopted by the CFA Officers
September 17, 2019