
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: AB 394 **Hearing Date:** June 7, 2017
Author: Medina
Version: March 30, 2017
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Olgalilia Ramirez

Subject: California State University: assessment and course placement of admitted students

SUMMARY

This bill requires, by August 1, 2018, the California State University (CSU) to implement additional measures for the assessment and course placement of admitted students.

BACKGROUND

- 1) Establishes the Donahoe Higher Education, setting forth the mission of the CSU (Education Code (EC) § 66010, et seq.).
- 2) Requires that the CSU be administered by a board designated as the Trustees of the CSU (EC § 66600).

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Requires, by August 1, 2018, the CSU to implement additional measures for the assessment and course placement of admitted students.
- 2) Requires the multiple measures approach to include, but not limited to, placing significant weight on:
 - a) High school transcript data in the assessment of recent California high school graduates.
 - b) Community college transcript data in the assessment of community college transfer students.
 - c) Those transcripts in the subsequent assignment of these students English and mathematics coursework.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “studies show that nearly one-third of students are misplaced when they enter higher education due to the use of placement assessments that are not comprehensive enough, and end up placing students in lower courses than they should be enrolled in, or the incorrect

courses altogether, which sets them up for potential failure to earn a college degree or credential.” This bill seeks to ensure the use of high school transcript data when assessing a student for course placement at a California State University (CSU) in order to improve the accuracy of that student’s placement.

- 2) **Remedial education.** Remedial education is intended to help students who are assessed as “unprepared” to succeed in college-level work. The traditional approach to remedial education is based on placement test scores. Colleges place a student who underperforms on placement tests into a sequence of developmental/college-prep courses prior to that student enrolling in college-level English and math courses. Concerns have been raised that this approach results in college-ready students being misplaced into remedial courses and extends time in school. According to the Campaign for College Opportunity, a growing body of research is finding that students are not nearly as “unprepared” for college-level work as believed and that the reliance solely on placement tests is a weak predictor of student success. A better way to assess college readiness is to use multiple measures, where student placement is determined by high school grades and other measures — not just a single test score.
- 3) **CSU Early Assessment/Early Start Program.** In 2010, to address concerns regarding the large number of incoming freshmen at the CSU requiring remediation, Executive Order 1048 was issued, creating the Early Start Program. Entering freshmen not proficient in math or “at risk” in English are required to start the remediation process before their first term at CSU. Students are given a menu of options to determine the best approach to start their remedial instruction, including senior year high school courses, courses offered in the summer at any one of their local California Community College or CSU campuses and online courses. Legislation enacted in 2012 (AB 2497, Solorio), required the CSU to work with the Legislative Analyst’s office (LAO) on an ongoing series of reports showing the impact of CSU’s Early Start Program on students needing remediation.

Additionally, CSU’s Early Assessment Program (EAP) provides a measure of college readiness to high school students in their junior year. If junior–year students demonstrate proficiency in both English and math based on the EAP (includes several standardized exam options), they are deemed college ready. Students who receive a score of “conditional” or “conditionally ready” on the EAP can demonstrate proficiency by enrolling in an approved math or English course during their senior year and earning a C grade or better. If students do not demonstrate proficiency “not yet ready” or “not ready” through the EAP, they are required to take an additional math and/or English placement exam. Finally if a student fails passage on those exams the student is required to participate in the CSU Early Start program. This series of placement measures is intended to provide students with several opportunities to demonstrate college readiness prior to attending their first college term.

- 4) **Use of multiple measures for placement.** As noted, California State University (CSU) campuses utilize multiple measures of assessment to determine readiness and competencies in English and Math which includes the use of tests already taken by students in high school including the ACT, Advance Placement

Scores, SAT or California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (EAP) as well as courses taken in the senior year in English and Mathematics. Multiple assessment opportunities occur over time which begins in 11th grade and extends through the summer before in the first fall term at a CSU campus. Concerns have been raised that although multiple measures of assessment are utilized, these measures are primarily based on test results with few exceptions.

This bill requires California State University (CSU) multiple measure approach to include and place significant weight on high school transcript data or community college transcript data (i.e. GPA or course grades) to determine college readiness.

- 5) **Remediation rates at CSU.** On March 1, 2017, the Senate Education Committee convened an oversight hearing on remedial education in California. The background paper for the hearing provided by the Legislative Analyst Office, "Overview of Remedial Education at the State's Higher Education Segments," noted that more than 40 percent of first time CSU students are identified as unprepared. The paper also revealed that unprepared students are less likely to graduate with a 20 percentage point difference in graduation rates between incoming students assessed as college-ready versus not college-ready.

According to CSU, "the policy and timeline outlined in this bill align with CSU's intent to develop an enhanced set of academic preparation policies that will help more students achieve CSU academic standards and position themselves for academic success and degree completion."

SUPPORT

California State University
California Catholic Conference, INC.

OPPOSITION

None received

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