

CSU Executive Order 1110

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Updated: August 3, 2017

Note: This FAQ is an iterative document that will be updated frequently based on questions and feedback received in consultation with CSU constituents across the system.

General Questions

1. What changes are the California State University making to its approach to academic preparation?

At the March 2017 Board of Trustees meeting, the Chancellor's Office highlighted four areas of academic preparation where improvements are needed to support student success, degree completion and to eliminate persistent equity/achievement gaps:

- Reexamining the CSU assessment and placement protocols for determining college readiness and course placement
- Strengthening the CSU Early Start Program
- Restructuring the CSU approach to developmental education
- Working to improve mathematics and quantitative reasoning skills among high school students

On August 2, 2017, the CSU issued [Executive Order 1110](#) that revises the policy for first-year student placement in English and mathematics/quantitative reasoning courses. It retires the CSU assessment exams (Entry-Level Mathematics Test and English Placement Test) currently used for course placement. It strengthens the Early Start Program by giving students an opportunity to earn college credit in the summer before their first term. Finally, it eliminates the use of developmental education prerequisites and calls for alternative instructional models to support students in credit-bearing courses.

2. What precipitated the changes to our approach to academic preparation?

While the CSU has made steady progress improving college readiness, nearly 40 percent of first-time students (approximately 25,000 each fall) are informed that they are admitted but are not ready for college-level coursework. Students from traditionally underserved communities are far more likely to be required to complete developmental education courses. For example, 59 percent of African American students and 47 percent of Latino students are informed that they are not prepared for college coursework after being admitted.

The overwhelming majority of these students are relegated to developmental education courses, which do not count toward a degree. Being assigned to these courses has a negative impact on a student's credit accumulation in the first year, inadvertently sending the

message that the student does not belong in college and decreasing the likelihood that the student earns a degree.

The [CSU Graduation Initiative 2025](#) goals seek to significantly improve student success and graduation rates and to close persistent equity gaps. In pursuit of these goals, the CSU established six priorities, including improving academic preparation. The CSU is working to ensure that all students, including those who arrive in need of additional academic support, have the opportunity to earn 30 college-level semester units (or 45 quarter units) before their second academic year. This required a change in how the CSU serves students in their first year.

Many CSU campuses are already leading the way on improving academic preparation, whether by restructuring developmental education or through implementation of a more robust Early Start Program. Our goal is to build on this momentum, improving systemwide policies and procedures to better serve all CSU students.

3. Will these changes result in lower quality learning experiences for CSU students?

No. The changes are not a mechanism for compromising academic quality or a means to merely accelerate graduation rates. Compromising academic rigor is not in the best interest of students or the increasing value of their CSU degree. These changes are intended to provide more innovative and targeted academic support to help students achieve existing rigorous course outcomes.

4. How was the new CSU approach to academic preparation—including Executive Order 1110—developed?

The Chancellor's Office engaged in significant consultation with faculty, students, campus administrators and other educational partners on the new approach to academic preparation and the development of Executive Order 1110. A draft executive order was circulated for feedback from campus constituents. The final policy reflects the collective advice and guidance of experts from around the system.

5. What is the next step in the process?

Work to improve academic preparation is ongoing. Continued faculty and staff development opportunities are being identified related to assessment, advising, curriculum design and innovative models of instruction. A coded memorandum outlining implementation and operational aspects of the transition to the new policy outlined in Executive Order 1110 is forthcoming. Also, a [Graduation Initiative 2025 workgroup](#) comprised of faculty, students and campus leaders and focused on academic preparation will begin convening to identify and assist in addressing critical implementation and operational matters.

6. How can interested parties stay updated on these impending changes?

This FAQ is a living document and will be updated on the [Graduation Initiative 2025 website](#) as new information becomes available. Additionally, Chancellor's Office staff will provide regular updates at a number of CSU affinity group meetings (e.g., Presidents Council, ASCSU Plenary, Provosts Council, Student Affairs Council, Math Council, English Council, California State Student Association (CSSA) Executive Committee, Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum meetings, high school counselor conferences, etc.).

Developmental Education

1. Under the new executive order, what will be the CSU policy on developmental education?

Beginning in fall 2018, the CSU will no longer require students to take three unit prerequisite courses in written communication and/or mathematics/quantitative reasoning that do not count for college credit before moving on to college-level courses that do. These courses are commonly referred to as developmental education classes.

Effective fall 2018, the CSU will place students needing additional academic support in courses that strengthen skills development and are college-level and credit-bearing. Supportive course models may include, among others, co-requisite approaches, supplemental instruction modules, or “stretch” formats that could extend a course beyond one academic term. Additional academic support will now be embedded or attached to college-level courses for students who need it. Any instructional content considered to be pre-baccalaureate during the regular term will be limited to one unit and it must be attached to a college-level course and offered concurrently.

2. How will these policy changes to developmental education benefit students?

CSU students will no longer be required to take courses that do not apply toward a degree. Instead, students will be able to earn college credit beginning day one, while receiving the academic support they need. These changes will potentially save students thousands of dollars. For many CSU students, these changes will also reduce the time required to earn their degree allowing them to move into the workforce or a graduate program more efficiently.

3. Shouldn't these decisions be left to campuses?

Course development, curricular modifications and innovative instructional approaches will be at the direction of faculty leaders from campus English and mathematics programs in concert with campus academic leadership. The Chancellor's Office will provide resources, technical assistance and professional development opportunities where appropriate, but will not prescribe a specific implementation model.

4. How will faculty be supported?

Approximately \$10 million has already been provided to campuses for new course development and course redesign, to support advising and to more effectively use campus data to support student success. The Chancellor's Office is also developing a series of technical assistance and professional development resources that will be available to campus faculty and staff.

5. How will these changes be communicated to our PK-12 and community college partners?

The Chancellor's Office will be meeting directly with PK-12 and community college partners to communicate the changes to the CSU academic preparation policy.

Early Start

1. Under the new executive order, what parts of the Early Start Program will change and why?

Effective summer 2019, students required to attend the CSU Early Start Program will have an opportunity to earn college credit the summer before beginning their first term. Instead of a one unit requirement, the Early Start Program will offer credit-bearing general education written communication and mathematics/quantitative reasoning courses systemwide. Instructional content considered pre-baccalaureate will carry a maximum of two units and shall be offered concurrently with a college-level, baccalaureate credit-bearing course.

Although the timeframe for this change is not until summer 2019, campuses can pilot innovative instructional approaches to the Early Start Program in summer 2018. Some CSU campuses are already implementing a more robust credit-bearing Early Start experience for students.

2. How will these changes impact low-income students and those who need to work in the summer?

Many CSU students need to work during the summer and throughout the academic year to afford college. The CSU provides financial support to cover tuition for students based on standard financial aid practices (i.e. the estimated family contribution). The Chancellor's Office is looking at opportunities to identify other forms of aid for students who participate in Early Start, including micro-grants, the utilization of low-cost textbooks, etc.

3. What will happen to students who attend an Early Start Program at a different CSU campus than the one in which they intend to enroll?

As is currently the case, a student's home campus will be sent the results of the academic work completed at the service campus during Early Start. Any baccalaureate credit earned during Early Start under the new policy will be transferred and accepted by the receiving CSU campus.

Assessment and Placement

1. Under the new executive order, what will be the CSU policy on the assessment and placement of first-year students?

Executive Order 1110 calls for the broadest utilization of multiple measures in assessing academic readiness and determining course placement for first-year students. Measures may include high school English and mathematics/quantitative reasoning courses completed and grades earned; high school grade point averages; grades in collegiate courses; ACT, SAT and/or SAT subject test scores; Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) scores; or Smarter Balanced Assessment/Early Assessment Program scores.

2. How will the Entry-Level Mathematics (ELM) and English Placement Test (EPT) change and why?

As part of this new policy, these two tests will be retired in August 2017. In addition to other measures, the CSU will move toward a greater incorporation of high school grades and course-taking. High school grades, when used as one of multiple measures, are shown to be a stronger predictor of how likely students are to achieve course outcomes over an academic

term if given the opportunity. Placing a greater emphasis on previous classroom performance is expected to improve student assessment and help customize academic support.

3. What does this mean for the campus testing center?

With the retirement of the EPT and ELM tests, campuses will be challenged to develop new opportunities for campus testing centers. This may include more support for testing as it is needed in the delivery of the actual curriculum; monitoring performance on electronic examinations such as ALEKS; or a new focus on the administration of ACT, SAT and possibly College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams.

Improving High School Quantitative Reasoning Skills

1. Why are changes to high school quantitative reasoning requirements not included in Executive Order 1110?

Although the CSU promotes four years of high school mathematics/quantitative reasoning, any changes to high school requirements for admission consideration call for coordination with the University of California and the California Department of Education and would culminate in a change to California Administrative Code (Title 5). Therefore, it would be presumptive and not appropriate to include it in the executive order. The CSU admission criteria have not changed. Although the CSU encourages high school students to take four years of mathematics/quantitative reasoning, the a-g requirements have not changed.

More information on Graduation Initiative 2025 can be found on the [website](#). If you have additional questions not covered in this document, please contact [Dr. James T. Minor](#) or [Jeff Gold](#).