

Governor Newsom signs bill to increase student success at Community Colleges

October 5, 2022



Today Governor Newsom signed Assembly Bill 1705, which will reform remedial placement policies at the state's community colleges. This legislation was authored by Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin (AD-44) and supported by a [diverse coalition](#) of organizations.

AB 1705 builds on AB 705 (Irwin), a groundbreaking 2017 law that requires the state's community colleges to recognize high school coursework instead of relying on inaccurate and inequitable placement tests. AB 705 also requires that students be placed into English and math classes where they have the greatest chance to make progress toward a college degree.

"As a math professor with over two decades of experience teaching at community colleges, I thank Governor Newsom for signing AB 1705," said **Tammi Marshall, Chair of the Math Department at Cuyamaca College in San Diego**. "I've seen firsthand how remedial classes hold students back and how transformative

it is to change our approach. AB 1705 is key to making sure that a student's opportunity to reach their full potential is not based on where they live."

A [report](#) from the California Acceleration Project highlights the progress that California community colleges have made in implementing the changes required by AB 705. However, there are pockets of weak AB 705 implementation, and these colleges disproportionately serve Black and Hispanic community college students.

"Our research found that a Black student is four and half times more likely to attend a college that continues large scale remedial course offerings than a white student, and a Hispanic student is three times more likely," said **Katie Hern, Co-Founder of the California Acceleration Project and a faculty member at Skyline College.** "AB 1705 is an important step towards addressing these inequities."

In tandem with AB 1705, Assemblymember Irwin also successfully advocated for \$64 million to be included in the state budget to help community colleges implement changes to placement and remediation, such as expanding tutoring, developing corequisite supports, and providing professional development to help faculty effectively teach a broader population of students in transfer-level classes.

"Community colleges across California are making a groundbreaking shift to equitable placement policies and AB 1705 will help take that work to the next level," said Michele Siqueiros, President of the Campaign for College Opportunity. "We're grateful to Assemblymember Irwin for championing AB 1705 so that Black and Latinx students will no longer be disproportionately placed into remedial education courses that completely derail their college dreams."

There was widespread support for AB 1705 among student leaders, including from the Student Senate for California Community Colleges, the UC Student Association, Students Making a Change, and [more than 50 student leaders](#).

"With the signing of AB 1705, thousands more Black and Brown students will now enroll in the courses where they have the greatest chance of success, no matter where they attend college," said Jetaun Stevens, Senior Staff Attorney with Public Advocates. "This bill brings the California Community College system one step closer to closing persistent racial equity gaps and fulfilling the [Vision for Success and Multiyear Roadmap](#). We thank the Governor and Legislature for their steadfast commitment to equity in higher education."

Background on California's Historic Changes to Remedial Courses at Community Colleges:

Prior to AB 705, the vast majority of California community college students were denied access to transferable, college-level English and math courses. Eighty percent of incoming students started in remedial classes that cost time and money but did not earn credit toward a bachelor's degree. AB 705 changed this by restricting colleges from requiring remedial courses.

“Students tell us loud and clear what we already know from the research: the remedial courses touted as additional support actually make it harder for community college students to achieve their educational dreams,” said Dr. Christopher J. Nellum, Executive Director with The Education Trust–West. “Governor Newsom’s signing of AB 1705 into law is a meaningful step toward centering transfer-level courses and equity-based strategies that students swear by.”

After AB 705 became law, there was a dramatic and unprecedented increase in students completing their classes at the state’s community colleges. [Student completion of transfer-level courses increased](#) from 49% to 67% in English and from 26% to 50% in math statewide (2015-2019). This amounts to more than 41,000 additional students who completed transfer-level English and more than 30,000 additional students who completed transfer-level math than before the law (2015-2019).

AB 1705 addresses the following:

Makes clear that colleges must enroll students in math and English classes where they have the greatest likelihood of completing degree and transfer requirements.

Clarifies that colleges should not require students to repeat math and English classes they passed in high school.

Provides greater protections to ensure that students are not required to take extra math and English courses that don't count towards their degree requirements.

Clarifies that it is the responsibility of colleges to ensure that students have supports that help them make progress toward their goals.

Additional Resources:

[Letter of support from the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office](#)

[Letter from over 90 community college faculty, administrators, staff, and researchers who support AB 1705](#)