



AB 1705 (Irwin)

Equitable Placement in Community College Courses

SUMMARY

AB 1705 will help ensure that students attending California Community Colleges (CCCs) are able to enroll directly into transfer-level English and math courses.

BACKGROUND

Historically, CCCs used placement tests to automatically enroll most students into remedial coursework, sometimes even multiple levels below transfer-level courses. In fact, research found **three out of every four students entering community college were enrolled in at least one remedial course, which disproportionately affected Black and Latino students.** Because so many students were stuck in remedial courses where they were not earning credits or making progress towards their degree, many dropped out without any credential or degree. Those who did eventually pass their remedial courses and continued in their academic journey lost precious time, resources, and financial aid.¹

In 2017, the Legislature unanimously passed and Governor Brown signed AB 705 (Irwin), which dramatically reformed basic skills education in English and math at the CCCs. **AB 705 requires colleges to maximize the likelihood that students complete transfer-level courses in English and math within one year.** Instead of placement tests, colleges must now use high school transcript and GPA data to place students into the most appropriate course for their educational goals and identify those who need extra support.

According to the Public Policy Institute of California, **the passage of AB 705 has led to tens of thousands of more students entering and successfully completing transfer-level English and math.**¹ Importantly, AB 705 contributed to significant reductions in racial equity gaps in access to and completion of transfer-level courses. More students enrolled in and completed Business, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (BSTEM) math courses due to AB 705. **These gains are noteworthy for Latino and Black students,** who have been historically underrepresented in BSTEM majors.

¹“The Detrimental Costs of Remedial Education for California Community College Students.” *The Institute of College Access and Success (TICAS)*. April 2022. [Link](#).

² Cuellar Mejia, M., Rodriguez, O., Johnson, H., and Alesi Perez, C. “Community College Math in California’s New Era of Student Access.” *Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC)*. December 2021. [Link](#).

³ Hern, K., Snell, M., and Henson, L. “Still Getting There: How California’s AB 705 Is (and Is Not) Transforming Remediation and What Needs to Come Next.” *Public Advocates*. December 2020. [Link](#).

PROBLEM

Implementation of AB 705 has been uneven across the CCCs and a substantial number of students are still required or directed to enroll in below transfer-level courses. **At one in five colleges, a third or more of students are still being enrolled in remedial courses** and these students are disproportionately Black and Latino.² Research demonstrates that the **chances of completing a transfer-level course are significantly diminished for those who start in a course below transfer-level:** only a third of these students subsequently enrolled in a transfer-level course.¹

THIS BILL

AB 1705 will prevent misapplication of AB 705 and codify selected guidance from the CCC Chancellor’s Office regarding its implementation. Specifically, this bill:

1. Guarantees access to transfer-level English and math for US high school graduates;
2. Exempts dual-enrollment, adult ed, and career tech students whose program does not require completion of English or math;
3. Allows pre-transfer-level placement and enrollment in lieu of transfer-level placement and enrollment for the following subgroups of students:
 - a) Students in career technical programs seeking a certificate or associate degree with specific requirements, as dictated by the program’s advisory or accrediting body, that cannot be satisfied with transfer-level coursework;
 - b) Specific subgroups of students where local research and data demonstrate that the subgroup benefits from the placement and enrollment into pre-transfer-level courses;
4. Authorizes the CCC Chancellor’s Office to change a campus’ placement policy or practice to ensure compliance with AB 705; and,
5. Provides campus-level accountability through an annually updated dashboard of aggregated student enrollment and completion of these courses.

SUPPORT

California Acceleration Project (co-sponsor)
Campaign for College Opportunity (co-sponsor)
The Education Trust—West (co-sponsor)
Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis (co-sponsor)
Public Advocates, Inc. (co-sponsor)
Students Making a Change (SMAC) (co-sponsor)
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
(co-sponsor)
University of California Student Association
(co-sponsor)
California Community College Chancellor's Office
California Competes
California EDGE Coalition
Career Ladders Project
GenerationUP (GENUP)
The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)
Improve Your Tomorrow
Just Equations
ReadyNation – Council for a Strong America
UnidosUS
Young Invincibles
93 community college faculty, staff, and administrators

CONTACT

Wesley Whitaker, Policy Consultant
Office of Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin
Wesley.Whitaker@asm.ca.gov