



SUMMARY

FACCC seeks to enact legislation clarifying that California Community Colleges students can access stand-alone foundational pre-transfer courses to promote student agency and equitable access.

BACKGROUND

California has significantly changed its approach to pre-transfer education in community colleges through legislative action. In the past, students who were not ready for college-level math and English courses had to take long remedial pathways that delayed their ability to transfer to four-year institutions.

In 2017, legislation required community colleges to provide students with a pathway to complete transfer-level math and English courses within one year. This legislation aimed to reduce the time students spent in remedial courses and increase completion rates in transfer-level classes.

Building on this, further legislation was enacted in 2022, requiring that colleges maximize the likelihood of students completing transfer-level math and English courses within a year. Unfortunately, during implementation, this led to the elimination of stand-alone foundational courses in math and English, with options for co-requisite classes. In the co-requisite model, students receive additional support to address skill gaps while in transfer-level courses. While the corequisite model is working for many students, some fall through the cracks. According to the [2022 California Community College Chancellor's Office Student Enrollment Survey](#), the most common reasons students drop courses are having to prioritize their work and mental health, as well as being unable to keep up with the pace of classes. For such students, the co-requisite model may not be the most effective way to complete transfer-level courses. Right now, this is the only option students have.

NEED FOR THE BILL

Research is demonstrating that the corequisite model is incompatible with the realities of some students, including those with significant family and work responsibilities. California is one of twenty states which has removed stand-alone pre-transfer courses over the last decade, including Tennessee in 2015. As written in a [published report from Brown University](#) regarding Tennessee's policy change, "Since the corequisite reform, students placed below the

college-readiness threshold were 8.1% less likely to continue enrolling in the state's public college system and 28.8% less likely to earn a credential (mostly certificates) within three years of the initial enrollment.

More comprehensive research demonstrates that the elimination of stand-alone pre-transfer math and English is not benefitting all students; [the Hechinger Report](#) establishes that in Tennessee, "The proportion of students earning either two-year associate degrees or four-year bachelor's degrees did not increase after the corequisite reform. Lower achieving college students, defined as those with very low ACT exam scores in high school, were more likely to drop out of college and less likely to earn a short-term certificate degree after the switch to corequisites."

It concludes that "Students are initially passing more courses, but are also more likely to drop out and less likely to earn credentials." Ultimately, the most vulnerable students at the California Community Colleges are likely to be impacted by the loss of standalone foundational courses— especially older nontraditional students who have been out of the classroom, first generation students, and ethnic minorities. Students who lack an adequate foundation and are rushed through transfer-level math and English also struggle in interdisciplinary disciplines like chemistry, physics, or sociology.

Additionally, there has been learning loss among high school students resulting from the pandemic, so the ability to brush up on pre-transfer material can set students up for success in transfer-level courses. And with the UCs changing their standards for math, we can best prepare our students to transfer by offering them a strong foundation at the community college level.

For community colleges to truly serve the whole community, they should be allowed to offer curricula in formats that meet community needs. Equity means that every student can enroll in classes that meet their needs instead of being required to attempt courses they are not ready for.

SOLUTION

We must allow students the agency to enroll in (and community colleges the agency to offer) standalone foundational pre-transfer courses if they need an alternative to the co-requisite model. This would allow for a truly accessible experience, and enable students of all academic backgrounds to achieve their goals.