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Proposed Changes in Admission Requirements at CSU

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For the first time in over 15 years, California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC) may have different course requirements for admission. CSU is currently considering changing its three-year high school math requirement to a quantitative reasoning requirement of four years that broadens the list of eligible courses.

The proposed change—scheduled for a November vote by the CSU Board of Trustees—would create a difference from UC’s three-year requirement, meaning that some students who would qualify for UC may not qualify for CSU. Both CSU and UC have historically defined their math requirements around algebra, geometry, and advanced algebra, as well as any advanced courses (e.g., pre-calculus and calculus) that require these subjects as prerequisites. Under the proposed change, students could continue with the traditional math sequence or take applied courses in the fourth year, including personal finance, laboratory science, computer science, or statistics. The new requirement would first apply to the high school graduating class of 2026.

The goal of the change is to better prepare students for success at CSU and to enable more students to pursue STEM majors once they enter college. But critics cite **access and equity concerns**, arguing that the changes may disproportionately affect low-income students in districts that are struggling to hire enough math teachers. CSU, which trains a large share of California’s K–12 teachers, has recently announced an **expansion of its Mathematics and Science Teacher Initiative** to increase the number of new math and science teachers.

CSU and UC have had the same course requirements since 2003, when UC adopted CSU’s visual and performing arts requirement, thus fulfilling “the long-sought goal of giving UC and the California State University a common set of subject requirements” (2000-05-24 Notice of the Meeting, Assembly of the UC Academic Senate).

The proposed change could cause confusion for students who may want to apply to more than one system. Complicating the issue, UC is currently considering adding another year to its science requirement but has not yet scheduled a vote by the UC Board of Regents.

Students in California would benefit from clearly organized admission requirements, but the state lacks an entity that could help K–12 and the higher education systems coordinate these requirements. A **higher education coordinating body could provide expertise** around this decision, clarify its goals, and help determine whether the proposed requirement is the best approach to meet those goals.

