

Date of Hearing: April 8, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 500 (Quirk-Silva) – As Amended April 02, 2025

SUBJECT: University of California: admissions changes

SUMMARY: Establishes the procedures the California State Legislature intends for the University of California (UC) Board of Regents to undertake prior to a vote to determine a change in the undergraduate admissions criteria or standards for admission to the UC. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) States it is the intent of the Legislature for any proposed change to the conditions for undergraduate admissions at the UC become operational only after the following procedures have been fulfilled:
 - a) The admission change proposal has been provided to the official student organization representing the student body of the University of California, the California State Board of Education (state board), and the Trustees of the California State University (trustees) for consideration and discussion;
 - b) The admission change proposal has been identified as an item for discussion and has been discussed in a public meetings of the state board and the trustees, respectively (not jointly);
 - c) Notice of the UC Board of Regent’s meetings where the admission change proposal is to be considered has been provided to each Regent;
 - d) Information and materials affiliated with the admission change proposal, including disclosure on the impact of the change on K-12 school districts, the University of California, and the California State University has been provided to each Regent in advance of the UC Board of Regent’s meeting where the admission change proposal is to be considered;
 - e) The intention to vote on the admission change proposal at a meeting of the UC Regents has been included in a public meeting notice;
 - f) The admission change proposal has been made available prior to the public meeting of the UC Board of Regents, where the admission change proposal is to be considered;
 - g) The admission change proposal has been voted on by the Regents as a final open session action item; and,
 - h) The admission change proposal has been adopted by the majority vote of the Regents through the making of a motion. Nothing is to preclude the Regents from having a discussion in open session of the contents of the admission change proposal as to the reasons why the admission change proposal should or should not be adopted.
- 2) Defines a “change to the conditions for undergraduate admissions” to mean any of the following:

- a) A change to the policy for undergraduate admissions to the UC as adopted by the UC Regents;
 - b) A reclassification or modification of which type of high school course meets the A-G subject matter requirements for admission to the UC; and,
 - c) A change to the admissions requirements criteria used in the review and certification of high school courses as meeting the A-G subject matter requirements for admissions to the UC.
- 3) Defines a “local education agency” to mean a school district, county office of education, or a charter school.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the University of California (UC) as a public trust administered by the Regents of the University of California (Regents) and endows the Regents with full powers of organization and government. Clarifies the UC is only beholden to legislative control as necessary to ensure the security of funds, compliance with the terms of the endowments of the university, and competitive bidding procedures where applicable to the university by statute for construction contracts, sales of property, and purchasing of materials, goods and services. Authorizes the Board of Regents to be comprised of seven ex-officio members, 18 members of the public appointed by the Governor, one student appointed by the Regents, and one faculty appointed by the Regents. The seven ex-officio members on the Board are the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the president and vice president of the UC alumni association, and the acting president of the UC system (Article IX, Section 9, subdivision (a) of the California State Constitution).
- 2) Stipulates the UC is to be entirely independent of all political or sectarian influence and kept free in the appointment of its regents and in the administration of the UC’s affairs. Prohibits the UC from barring a person from being admitted to any department of the UC based on the person’s race, religion, ethnic heritage, or sex. Gives the Regents legal title, management, and disposition of UC property. Authorizes the Regents to do the following:
 - a) Use the UC seal (enter into contracts);
 - b) Sue or be sued; and,
 - c) Delegate any function of the university to committees of the Regents or the faculty of the University or others, as deemed wise by the Regents (Article IX, Section 9, subdivision (f) of the California State Constitution).
- 3) Mandates the meetings of the Regents be public with exceptions and notices as authorized by law (Article IX, Section 9, subdivision (g) of the California State Constitution).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS: *Author’s intent.* As conveyed by the author, “every student deserves a fair chance to pursue higher education. AB 500 ensures that changes to UC admissions do not leave

students behind by requiring an open and transparent process. When universities engage educators, students, and policymakers before making decisions, we create a system that reflects our values of fairness, equity, and opportunity for all.”

Background on California State University (CSU) and UC admissions. The governance structure of the California State University (CSU) and the UC system are relatively the same, with one exception. While the authority of the CSU system lies in the Education Code as delineated by the Legislature, the UC system is constitutionally autonomous. Essentially the Board of Regents, the governing body of the UC, has authority over every aspect of the system. The Board of Trustees, the governing board of the CSU, has the authority delegated to it by the Legislature. Both governing bodies of the CSU and UC oversee admissions and admission requirements for their respective system.

The CSU requirements for undergraduate admission are located in the California Code of Regulations: Title 5, Section 40753 and 40601. The regulations states for admission to the CSU a student must have as follows:

“at least four years of English, three years of mathematics, two years of history or social science, two years of laboratory science, two years of foreign language, one year of visual and performing arts, and one year of electives from any combination of English, mathematics, social science, history, laboratory science, foreign language, visual and performing arts, CSU-approved career technical education courses, and other fields of study determined by the Chancellor to be appropriate preparation for California State University study.”

The UC Board of Regents (UC Regents) adopted Regents policy 2102 in May 1988, and according to the policy:

“First year applicants will be required to complete a minimum of 15 high school year-long courses to be taken during grades 9 through 12. These fifteen must be academic or college preparatory courses approved by the University and consisting of courses in a) history/social science (2 courses); b) English (4 courses); c) mathematics (3 courses including elementary algebra, geometry, and intermediate algebra); d) laboratory science (2 courses to be taken from two disciplines); e) foreign language (2 courses); f) visual and performing arts (1 course); and g) college preparatory elective courses (1 course, to be chosen from the fields listed above).”¹

However, completing the courses in the categories listed above is only part of the requirement to be minimally qualified for admission to the CSU or UC. Even if a student has three years of math on their high school transcript, the math courses must meet the academic qualifications for admission to the CSU and UC. The entity tasked with determining if the high school course meets the academic qualifications for admission to the CSU and UC is the UC Office of the President, specifically the UC Enrollment Services Unit.

As stated in the 2025-2026 CSU Admission Handbook:

¹ <https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/policies/2102.html>

“the CSU faculty has delegated to the University of California (UC) the responsibility for certifying high school courses that meet the “A-G” requirements. Consequently, the CSU accepts high school courses on the UC “A-G” course list. Courses on the “A-G” list can be used to meet CSU requirements in the designated subject areas or may be used as electives.”²

Therefore, any changes to the conditions for admission to the UC would also change the admissions conditions for the CSU.

In order to certify a course as academically qualified or “A-G” qualified, a high school district submits their courses to the UC Enrollment Service Unit for review and approval. The UC Enrollment Services Unit, who will in turn evaluate the course and supporting materials to determine if the course meets the criteria established by the Academic Senate Board of Admissions and School Relations (UC BOARS).

Delegated authority to UC Board of Admissions and School Relations (UC BOARS). The California Constitution authorizes the UC Regents the ability to delegate operations to subcommittees of the UC Regents or to others, as necessary. The UC Regents have delegated much of the day-to-day operations to the UC Office of the President, but in Regents policy 2102, the UC Regents delegated the authority of determining the conditions of undergraduate admissions to the Academic Senate, more specifically the UC Board of Admission and School Relations (UC BOARS).¹

UC BOARS oversees all matters relating to the admission of undergraduate students. UC BOARS oversees all matters relating to the admission of undergraduate students. UC BOARS regulates the policies used in the admission process and directs efforts to improve the admission process.³ The membership of UC BOARS includes one faculty representative from each of the 10 UC campuses, two additional faculty acting as Chair and Vice Chair, and two student representatives. In addition to the members of the Committee, staff from the UC Office of the President attend the meetings and provide technical support.⁴ The primary objective of UC BOARS is to determine if the undergraduate admission criteria is representative of the academic requirements to succeed at the UC. If a majority of the membership of UC BOARS determines a change is required, UC BOARS will make a recommendation to the full assembly of the Academic Senate. If approved by the Academic Senate, the UC Regents will then approve the change in admission criteria at a public meeting of the board.

Additional authority granted to UC BOARS by the UC Academic Senate bylaws, includes the following:

“Require secondary schools in California whose graduates are to be admitted on a transcript to submit for approval a list of those courses certified by the school as fulfilling the subject requirements for admission. The committee shall review these courses annually.”⁵

² <https://www.calstate.edu/attend/student-services/Documents/csu-admission-handbook.pdf>

³ <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/committees/boars/index.html>

⁴

https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/rosters/committees.html?admin_task=committee_details&comm_name=boars

⁵ <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/bylaws-regulations/bylaws/blpart2.html#bl145>

Committee staff note that it is unclear when the transition occurred from having UC BOARS review courses annually for approval to the A-G list maintained by the UC Office of the President, but currently the responsibility of reviewing and approving courses lies with the Enrollment Services Unit in the UC Office of the President.

UC BOARS sets the criteria for the high school course evaluations and the UC Enrollment Services Unit reviews and either approves or disapproves course as “A-G qualified.”

Joint Legislative Hearing on October 10, 2024. On July 07, 2023, UC BOARS unanimously voted to remove data science and statistics as a qualifying course to replace algebra II on a high school student’s transcript. Algebra II is a required A-G course listed in the UC Regent policy. The decision to exclude data science and statistics as replacements for algebra II is directly contrary to the newly adopted Mathematics Framework published by the State Board of Education. The decision to remove data science and statistics as a suitable alternative to algebra II undermined years of work by the State Board of Education and the Instructional Quality Commission to improve data literacy and mathematical attainment in the K-12 system.

On October 10, 2024, the Chairs of the Assembly Committee on Education and the Assembly Committee on Higher Education hosted a joint oversight hearing to determine the scope of the unintended consequences of the UC BOARS decision to change the conditions for undergraduate admission. Dr. Deborah Swenson, the Chair of the UC BOARS, and the Executive Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Dr. Han Mi Yoon-Wu represented the UC during the hearing.

During the course of the hearing, both UC representatives refused to provide a direct answer as to whether the UC Regents should have voted on the UC BOARS decision to exclude data science and statistics as advance math. Dr. Swenson continuously suggested the “change to the admission requirement” was not a change at all, but rather a “reclassification” of which courses would qualify as advance mathematics. The semantics of the issue is important as the UC maintains a vote of the Regents is only necessary if UC BOARS suggest a change in the conditions for admission. Therefore, UC BOARS can reclassify any course as no longer qualifying as A-G and disrupt hundreds, if not thousands of high school students’ course taking patterns; potentially, leading to their disqualification from admission to the CSU and the UC.

Dr. Han Mi Yoon-Wu insisted during her testimony the “reclassification” of mathematics courses would only affect data science and statistics courses; however in November 2024, the UC Office of the President hosted a webinar where UC Enrollment Services staff explained what was changing in Area C (A – G qualified math courses) and provided additional guidance on discipline changes and reclassification of Area C courses. The webinar listed other “advance math courses” which are being reclassified as “additional math courses” or no longer qualifying as a replacement for algebra II:⁶

⁶ <https://ucop.app.box.com/s/aifjhye0kox028jyvt73cx2x8gcagc wd>



Courses moving from Other Advanced Math to Additional Math (new discipline)

Quantitative Reasoning	Discrete Math	Data Literacy
Math for Liberal Arts	Finite Math	Logic
Consumer Math	Game Theory	Others



During the October 2024, Joint Oversight Hearing, the UC Representatives were asked if anyone from the K-12 governance system was consulted prior to the decision to reclassify the data science and statistics courses, and neither representative could provide an answer. Furthermore, according to the UC BOARS minutes and subsequent presentations to the UC Regents, it is unclear the extent to which CSU faculty were involved in the final decision to exclude certain math courses as “advance math.”⁷

Committee comments. After the Joint Oversight Hearing, the Chairs of the Assembly Committees on Education and Higher Education submitted a letter to the UC Regents asking for the following:

- 1) The Regents to vote on the admission criteria change of which math courses were considered substitutes for algebra II; and/or,
- 2) A delay in the implementation of the UC BOARS admission criteria change for math.

The letter from the Chairs stated that, “the precedent set by the decision to change the Area C course criteria undermines the collaborative relationship between K-12 and postsecondary education in the academic preparation of high school students for collegiate work. To quote the previous Chair of the BOARS Committee during a recent UC Regents meeting, ‘any substantive change to the admission requirements [to the UC] would require collaboration, alignment, and shared goals with kindergarten to postsecondary levels.’ To this end, the University of California should partner with K-12 and with the broader higher education community in the decision to change the admissions criteria.”

On February 24, 2025, the UC Regents replied to the Chairs of the two committees stating they would delay the implementation of the changes for one year, but reasserted their belief a vote of

⁷ <https://ahed.assembly.ca.gov/media/3294>

the Regents was not necessary, as the reclassification of what qualifies as an algebra II alternative course did not constitute a change in the conditions for admission. Specifically the letter states:

“As a point of clarification, there has been no change to the math admissions requirements as outlined in Regents Policy 2102: Policy on Undergraduate Admissions. This policy requires first-year students to complete three mathematics courses – elementary algebra, geometry, and intermediate algebra – standards that align with California’s Common Core K-12 mathematics framework. BOARS recently determined that data science courses cannot serve as a substitute for the intermediate algebra requirement, as the content is not necessarily based on knowledge acquired in lower-level required coursework. As a result of this clarification, a small number of data science courses that had previously been approved no longer fulfill the algebra II requirement and must undergo review to ascertain if their content is sufficient to qualify as substitutes. Under the authority delegated by the Regents, the Academic Senate may make these determinations based on its subject matter expertise. We assure you that any substantive change to UC’s basic admission requirements would necessitate amendment of Regents Policy 2102 and approval by the Board. However, because this update is a refinement of implementation rather than a change in policy, it does not require Board action.”

It is imperative to note, the Regent policy 2102 does not make a point of clarification between substantive changes, or clarification, the policy simply states, “subject to approval by the Board, the Academic Senate determines the conditions for admission.”¹

The Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute definition of condition is “a requirement or limitation involved in a law or contract that changes the rights and duties of those involved.”⁸ Therefore reclassifying the type of courses that would qualify a student for admission to the UC is changing the rights and duties of those involved in the contract of admission; and as such, a reclassification of courses should be subject to the approval of the UC Regents.

AB 500 (Quirk – Silva) provides the legislative intent for how the UC is to adopt changes, alterations, clarifications, or reclassifications, to the conditions for undergraduate admission to the UC. The measure would require the UC to provide meaningful consultation with the governing bodies of the CSU and the K-12 system, both of whom oversee the academic content of their respective system. Furthermore, the measure would allow the public at least three separate opportunities to provide input as to overall impact of the admission change. Finally, it provides clarity that all changes, regardless of how innate should be subject to approval by the UC Regents.

The measure is a request of the Legislature as the UC is constitutionally autonomous and therefore, neither the Legislature nor the Executive can require the entity in regards to UC governance. However, in 1993 the Legislature passed a similar bill stating its intent for how salary, benefits, perquisites, retirement benefits, and severance payments would be determined for an officer of the UC. SB 504, Chapter 1290, Statutes 1993 outlined how the UC would determine salaries for officers of the UC and the policy, in part, was adopted by the Regents and is Regent’s Policy 7201.

⁸ <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/condition>

Similar legislation.

AB 684 (Patel) of 2025, is scheduled to be heard in Assembly Higher Education Committee on April 08, 2025. The measure would subject UC BOARS to the Bagley-Keene Open Meetings Act.

AB 1217 (M. Fong) of 2025, is scheduled to be heard in Assembly Higher Education Committee on April 08, 2025. The measure would establish the legislative intent for how the UC Office of the President determines if a high school course is a college preparatory course.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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