



Assembly Bill 705 (Irwin) FACT SHEET

Bill Summary

AB 705 helps more students succeed in completing a degree, certificate or transfer by ensuring that they have access to college-level courses when they first enter a community college. **In order to maximize the likelihood that students will complete college-level coursework** in English and math within a one-year timeframe (a key indicator of student success), AB 705:

- ✓ requires colleges to use high school transcript data, and it sets a standard for how community colleges use high school transcript data, in the placement of students into math and English courses,
- ✓ allows more students to enroll directly into college-level courses in which they can be successful.

AB 705 leaves room for colleges to exercise local control over placement in response to research with their own student body. AB 705 does not dictate specific placement rules or criteria, rather sets standards that colleges must use in their local decision-making. These standards are designed to ensure that placement decisions maximize a student's likelihood of completing math and English milestones.

The Need: Placement is Destiny

California Community Colleges are the gateway to opportunity for 2.1 million students each year, promising access to the California dream. Unfortunately, the troubling reality is that too many students will never achieve that dream and be prepared for good jobs because of a huge barrier most of them will encounter upon entry – **being assessed as not ready for college-level coursework**.

Placement policies and basic skills courses are intended to improve students' success in college-level English and math. However, under current practice, **being required to take basic skills English or math substantially REDUCES a students' chances of completing** college-level courses. Among community college students placed into remediation, just 40 percent go on to complete a degree, certificate, or transfer in six years compared to 70 percent for students allowed to enroll directly in college-level courses¹. A recent Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) report found that 80 percent of students entering community colleges enroll in at least one remedial course in English, math, or both; of that population minority students are overrepresented; and most of these students never advance to or successfully complete college-level coursework². In fact, PPIC states that **"In its current form, developmental education may be one of the largest impediments to success in California's community colleges."**

At most colleges, access to transfer-level courses is highly restrictive. Across the state, 75 to 80 percent students are placed into remedial courses, despite a growing body of research showing that many of them could be successful if allowed to enroll directly into college-level courses. Additionally, although colleges are required to use multiple measures to place students into courses, they have relied overwhelmingly on high-stakes, standardized tests which research has shown are very weak predictors of students' performance.

The Opportunity

With an expected workforce skills gap of 2.4 million, California can't afford to lose any more capable students at our community colleges, a critical entry point to higher education in the state. **AB 705 helps ensure that poor placement policies do not determine a student's destiny, making capable students less likely to reach their college dreams.** In doing so, California will help reduce persistent achievement gaps by race/ethnicity, reduce a student's time-to-degree, and increase successful student outcomes.

¹ [California Community Colleges Student Success Scorecard](#)

² http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_1116MMR.pdf