

# The CAPacity Gazette



Feb 2020

## Dispatches from Community Colleges Transforming Remediation

Because students have the capacity to succeed in challenging courses and we have the capacity to support them



Students working with math professor Israel Castro and lab technician Mei-Ling Cheng in the Math Success Center at Pasadena City College

## For the Greater Good: How Administrators Can Help Maximize Student Completion

By Leslie Henson and Katie Hern

In spring 2019, Pasadena City College Division Dean Carrie Starbird made a decision: As of fall 2019, the college would no longer offer standalone remedial math courses, including intermediate algebra. "It's my job to schedule the classes that serve students' greater good," Starbird says, "so I made the call."

The core standard of AB 705 is that students should begin in classes where they have the greatest likelihood of completing transferable English and math requirements, and research from the [Multiple Measures Assessment](#) Project shows that all students are more likely to complete when they begin directly in this level rather than in a remedial course.

Yet many colleges continue to offer a substantial number of remedial sections, especially in math.

Pasadena is one of just 13 colleges in the state where remedial courses constituted less than 10% of introductory math offerings in fall 2019, according to [Getting There II](#), a study by the California Acceleration Project and the Campaign for College Opportunity. At 49 out of the state's 114 community colleges, traditional remedial courses still constituted more than 30% of fall math offerings.

Why? Some faculty continue to believe that remedial courses are good for students. Others acknowledge the research showing that taking pre-transfer courses reduce students' likelihood of completion but think they need to maintain sections for specific student populations, such as students who don't intend to transfer or students who did not complete Algebra II in high school.

The California Acceleration Project

[www.AccelerationProject.org](http://www.AccelerationProject.org)

Staff writers: Hal Huntsman and Leslie Henson. Editor: Katie Hern.

# For the Greater Good: How Administrators Can Help Maximize Student Completion

By Leslie Henson and Katie Hern

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The good news is that, at a number of colleges around the state, administrators and faculty have developed solutions to these concerns that don't require continuing to offer remedial math (for detail, see [Getting There II](#), pp. 14-15). Below we have highlighted a number of strategies that administrators can use to ensure that students begin in courses where they have the greatest likelihood of completion.

## Changes to Course Schedule

As noted by Starbird above, administrators can use their responsibility for course scheduling to ensure students have the best chance of completion. This includes:

- Replacing below-transfer courses with corequisite support for students who need it (e.g., those in the lower bands of the statewide default placement rules, students who self-select for added support).
- Aligning math offerings with student need, especially regarding the balance of STEM and non-STEM courses. According to national research estimates, just 25% of students are pursuing STEM majors. In addition, some business majors may also need to take applied calculus or finite math. Colleges should use local data to match the courses they offer to the educational goals of their local student population.
- Expanding the number of sections of statistics offered by other departments (e.g., business, economics, psychology), a strategy for addressing the shortage of math faculty who teach statistics. Bakersfield College offered 56 sections of statistics in the fall, with 30 of them taught outside the math department.
- Substantially restricting the number of intermediate algebra sections so that students don't end up under-placing themselves in a class that makes them less likely to succeed. Students who have not completed algebra II in high school can still have access to the transfer level through STEM corequisites like those offered at Los Medanos, Pasadena, and Citrus. Students seeking a terminal associate's degree or CTE credential are better served in transfer-level or specialized CTE math courses, where they have higher success than in intermediate algebra.

## Communicating with Students

Administrators can also provide leadership to ensure that college communications steer students to courses where they have the greatest likelihood of completion. This is especially important at colleges that continue to offer stand-alone remedial courses. Among the communication strategies colleges are using:

- Asking students about their general area of academic interest (meta-major) during the assessment process, then directing them to the math course for that area instead of simply providing a list of math options. This prevents students from misplacing themselves into familiar-looking algebra courses that aren't appropriate for their major, something that regularly happened at colleges early to implement math pathways. Colleges using a pathways intent question include [West Hills College](#), [Los Medanos College](#), and Cuyamaca College.
- Checking placement information for students who enroll in remedial math before the start of term and moving them to the transfer-level class appropriate to their program of study, as Cuyamaca's math department chair does every semester.
- Taking proactive steps to prevent students from under-placing themselves into remedial courses, such as:
  - Chaffey College includes a registration "pop-up" that informs students of their right to enroll at the transfer level and requires them to acknowledge this before registering.
  - College of the Redwoods requires students to sign an informed consent to register for a below-transfer math class; the form includes information about their rights under AB 705 and a statement clarifying that students are most successful when they start in the transfer-level or college-level math for their program.
  - Modesto Junior College requires students to go through a challenge process in order to enroll in a course below their placement level.

- Cleaning up the college website to eliminate all references to assessment tests and clarify how placement has changed and why; making sure that placement messages to students are positive, with a focus on student capacity and the support available to help them succeed in transfer-level courses, as in this [video](#) by College of the Sequoias and this [page](#) from Porterville College.
- Conducting proactive outreach to continuing students about the new assessment process and what they should enroll in now, including sending emails, posting flyers around campus, and creating AB 705 pages like these ones from [Reedley](#) and [Porterville](#) Colleges. At both [Reedley](#) and [Porterville](#) colleges, counselors visited the soon-to-be-discontinued remedial math classes in person so they could allay student fears about enrolling at transfer-level the following semester. Porterville counselors prepared for these visits by role-playing student scenarios.
- Supporting faculty through paid participation in ongoing communities of practice in which they collaborate with other faculty on how to teach new content, use new pedagogy, and navigate the challenges of changing instruction. A robust community of practice was key to [Cuyamaca College's](#) shift to corequisite support at the transfer level.

### Conclusion

Navigating change in a shared governance environment can leave deans and department chairs understandably uneasy about their purview. Sometimes they may even feel like their hands are tied. But looking across the state, we see inspiring examples of individual leaders using skill and creativity to achieve the best results for students under AB 705.

One faculty member at Cuyamaca recently posted an homage to her math department chair on the CAP Facebook group. "That is my department chair, Tammi Marshall," the post said, with a photo of Marshall at a table with several students. "During the first days of every semester you can find her surrounded by students. She is helping them find the right math class. She convinces the skeptical students that they are capable of the class they need so they don't under-place themselves. She walks them to classes and introduces them to teachers. To all the department chairs out there: be a Tammi."

AB 705 represents perhaps the single largest change in the community college system over the last several decades, and it requires all of us -- administrators, faculty, staff, and students -- to take up the mantle of making it work. If we each use our respective roles to ensure that students have the greatest opportunity for success, as Pasadena dean Carrie Starbird says, "We can move the needle for thousands of students each semester."

### Professional development

Administrators can also ensure strong AB 705 implementation by supporting sustained and intentional faculty development. At many colleges, this work was initially funded through Basic Skills and Student Outcomes Transformation fund. Now that this program has ended, the state Chancellor's Office has [informed](#) colleges that they can use up to 1% of their Student Equity and Achievement dollars for AB 705 professional development. At a number of colleges, professional development has included:

- Investing in faculty leadership, including release time or stipends for faculty to lead professional development and create curricular materials for new corequisite courses. The Los Rios Community College District, for example, funded [corequisite coordinators](#) to support the changes of AB 705.



Cuyamaca College ESL students do "speed dating," a pedagogical technique from the professional development provided to English, math, and ESL faculty at the college

## Prison Scholars Thrive in Corequisite English and Statistics

By Hal Huntsman

In 2018-19, 38 out of 39 students passed statistics with corequisite support in the Pelican Bay Scholars Program, and 88% of students taking English composition with corequisite support also passed.

Few of these students graduated from high school. Some never even attended. Most are men of color, and every one of them is an inmate at Pelican Bay State Prison, California's only supermax state prison, located near the coast about 20 miles south of the Oregon border. It's hard to imagine students starting out with less academic experience and privilege than the ones in the Pelican Bay program.

Faculty from the College of the Redwoods teach the classes with the same curriculum, rigor, and pedagogy as standard college statistics and composition courses on campus. The corequisite units provide additional class time for collaborative activities and guidance.

**“At first, going in, I was a little concerned about the group work,” says statistics instructor Levi Gill.**

He notes that many prisoners are gang-affiliated, and that his classes include a mix of students from different gangs. “But we’ve never had any problems.”



Levi Gill – faculty member, College of the Redwoods

“They really want to learn. They have a lot of pride in doing college-level work and math. The questions they ask are similar to questions students outside the prison ask, even though almost no student in the program has a strong background in math.”

Ashley Knowlton, the program's English instructor, thinks students' motivation comes from their desire to be thought of as something other than an inmate: “They want to be more than that single story. They want to be part of a community that can be beneficial. They want to occupy their minds with something positive.”





## Student Spotlight Gregory Lopez

Pelican Bay scholar David Nguyen writes that growing up in Southern California, "I was the exception to the stereotype that Asians are good at math. I sucked!" Teachers used to consider him recalcitrant and unruly, and he was suspended and even escorted out of class in handcuffs. What helped Nguyen learn in Gill's class was learning that "the brain is a muscle and it can grow." He also appreciated the group work. "I learned so much from these groups, because we are not only learning how to do the math, but learning how to work in a team, develop communication skills, give presentations, and so on."



Fellow scholar Frank Lalo, 43, is pursuing a bachelor's degree in business while serving a 56-year sentence "for stupid and ignorant choices I made as a young adult." Lalo says, "Just think, I'm a college student! Nobody in my past or present would've ever thought it to be realistic or possible, except maybe for my dear Mom. Crazy!"

**"Being in prison comes with a stigma of we're not good enough and dehumanizing thinking of we're just animals," says Lalo.**

At first he says it was hard to trust that faculty would treat them well. But in statistics, Gill "taught us like we were actual college students, and I can honestly say that was key in getting the class, especially myself, in being receptive and fully absorbed in soaking up everything he taught us."

"These students have great potential," says Gill. "They'll go as far in their education as we can support them to go."

### College of the Redwoods

Gregory Lopez grew up in San Jose, CA and never went to high school. He was the first in his family of six children to enroll in college. "I have always enjoyed the challenge of mathematics," he says, crediting his eighth grade teacher Mr. Conrad. "I can stay up all night trying to figure out the solution to a problem."

Lopez says that taking statistics in the Pelican Bay scholars program "intensified my love of math. I feel encouraged, inspired, and motivated to further my mathematics education."

"Statistics was completely new to me, so every class I was really learning," says Lopez. "There was this one rule, that Levi called 'Levi's Big Rule of Statistics,' which was 'Never interpret the center without knowing the spread, and vice versa.' With the knowledge of the rule, I now question every poll I see."

About working in groups, Lopez writes, "Class activities helped immensely. Levi would group us up randomly, enabling us to grasp each other's perspectives. This definitely supported me by showing I am parallel with my classmates in my understanding."

Lopez wants to earn his associate and bachelor's degrees in mathematics and dreams of becoming an electrical engineer.



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# A Deep Dive into Equity in English Composition

By Leslie Henson

## Cuyamaca College

When San Diego's Cuyamaca College began allowing all students to enroll directly in transfer-level composition and offering corequisite support instead of traditional remedial courses, students' one-year completion of English composition doubled, increasing from 41% to 80%. All racial/ethnic groups benefited from the change, and equity gaps narrowed.

But, says English department chair Lauren Halsted, white students were still completing college English at higher rates than students from other racial and ethnic groups.

"Part of the reason is that even though most teachers want to empower students, historically, racism has been woven into the English curriculum," she says,

"from a literary canon based mostly on texts by white authors to style guides that privilege the language patterns of white, middle-class speakers."

In spring 2018 the English department began what Halsted calls "a deep dive" into equity-minded teaching. The college's research office provided all teachers with success data from their own courses, broken down by race, ethnicity, and other factors. They also began hosting -- and paying faculty to attend -- monthly equity workshops, including sessions on unconscious bias, discipline, and course policies.

One of the equity-minded shifts faculty describe is being intentional about explicitly teaching students what they are expected to do, instead of assuming they already know how. "Students have a fear of writing essays," says English teacher Marvelyn Bucky.



## Student Spotlight: Elizabeth Garcia

"So we look at individual parts of essays and spend more time building the parts."

"Instead of me saying, Here's the assignment, good luck with that, I teach them the strategy, and they try it together," Bucky explains. "We discuss what's working and what's not, and then they start writing their assignment individually during class."

**She says the approach enables students to build early success, "instead of having to fix it after they have already turned it in."**

Another shift is recognizing that class policies can contribute to inequitable outcomes. For example, a rigid lateness policy is more likely to penalize students who rely on public transportation than those who own cars. So instead of teaching as if every student has the same life circumstances, Bucky says she now allows students who miss class to make up or turn in work during her office hours: "I think about the individual students in my class and try to give them what they need."

Halsted says the English department is also collaborating with ESL faculty on how to meet the needs of English language learners, especially trying to change the way in which English instruction has suppressed students' cultural identities. "We talk about not penalizing students for non-U.S.-native markers or language acquisition markers. If it's clear, then that's good," she says. "And they can generate ideas and take notes in the language they think in and then translate their ideas later on."

Collaborating on equity-minded practices has allowed faculty to open up to new teaching approaches without being overwhelmed by the magnitude of the change. English teacher Karen Marrujo says she feels a sense of "supported freedom" to do this work as part of a larger community of teachers.

"We're systemically changing our approach to embrace student voices," Marrujo says, "inviting students to take charge and letting them bring as much of their full selves into the classroom as they feel comfortable bringing."

### Mount San Antonio College

It was Elizabeth Garcia's third attempt at college English at Mt. San Antonio College. If she didn't pass Michelle Dougherty's college English with corequisite support class, Garcia was going to drop out of college.

A first-generation Mexican-American, Garcia says her previous English teachers left her wondering if she even belonged in college. She recalls one professor responding to her questions: "If you don't understand it by now, I don't know what else I can tell you."

"I was becoming concerned that, intellectually, I didn't have what it takes to pass a college English class," she says.



But things felt different in Professor Dougherty's class. The workload was the same, but the tone was supportive. Instead of belittling students for not knowing things, the teacher "wasn't going to give up on me, or any of us," says Garcia. "She wanted us to succeed in the class."

The readings were also more relevant and recent -- "not just stuff put out in the 1980's," Garcia says -- and students got to choose some of the books they read. They also received a lot of individual attention and feedback on their writing: "The teacher pointed out what we needed to work on, but she also told us what we were doing well."

Garcia calls Dougherty a "writing angel" and says the positive approach "made writing easier, and it made coming to class and doing the assignments easier." She learned to make her essays more cohesive by transitioning from one topic to another. She also got some refreshers on grammar and punctuation rules she'd forgotten.

Garcia earned a B in college English. More important, she went from being "so frightened of failing" to someone who can walk into a class confident about writing papers. Currently enrolled in the college's veterinary technician program, Garcia plans to transfer to Cal Poly Pomona and one day become a veterinarian.



# Maximizing Completion for English Language Learners

By Katie Hern

We're just six months away from the AB 705 implementation deadline for ESL, but many colleges still have questions about what the law means for English language learners. What exactly does it mean to maximize ESL students' likelihood of completing transfer-level English?

This piece focuses on highlights from recent research by the Multiple Measures Assessment Project (MMAP) and the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC). Because AB 705 only applies to degree- and transfer-seeking students in credit ESL, the recommendations and studies referenced here focus just on those segments of the ESL community. (Given the diversity of English learners' educational goals, colleges may need additional structures beyond those discussed below, such as noncredit classes for students not pursuing a degree).

## ESL Sequence Design

Under AB 705, colleges are charged with maximizing students' likelihood of completing transfer-level English composition within a three-year timeframe. One common misinterpretation of the law is that colleges must only ensure that a degree-seeking ESL student *could* complete transfer-level English composition within three years -- that is, if the ESL sequences includes five or fewer semesters of credit coursework followed by English composition. But this interpretation misses the law's core standard that students should begin in the course where they have the *best likelihood* of completion.

## The length of a college's ESL sequence is the largest driver of student completion rates.

At colleges that have reduced the length of their ESL curricula and enabled students to start closer to English composition, student completion of transfer-level English has increased substantially (see "Leaps of Faith" sidebar about Cuyamaca College).

According to a [2019 analysis](#) by MMAP, when colleges' ESL sequence includes 3 or fewer levels, 31% of students complete transfer-level English in three years or less, but just 16% do at colleges where the ESL sequence includes five or more levels.

"One thing is clear: as is the case in traditional developmental math and English sequences, the more levels students must traverse, the more exit points there are, and the less likely students are to complete a transfer-level course," wrote PPIC

researchers in their [2019 study](#) "English as a Second Language in California Community Colleges."

In addition to sequence length, PPIC found that three other structural features have been shown to improve degree-seeking ESL students' completion:

- At colleges where skills instruction is integrated (e.g., reading and writing taught within the same course), students are 12 percentage points more likely to complete transfer-level English in three years than students at colleges where skills are taught in separate courses.
- At colleges where ESL courses earn transferable elective or general education credit, students are 16 percentage points more likely to complete transfer-level English in three years than at colleges where ESL coursework is non-transferable.
- At colleges where ESL courses feed directly into transfer-level English composition, students are 7 percentage points more likely to complete the course within three years than at colleges where students take developmental English after completing ESL.

Bottom line: Offering a five-level ESL sequence is not enough to truly maximize ESL student completion of transfer-level English. Colleges should integrate and accelerate their ESL sequences to reduce the time students spend in stand-alone ESL classes, seek transfer articulation for higher-level ESL courses, and structure ESL courses to feed directly into transfer-level composition.

## Students Who Graduated from a U.S. High School

Early AB 705 guidance from the Chancellor's Office emphasized that students who had completed four years of a U.S. high school had the best outcomes when placed directly into transfer-level English composition. This led some colleges to conclude that English language learners should be placed into transfer-level English *only if* they had four years of high school.

However, the MMAP research team later clarified that this was a "false impression" based on the fact that they had not examined data for students with less than four years of transcript data.

As described in a January 2020 presentation to the statewide AB 705 ESL Advisory Committee, when MMAP researchers broadened their sample, they found that all English language learners who graduated from a U.S. high school have higher



## “Leaps of Faith”

By Leslie Henson

completion of transfer-level English if they enroll directly rather than taking a stand-alone ESL course below transfer level -- regardless of whether one, two, three, or four years of high school data were available. Even English language learners with GPAs below 1.9 are better off starting in transfer-level composition, and their success rates in the course are higher than non-language learners with similar GPAs (53% vs. 42%).

Among students who have completed only their senior year in the U.S., 81% complete transfer-level English in a year if they enroll directly, while only 30-31% do if they begin in an ESL course. Extending the timeframe for the ESL path, or limiting the number of ESL courses students take, does not change the bottom line. Students who begin just one ESL course below transfer-level composition have a lower three-year completion rate than the one-year rate for those who enroll directly in transfer-level composition.

Bottom line: Degree-seeking students who graduated from a U.S. high school should begin directly in transfer-level composition. If language support is to be required, it should be delivered concurrently (e.g., corequisite model of English composition taught by ESL faculty).

### Students Who Did Not Graduate from a U.S. High School

For international students and other English language learners who did not graduate from a U.S. high school, the research is less clear because of the lack of a common dataset for determining placement. Some colleges are investigating other forms of multiple measures and experimenting with informed self-placement for degree-seeking ESL students, but the work is too new to have clear data.

Given these complexities, the Chancellor's Office has extended the timeframe during which colleges can continue to use standardized tests for ESL placement, but colleges should be wary of the low predictive validity of such tests. For example, MMAP research found that high school GPA was more than 10 times as predictive of English language learners' performance in ESL classes than scores on the English STAR test (correlation coefficient .25 vs. .02).

Bottom line: More research will be needed on how to maximize completion for English language learners without U.S. high school GPAs. In the meantime, colleges should increase these students' likelihood of completion by implementing the course sequence reforms identified above.

### Cuyamaca College's ESL Transformation

In a recent article for *The CATESOL Journal*, ESL Chair Guillermo Colls describes how Cuyamaca College accelerated their ESL sequence and became an early leader in AB 705 reforms. Previously, students at this San Diego area college faced up to four years of ESL coursework before they could even enroll in transferable English composition. Now, a beginning ESL student can complete English composition in as few as two years.

**“It has taken not a single, but multiple, leaps of faith to get where we are,” writes Colls. “We not only believe in our students, we believe in everybody’s students.”**

In the old sequence, skills were taught separately, teachers did most of the talking, and students completed textbook grammar drills and exercises. In the new sequence, skills are integrated, with grammar taught in the context of students' own writing. Following the California Acceleration Project's instructional [design principles](#), instructors assign full-length, real-world texts, and students spend class time working collaboratively to practice their skills and prepare for individual writing assignments.

Despite the more challenging curricula, completion of transferable English composition has increased substantially. In the old sequence, just 54% of students who started two levels below would complete composition within five semesters (n=63). In the new sequence, these students now start one level higher, and 67% complete within five semesters, a thirteen-percentage-point increase (n=110). And completion has doubled for students who previously would have started four levels below transfer-level English and who now begin two levels higher (36% compared to 17%).

“Our students . . . have great intelligence and capacity,” writes Colls in a statement cosigned by fellow ESL faculty Virginia Lyn Neylon-Craft and Manuel Mancillas-Gomez. “They can do so much more with the proper training in a much shorter time if only we will give them the opportunity.”

## Pasadena Offers 100% Transfer-Level Math

By Leslie Henson

Pasadena City College math faculty are candid about their past failures. Professor Linda Hintzman says that back in 2009, she helped the college add another level of remedial math to their course sequence, not understanding that this would reduce student completion rather than improve it.

**“My whole teaching career was based on falsehoods,” says former basic skills teacher and now-dean Carrie Starbird. “Students could do far more than what I thought.”**

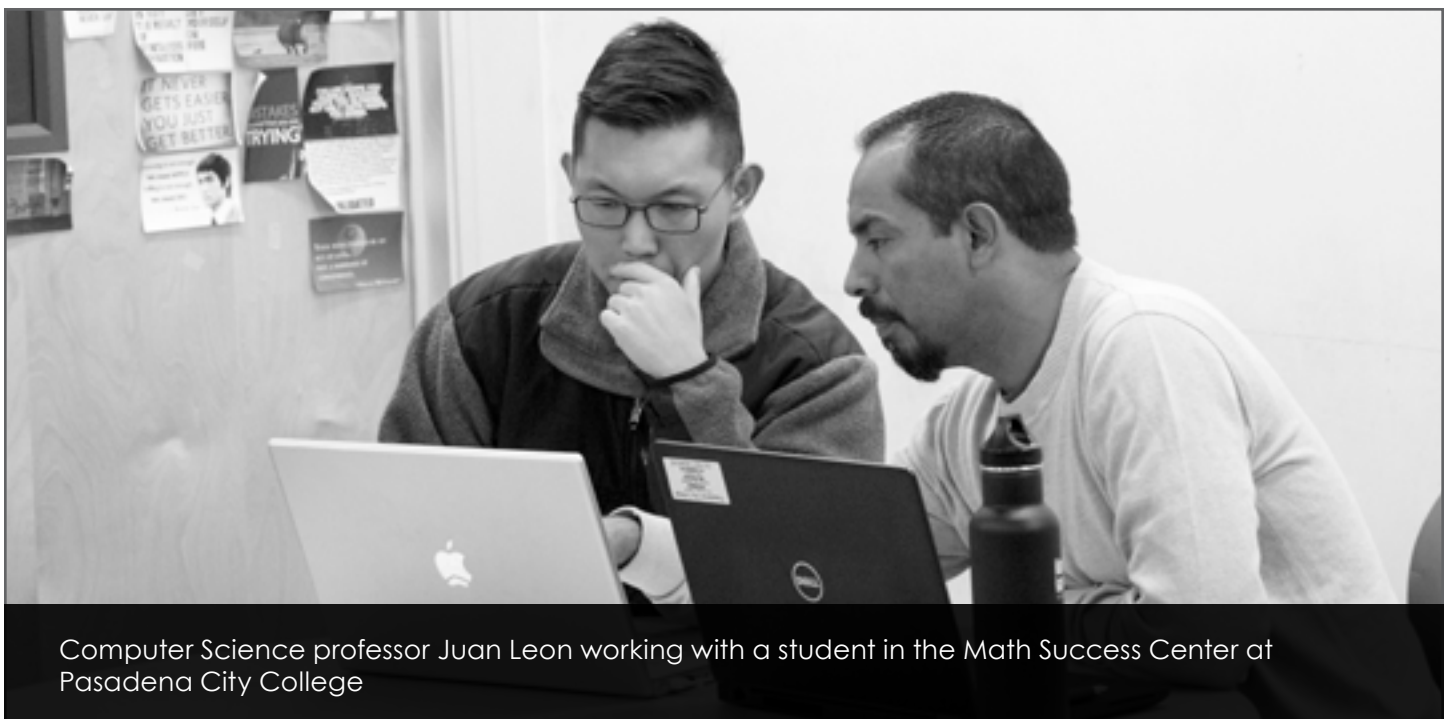
For several years the math department has been working with the California Acceleration Project to streamline remediation, and as of this fall, the college no longer offers standalone remedial math courses, not even intermediate algebra. Instead, all students enroll directly in the transferable, college-level math appropriate to their major.

Students who want additional support can enroll in half-unit corequisite lab courses linked to introductory statistics, college algebra, and liberal arts math. These courses address topics like time management and the forgetting curve, reading for statistics, and failure as part of the process, along with activities to deepen students' conceptual understanding. They also include

material formerly covered in remedial courses, such as teaching proportions and decimals in the context of real-world statistics. Math professor Corinne Kirkbride says this “pulls students in because it's more relevant to the course and to their lives.”

Corequisite courses are complemented by other student success efforts at the college. The math department has embraced more holistic pedagogy, emphasizing support for students' emotional needs and helping students become aware of their own thinking and learning processes. The college also recently used grant funds to purchase almost 3,000 graphing calculators for student use, and all full-time math, English, and ESL faculty received a copy of *Whistling Vivaldi*, Claude Steele's book about how stereotypes affect academic performance.

Math professor Jay Cho says he's learned that faculty can communicate “unconscious assumptions that some students won't do well because of their backgrounds or identities.” As an example, Cho says a student once informed him that he rolled his eyes when she asked a question. “Me rolling my eyes isn't going to help anyone learn better,” says Cho. Instead of complaining to other faculty -- “Oh, I'm trying so hard, why aren't they trying harder and doing homework” -- Cho says he now tries to remember that “math class is the epitome of where students have felt a lack of belonging in school.” He tries to convey, “You can all do this, and you are all welcome here.”



Computer Science professor Juan Leon working with a student in the Math Success Center at Pasadena City College

## Student Spotlight Maria Sullivan

### College of the Redwoods

After nine years living and working in San Francisco as a butcher, Maria Sullivan wanted a career change. She moved in with her parents in Crescent City, CA and enrolled at College of the Redwoods to take the prerequisites for the nursing program.

Sullivan had gotten good grades in high school, including an A in algebra II, but it had been a decade since then. In the past, Sullivan would have had to take at least a semester of remedial algebra, but Redwoods has begun offering a half-unit algebra support course that students take early in the same semester alongside their chemistry class.

The class met twice a week for only four weeks, but it was just what Sullivan needed. "The math was not easy," Sullivan recalls. "It focused on the kinds of problems we were doing in chemistry. It was clear that the math instructor was talking to the chemistry instructor."



And, even though the students were at a lot of different levels, "we all felt comfortable asking questions," Sullivan says. "There was some lecture, but mostly we did problems together. Often our teacher would give us something to work on and then call some people up to the board to show what they tried. We solved it together as a class."

Sullivan also got extra help from her math instructor in the math lab. She feels the Pass/No Pass grading in the math support class reduced the pressure of getting a grade and allowed her to concentrate on learning. "I got an A in chemistry," Sullivan is proud to report. "I don't think that would have happened without the math I learned in the support class."



A math tutor working with students at Pasadena City College

Now that statistics and liberal arts math constitute over 70% of introductory math courses in the schedule, Pasadena faculty are also receiving support to teach these classes, including "lunch and learn" meetings about statistics led by Cho and fellow faculty member Roger Yang. "As math majors," Kirkbride says, "many of us may only have taken statistics once, twenty years ago."

This fall was the first time Hintzman ever taught statistics. And though she acknowledges that it can be unnerving to teach a new class, "I'm not freaking out too much because I have faculty I can reach out to who will help me."

Students can also be nervous about the changes. Hintzman says it has been difficult to persuade them that the college's past placement practices had been wrong, especially students "who believed us when we told them they weren't ready for college-level math."

But Pasadena faculty are clear that remedial courses don't help struggling students, and they're committed to helping students understand and thrive in the new system. "We've been working under the gun of the AB 705 deadline," says Hintzman. "But we're not done just because fall 2019 is over. We're just beginning."

## Statewide Progress on AB 705 Implementation

A recent report by the California Acceleration Project and the Campaign for College Opportunity takes an early look at how colleges are responding to AB 705, a new law that requires far-reaching changes in how community colleges place students into English and math courses. [Getting There II: A Statewide Progress Report on Implementation of AB 705](#) reveals that California community colleges have made substantial progress, but that uneven implementation -- particularly in math -- threatens to depress student completion.

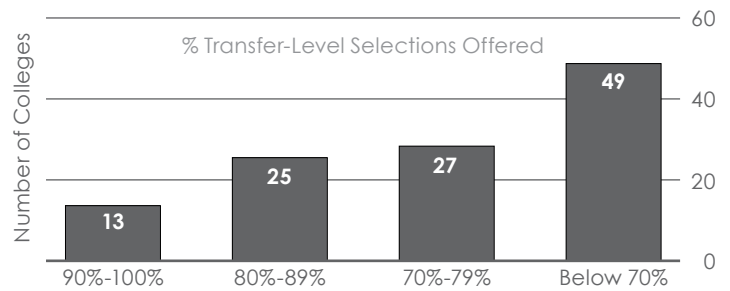
Researchers examined fall 2019 course schedules to assess whether colleges' offerings were aligned with the AB 705 standard of "maximizing" student completion of transferable, college-level English and math courses. The report highlights recent [statewide research](#) showing that all students have higher completion when enrolling directly in transfer-level courses, and it notes that colleges approximately doubled the proportion of transfer-level classes between fall 2017 and fall 2019. Statewide, transfer-level classes increased from 48 percent to 87 percent of introductory English sections and from 36 percent to 68 percent of introductory math sections.

*Getting There II* also examines the extent to which colleges are acting upon research showing that student completion is much higher when colleges replace traditional remedial classes with [corequisite](#) models in which students take a transfer-level class with additional, concurrent support. They found that the number of colleges offering corequisite remediation grew considerably in the last two years, with 99 colleges now offering corequisite remediation in English, 91 in statistics and liberal arts math, and 84 in math-intensive business and STEM pathways.

Despite this progress, many colleges continue to offer a large proportion of remedial sections, especially in math. Only 13 out of the 114 colleges met the "strong implementation" benchmark of offering fewer than 10 percent remedial math sections, while 49 of the 114 colleges were in the "weak implementer" category, with remedial math constituting over 30 percent of introductory sections (Figure 1).

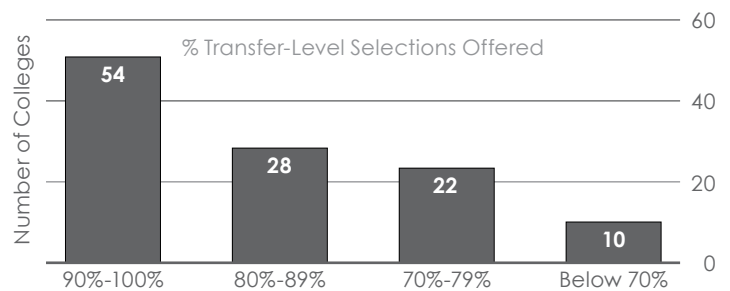
### Math

Figure 1



### English

Figure 2



### AB 705 by Strength of Implementation

Implementation is uneven for English and math

Finally, the report examines how colleges are communicating with students about placement policies and their right to enroll in transfer-level courses. In a close analysis of the websites of 11 colleges still offering a substantial share of remedial courses, researchers found that none provided information on how enrolling in a below-transfer class would reduce students' likelihood of completing their English and math requirements. Without this, students are unable to make informed choices and protect their right to begin in courses where they would have the best chance of completing English and math requirements.

"With regard to AB 705, the California Community College system is *getting there*. Colleges have made substantial progress in addressing the long-standing problem of low and inequitable completion among students placed into remediation," the report concludes. "However, student completion gains will be depressed if problems implementing AB 705 are not addressed."



## The California Acceleration Project

Supporting the State's 115 Community Colleges to Transform Remediation to Increase Student Completion and Equity

[www.AccelerationProject.org](http://www.AccelerationProject.org)