

DH 20015633 E1

CSU pushes new test to replace SAT Sept. 7

11th-grade exam
would also serve
as state assessment

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SACRAMENTO — A top official of the California State University called yesterday for a single test for 11th-graders that would do double duty as the state's assessment test and a college placement exam.

The test could possibly replace the SAT exam for placement in the 23-campus system, helping to determine whether students need to take remedial courses.

"Meeting the state's standards would not only mean success in high school, but placement at a CSU," David Spence, executive vice chancellor and chief academic officer for CSU, told members of the state Board of Education. "Even more force and focus would be lent to the California standards, and it would mean less testing for everybody."



David Spence, of CSU said a new test would mean less testing for everybody.

California is in the forefront of a movement to offer a single test for both purposes, Spence said.

The state is poised to pass legislation that would allow the board, which was meeting yesterday at the state education building in Sacramento, to restructure its testing program to include assessments of recently adopted grade-level standards.

CSU officials believe that with the inclusion of a writing exam, the state's test could be aligned to show whether students have learned what they need to be prepared for college.

The University of California, which accepts just one-eighth of the state's graduates, has less need for a placement test.

But Spence said it fit with CSU.

"For us and our kind of students, it can be done," Spence said. "My message is let's do this thing, and let's do it as quickly as we can."

CSU currently accepts the top one-third of all California high school graduates. But students must still pass writing and math placement exams and get at least a 550 on both the SAT verbal and math portions.

CSU has long wanted to offer its placement exams in 11th grade to give students who fail them a chance to catch up during their senior year of high school. But the idea has been impeded by funding restraints and critics who say it would overburden high school students, who already take a battery of state exams.

John Mockler, executive director for the California Board of Education, said the board was encouraged by Spence's remarks and would formally start work on the issue.

"It connects post-secondary and higher education," he said. "They are not asking for 'A' while we are asking for 'B.'"

In addition, aligning the high school standards tests with requirements for college provides a motivation for students, he said.

"It makes the standards relevant," Mockler said. "Now, you can tell kids in high school that these are not meaningless."

Meanwhile, University of California President Richard Atkinson told the board yesterday UC would like to see the state's standards aligned with the 15 rigorous courses required for admission to UC.

He noted that in February he had called on UC's eight undergraduate campuses to drop the SAT I basic aptitude exam in admissions and replace it with an achievement exam tied closely to the curriculum for college-bound students.

"We want to send a message to students that if they indeed master the curriculum, they will do well on these achievement exams," Atkinson said.

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