



PPIC

PUBLIC POLICY
INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

English as a Second Language at California's Community Colleges

An Early Examination of AB 705 Reforms

Technical Appendices

CONTENTS

Appendix A. Key Terms, Data, and Methods

Appendix B. ESL Placement

Appendix C. ESL Enrollment and Outcomes

Olga Rodriguez, Laura Hill, and Daniel Payares-Montoya
with research support from Rogelio Salazar

Supported with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Sutton Family Fund

Appendix A. Key Terms, Data, and Methods

Key Terms

Transfer-level English (TLE): In this report, when we talk about transfer-level English (TLE) courses we are referring to the lowest-level English courses that are transferable to the University of California (UC) and/or to the California State University (CSU) systems based on articulation agreements. These courses are also known as gateway courses. For English the first transfer-level composition course (C-ID ENGL 100) qualifies as the gateway course.

Transfer-level English for ESL students (TLE-ESL): These are freshman composition courses offered by ESL departments and that also qualify as a gateway course (C-ID ENGL 100). At least 19 of these courses were listed in the colleges' catalogs for Fall 2021, and 14 of them had students enrolled during that semester.

Transfer-level English for Multilingual speakers (TLE-Multi): TLE courses designed to provide additional language support for ELs that may require it inside the class or through corequisite courses.

Guided Placement: Under a guided placement process, a college may provide students with course descriptions, sample course materials, and questionnaires intended to help them self-assess their preparedness to read and write at a certain level. Upon completing the guided placement process, students would be able to receive their course placement, sometimes in consultation with an academic advisor.

Self-placement: The Chancellor's Office placement guidelines define self-placement as a "process in which a student chooses their placement after consideration of the self-assessment survey results and other relevant factors" (Perez 2019). Note that self-placement can be use jointly with other methods, the most common in ESL is the use of guided placement and self-placement, a practice which is known as guided self-placement (GSP) that is used by 66% of colleges.

Sequence course: ESL course that is part of the ESL sequence that leads to transfer-level English (i.e. ESL prerequisite to transfer-level English).

Credit ESL: ESL courses offered to CCC students for credit and for which students pay tuition. Many of these courses confer non-degree applicable credit, but some do confer degree applicable or transferrable credit (see Appendix Table B1 for more details). AB 705 only applies to credit ESL.

Non-Credit ESL: ESL courses offered to CCC students at no cost. These courses are typically open entry/open exit and final grades are not recorded on student transcripts. AB 705 does not apply to non-credit ESL. However, some colleges offer a non-credit ESL mirrored sequence that can also lead students into the TLE or TLE-ESL course.

Degree/transfer-seeking ESL students: a student that reports that their educational goal to obtain an associate degree and transfer to a baccalaureate granting institution; or to transfer to a baccalaureate granting institution without an associate degree; or to obtain a two-year associate degree without transfer. Throughout the report we use the terms degree/transfer seeking, degree-seeking, and degree-intending interchangeably.

Sequence length: number of levels that an ESL sequence lists as necessary/recommended before students are able to enroll in transfer-level English or TLE for ESL students (e.g. levels below transfer-level English). Sequence length may include ESL credit or non-credit courses and/or English courses if they are listed as prerequisites in a sequence leading to transfer-level English.

Integrated sequence: Combines instruction of two or more skills into a single course (i.e. reading and writing). Integration is also known as horizontal compression. A sequence at a given college is coded as integrated if 75 percent or more of courses being offered in the sequence use an integrated approach.

LEP students: Refers to a student that has been identified in the student level data as limited English proficient (LEP) by virtue of having been enrolled in a basic skills end ESL course at some time or that has been identified as needing ESL services without being enrolled in one yet.

Data

Our analysis utilizes both quantitative and qualitative data to both descriptively illustrate the ESL landscape of the California community college system after the first year of implementation of Assembly Bill 705. Below we detail our quantitative and qualitative approaches.

ESL Course Scan

An important component of our qualitative approach is a comprehensive scan of ESL course information collected from official college documents, namely college websites and course catalogs, to accurately capture the sequence of courses English learners would need to take to access transfer-level English (TLE) or TLE for ESL students, by college. From previous ESL reports we learned of the importance of appropriately recording the ESL sequences from the catalogs given that information reported by the colleges to the California Community College Chancellor's Office may not be, in some cases, totally accurate or adequately captured in the data. These coding issues have implications for data dissemination and analysis, thus highlighting the importance of a thorough scan of course catalogs to ensure that course information is accurately captured. We used catalogs from the most recent academic year for all 115 colleges (2021-22).

We employ a “backwards mapping” approach in our course scan methodology: at each college in our study, we identify the TLE or TLE for ESL students course offered. From there, we trace out the sequence of courses to transfer level English by identifying the courses listed as prerequisite for the transfer-level course, until we identify the last one that a student would need to take to reach transfer-level course (i.e., the course that has no prerequisites). Once we identify the sequence of courses, we assign the level below the transfer-level course by counting how many courses proceed a given course in the sequence in order for a student to take TLE or TLE for ESL students and update our database of courses with the coding. For example, a “1” code means the course is the only course listed as a prerequisite before taking transfer-level course, “2” means there are two courses before taking transfer-level English, “3” means there are three courses, and so on. If the ESL sequence information at a given college was not readily available or comprehensible from college documents, we reached out to ESL department members at the college via email to gain more clarity.

ESL AB 705 Adoption Plans

The data used to examine the changes California community colleges made to their ESL placement policies in response to AB 705 comes from the AB 705 adoption plans gathered by the CCC Chancellors Office during the summer of 2021 for all colleges in the system (see [Lowe and Davidson \(2021\)](#) for a PDF of the survey instrument used to gather plans). The data was provided by the Chancellors Office in fall 2021, with a final dataset provided in summer 2022. In all, 113 of the 115 colleges were represented among the AB 705 adoption plans. Submissions were made either by individual colleges or by districts (e.g. one single submission representing all colleges in the district). The sample of colleges used for the analysis includes only colleges that submitted an AB 705 adoption plan and also offered an ESL sequence in fall 2021 (N=105). We identified two colleges that had ESL sequences but did not submit an adoption plan and eight colleges who submitted an adoption plan but did not offer an ESL sequence during fall 2021. Note that while the survey also asked colleges to report on the supports provided to students in college composition, validation practices, and disproportionate impact, this analysis solely focused on the questions that were directly related to the placement policies.

The survey itself included a mix of open-ended and multiple choice (e.g. select all that apply). Colleges were asked to report the methods used to place students with a U.S. high school diploma or the equivalent separately from those used for students without these educational credentials. For both, colleges were asked to report the different methods used and then an open ended question asked them to describe how the measures are used to

inform the placement process. As part of the analysis of the survey data, the researchers carefully reviewed the open-ended placement descriptions to verify the methods colleges reported. If necessary, measures not reported, but included in the description were recorded in the survey (e.g. describes guided placement, but this option is not selected). Additionally, a series of new variables were derived using the data—for example, if both guided placement and self-placement were reported, a new variable was derived to identify how many colleges used guided self-placement. In addition, the detailed analysis of the open-ended descriptions also identified whether counselors are used during the placement process.

The survey also asked colleges using an assessment instrument to report details about the specific instrument used and the cut scores used for placement. While not all colleges that reported using an assessment reported these details, 27 of 31 did. For these, researchers were able to determine the most commonly used assessment tests. Further, for the subset of colleges that reported using the same test and who reported detailed cut scores used for the different course levels, researchers were able to analyze if and how cut scores varied for placements into the same course level (e.g. one-level below transfer English and TLE or the TLE ESL equivalent).

Student Longitudinal Data

Our quantitative approach utilizes student-level longitudinal data from the California Community College Chancellor’s Office Management Information System (COMIS). Students in the dataset are enrolled across the 114 community colleges that comprise the California Community College system, and includes information on student demographics, course-taking behavior, course elements (e.g., title of course, basic skills status, minimum/maximum number of credits, etc.), and student outcomes (grades, credits earned, degree attainment, transfer, etc.). The timeframe covered by the data spans the 2014-15 academic year through the 2021-22 academic year. Appendix X lists the variables from the COMIS data that we use in our analyses.

ESL Faculty/Staff Interviews

To inform our quantitative results, we interviewed ESL faculty and ESL department chairs from 16 California community colleges. Colleges were selected for an interview to be representative of the different types of placement and curricular reforms and of different regions of the state. The final interview sample included 24 individuals between previous and current ESL department chairs and ESL faculty. The interviews were conducted in May and June 2022. We spoke with each interviewee for between 45 minutes and 1 hour and a half. Interviewees were asked a variety of questions pertaining to their background in ESL; ESL sequence offerings, assessment, placement, and enrollment in ESL; ESL sequence experience; ESL students; ESL outcomes; professional development; and the perceived impact of AB705 in ESL placement and sequences. After each interview was conducted, researchers debriefed, reviewed notes, and shared their impressions to identify emerging themes, and points that needed to be pursued further. This process of review and reflection informed all subsequent interviews. In this manner, data collected from each interview was continuously assessed and informed future interviews until data collection was complete. The data was organized and coded to identify themes on a Google document.

Sample Construction

To describe the ESL population’s socioeconomic characteristics, enrollment and success in transfer level courses, our analysis focused on students who were enrolled in the CCC between 2014-15 and 2021-22 academic years during the Fall semesters. To identify the ESL courses, we relied in COMIS data, using the top-codes associated with them, and on the information collected from the college catalogs. For the gateway courses, we relied on the information provided in the catalogs. We restrict our analysis to students 1) enrolled both in credit and non-credit ESL courses and 2) students with valid enrollments (students that received valid grades). Depending on the

specific analysis, we applied other restrictions, like 3) degree-intending students (according to the information reported by them during each term), 4) students that are in their first year in the California community college system, and/or 5) students that are part of the ESL sequence identified in the 2021-22 college catalogs. Importantly, in our sample we include the group of students with invalid SSNs as they may signal undocumented status. Furthermore, dual enrollment students—who are high school students taking college courses—are excluded from our sample.

Tables A to E contains a breakdown of the different data samples.

TABLE A1

Number of students, by cohort (students enrolled in ESL courses in CCC system)

	Fall-2014	Fall-2015	Fall-2016	Fall-2017	Fall-2018	Fall-2019	Fall-2020	Fall-2021
ESL students - All	59,261	59,489	58,208	58,289	59,873	61,556	36,793	36,994
ESL students - Writing and/or integrated courses	50,501	50,908	50,030	50,372	52,460	53,801	31,806	31,266
ESL students - Transfer intending	24,763	24,320	24,578	25,856	22,775	19,080	13,624	11,358
ESL students - Sequence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12,938

NOTES: Author calculations from Chancellor’s Office MIS data.

TABLE A2

Share of students in ESL courses with various features.

	Fall-2014	Fall-2015	Fall-2016	Fall-2017	Fall-2018	Fall-2019	Fall-2020	Fall-2021
Gender								
Non-binary	0	0	0	2	0	26	13	20
Female	36,492	36,937	36,443	37,095	39,389	41,040	26,453	26,369
Male	22,099	21,891	21,050	20,503	19,633	19,157	9,634	9,954
Unknown/non-respond	670	661	715	689	851	1,333	693	651
Race								
Asian	23,771	24,768	23,312	24,196	22,503	21,144	13,176	12,601
Black	932	857	781	793	746	633	487	445
Latino	20,361	19,164	19,014	19,166	21,901	25,249	13,425	15,573
Native American/Alaskan Native	43	46	40	40	37	23	13	9
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	81	70	71	64	40	40	30	23
Two or more races	594	541	522	536	530	427	338	360
White	9,479	9,474	9,203	9,622	9,997	8,522	6,582	5,470
Unknown	4,000	4,569	5,265	3,872	4,119	5,518	2,742	2,513

	Fall-2014	Fall-2015	Fall-2016	Fall-2017	Fall-2018	Fall-2019	Fall-2020	Fall-2021
Citizenship								
US Citizen	12,892	12,627	13,011	12,324	12,490	13,220	8,329	9,136
Permanent Resident	21,202	20,443	19,683	21,068	21,745	21,073	14,179	12,086
Temporary Resident	1,849	2,288	1,379	1,522	1,663	1,622	891	790
Refugee/Asylee	2,503	2,689	2,547	2,430	2,497	2,080	1,366	1,186
Student Visa	7,051	7,275	6,421	5,892	4,793	3,324	1,493	1,242
Other Status	5,127	5,442	5,837	5,630	8,220	8,952	4,814	5,011
Status Unknown	8,637	8,725	9,330	9,423	8,465	11,285	5,721	7,543
Education								
No high school	7,263	8,707	8,830	8,955	10,512	10,684	5,207	5,249
US high school	15,037	13,676	12,904	11,369	10,457	7,967	5,536	5,437
Foreign high school	20,906	21,501	20,041	19,745	19,811	18,789	13,035	11,191
College degree	4,626	4,874	4,884	5,725	6,749	6,037	4,345	4,775
Unknown	11,429	10,731	11,549	12,495	12,344	18,079	8,670	10,342
Age								
Non-traditional	39,248	39,931	39,548	40,673	44,785	48,171	29,214	29,485
Traditional	19,995	19,535	18,643	17,592	15,048	13,310	7,554	7,498

NOTES: Author calculations from Chancellor's Office MIS data.

TABLE A3

Share of students in ESL – Writing and/or integrated courses with various features.

	Fall-2014	Fall-2015	Fall-2016	Fall-2017	Fall-2018	Fall-2019	Fall-2020	Fall-2021
Gender								
Non-binary	0	0	0	2	0	20	10	15
Female	30,811	31,350	31,089	31,828	34,266	35,498	22,694	22,123
Male	19,147	18,989	18,320	17,954	17,449	17,073	8,499	8,562
Unknown/non-respond	543	569	621	588	745	1,210	603	566
Race								
Asian	20,560	21,657	20,497	21,210	19,366	18,278	11,192	10,365
Black	764	727	672	685	644	562	416	359
Latino	17,175	16,201	15,915	16,155	19,451	22,398	11,757	13,549
Native American/Alaskan Native	38	35	23	24	31	19	12	8
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	63	59	60	58	37	36	23	21
Two or more races	496	448	436	464	455	353	301	299

	Fall-2014	Fall-2015	Fall-2016	Fall-2017	Fall-2018	Fall-2019	Fall-2020	Fall-2021
White	7,825	7,690	7,754	8,297	8,770	7,249	5,679	4,495
Unknown	3,580	4,091	4,673	3,479	3,706	4,906	2,426	2,170
Citizenship								
US Citizen	10,067	9,909	10,318	9,911	10,579	11,318	7,155	7,722
Permanent Resident	17,933	17,220	16,763	18,171	18,955	18,139	12,238	10,018
Temporary Resident	1,596	2,004	1,127	1,248	1,386	1,365	744	640
Refugee/Asylee	2,165	2,304	2,255	2,194	2,221	1,819	1,216	1,021
Student Visa	6,532	6,885	6,050	5,552	4,491	3,081	1,352	1,099
Other Status	4,478	4,741	5,032	4,883	7,473	7,875	4,194	4,234
Status Unknown	7,730	7,845	8,485	8,413	7,355	10,204	4,907	6,532
Education								
No high school	6,350	7,621	7,721	7,785	9,283	9,203	4,413	4,438
US high school	12,340	11,288	10,784	9,453	9,139	7,014	4,841	4,595
Foreign high school	18,187	18,686	17,527	17,612	17,718	16,600	11,520	9,567
College degree	3,809	4,024	4,041	4,677	5,627	4,952	3,485	3,741
Unknown	9,815	9,289	9,957	10,845	10,693	16,032	7,547	8,925
Age								
Non-traditional	32,873	33,526	33,422	34,635	38,626	41,458	24,878	24,527
Traditional	17,613	17,360	16,592	15,719	13,799	12,274	6,910	6,729

NOTES: Author calculations from Chancellor's Office MIS data.

TABLE A4

Share of transfer intending students in ESL with various features.

	Fall-2014	Fall-2015	Fall-2016	Fall-2017	Fall-2018	Fall-2019	Fall-2020	Fall-2021
Gender								
Non-binary	0	0	0	2	0	8	6	13
Female	14,485	14,156	14,380	15,468	13,788	11,884	9,120	7,569
Male	10,039	9,942	9,987	10,190	8,815	7,023	4,325	3,663
Unknown/non-respond	239	222	211	196	172	165	173	113
Race								
Asian	10,585	10,902	10,783	11,704	10,142	8,161	5,664	4,606
Black	504	461	416	467	411	346	257	204
Latino	5,298	5,302	5,484	5,379	4,397	4,126	2,958	2,984
Native American/Alaskan Native	27	28	25	20	15	11	7	3

	Fall-2014	Fall-2015	Fall-2016	Fall-2017	Fall-2018	Fall-2019	Fall-2020	Fall-2021
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	40	35	33	33	21	22	19	14
Two or more races	347	319	339	348	328	257	196	189
White	5,916	5,694	5,702	6,091	5,820	4,759	3,605	2,440
Unknown	2,046	1,579	1,796	1,814	1,641	1,398	918	918
Citizenship								
US Citizen	5,631	5,306	5,405	5,104	4,220	3,560	2,754	2,670
Permanent Resident	10,266	10,011	10,021	11,382	10,476	9,402	7,049	5,401
Temporary Resident	538	525	306	426	365	313	217	173
Refugee/Asylee	1,640	1,644	1,625	1,561	1,433	1,151	812	595
Student Visa	5,140	5,102	5,121	4,728	4,118	2,735	1,224	1,004
Other Status	980	997	1,066	1,375	1,315	1,304	978	895
Status Unknown	568	735	1,034	1,280	848	615	590	620
Education								
No high school	1,264	1,560	1,688	2,104	1,947	1,516	1,046	872
US high school	8,564	7,818	7,558	7,160	5,719	4,356	3,222	2,970
Foreign high school	11,461	11,704	11,768	11,983	11,198	9,606	6,853	5,146
College degree	1,181	1,165	1,209	1,659	1,668	1,445	1,126	985
Unknown	2,293	2,073	2,355	2,950	2,243	2,157	1,377	1,385
Age								
Non-traditional	12,803	12,620	12,517	14,138	13,200	11,772	8,922	7,237
Traditional	11,960	11,698	12,058	11,711	9,573	7,304	4,699	4,119

NOTES: Author calculations from Chancellor's Office MIS data.

TABLE A5

Share of students in ESL courses that are part of the sequence identified in the college catalogs with various features.

Fall-2021	
Gender	
Non-binary	7
Female	8,890
Male	3,822
Unknown/non-respondent	219
Race	
Asian	4,797
Black	180
Latino	4,140
Native America/Alaskan Native	5
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	8
Two or more races	178
White	2,596
Unknown	1,034
Citizenship	
US Citizen	3,133
Permanent Resident	5,907
Temporary Resident	320
Refugee/Asylee	534
Student Visa	819
Other Status	1,378
Status Unknown/Uncollected	847
Education	
No high school	1,498
US high school	2,601
Foreign high school	5,351
College degree	1,607
Unknown	1,881
Age	
Non-traditional	9,188
Traditional	3,748

NOTES: Author calculations from Chancellor's Office MIS data.

Appendix B. ESL Placement

Analysis of ESL AB 705 Adoption Plans

TABLE B1

Characteristics of ESL placement methods, Fall 2021

	N	Percent
Methods used for HS graduates (not mutually exclusive)		
Default placement rules	87	83%
Guided Placement	18	17%
Self-Placement	17	16%
Guided + Self-Placement	12	11%
Methods used for Non-US HS graduates (not mutually exclusive)		
Guided Placement	83	79%
Self-Placement	70	67%
High school data (self-report or transcript)	32	30%
Approved assessment (incl. writing)	31	30%
Other assessment measures	28	27%
Educational background/English use survey	10	10%
SAT, ACT, EAP, AP tests	9	9%
Guided + Self-Placement	55	52%
Average number of measures used	3	
Number of measures used		
1	16	15%
2	29	28%
3	37	35%
4	13	12%
5 or more	10	10%
Use of Counselors		
General Counselor	32	30%
ESL Counselor or Faculty	10	10%
Number of colleges reporting assessment	27	87%
Assessment test used (not mutually exclusive)		
Accuplacer	11	41%
CELSA	7	26%
CASAS	2	7%
Other	7	26%

	N	Percent
Sample Size		
Total colleges in CCC	115	
College with ESL sequence	107	93%
Colleges with ESL sequence & AB 705 adoption plan	105	91%
Colleges with no ESL sequence	8	7%

SOURCES: Data on placement policies in 2021 is derived from author's calculations using CCC Chancellor's Office AB 705 adoption plans submitted by 113 of 115 colleges in the CCC during the summer of 2021. Only the subset of colleges that submitted an AB 705 adoption plan and also offered an ESL sequence leading to College Composition are included in the calculation (N= 105 colleges).

TABLE B2

Assessment test cut scores for placement into ESL one-level below TLE and TLE or TLE-E, Fall 2021

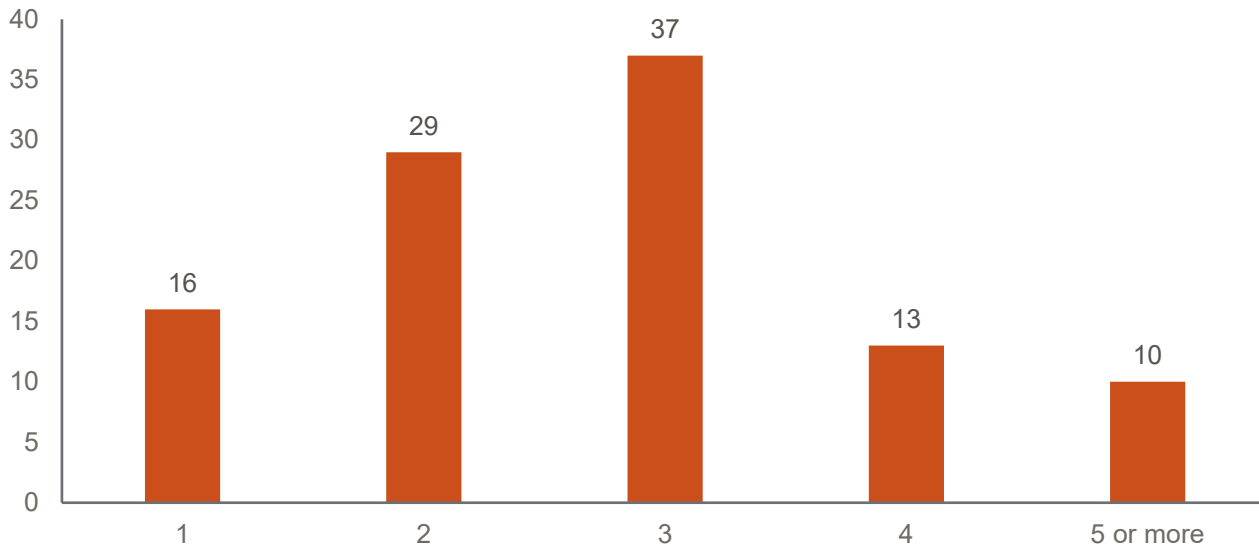
One-level below TLE/TLE-E assessment cutoff	TLE or TLE-E assessment cutoff
Accuplacer	
100-111	112-120
100-120	-
100-120	-
102-113	114-120
103-113	114-120
106-120 & 4 or less in writing	106-120 & 5/6 in writing
110-120	-
114-120	-
CELSA	
63-68	69-75
64-71	72-75
65-69	70-75
65-71	72-75
69-73	74-75
70-75	-
CASAS	
221-235	236+

SOURCES: Data on placement policies in 2021 is derived from author's calculations using CCC Chancellor's Office AB 705 adoption plans submitted by 113 of 115 colleges in the CCC during the summer of 2021. Only the subset of colleges that reported using an assessment test and that also reported detailed cut scores for different ESL course levels are included (N=15).

NOTE: Four of the colleges that reported Accuplacer cut scores and one college reporting CELSA cut scores do not offer a TLE or TLE-E course. At these colleges, the highest level a student can place into using the assessment test is the 1LBT ESL course.

FIGURE B1

Number of ESL placement methods used at California community colleges



SOURCE: Data on placement policies in 2021 is derived from author's calculations using CCC Chancellor's Office AB 705 adoption plans submitted by 113 of 115 colleges in the CCC during the summer of 2021. Only the subset of colleges that submitted an AB 705 adoption plan and also offered an ESL sequence are included in the calculation (N= 105 colleges).

TABLE B3

Characteristics of Colleges by Placement Method

College Characteristics	Full Sample	Default Rules		Assessment Test		High School Records		Guided Placement		Self-Placement		Guided Self-Placement	
		No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Sequence Length	4.69	4.83	4.67	4.42	5.29	4.80	4.48	5.00	4.62	5.00	4.53	4.86	4.54
Female	56%	57%	56%	56%	56%	57%	54%	57%	56%	55%	57%	56%	56%
Male	42%	41%	42%	42%	42%	41%	44%	41%	42%	43%	42%	42%	42%
Traditional Age	60%	62%	60%	60%	62%	61%	58%	63%	60%	59%	61%	60%	61%
Non-Traditional Age	40%	38%	40%	40%	38%	39%	42%	37%	40%	41%	39%	40%	39%
Black	6%	5%	6%	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%	6%	5%	6%	6%	6%
Asian	10%	9%	10%	9%	13%	10%	10%	13%	9%	12%	9%	13%	8%
Latino	47%	45%	48%	49%	43%	45%	52%	43%	48%	43%	49%	44%	51%
White	24%	27%	24%	24%	25%	26%	22%	26%	24%	25%	24%	24%	25%
US Citizen	87%	89%	87%	88%	86%	87%	88%	89%	87%	87%	88%	87%	88%
Permanent Resident	5%	6%	5%	5%	7%	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%
Student Visa	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other Citizenship	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Unknown Citizenship	3%	1%	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	1%	3%	2%	3%	2%	3%
N	105	18	87	74	31	73	32	22	83	35	70	50	55

SOURCE: Data on fall 2021 student characteristics comes from CCC Data Mart. Data on placement policies in 2021 is derived from author's calculations using CCC Chancellor's Office AB 705 adoption plans submitted by 113 of 115 colleges in the CCC during the summer of 2021. Only the subset of colleges that submitted an AB 705 adoption plan and also offered an ESL sequence are included in the calculation (N= 105 colleges).

NOTE: Numbers in bold indicate that differences are statistically significant at the 5% level.

TABLE B4

Benefits and challenges of the new vs. old placement systems—Guided self-placement and assessment testing

Guided Self-Placement	Assessment Test
Main cost is to develop & maintain	Per-student cost paid to test-maker
Can be time intensive for students, faculty, counselors who support placement process	Fast turnaround, gives placement using one or more test scores
Can be done online and made accessible 24/7	Relies on proctoring and testing centers
Can be translated to multiple languages	Primarily done in English
Gives students agency in selecting the level that they feel is best	Cut scores tied to language proficiency and course placement levels, but students can challenge placement recommendation
Might not need to be submitted for approval by the CCCC – relies on institutions to assess validity, fairness, and reliability	CCCCO approved assessments meet standards for validity, fairness, and reliability
Can be the only method used, if high school records are unavailable	Is supposed to be used as a multiple measure, not as the sole placement
Can be more difficult to capture in administrative data	More easily captured in administrative data

Examples of placement methods used for ESL

Default Placement Rules

In a guidance memo, CCC Chancellors Office clarified that Title 5 regulations enacted in response to AB 705 require U.S. high school graduates to be placed into transfer-level English (TLE) or TLE ESL (TLE-E) equivalent (Hope and Stankas 2018). As of fall 2021, ESL AB 705 adoption plans indicated that the vast majority of colleges were using the default rules to place U.S. educated ELs into these courses. As can be seen here, the rules effectively direct all students into TLE, and depending on their GPA, it recommends different levels of concurrent support.

High School Performance Metric for English	Recommended AB 705 Placement for English
HSGPA \geq 2.6 Success rate = 78.6%	Transfer-Level English Composition No additional academic or concurrent support required
HSGPA 1.9 - 2.6 Success rate = 57.7%	Transfer-Level English Composition Additional academic and concurrent support recommended
HSGPA < 1.9 Success rate = 42.6%	Transfer-Level English Composition Additional academic and concurrent support strongly recommended

Sample GSP self-assessment

A typical question that might be asked as part of a GSP self-assessment asks students to rate their English proficiency. Each of these ratings is then linked to a specific course in the ESL sequence—which will directly

inform their placement. Proficient here would route students into the TLE course that provides ESL co-requisite support. While the low-beginner would route students into the lowest level of ESL offered at the college.

15. Please rate your English proficiency level (only select one):

Proficient	Ability to speak and write English with ease and fluency similar to your native or mother tongue
Advanced	Ability to speak and write in English about a range of topics with a wide range of vocabulary in social and academic settings
Low Advanced	Ability to speak and write in English about a range of topics with limited vocabulary in social and academic settings
High Intermediate	Ability to speak and write English about a limited range of topics with limited vocabulary in social and travel settings
Low Intermediate	Ability to speak and write basic English to communicate in practical everyday situations
High Beginner	Ability to speak and understand English to meet basic needs
Low Beginner	Ability to speak and understand basic greetings and simple words in English

Sample guided placement writing sample

Below is what an example of the typical ESL writing sample a student might see as part of the GSP process. After reviewing the different writing samples provided, a student is asked to identify the writing sample that is most similar to theirs. The student then clicks on the link associated with this writing sample and gets information about the course that matches that writing sample, which would be their placement recommendation.

ACADEMIC/COLLEGE ENGLISH

*The writings below are short samples from ESL students. They were answering the question: **What are the challenges of living in a new culture? Please read them and answer honestly: which of these writings is most like your writing? Which level do you think you should be in? If you are not sure, choose the highest level that seems like your level.***

WRITING A:

When I came to the USA. It was a big challenge for me and my family. For example here in the USA I have to work to do doctor appointment and also study because here I am living only. Here is no family and no relatives. I have to do everything by myself.

*If writing "A" is similar to yours then [click here for more information](#)

Sample course information

Colleges using guided placement often provide course information to help inform placements. This can be provided as a standalone source of information or one that is linked to a writing sample. In the example presented here, the person that selected writing level A would see the information associated with ESL 3, and thus be placed into ESL 3 levels below transfer. This provides them information about the course and expected outcomes. The document also lists the pathway to TLE-E from the course in which they are placing.

ACADEMIC ESL CLASSES at Palomar College

ESL 45/NESL 945: Credit or noncredit course

This is a beginning course in reading and writing academic English for students whose first language is not English.

Students write: Academic paragraphs with topic sentences, examples and details. Paragraphs are one page to one and half pages in length.

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- ✓ Find the main idea in a paragraph.
- ✓ Write an in-class paragraph using a topic sentence, examples, correct spelling, academic vocabulary and different sentence types.

**ESL 45/
NESL 945**



**ESL 105/
NESL 975**



ESL 106



**ESL 110
Transfer Level
Composition**

Sample assessment test questions

Assessment tests had long been the most widely used placement measures. Such tests assess an English learner's reading comprehension, sentence skills, grammar skills, listening skills and/or writing skills to inform placements into the ESL sequences. These tests are typically multiple choice and can be completed either by paper and pencil or on a computer. Some of these tests are developed by individual campuses or districts (e.g. homegrown), but most are standardized placement tests acquired from a third-party vendor (e.g. Accuplacer, CELSA, etc.). In this example, we sample questions from an Accuplacer reading skills and sentence skills tests.

ESL Reading Skills Sample Questions

Read the information below, then choose the best answer.

1. Television has been introduced to almost every country in the world, reaching a large number of viewers on every continent. About 600 million people saw the first person walk on the moon, and a billion people watched the twentieth Olympic Games. Television has in many ways promoted understanding and cooperation among people. It does this by showing educational and cultural programs.

From this passage, a reader can most reasonably conclude that the author believes that

- A. people spend too much time watching television
- B. not every country needs to have television
- C. television can unify people from around the world
- D. television is as important as schools

ESL Sentence Meaning Sample Questions

Directions for questions 1–8

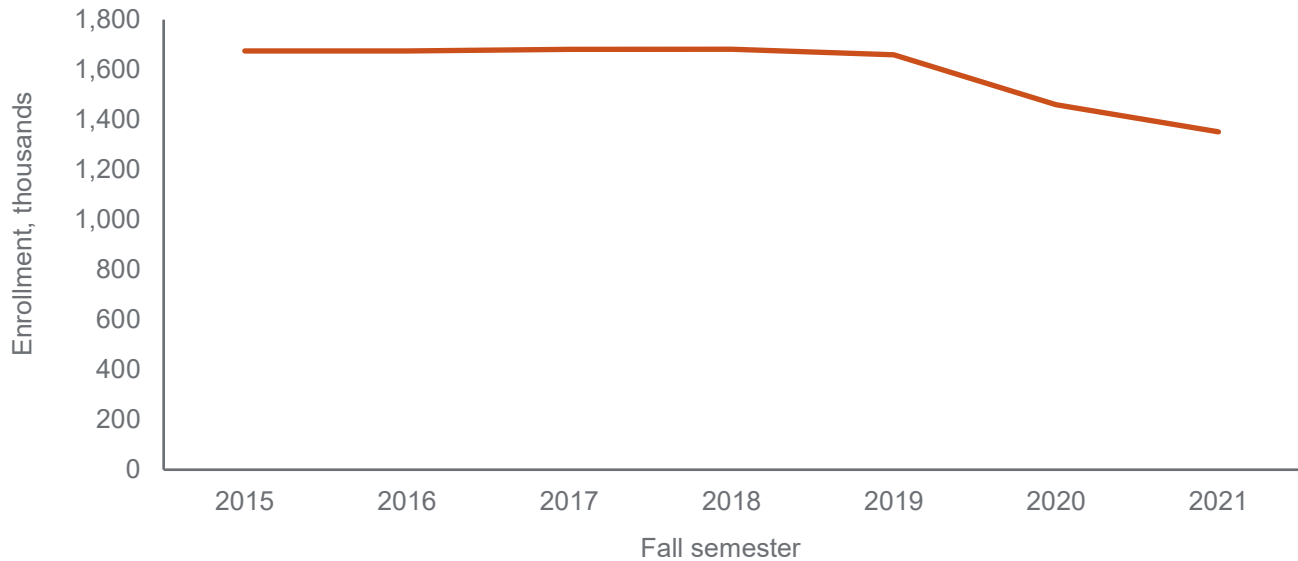
The sentence below has a blank space. Choose the word or phrase that makes the sentence meaningful and correct.

1. Shikibu Murasaki, who wrote almost a thousand years ago, was one of the world's _____ novelists.
 - A. most early
 - B. too early
 - C. more early
 - D. earliest
2. The Chang children _____ their parents by making sandwiches for the whole family.
 - A. helped out
 - B. helped with
 - C. helps for
 - D. helps to

Appendix C. ESL Enrollment and Outcomes

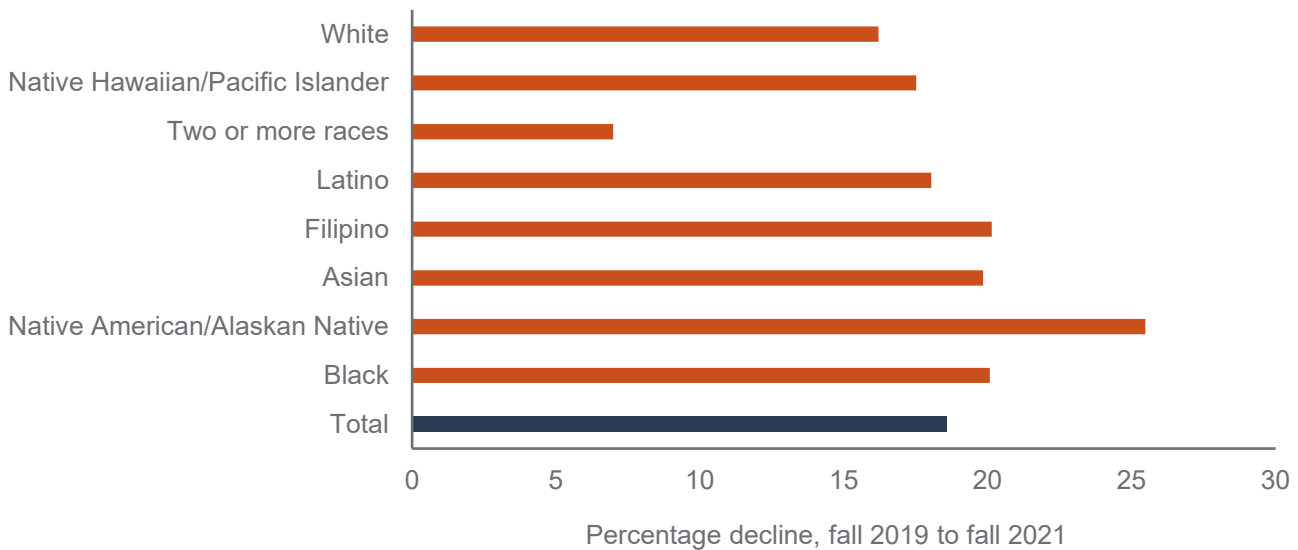
California Community Colleges have seen unprecedented enrollment decline during the pandemic.

FIGURE C1
Annual CCC enrollment declined sharply during the pandemic



SOURCE: California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, Student Enrollment Status Summary Report, fall enrollments.

FIGURE C2
Enrollment declines during the first two years of the pandemic sharpest among Native American, Black, Filipino, and Asian students



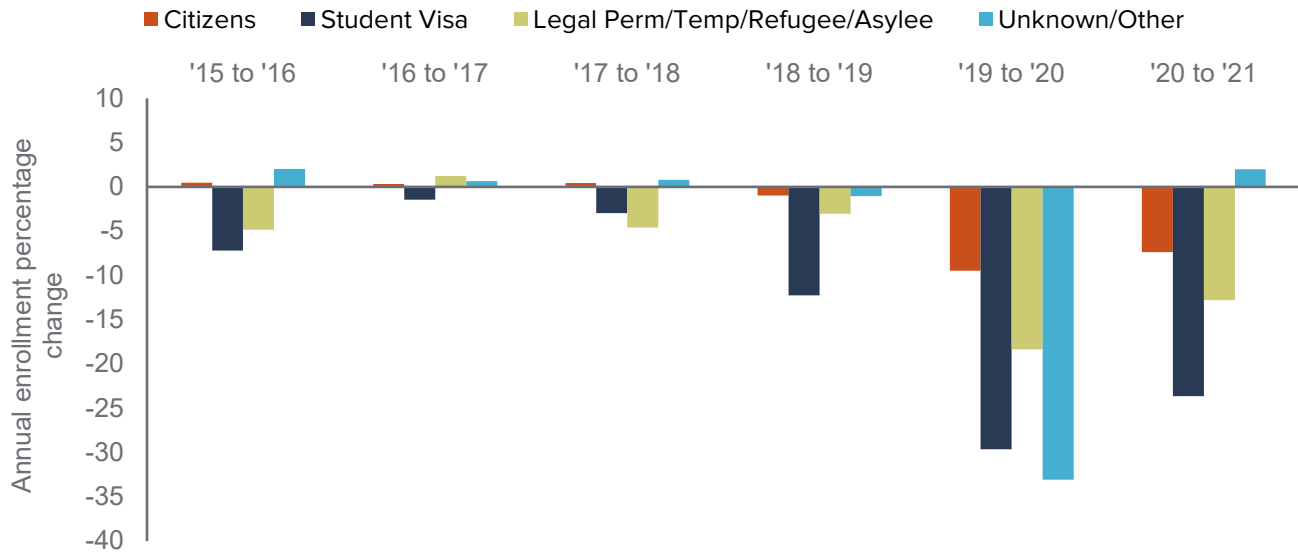
SOURCE: California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, Student Enrollment Status Summary Report, fall enrollments.

The steepest pandemic declines were among students with “other” or “unknown” immigrant status, with declines of 33% in the 2020 school year (in comparison to 9% for citizens and 18% for legal immigrants). However, student visa holders also saw large enrollment declines during the pandemic (30% between 2019 and 2020 and

24% between 2020 and 2021) and these declines began in advance of the pandemic. In Fall 2021, declines continued for citizens and legal immigrants, but enrollment increased slightly from the previous fall for the likely undocumented immigrants (“other” and “unknown” status).

FIGURE C3

Student visa holders and student with unknown or other immigration status had the largest pandemic declines

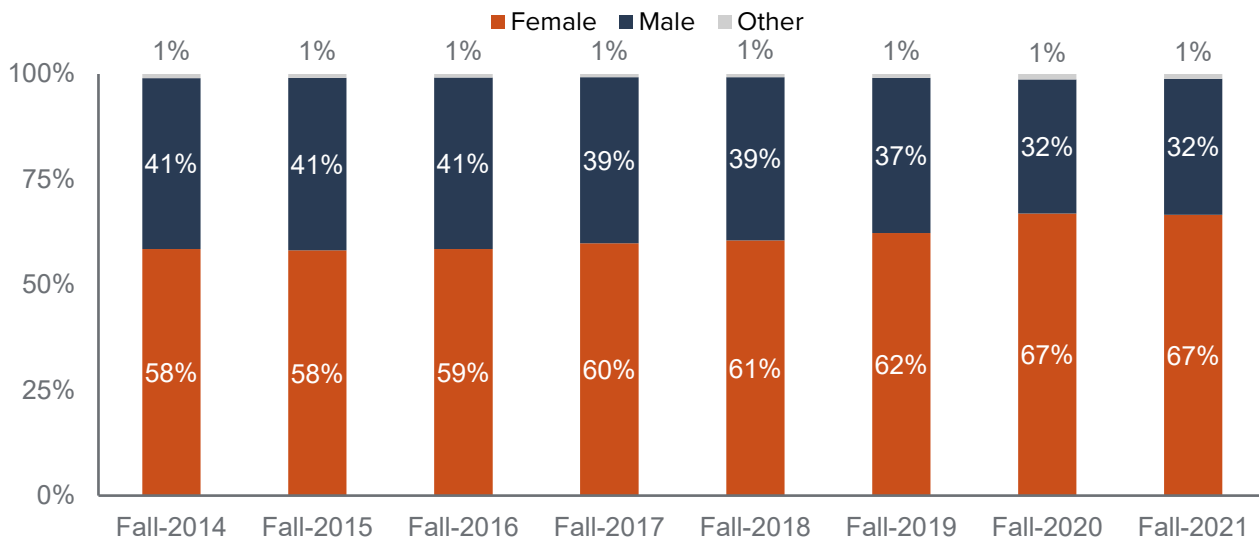


SOURCE: California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, Student Enrollment Status Summary Report, Fall enrollments

NOTE: Legal immigrants include Legal Permanent Residents, Temporary Residents, Refugee/Asylee, and Student Visa holders (F-1 or M-1). Unknown are those reporting “other” and students who did not respond).

FIGURE C4

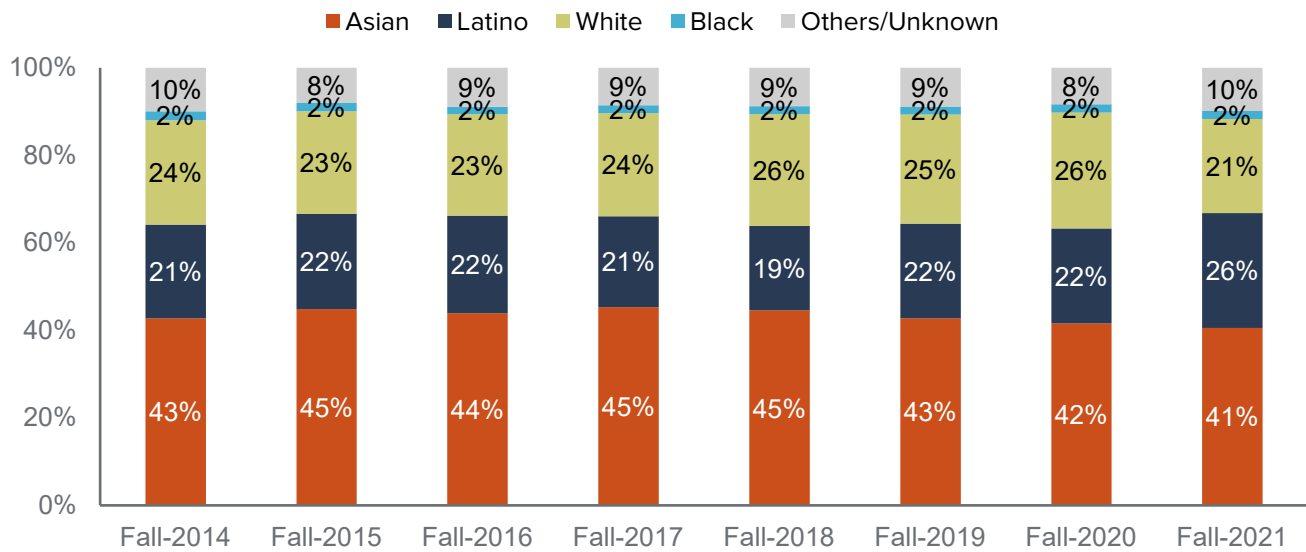
Share of degree-seeking ESL students that are female is increasing



SOURCE: Author calculations from Chancellor’s Office MIS data.

FIGURE C5

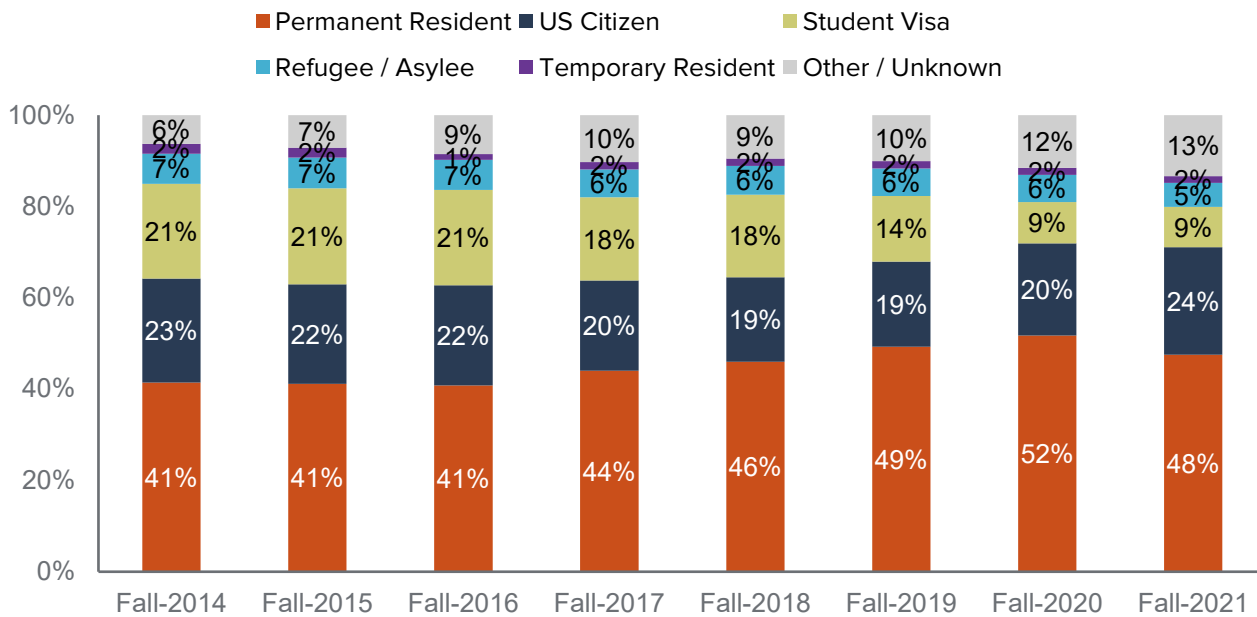
Race/ethnic composition of degree-seeking ESL students is fairly steady



SOURCE: Author calculations from Chancellor's Office MIS data.

FIGURE C6

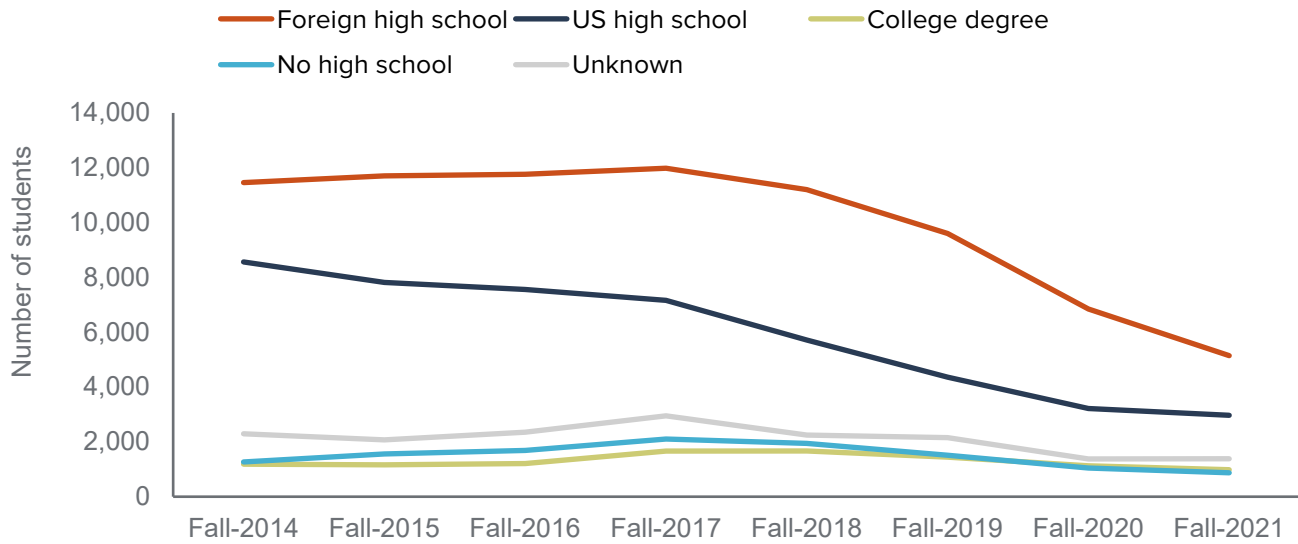
Share of degree-seeking ESL students that hold student visas is down



SOURCE: Author calculations from Chancellor's Office MIS data.

FIGURE C7

Enrollment declines among high school graduates predate the pandemic and the switch to the new placement policy in fall 2021



SOURCE: Author calculations from Chancellor’s Office MIS data.

TABLE C1

Number of students in TLE and TLE-ESL by outcome

	TLE			TLE - ESL		
	Pass	No Pass	Total	Pass	No Pass	Total
All	88,532	71,396	159,928	557	197	754
LEP	1,700	634	2,334	296	76	372
All First Time	60,371	42,441	102,812	155	65	220
All LEP First Time	89	55	144	17	5	22
All Prior Students	28,161	28,955	57,116	402	132	534
All LEP Prior Students	1,611	579	2,190	279	71	350

SOURCE: Author calculations from Chancellor’s Office MIS data



PPIC

PUBLIC POLICY
INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

The Public Policy Institute of California is dedicated to informing and improving public policy in California through independent, objective, nonpartisan research.

Public Policy Institute of California
500 Washington Street, Suite 600
San Francisco, CA 94111
T: 415.291.4400
F: 415.291.4401
PPIC.ORG

PPIC Sacramento Center
Senator Office Building
1121 L Street, Suite 801
Sacramento, CA 95814
T: 916.440.1120
F: 916.440.1121