



COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS RECEIVE A MORE INFORMED, RACIALLY JUST EDUCATION TO PREPARE FOR FUTURE WORKFORCE UNDER AB 1040

Ethnic studies bill by Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi aligns California's community colleges with California State University graduation requirement and helps prepares students to become socially conscious professionals

LOS ANGELES—Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) officials urge full approval of AB 1040 by the California Legislature now that the bill has passed a key hurdle April 8 on a 7-3 vote by the Assembly Committee on Higher Education. The bill, authored by Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi, 66th District, (D-Torrance), will expand access to ethnic studies courses at community colleges statewide and will require students to complete at least one course in ethnic studies to receive an associate's degree.

"California has the largest and most diverse community college system in the country. It has been a leader in many reforms in higher education," LACCD Board of Trustees President Steven F. Veres said. "The ethnic studies requirement will help better prepare students for the real world marketplace with the many distinct and valued communities."

Veres said "our role is to help educate students within the context for which we live and work. We continue to struggle with the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Latino, Black, Native American and Pacific Islander communities. Hate crimes are rising along with fatal police shootings of unarmed people of color, the unlawful detention of child migrants and a myriad of other injustices, including high unemployment rates among the lowest income earners, especially Latinas. This legislation will result in transformational change for our institutions and we strongly urge its passage."

Assemblymember Muratsuchi said all students in California benefit immensely from ethnic studies. "Learning about the histories of our diverse communities is simply too important to make optional, given the changing face of our state and country. I am proud to author this bill, which keeps California at the forefront of social justice and ensures our community college students get a well-rounded education that prepares them for success in life," he said.

Ethnic studies is a framework to a life of social justice and racial equity that will foster greater understanding of the diverse cultures around the world and in California, an economic powerhouse and an increasingly diverse state. The ethnic studies requirement will give community college students an invaluable tool for understanding how to communicate and thrive in an ethnically diverse society, build critical thinking skills and give them the perspective on how to work collaboratively with others from varied or non-traditional backgrounds in respectful and effective ways.

"Our District strongly encourages the passage of AB 1040," LACCD Chancellor Francisco C. Rodriguez, Ph.D., said. "It aligns our community college curriculum with the California State University graduation requirement, provides students a deeper understanding of our complex world and will incentivize our community colleges to hire more instructors that look like our students. At this crucial time in our nation's history, it is the forward-looking legislation we need."

The bill next goes to the Assembly's Appropriations Committee.

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AB 1040 aligns the ethnic studies requirement at community colleges with the similar graduation requirement for the California State University that was approved in 2020 under AB 1460, authored by former Assemblymember Shirley Weber, now California Secretary of State. AB 1040 ensures a seamless education process for students seeking a four-year degree by allowing community colleges to offer transferable ethnic studies credits, saving students time and financial aid dollars once they have transferred to a California State University campus.

AB 1040 also helps to address the current uneven status of ethnic studies programs across the state's community colleges, bolstering ethnic studies curricula and ensuring all students have access to classes that are representative of all communities. Adding more ethnic studies courses will also enable community colleges to hire more faculty of color that specialize in these disciplines, improving the diversity of faculty and increasing equity to higher education job opportunities. Currently, more than 72 percent of California's community college students come from [many diverse cultures and backgrounds](#), but only about 37 percent of faculty (tenured and tenure track) in the community college system are representative of the same backgrounds.

"As a longtime advocate for the Asian-American, Pacific Islander community, I am deeply aware of the need for cross-cultural awareness—as recent events have sadly made clear regarding our AAPI, Latino, Black, Jewish, LGBTQIA+ and Native American communities," LACCD Board of Trustees Member Mike Fong said. Fong, who chairs the Board's Legislative and Public Affairs Committee, said "AB 1040 will provide the groundwork for our community college students to embark on their careers and livelihoods with a strong foundation in this critical area of ethnic studies, and create more opportunities for faculty and students from underrepresented backgrounds."

The LACCD colleges include: [Los Angeles City College](#); [East Los Angeles College](#); [Los Angeles Harbor College](#); [Los Angeles Mission College](#); [Los Angeles Pierce College](#); [Los Angeles Southwest College](#); [Los Angeles Trade-Technical College](#); [Los Angeles Valley College](#) and [West Los Angeles College](#).

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About the Los Angeles Community College District

We are the Colleges of Los Angeles! LACCD (www.laccd.edu) is the nation's largest community college district, educating about 250,000 students annually at its nine colleges that serve the residents of more than 36 cities and communities from 900 square miles of Los Angeles County. Since 1969, the District has been providing an important learning pathway for students seeking transfer to four-year colleges or universities while also offering two-year degrees and certificated training programs to Southern California's diverse workforce in many specialized trades and professions. Follow us on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/LACCD>, @LACCD, and on Twitter, <https://twitter.com/laccd> @laccd and Instagram, https://www.instagram.com/laccd_edu/ @laccd_edu.

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