



Campaign for Free College Tuition

Making Public Colleges Tuition Free

A BRIEFING BOOK FOR STATE LEADERS

REVISED & RE-RELEASED JUNE 2022

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Introduction

America's future prosperity and its citizens' access to opportunity depend on increasing educational opportunities beyond high school for all students. As documented in this briefing book, states led by visionary Governors and state legislators are once again responding to the need to expand public education for their residents by offering tuition free college to their constituents.

States with the highest levels of educational attainment are the places that are winning in today's competitive global economy. Business climate matters, but the percentage of a state's workforce with a college degree or occupational certificate matters most. The challenge is to move a state's level of educational attainment higher and to make sure that every person who is willing to work hard and get good grades has equal access to post-secondary degrees, regardless of family income.

Although there are many alternative approaches to improving college affordability, they offer, at best, a piecemeal solution. Providing tuition free opportunities at public colleges and universities is far superior to the hodgepodge of aid packages and loans that are offered to many students by college financial aid offices in an opaque process that rarely motivates students to apply in the first place. As documented in [recent research](#), a promise of free tuition by contrast, is easily understood by students and their families and leads to increased college enrollment. It provides longer term certainty to young students that they will be able to afford college when they graduate from high school and builds on the nation's history of providing free public education.

The path to providing free tuition is not an easy one but we've faced similar challenges in our history. The need for a literate citizenry in the new Republic led to free universal primary education by the time of the Civil War. The rapid industrialization of America in the late 19th and early 20th century made the creation of free secondary education a necessity by the end of World War I. This expansion of educational opportunity occurred state-by-state and community-by-community.

Recognizing the path to our country's success in an age of global competition depends on an educated workforce, state and community leaders across the country are once again stepping up to the challenge of expanding free public education to assure economic growth and individual opportunity for their residents.

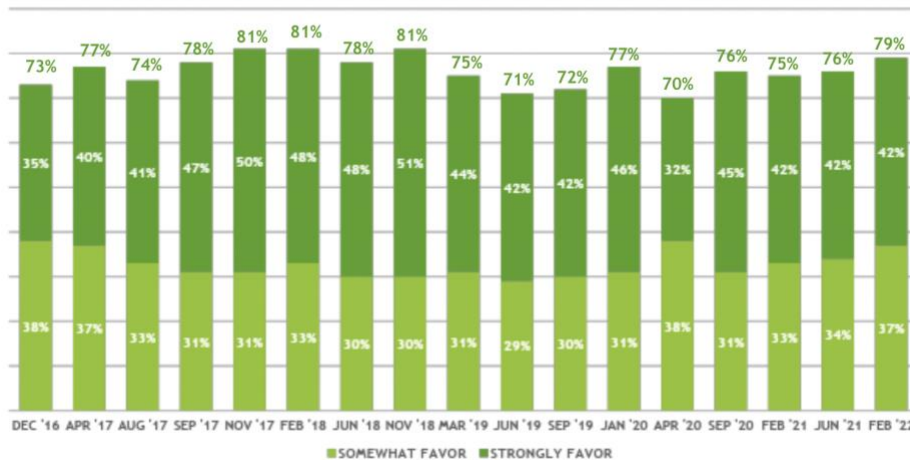
Evidence from states that have taken action demonstrates that offering free college tuition is an effective way to increase the number of high school graduates who enroll in community college:

- Republican Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam was the first governor to make community college tuition free in 2014. In the first year of the Tennessee Promise, enrollment in the state's community colleges increased by 24.7% and by 20% in their colleges of applied technology (TCAT). The percentage of black students increased from 14% to 19% and the share of Hispanic students went up from 4% to 5%. The percentage of white students enrolled in community colleges declined from 74% to 70%.
- Oregon, with leadership from Democratic State Senator Mark Hass, followed suit in 2015. The previous year, 5,709 public high school graduates enrolled in community colleges for at least six credits, which represents 16.3% of the public graduating class. After the Oregon Promise was implemented, 6,553 public high school graduates took advantage of the program, representing approximately 18.5% of the public graduating class.
- Then Democratic Governor of Rhode Island, Gina Raimondo, convinced a reluctant state legislature to make her state's lone community college tuition free in 2017. Even though they had only one month, and no extra marketing money to spread the word that tuition would be free that fall, the number of students enrolling full time directly from high school rose by 47% – more than 1,400 such students enrolled in the Fall 2017 semester, compared to 950 the previous year. The impact on the Community College of Rhode Island included a 62% increase in full time, first time, high school (FTFTHS) students of color.

Some form of tuition free college is now in place in more than half of the states and the numbers continue to rise as public support for the idea spreads across the country. The Campaign for Free College Tuition's (CFCT) exclusive survey research indicates that about three-fourths of the American public favor state governments providing free tuition at their colleges or universities for those who are academically qualified. That level of bipartisan support has held steady in the middle of an ever more polarized national political climate in our research over the last seven years.

Respondents were asked their level of support for free college tuition. Specifically:

"Do you favor or oppose your state providing free tuition at public universities or colleges for anyone who is academically qualified?"



Campaign for Free College Tuition

The results of increased enrollment in states that offer some form of tuition free college and the continuing bipartisan support for the concept in our surveys means that making public colleges tuition free is the most effective, popular program that states have the power to enact.

All of the free college tuition activity over the past decade at the state level means there are lessons to be learned from others about how to start such programs, operate them effectively, and fund them. One purpose of this briefing book is to share those experiences.

We also provide evidence of the effectiveness of those programs that have been around long enough to measure real outcomes. And we provide information on different funding approaches used by the states to make the Promise of free college tuition real, including recent actions by the federal government in response to the pandemic that some states have used to fund their tuition free college programs.

We, at the Campaign for Free College Tuition, are available to help in any way we can. CFCT is a bipartisan 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to making college tuition free in all fifty states.

Chapter I —

States Taking the Lead in Making Colleges Tuition Free: Current State Programs

Arkansas Future Grant

Description

This state funded grant covers tuition and fees for qualifying certificate and Associate degree programs at Arkansas' public institutions for eligible students. It is awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis and provides up to five semesters of tuition and fees to students enrolled in a high demand field of study. It also contains reforms designed to enhance student accountability and success. All grant recipients are required to participate in both mentoring and community service programs (10 hours of community service per semester is required). Additionally, upon graduation, the student must reside and work in Arkansas for a minimum of three years. If a student does not complete his or her commitment, the grant will be converted to a loan for repayment to the State of Arkansas.

Website

<http://scholarships.adhe.edu/scholarships/detail/arfutures>

Enacting Legislation

<http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2017/2017R/Acts/Act316.pdf>

Funding Source

The program was initially funded by repurposing \$8.2 million in general revenue funds by canceling the Workforce Improvement Grant and the Higher Education Opportunities Grant. For the 2020-21 academic year, the program had 604 recipients and cost \$2.08 million.

Eligibility

All applicants must:

- Have either graduated from an Arkansas public school, private school, home school or received a high school equivalency diploma approved by the Department of Career Education; or verify that he or she has resided within the state for the three (3) years

- immediately preceding application and has either: graduated from an out-of-state high school, private school, home school or received a high school equivalency diploma approved by another state;
- Be enrolled part-time or full-time at an approved institution of higher education in a program of study that leads to an associate degree or a certification in a STEM or regional high demand field; and
 - Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

A student may continue to be eligible until the student has:

- Received an associate degree;
- Received funding from the ArFuture Grant for five (5) semesters;
- Failed to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) as determined by their institution of higher education; or
- Failed to complete mentoring or community service requirements.

California College Promise

Description

Governor Jerry Brown's signature of AB 19 in October 2017 laid the groundwork for the California College Promise. The legislature subsequently approved \$46 million to allow community college districts to choose whether they want to waive one-year of fees and tuition for first time, full-time students, or make use of program funding in other ways that meet the goals of the legislation to lower the financial burden of attending community college for those students. California's FY 2019-20 budget provided funds to extend the California College Promise to a second academic year.

The Promise builds on the California College Promise Grant, formerly the Board of Governors Fee Waiver, which provided over one million low-income students with tuition/fee free community college.

In addition to aiding students with tuition/fees at participating community colleges, the Promise aims to promote successful outcomes. To this end, participating community colleges must partner with one or more local educational agencies (LEAs) to establish an Early Commitment to College Program that will provide students, and their families, assistance in learning about postsecondary opportunities, completing college prep courses, and applying for college and financial aid.

Additionally, to be eligible for state support for free tuition for first-time full-time students, a community college must participate in the Guided Pathways Grant Program and in the Federal student loan program.

Enacting Legislation

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billPdf.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB19&version=20170AB1989C
[HP](#)

Funding Source

\$72.5 million of Proposition 98 funds were appropriated in the FY 2021-22 budget. These funds are reserved for K-12 education and community colleges.

Eligibility

AB 19 specifies the following criteria: completion of a FAFSA; specific enrollment requirements (i.e. first-time, full-time); and attendance at California community college district that partners with a school district or four-year public university.

Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative

Description

The Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI) was created in 2014 with the goal of increasing the attainment of postsecondary credentials and degrees for underserved students in Colorado. The project addresses this challenge by focusing on accessibility and affordability, matching community dollars to fund student support organizations and scholarship programs across the state. To improve accessibility, COSI funds programs that will help prepare students for postsecondary education, as well as support them through completion. To improve affordability, COSI provides tuition support to students through matching funds for community scholarships. These approaches together work to create a strong network of support for students throughout the state as they move to and through postsecondary credentials.

In the first five years, \$47 million was awarded (leveraging \$28 million in additional local and private dollars) to serve more than 75,000 students across its programs. For scholarships, COSI provides approximately \$7 million annually in Matching Student Scholarship Grants to eligible counties, institutions of higher education, and community workforce programs. These partnering organizations leverage state funds 1:1 to increase the amount of scholarship giving available for postsecondary students in Colorado. In total, they provide approximately 6,000 students with scholarships annually.

Internal studies using the latest available data show most COSI students enrolled in the Community Partner Program—87%—persist in their education path, 15 percentage points higher than peers of similar demographic groups. Students who receive COSI scholarships perform even better: 89% continue on in their second and third years, outpacing their non-COSI counterparts by 25 percentage points.

Website

www.coloradoscholarshipinitiative.org

Enacting Legislation

http://www.leg.state.co.us/clics/clics2014a/csl.nsf/fsbillcont3/3FFCEF53367381A087257C3000065345?open&file=1384_enr.pdf

Funding Source

In 2014, the Colorado legislature committed \$35 million, and now provides an annual appropriation from the general fund of \$7 million.

Eligibility

Recipients of COSI funds must be students:

- Whose household incomes are determined to be between 0 and 100% or between 100% and 250% of the maximum permissible income for the purpose of determining eligibility for PELL grants;
- Participating in a rigor-based student success program;
- Classified as Colorado residents for tuition purposes (includes ASSET students); and
- Attending public vocational schools, community colleges, four-year institutions of higher education, and research institutions in Colorado.

Pledge to Advance Connecticut (PACT)

Description

The enactment of Connecticut's biennial budget in June 2019 established a program that allows eligible first-time, full-time students to attend a community or technical college tuition-free. PACT provides a "middle dollar" scholarship to qualified residents who fill out FAFSA and take at least 12 credit hours each year. If the student's federal Pell Grant and/or state Roberta B. Willis Need-Merit Scholarship fully covers tuition, they will still get up to \$250 per semester grant to spend on other costs of attending college.

Funding for this program was initially slated to come from online lottery sales. The enacting legislation required Governor Ned Lamont (D) to consult with the Connecticut Lottery Corporation and other state officials and report to the legislature by February 5, 2020 on the feasibility of allowing online lottery sales through a website, online service, or mobile application.

PACT was however launched in the Fall of 2020 utilizing \$3 million in Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System reserves to pay for the first semester of the new program. The state's FY 2022 and

FY 2023 budget enacted in June 2021 provided up to \$14 million to PACT in FY 2022 and up to \$15 million in FY 2023.

Enacting Legislation

<https://search.cga.state.ct.us/dl2019/pa/doc/2019PA-00117-R00HB-07424-PA.docx>

Funding Source

According to the legislature's Office of Fiscal Analysis, the program is anticipated to cost up to \$8.1 million – including \$2 million in implementation and marketing – in FY 2021. The Office of Fiscal Analysis anticipates that the higher enrollment resulting from free community college will generate between \$2.1 million and \$7.7 million in additional tuition and fees. Connecticut currently has underutilized community college capacity that may allow the newly enacted free college tuition program to largely pay for itself.

Eligibility

To be eligible for Connecticut's program, applicants must:

- Be eligible for in-state tuition;
- Have graduated from a public or private Connecticut high school;
- Enroll as a first-time, full-time student (at least 12 credit-hours per semester for most students) in a community college program leading to a certificate or degree;
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA);
- Accept all available financial aid that is not in the form of a federal, state, or private student loan;
- Must maintain satisfactory academic progress (2.0 GPA) in college; and
- Be continuously enrolled at a community college with exceptions for an administratively approved medical or personal leave of up to six months or active-duty military service.

The state's Board of Regents for Higher Education is authorized to adopt additional rules, procedures and forms necessary to implement the debt-free community college program.

Delaware Student Excellence Equals Degree (SEED) Scholarship

Description

The Student Excellence Equals Degree (SEED) Scholarship was established in 2005 to provide last dollar tuition scholarships to qualified, in-state high school graduates attending Delaware Technical and Community College or the University of Delaware's Associate in Arts program. A similar program – the Inspire Scholarship – is available for students attending Delaware State University. Between 2007 and 2016, approximately 16,000 Delawareans received SEED scholarships.

In 2021, the program was expanded to include Delaware residents aged 25 or older wishing to pursue an academic credential or associate degree. Senate Bill 12, which was signed into law in October 2021, made several other related changes to their SEED scholarship program which are detailed in the Eligibility section below.

Made both credit or non-credit programs leading to the award of a recognized academic credential at Delaware Technical and Community College (DTCC) eligible for the scholarship.

Increased the number of continuous semesters for eligible participation from 6 to 10.

Made other adjustments to eligibility including removal of enrollment requirement to begin in the fall semester immediately following graduation from high school, permitting certain allowances for G.P.A.s less than 2.5, allowing leaves of absence for up to one year, and changing student certification criteria to allow participation of individuals convicted of a non-violent felony.

Websites

<https://delawarestudentsuccess.org/seed-and-inspire/>

<https://www.dtcc.edu/admissions-financial-aid/financial-aid-scholarships/types-aid/seed>

Enacting Legislation

As Originally Enacted:

<https://legis.delaware.gov/SessionLaws/Chapter?id=18353>

2021 Expansion:

<https://legis.delaware.gov/SessionLaws/Chapter/GetPdfDocument?fileAttachmentId=448392>

Funding Source

The FY 2018 operating budget contained \$5.6 million for SEED and \$1.6 million for Inspire.

Eligibility

The expanded scholarship:

- Removes the age restriction for applicants, though people 25 years of age and over must meet a five-year Delaware residency requirement.
- Includes all credit and non-credit programs leading to the award of a recognized academic credential or associate degree (this includes short-term certificate programs in areas such as diesel technology, allied health, or information technology (IT).)
- Expands eligibility to 10 semesters, so scholarship recipients will have additional time to complete an academic degree program (this is critical for those who are going to school while working full-time and supporting their families).
- Allows students to go part-time after their first semester.
- Allows students to take a year off without losing their SEED scholarship. Additional gaps in enrollment can be approved based on military or volunteer service, medical conditions, or

personal/financial hardship, but gaps in enrollment do not extend the five-year funding period.

- Includes students who have a GED or “Delaware State Board of Education Endorsement Secondary Credentials.” Delaware Tech has created a GPA equivalency for students with a GED so they could directly enter an associate degree program if they have the equivalent of the required 2.5 GPA. However, those who graduate high school with less than a 2.5 GPA may obtain an associate degree through the SEED scholarship program if they are enrolled in a pathway program and successfully complete each step. Workforce training certificates do not require a minimum GPA but do require graduation from a Delaware high school/GED program.
- Is available to individuals with non-violent felonies (previously, individuals with felony convictions were not eligible for the scholarship).

The following scholarship requirements from the original SEED scholarship still apply:

- The equivalency standards for Delaware home-schooled students shall be a complete home-schooled academic transcript, or a combined score of 1350 on the new SAT or a composite ACT score of at least 19.
- Undocumented students must meet the same eligibility requirements as documented students. Additionally, they must submit a notarized Tuition Affidavit which certifies that the student is an undocumented person and that s/he has filed an application to legalize his/her immigration status or will file an application to legalize his/her application status as soon as s/he is eligible.
- Individuals who lived in foster care at any point between the ages of 16 and 18, whether placed within or outside Delaware, qualify for the SEED Scholarship provided they meet in-state tuition residency requirements.
- A student must be admitted to college.
- A student must complete and submit the FAFSA. If Pell Grant funds cover full tuition, the SEED Scholarship will NOT be awarded. If Pell Grant funds do NOT cover full tuition, the SEED Scholarship will be awarded to cover the difference up to the cost of tuition. A student must also complete all institutional forms and supporting documentation as requested by the campus. A student should apply for financial aid by the priority date of April 1 of each year.

Hawai'i Promise

Description

Hawai'i Promise is a last dollar scholarship program that makes the University of Hawai'i Community College (UHCC) tuition-free for students with financial need. The program covers all direct education costs – including tuition, fees, books, supplies and a standard transportation allowance – for eligible students.

Students are considered for the Hawai'i Promise when they submit their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and they do not need to apply for the program separately. In 2020-21, the Promise program supported 1,800 UHCC students who had financial need. Average family income of Hawai'i Promise scholarship recipients was \$53,755 (Adjusted Gross Income), well below the state's median household income of \$83,102.

Website

<https://hawaii.hawaii.edu/financialaid/hawaiipromise>

Enacting Legislation

https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol05_Ch0261-0319/HRS0304A/HRS_0304A-0506.htm

Funding Source

The state budget provides annual funding for the program. For the 2020-21 academic year, the University awarded \$2,932,719 to assist 1,800 community college students.

Eligibility

In order to receive the Hawai'i Promise, students must:

- Complete the FAFSA;
- Be a State of Hawai'i resident or qualify for exempt status that pays in-state tuition;
- Enroll in a UH System community college for at least 6 credits per semester;
- Be degree-seeking in a financial aid eligible program;
- Accept all federal and state grants, scholarships, and any other funding sources that do not require repayment;
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress, and;
- Not have already achieved an undergraduate degree.

Indiana Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant

Description

The Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant pays tuition and mandatory fees for eligible high-value certificate programs at Ivy Tech Community College, Vincennes University, Indiana Institute of Technology, or other approved providers. The grant is available for two years and covers up to the number of credits required by the qualifying program. The grant does not cover courses that do not directly apply to the student's certificate program. Program-specific fees and equipment are not covered.

Qualifying high-value certificate programs are selected based on employer demand, wages, job placements and program completion rate. They currently include programs in the following fields: advanced manufacturing, building and construction, health sciences, IT and business services, and transportation and logistics.

The Workforce Ready Grant program is implemented jointly by the Department of Workforce Development and the Commission for Higher Education who provide grants to non-credit bearing providers and credit bearing providers respectively.

Website

<https://www.in.gov/cbe/state-financial-aid/state-financial-aid-by-program/workforce-ready-grant/>

Indiana Code

See IC 21-12-8-9 through IC 21-12-8-13

<http://iga.in.gov/legislative/laws/2021/ic/titles/021/#21-12-8-9>

Funding Source

The state's current biennial budget appropriates \$3 million annually for the program.

Eligibility

- Be an Indiana resident and U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen
- Have a high school diploma (or equivalent) but less than a college degree
- Enroll in a qualifying program at an eligible training provider

For credit bearing programs, students must also:

- Complete the FAFSA
- Enroll full-time if a dependent student
- Enroll at least half time if an independent student
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress
- Meet any other minimum criteria established by the Commission

Indiana 21st Century Scholarship

Description

The 21st Century Scholarship is an “early promise” program that offers income-eligible Hoosier students up to four years of paid tuition at a state college or university. Students must apply in the 7th or 8th Grades, maintain a 2.5 HS GPA, and fulfill a twelve-requirement pledge.

Income limitations for the Scholarship are based on household size. The current maximum annual income for a family of four is \$49,025.

Website

<https://learnmoreindiana.org/scholars/enroll>

Indiana Code

<http://iga.in.gov/legislative/laws/2021/ic/titles/021#21-12-6>

Funding Source

The program's funding is included in the state's \$388 million annual appropriation to the Commission for Higher Education for student financial aid. The 21st Century Scholarship program cost \$173 million in FY 2019.

Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Be an Indiana resident when applying and receiving the scholarship
- Be one of the following:
 - A U.S. citizen or U.S. national
 - A U.S. permanent resident
 - A non-citizen with one of the following designations:
 - Refugee
 - Asylum Granted
 - Indefinite Parole and/or Humanitarian Parole
 - Cuban-Haitian Entrant, Status Pending
- Be enrolled in the 7th or 8th grade at an Indiana public or private school accredited by the Indiana Department of Education.
- Meet the family income eligibility guidelines detailed below.

Household Size	Maximum Annual Income
2	\$32,227
3	\$40,626
4	\$49,025
5	57,424
6	\$65,823
7 or more	For each additional person, add \$8,399

All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship

Description

The All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship is a last dollar scholarship for students who attend an Iowa college/university within two years of completing a high school diploma. Priority is given to the following individuals:

- Students who age out of Iowa's foster care system, age out of the State Training School, and students adopted from Iowa's foster care system after age 16;
- Children of deceased public safety workers;
- Students who participated in certain federal TRIO programs while in high school (Upward Bound, Talent Search, Educational Opportunity Center);
- Graduates from alternative high schools or alternative high school programs; and
- Students who participated in a Federal GEAR UP Grant program in Iowa

The amount of the AIOS adjusts each year. For the 2021-22 school year, the maximum value was \$4,772. Students who are first-time recipients of AIOS in the 2022-23 school year can receive the scholarship for up to eight full-time semesters, or sixteen part-time semesters, so long as they are continuously enrolled in college.

Website

<https://iowacollegeaid.gov/AllIowaOpportunityScholarship>

Iowa Code

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/261.87.pdf>

Funding Source

The program cost \$3 million in FY 2020. Funding comes from the state's General Fund.

Eligibility

High school seniors are eligible for the All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship if they meet the following criteria:

- Iowa resident;
- Attend an eligible Iowa college or university;
- Must have graduated from an eligible Iowa high school or completed a high school equivalency diploma within the last 2 years;
- Be a first-time college freshman;
- Must be continuously enrolled in college and continuously receiving a scholarship disbursement for renewal;
- Enroll for at least 3 semester hours (or the trimester or quarter equivalent) in a program leading to an undergraduate degree, diploma or certificate;
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Iowa Financial Aid Application by March 1; and
- Have an eligible Expected Family Contribution (EFC) on the 2022-23 FAFSA. For reference, the eligible EFC range in 2021-22 was \$0-\$9,543.

Renewals require continuous college enrollment and a scholarship disbursement in each semester/term, annual completion of the FAFSA, and having an eligible Expected Family Contribution (EFC) throughout the entire school year.

Kansas Promise

Description

The Kansas Promise Scholarship was enacted in 2021 to assist students attending Kansas community colleges, technical colleges, Washburn Institute of Technology and certain private postsecondary educational institutions. Eligible postsecondary programs must be in one of the following fields of study: Information technology and security; mental and physical healthcare; advanced manufacturing and building trades, or; early childhood education and development. Additionally, each eligible postsecondary institution may designate one additional associate degree, CTE certificate, or stand-alone program that corresponds to a high wage, high demand or critical need occupation.

The last dollar scholarship requires recipients to sign an agreement to live and work in the State of Kansas for two consecutive years following the successful completion of their program of study. Failure to do so requires repaying the scholarship with interest.

Enacting Legislation

http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2021_22/measures/documents/hb2064_enrolled.pdf

Funding Source

The enacting legislation establishes the Kansas Promise Scholarship Program Fund to be administered by the state's Board of Regents. The legislature appropriated \$10 million for the program in FY 2022 and FY 2023. Beginning in FY 2024, subsequent appropriations could not exceed 150% of the preceding year's expenditures.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the Kansas Promise, applicants must:

- Be a Kansas resident, AND
- Have graduated from a Kansas high school within the preceding 12 months or have received a GED or other high school equivalency credential within the preceding 12 months, OR
- Be 21 years of age or older and a Kansas resident for the preceding three consecutive years, OR
- Be a dependent child of a military servicemember who is stationed in another state and who, within the preceding 12 months, graduated from an out-of-state high school or obtained a GED or other high school equivalency credential.

To apply and remain qualified for the Kansas Promise Scholarship, students must:

- Complete the Kansas Promise Scholarship application and submit their application to schools' financial aid office; AND
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); AND
- Enroll in an eligible program of study; AND
- Sign a Kansas Promise Scholarship Agreement that you agree to live and work in Kansas for a minimum of two consecutive years following successful completion of your program;
- Successfully complete an eligible program of study within 30 months of first being awarded a Kansas Promise Scholarship.

Kentucky Work Ready Scholarship

Description

The Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship is a last-dollar scholarship for Kentuckians who have not yet earned an associate degree. Applicants must be accepted or enrolled in a qualifying certificate and diploma program in health care, advanced manufacturing, transportation/logistics, business

services/IT, and construction. The Scholarship limits the maximum award to the in-state tuition and fees rate for full-time enrollment at the Kentucky Community and Technical College System.

Website

https://www.kheaa.com/website/kheaa/work_ready?main=1

Enacting Executive Order

<http://apps.sos.ky.gov/Executive/Journal/execjournalimages/2016-MISC-2016-0912-247765.pdf>

Funding Source

The FY 2002 state budget contains \$10.4 million in funding for the program.

Eligibility

All applicants must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident;
- Be a Kentucky resident;
- Be a high school graduate or be enrolled in or have completed a General Educational Development (GED) Program;
- Have not earned an associate's or higher degree;
- Be enrolled, or accepted for enrollment, at an eligible postsecondary institution in an approved program of study that leads to an industry recognized certificate or diploma or Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree in a high-demand workforce sector;
- Not be enrolled in an ineligible degree program, such as a bachelor or other associate; program, at the same or any other institution, and;
- Not be in default on any obligation to KHEAA.

In college, recipients must maintain satisfactory academic progress as determined by the eligible postsecondary institution.

Eligibility expires when the first of the following conditions is met:

- Receipt of scholarship funding for the equivalent of four academic terms;
- Receipt of the scholarship for 60 credit hours of enrollment; or
- Receipt of a first associate degree.

Louisiana Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)

Description

Louisiana's Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) is a comprehensive program of state scholarships. The program has four award components.

1. ***TOPS Opportunity Award***
Eligibility requirements for class of 2022 HS graduates include a 2.5 HS GPA in core courses and a ACT composite score of at least 20.
2. ***TOPS Performance Award***
Eligibility requirements for class of 2022 HS graduates include a 3.25 HS GPA in core courses and a ACT composite score of at least 23.
3. ***TOPS Honors Award***
Eligibility requirements for class of 2022 HS graduates include a 3.5 HS GPA in core courses and a ACT composite score of at least 27.
4. ***TOPS Tech Award***
Eligibility requirements for class of 2022 HS graduates include a 2.5 HS GPA in core courses and a ACT composite score of at least 17 or a silver level score on the ACT WorkKeys assessments.

All four TOPS programs require completion of HS core curriculum and continuous full-time enrollment at an eligible Louisiana postsecondary institution – including Louisiana public colleges and universities, members of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (LAICU), and certain Louisiana cosmetology and proprietary schools.

Payment of TOPS Awards is contingent upon appropriations by the Louisiana Legislature and vary by institution. A chart on the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) website details current award amounts. Other scholarships and financial aid can be used with TOPS up to the student's full course of attendance. Based on federal guidelines this may include: tuition and fees, on-campus room and board (or a housing and food allowance for off-campus students), and allowances for books, supplies, transportation, child care, costs related to a disability, and miscellaneous expenses.

Website

<https://mylosfa.la.gov/students-parents/scholarships-grants/tops/>

Louisiana Revised Statutes

RS 17:5001 to 17:5069 - <https://legis.la.gov/Legis/Law.aspx?p=y&d=963507>

Funding Source

Funding for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) is currently about \$331 million annually. Most of the program's funds come from the state's general fund.

Eligibility

Eligibility information for the TOPS Opportunity, Performance, and Honors Awards can be found at <https://mylosfa.la.gov/wp-content/uploads/TOPSOPH2021-2022-11-x-17.pdf>

Maine Free College Scholarship

Description

Maine Governor Janet Mills (D) proposed making community college tuition-free for recent high school graduates in her 2022 State of the State Address. The state's 2022 Supplemental Budget, enacted by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Mills, subsequently dedicated \$20 million in one-time General Fund to establish a last dollar scholarship providing up to two years of tuition-free community college.

To qualify for the Free College Scholarship, students must have a high school diploma or equivalent from 2020-23, enroll full-time in an associate degree program or one-year credential, live in Maine while enrolled, and accept all federal and state grants, scholarships and other funding sources. Current community college students who graduated high school in 2020 or 2021 also qualify for tuition-free community college.

Enacting Legislation

<https://legislature.maine.gov/ros/LawsOfMaine/breeze/Law/getDocById/?docId=86715>

Funding Source

Maine Governor Janet Mills' 2022 supplemental budget – subsequently approved by the legislature – allocated \$20 million allocation for tuition-free college.

Eligibility

Eligible students must:

- Graduate from high school or earn a HiSet/GED in 2020, 2021, 2022, or 2023. There are no income or age limits for students who graduated during these years;
- Complete a Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA);
- Accept all state and federal grants and scholarships;
- Enroll full time, earning 30 credits per year;
- Pursue an associate degree or academic credential;

- Participate in academic planning and advising to stay on track to completion;
- Live in Maine at the time of enrollment and while enrolled in the program.

Maryland Community College Promise

Description

In the final hour of the 2018 legislative session, Maryland legislators agreed to authorize and fund a \$15 million community college Promise program, which began awarding last-dollar scholarship in the Fall of 2019. It was a compromise between the Senate, which passed a bill to create a \$30 million program, and the House, which wanted to start with only \$10 million.

The enacting legislation limits the annual scholarship award to \$5,000 per recipient – which is enough to make most community colleges in the state tuition free for eligible students – or actual tuition, whichever is less. Recipients meeting specified eligibility criteria are eligible for up to three years of awards.

If the state's appropriation is insufficient, initial awards will be prioritized to students with the greatest financial need. Priority for awards in subsequent years will be given to prior year recipients who remain eligible for the program.

Enacting Legislation

http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2018RS/Chapters_noln/CH_554_hb0016e.pdf

Eligibility

An applicant must:

- Submit either the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or, if undocumented, the Maryland State Financial Aid Application (MSFAA).
- Be a high school graduate or GED recipient who is planning to enroll, or is currently enrolled, at a Maryland community college as a candidate in: a credit-bearing vocational certificate; a credit-bearing certificate; an associate degree program; a sequence of credit or non-credit courses that leads to licensure or certification, or; a registered apprenticeship program.
- Be eligible for in-state tuition, as determined by the community college;
- Have earned an unweighted high school cumulative GPA of at least a 2.3 (or its equivalent) if enrolling directly from high school. Applicants currently or previously enrolled at a community college must have earned either: a cumulative GPA of at least a 2.5 from the community college; or a high school unweighted cumulative GPA of at least a 2.3 or its equivalent;

- Have an annual adjusted gross income not more than \$100,000 if the applicant is single or resides in a single-parent household; or \$150,000 if the applicant is married or resides in a two-parent household for the 2020 tax year;
- Have not earned a bachelor's degree or an associate degree; and
- Have not been awarded other educational grants or scholarships that cover their full cost of attendance at a community college.
- For continued eligibility, maintain at least a 2.5 cumulative community college GPA if enrolled in a credit bearing program; make satisfactory academic progress toward a vocational certificate, or; participate in a registered apprenticeship program.

MassGrant Plus

Description

The MASSGrant Plus program was established in 2018 to provide Massachusetts residents with last dollar financial aid covering community college tuition and mandatory fees. In 2020, program eligibility was expanded to include full-time Pell-eligible students enrolled in one of the Commonwealth's comprehensive state universities or specialized colleges. The program will also aid eligible University of Massachusetts students starting with the 2022-23 academic year.

Student eligibility for the MassGrant Plus funds is based upon a student's unmet financial need as determined by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the receipt of other grant aid. The program does not require a separate application.

Website

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgrant-massgrant-plus>

Funding Source

The Commonwealth's FY 2022 budget allocated over \$130 million for state scholarship programs. MassGrant Plus is one of several components of this funding stream.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the MassGrant Plus program, students must:

- Be a permanent legal resident of Massachusetts for at least one full year prior to enrolling in college;
- Be a U.S. Citizen or a non-citizen eligible for Federal Student Aid;
- File a FAFSA;
- Have unmet financial need for tuition and fees after accounting for Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and all forms of institutional and public grant aid; and

- Enroll full-time (minimum of 12 credits per semester) or part-time (minimum of 6 credits per semester) in a community college degree or certificate program. Pell grant recipients enrolled full-time at public four-year colleges and universities are also eligible for the MassGrant Plus program.

Michigan Reconnect

Description

Michigan Reconnect is a last dollar scholarship program that pays for adults – aged 25+ to attend an in-district community college tuition-free. Michigan Reconnect offers a case study of how the parties can work together to address the ongoing need for a skilled workforce.

In Governor Gretchen Whitmer’s (D) first State of the State address in 2019, she made closing the state’s “skills gap” a major theme and proposed Reconnect as one way to produce more skilled workers. Normally, a proposal coming from the governor of one party to the Legislature controlled by the other party carries scant prospects. But the governor did two things differently to avoid a “dead on arrival” verdict for her initiative: She convinced the Democratic leaders in the Legislature to let her staff look for Republicans to be the chief sponsors of the proposal in both houses; and she asked the business, labor and education groups that supported new opportunities for adults to acquire more skills to come out publicly for Reconnect — which they did at a press conference with the governor and Republican bill sponsors in the spring of 2019.

Then the Republicans in the Legislature took over. With Rep. Ben Frederick in the House and Sen. Ken Horn in the Senate as the primary bill sponsors, the Republicans took the governor’s proposal and revised it to reflect their priorities and political philosophy. In the Spring of 2020, the bill was passed with overwhelming bipartisan support and signed into law.

The launch of Reconnect was however delayed nearly a year due to fiscal uncertainty related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the interim, Governor Whitmer utilized \$24 million in Governor’s Emergency Education Relief funds from the CARES Act to establish “Futures for Frontliners.” This initiative offered tuition-free college or high school completion to state residents who provided essential front-line services during COVID-19 Stay Home, Stay Safe orders between April and June 2020. More than 120,000 Michiganders submitted applications by the December 31, 2020 deadline and over 12,000 Frontliners enrolled in community college.

Enacting Legislation

<https://legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/archive/2021/April/mcl-Act-84-of-2020.pdf>

Funding Source

The state budget provides \$55 million to fund the program through September 2022.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the Michigan Reconnect, applicants must:

- Be at least 25 years old
- Have lived in Michigan for a year or more
- Have a high school diploma or equivalent
- Have not yet completed a college degree (associate or bachelor's)

After completion of a Michigan Reconnect application, prospective students must:

- Apply to and be admitted to a Michigan public community college
- File a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Enroll in the program of study for at least half-time (six credits) within a year of submitting the Reconnect application.

In order to continue receiving the Michigan Reconnect scholarship, participants must:

- Continue to be a Michigan resident.
- Be enrolled at least half-time (6 credits) in at least two semesters in a 12-month period. The credits must be in an associate degree or skill certificate program.
- Maintain a cumulative 2.0 grade point average by the end of each 12-month period.
- Annually submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). annually.
- Participate in any academic coaching programs or other college success services offered by their college to Reconnect students.

Michigan Promise Zones

A few years after the Kalamazoo Promise awarded its first scholarships, Michigan's legislature and then Governor Jennifer Granholm (D) enacted the Michigan Promise Zone Authority Act. The measure establishes "Promise Zones," which are public-private partnerships committed to ensuring that every child in a community has a tuition-free path to at least an associate degree, in economically distressed communities/counties.

In November 2017, Governor Rick Snyder (R) signed legislation authorizing the state to certify up to 15 Promise Zones – a 50% increase from the previous 10.

After two years of operation through private funding, a Promise Zone can receive half the growth in the State Education Tax (SET) within their boundaries. This Tax Increment Financing calculates capture from a base year that is the year before the Promise Zone begins awarding scholarships.

Enacting Legislation

[http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(av2g1lqilnt33zyoghihcuv\)\)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Act-549-of-2008.pdf](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(av2g1lqilnt33zyoghihcuv))/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Act-549-of-2008.pdf)

<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2017-2018/publicact/pdf/2017-PA-0150.pdf>

Funding Source

After two years of operation through private funding, a Promise Zone can receive half the growth in the State Education Tax (SET) within their boundaries. This Tax Increment Financing calculates capture from a base year that is the year before the Promise Zone begins awarding scholarships.

Eligibility

The Promise Zone Authority Act gives each individual Promise Zone considerable authority to establish eligibility criteria so long as they provide high school graduates a tuition-free path to at least an associate degree from one or more post-secondary institutions.

The Lansing Promise, for example, requires students to:

- Attend, for four or more consecutive years, and graduate from a public or non-public school located within the boundaries of the Lansing School District (LSD); or
- Attend, for eight or more consecutive years, a public or non-public school located within the boundaries of the LSD and obtain a GED before age 20;
- Be admitted to and enroll in Lansing Community College or Michigan State University; and
- Meet eligibility requirements to apply for federal student aid and complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) each year.

Legislative Fiscal Analysis

<https://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2007-2008/billanalysis/House/pdf/2007-HLA-5375-6.pdf>

Additional Information

<https://www.wmich.edu/conferencemanagement/promisenet2015/files/Slideshows/AreMichiganPromiseZonestheDIYPromise.pdf>

Minnesota Future Together Grants

Description

Governor Tim Walz allocated \$35 million of American Rescue Plan Act funds to establish Minnesota Future Together Grants. This new program will provide eligible Minnesotans with a tuition-free pathway for earning a certificate, diploma, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree at any public

institution in the state. The last dollar grants will be available starting Spring 2022 through 2024 or until all funds are dispensed, whichever comes first.

Eligibility is limited to specific programs leading to a career in the following high-need areas: healthcare, STEM, business, industry and technology, education, and public service. The program also has specified income limitations.

Website

<http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/sPages/FTG.cfm>

Funding Source

\$35 million of American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Eligibility

Prospective students must:

- Be a Minnesota resident;
- Attend a public higher education institution or Tribal College;
- Initially enroll in college during the 2021-22 or 2022-23 school year or return to college after not being enrolled at any college in the last three semesters;
- Enroll as a degree-granting student in an eligible program leading to a career in a high-need area (Note: Specific programs will vary by campus); and
- Meet one of the following requirements:
 - Have a Family Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) of less than \$100,000 and have worked in a critical industry listed in Executive Order 20- 74 at least part-time between March 1, 2020 - December 31, 2021;
 - Received unemployment benefits between March 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021;
 - Have a Family AGI of less than \$50,000.
- Complete a FAFSA or Minnesota Dream Act Application.

Missouri A+ Scholarship Program

Description

The program provides last-dollar funds to eligible graduates of A+ designated high schools attending participating public community college or vocational/technical school, or certain private two-year vocational/technical schools. The tuition amount eligible for reimbursement is capped at the published standard per credit hour tuition rate charged by State Technical College of Missouri. For the 2021-2022 academic year, the maximum rate is \$189.00 per credit hour or \$5.00 per clock-hour.

Website

<http://dhe.mo.gov/ppc/grants/aplusscholarship.php>

Enacting Legislation

<https://revisor.mo.gov/main/OneSection.aspx?section=160.545&bid=47841&hl=>

Funding Source

The program is funded from both General Revenue and Lottery Proceeds. In FY 2021, A+ provided \$50 million of assistance to 14,809 students.

Eligibility

All applicants must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident;
- Have a written agreement between the student and their high school prior to graduation;
- Attend a designated A+ high school for two years prior to graduation;
- Graduate HS with an overall unweighted grade point average of 2.5 or higher;
- Have at least a 95% attendance record overall for grades 9-12;
- Perform at least 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring, of which up to 25% may include job shadowing;
- Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoid the unlawful use of drugs and/or alcohol;
- Have achieved a score of proficient or advanced on the Algebra I end of course exam or a higher level DESE approved end-of-course exam in the field of mathematics.
- Complete a FAFSA; and
- Enroll and attend full-time at a participating public community college or vocational/technical school, or private two-year vocational/technical school.

Post-secondary students must also maintain satisfactory academic progress – specifically, a 2.0 GPA at the end of the initial fall semester, and a 2.5 minimum GPA thereafter.

Missouri Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant

Description

The Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant was established in 2019 to address workforce needs by helping adults pursue a certificate, degree, or industry-recognized credential in an area designated as high need. Grant recipients must maintain Missouri residency and work in Missouri for three years after graduation to prevent the grant from becoming a loan that must be repaid with interest.

Missouri residents who are 25 year or older are eligible for the program if they have not earned a bachelor's degree and earn no more than \$80,000 if filing jointly or \$40,000 per year if filing as an individual. The Fast Track grant is considered a middle dollar program as it provides students, whose other aid covers full tuition and fee, with an award of up to \$500 to cover other education-related expenses.

The Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant can be utilized for eligible certificate, associate's degree and bachelor's degree programs at approved public and non-profit postsecondary institutions. High-demand occupations were identified using long-term occupational projections developed by the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC).

In his 2022 State of the State Address, Missouri Governor Mike Parson (R) called for the Fast Track Program to be made permanent. He said, "over the last few years, it has become more important than ever to provide adults with opportunities to learn new skills and develop their career potential. In just a short time, and despite the pandemic, our Fast Track program saw a 65 percent increase in participants in 2021. To our surprise, 80 percent of the recipients are women and 50 percent are first-generation college students. Additionally, more than 50 percent are enrolled in health care programs, which has become a blessing considering the past 22 months."

Website

https://dhewd.mo.gov/initiatives/fast_track.php

Enacting Legislation

https://www.senate.mo.gov/19info/BTS_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=R&BillID=91

Funding Source

The FY 2021-22 Budget contains \$2.7 million to support the support the Fast-Track Workforce Incentive Grant Program. An additional \$1 million comes from Missouri Lottery proceeds.

Eligibility

The following Missouri residents are eligible:

- Individuals who are 25 years or older or individuals who have not been enrolled in any school within the last two years.
- Individuals who make no more than \$80,000 filing jointly, or no more than \$40,000 per year, filing any other tax status.
- Individuals who have not earned a bachelor's degree and are planning to enroll part time or full time.

Applicants must:

- Apply for and enroll in an approved program at an eligible postsecondary institution.

- Compete a Fast Track application.
- Complete a FAFSA for each year enrolled

Grant recipients are required to:

- Maintain at least half-time enrollment in an eligible program until graduation. Students may take a leave of absence of up to 12 months without triggering this requirement.
- Graduate from an approved institution.
- Verify residency in the state for 12 months after graduation and maintain residency for at least three years.
- Achieve qualifying employment in Missouri within 12 months of graduation and maintain qualifying employment in Missouri for at least three years.

One-third of the aggregate amount received through the Fast Track program will remain a grant for each year of residency and employment. If the recipient maintains residency and qualifying employment for less than the full three years, any remaining balance will be converted to a loan and will be repayable with interest.

Nevada Promise Scholarship

Description

The Nevada Promise is a scholarship and mentoring program which aims to make a college education accessible and affordable. Established by the Nevada Legislature in 2017, the Nevada Promise provides last-dollar scholarships to eligible Nevada students attending any of the state's four community colleges: College of Southern Nevada, Great Basin College, Truckee Meadows Community College, or Western Nevada College.

The Nevada Promise Scholarship (NPS), as initially enacted, can provide for up to three years of registration fees (Nevada does not charge tuition to state residents), and other mandatory fees, to eligible students not covered by other aid, including the federal Pell Grant, the federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), the Silver State Opportunity Grant (SSOG), and the Governor Guinn Millennium Scholarship (GGMS).

All four Nevada community colleges agreed to participate in the Nevada Promise Scholarship program. Pursuant to the enacting legislation, they were required to establish a mentoring program for students who intend to participate in the Promise without receiving additional state funds, or partner with non-profit organizations or other government entities to provide mentoring services.

In 2019 the Nevada State Legislature approved Senate Bill 350 (Chapter 218, Statutes of Nevada 2019), which transferred administration of the Nevada Promise Scholarship program from individual

community colleges to the state's Board of Regents. This change helped establish state-wide consistency across institutions and provided the flexibility necessary to effectively implement the program. This bill also made several revisions to student eligibility requirements, including:

- Reducing – from 20 to 8 for initial eligibility – the number of community service hours required from participants and revising when such community service must be completed;
- Combining the requirements to attend separate training and orientation meetings into a single meeting requirement;
- Removing the requirement for students to submit yearly renewal applications;
- Waiving the 12-credit requirement during a student's last semester prior to graduation; and
- Extending program eligibility to students prohibited by federal law from completing the FAFSA.

Website

<http://system.nevada.edu/Nshe/index.cfm/initiatives/nevada-promise-scholarship>

Enacting Legislation

https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Session/79th2017/Bills/SB/SB391_EN.pdf

<https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/80th2019/Bill/6633/Text>

Funding Source

The enacting legislation (SB 391) contained a \$3.5 million appropriation. According to the 2021 NPS Annual Report, nearly \$2.8 million was awarded to 1,395 students in the 2020-21 Academic Year.

The Board of Regents reported that, due COVID-19 related budget cuts, the Nevada Promise Scholarship account did not have sufficient funds to cover the base registration and certain other mandatory fees for all 2020-21 participants already awarded. To prevent a mid-year reduction in NPS award amounts, the state's community colleges used institutional financial aid dollars to cover a \$346,516 gap in state funding.

Eligibility

A student must:

- Complete a Nevada promise Scholarship application;
- Be classified as a Nevada resident for tuition purposes by the institution where they plan to receive the Nevada Promise Scholarship;
- Have earned one of the following during his/her high school senior year:
 - High school diploma from a public or private high school located in Nevada;

- High school diploma from a public high school in a county of another state that borders Nevada and accepts Nevada residents; or
- General Equivalency Diploma (GED) or equivalent document before 20 years of age no later than June 15.
- Not have earned a prior associate or bachelor's degree;
- Meet all applicable deadlines including completing the Nevada Promise Application no later than 11:59 p.m. on October 31, 2019 for the Fall 2020 award year;
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or if the student is prohibited by law from completing the FAFSA, complete an alternative form provided by the community college;
- Before enrolling in a community college, participate in one training meeting related to financial aid, the FAFSA, and college orientation;
- Meet at least once with a mentor (assigned by the college) before the first semester of enrollment and at least twice during each academic year while in the program;
- Complete at least 8 hours of eligible community service during their last year of high school and during each semester of college enrollment;
- Enroll in at least 12 credit hours that apply to the student's chosen program of study, with an exception for lower enrollment provided for the last semester if fewer than 12 credits are required to graduate;
- Meet institutional Title IV Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements; and
- Have not already received the scholarship for three (3) academic years.

New Jersey Community College Opportunity Grant (CCOG)

Description

New Jersey's FY 2018-19 budget contained \$20 million to establish a pilot program awarding last-dollar scholarships to students from families with less than \$45,000 in adjusted gross income to attend county (community) colleges. An additional \$5 million was allocated to the Secretary of Higher Education in order to provide planning grants to county colleges seeking to provide tuition-free college to eligible students. Pursuant to the authorizing legislation, the grants "shall include but not be limited to goals and strategies for capacity building, increasing student completion, reducing financial burdens on students, and estimates and plans by county colleges for adapting to increased enrollment."

The FY 2019-20 budget increased the family income limit to \$65,000. Awards to students attending 13 county colleges began for the Spring 2019 semester. Governor Phil Murphy subsequently expanded the program to include all 19 county colleges in the state. In 2021, CCOG was made permanent with the passage of A4410.

Website

<https://www.hesaa.org/Pages/ccog.aspx>

Enacting Legislation

https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2020/PL21/26_.PDF

Funding Source

The program received a \$20 million appropriation in FY 2019 and a \$25 million appropriation in FY 2020. The appropriation to the program for the FY 2020 three-month extension totaled \$10 million and the appropriation in the FY 2021 appropriations act for the nine-month period was also \$10 million, making the total financial aid funding for that 12-month period \$20 million.

Eligibility

Community College Opportunity Grants are available to students who meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Enrolled in at least six (6) credits per semester at any community college during Academic Year 2022-2023
- Does not have a prior college degree
- Completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the New Jersey Alternative Financial Aid Application according to agency deadlines at www.njgrants.org
- Make satisfactory academic progress
- Have a total household adjusted gross income between \$0 - \$65,000

New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship

Description

In February 2022, New Mexico's legislature passed the nation's most comprehensive and universal free college tuition program. Effective July 1, 2022, up to 35,000 New Mexicans will be able to attend public colleges and universities tuition-free.

SB 140 is innovative in the following ways. First, the program will allow both recent high school graduates and adults to attend public college tuition free. Second, it will be the only state program to allow adults with an associate degree to return to school tuition-free to complete a bachelor's degree. Finally, the aid will be in addition to any federal Pell Grant money students might receive. This means that lower income students will be able to use that money to help pay for non-tuition expenses such as books, transportation, and housing.

The new “Opportunity Scholarship” will be established on or after July 1, 2022. Upon enactment of SB 140 the balances in the legislative endowment scholarship fund and the college affordability endowment fund will be transferred to the opportunity scholarship fund

Website

<https://hed.state.nm.us/financial-aid/scholarships/new-mexico-opportunity-scholarship>

Enacting Legislation

<https://nmlegis.gov/Sessions/22%20Regular/final/SB0140.pdf>

Funding

The state’s General Appropriations Act of 2022 (HB 2) allocated \$63 million in nonrecurring funding and \$12 million recurring funding for the opportunity scholarship program. Additionally, all balances in the legislative endowment scholarship fund and the college affordability endowment fund – estimated at \$24.5 million – were transferred to the opportunity scholarship fund.

Eligibility

A student must:

- Be an established New Mexico resident;
- Enroll in a New Mexico public college or university;
- Be pursuing an associate or bachelor’s degree, or a credit-bearing career training certificate in a high demand field;
- Demonstrate continuous progress -- at least six credit hours per semester -- towards a degree or certificate;
- Maintain a 2.5 college cumulative GPA starting their first semester receiving the Opportunity Scholarship;
- If pursuing an associate degree, have not completed a first associate degree or 90 credit hours, whichever comes first.
- If you are pursuing a bachelor’s degree, have not completed a first bachelor’s degree or 160 credit hours completed, whichever comes first.

New York Excelsior Scholarship

Description

The last dollar Excelsior Scholarship covers any remaining gap in tuition expenses, after other federal and state grants and scholarships are applied, up to \$5,500. In instances where tuition expenses exceed the total financial aid a recipient is awarded, a tuition credit will be applied to the remaining balance.

Under this program, initially established by the FY 2018 budget, full-time students with an income or family income of up to \$125,000 per year qualify to attend college tuition-free at all CUNY and SUNY two- and four-year colleges in New York State. The income calculation is based on federal adjusted gross income, as reported on federal income tax forms, for the student and their family.

The Excelsior Scholarship is designed to encourage on-time degree completion. Students must average 30 credits per year (including Summer and January semesters) to receive the funding. However, there is some built-in flexibility for students facing certain hardships. After graduation, Excelsior Scholarship recipients are required to reside in New York State for the same number of years in which they received the award, or it will be converted into a loan. The student does not need to be employed during this period, however they cannot be employed in another state.

Website

<https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/financial-aid/types-of-financial-aid/nys-grants-scholarships-awards/the-excelsior-scholarship.html>

<https://www.ny.gov/programs/excelsior-scholarship-answer-center>

Enacting Legislation

https://assembly.state.ny.us/2017budget/budget_bills/A3009C.pdf#page=142

<http://legislation.nysenate.gov/pdf/bills/2017/s2009c>

Funding Source

The state budget. According to the state's Higher Education Services Commission, the program was estimated to cost just over \$137 million for the 2020-21 Academic Year.

Eligibility

An applicant must:

- Be a resident of New York State (NYS) and have resided in NYS for 12 continuous months prior to the beginning of the term;
- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen;
- Have either graduated from high school in the United States, earned a high school equivalency diploma, or passed a federally approved "Ability to Benefit" test, as defined by the Commissioner of the State Education Department;
- Have a combined federal adjusted gross income of \$125,000 or less;
- Be pursuing an undergraduate degree at a SUNY or CUNY college, including community colleges and the statutory colleges at Cornell University and Alfred University;
- Be enrolled in at least 12 credits per term and successfully complete at least 30 credits each year, applicable toward his or her degree program through continuous study with no break in enrollment except for certain reasons that can be documented;

- If attended college prior to the 2021-22 academic year, have earned at least 30 credits each year, applicable toward his or her degree program prior to applying for an Excelsior Scholarship;
- Be in a non-default status on a student loan made under any NYS or federal education loan program or on the repayment of any NYS award;
- Be in compliance with the terms of the service condition(s) imposed by any NYS award that you have previously received; and
- Execute a Contract agreeing to reside in NYS for the length of time the award was received, and, if employed during such time, be employed in NYS.

North Carolina Longleaf Commitment Grant

Description

Governor Roy Cooper announced the Longleaf Commitment Grant in May, 2021 to facilitate learning recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and to help ensure that high school graduates do not fall out of the education pipeline for good. The last dollar program for students with less than \$15,000 Expected Family Contribution based on their FAFSA determination was initially available only to prospective community college students who completed high school in the 2020-21 school year. The state's community college system subsequently dedicated surplus funds to open it up to students who finished high school during the 2019-20 school year. The state's budget added another \$25 million to extend the grants to a third cohort – students who graduate in the 2021-22 school year.

Funding Source

North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper allocated \$15 million from the Governors Emergency Education Relief (GEER) fund through federal COVID-19 relief packages. An additional \$25 million from the state budget will extend the program to high school graduates from the 2021-22 school year.

Eligibility

Applicant requirements include:

- Completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- Having an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) from \$0 to \$15,000.
- North Carolina residency
- Applying for admission, and acceptance, at a North Carolina community college
- Enrollment in an approved curriculum for at least 6 hours per semester

College students must annually complete the and meet their college's Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements.

Oklahoma Promise

Description

Oklahoma's Promise was originally enacted in 1992 as the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program. The program, which is administered by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, allows students whose families earn \$60,000 or less annually, and who meet academic and conduct requirements to earn a last dollar college tuition scholarship.

Oklahoma's Promise will pay up to the full tuition at an Oklahoma public two-year college or four-year university. Students wishing to enroll at an accredited Oklahoma private college or university, or in a program that does not qualify for federal financial aid at a public career technology center are eligible for partial scholarships. The scholarship amount does not cover fees, books, supplies, or room and board.

High school students apply for the Oklahoma Promise in the eighth, ninth, 10th or 11th grades. The \$60,000 family income limit is applied when the student fills out the Promise application and is based on the federal adjusted gross income (AGI) of the student's parents. However, the federal adjusted gross income (AGI) of the student's parents (or the income of the student if the student is officially determined to be financially independent of their parents) can be up to \$100,000 when the student enrolls in college. Oklahoma Promise students are required to complete a FAFSA each year in college to determine whether adjusted gross income exceeds \$100,000.

High school students must complete a specific college preparatory curriculum that meets Oklahoma Academic standards in order to receive an Oklahoma's Promise Scholarship. According to state data, 75% of the high school class of 2020 completed the program's high school requirements.

Website

<https://www.okhighered.org/okpromise/>

Enacting Legislation

<https://www.okhighered.org/okpromise/statutes-rules.shtml>

Funding Source

Legislation creating a dedicated funding process for Oklahoma's Promise was enacted in 2007. This law allows the program to be funded "off the top" from the state's General Revenue Fund each year. The program cost \$66.7 million to provide 15,347 scholarships in the 2019-20 academic year.

Eligibility

Applicants must be:

- Oklahoma residents and a U.S. citizen or lawfully present in the United States.

- Enrolled in the eighth, ninth, 10th or 11th grade in an Oklahoma high school. (Homeschool students must be age 13, 14, 15 or 16.)
- Students whose parents' federal adjusted gross income for the most recent federal tax year does not exceed \$60,000.
- Submit an Oklahoma's Promise application by December 31 of their senior year in high schools.

In high school, the student must:

- Graduate from high school and complete all high school requirements by the time of graduation.
- Achieve at least a 2.50 cumulative GPA for all coursework attempted in grades 9 through 12.
- Complete the 17-unit college prep core curriculum and achieve at least a 2.5 cumulative GPA for the 17-unit core curriculum. The curriculum must be strictly followed, and students should be aware that some courses that meet high school graduation requirements do not meet Oklahoma's Promise requirements.
- Attend school regularly and do homework.
- Refrain from substance abuse.
- Refrain from criminal or delinquent acts.
- Have school work and school records reviewed by an appropriate school official.
- Provide information to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education or the State Board of Education, if requested.
- Be contacted by the OKPromise office with information relevant to my application or the program when contact information is provided on the application.
- Apply for other financial aid during the senior year of high school.
- Participate in program activities.

College students must:

- Complete the FAFSA annually to determine that federal adjusted gross income does not exceed \$100,000.
- Meet the regular admission standards for first-time entering students at the college or university to which the student applies.
- Start taking college courses within three years after graduating high school.
- Meet the college's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy requirements for eligibility to receive federal financial aid.

Oklahoma's Promise Scholarship awards:

- May not be used for non-credit remedial courses.
- Are limited to no more than five consecutive years after enrolling in college.
- May not be used for courses taken after completion of the requirements for a bachelor's degree.
- May not be used to complete more than 129 semester credit hours, unless the student's degree program requires more than 129 hours.
- Will be permanently lost if the student is suspended from college for more than one semester for conduct reasons.

Oregon Promise

Description

The Oregon Promise is a state grant program that helps cover tuition cost at any Oregon community college. Eligible recipients are recent Oregon high school graduates and GED recipients who enroll in an Oregon community college within six months of graduation. For full-time students, awards ranged from \$1,000 to \$4,131 in 2021-22, depending on financial need and other state and federal grants awards. As originally enacted, the college automatically deducted a \$50 co-pay from the award each term.

The passage of an equity focused bill – SB 1522 – in March 2022 made the following changes to the Oregon Promise Grant.

1. Starting with the Class of 2022, the high school GPA requirement has been lowered to a cumulative, unweighted 2.0.
2. For the 2022-23 academic year and beyond:
 - a. the \$50 per term co-pay has been removed from the award calculation.
 - b. the minimum award will increase from \$1,000 to \$2,000 for full-time, full-year students, and it will increase at the same rate as the maximum award each year.
 - c. the First-Year Experience, which varies by community college, is no longer be a requirement to renew the Oregon Promise Grant.

Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission has the authority to apply an Expected Family Contribution limit as necessary when state funding levels are insufficient for this program. For Class of 2020 students who started college between Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) limit was \$22,000 due to a budget cut from the Oregon Legislature. As of July 2021, there is no Expected Family Contribution (EFC) limit for Class of 2021 applicants.

Website

<http://www.oregonstudentaid.gov/oregon-promise.aspx>

Enacting Legislation

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2015R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/SB81/Enrolled>

Legislative Budget Report

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2015R1/Downloads/MeasureAnalysisDocument/32321>

2022 Amendments

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2022R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/SB1522>

Eligibility

Applicants must meet all of the following application and eligibility requirements:

- Complete an Oregon Promise Grant Application;
- File a FAFSA or ORSAA application listing at least one Oregon community college;
- Be a recent Oregon high school graduate or GED recipient;
- Document a 2.0 cumulative high school GPA or higher, or a GED score of 145 or higher on each test;
- Enroll at least half-time at an Oregon community college before their [required start term](#) – determined by graduation date;
- Be an Oregon resident for at least 12 months prior to enrolling in community college; and
- Have no more than [90 college credits](#) completed or attempted.

Rhode Island's Promise

Description

Rhode Island's Promise was enacted in 2017 and allows students to enroll right out of high school at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) tuition-free. It provides a last dollar scholarship for up to two academic years and can be applied to any associate degree program at CCRI. It may not be used for certificate or non-credit programs.

Recipients of the Promise commit to live, work, or continue their education in Rhode Island after graduation. However, the program does not contain a penalty for leaving the state.

Website

<https://www.ccri.edu/ripromise/index.html>

Enacting Legislation

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText17/HouseText17/H5175Aaa.pdf>

The Rhode Island Promise was made permanent by the enactment of S0079 Substitute A/H5224 Substitute A in May 2021. <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/PublicLaws/law21/law21028.htm>

Funding Source

A \$7.68 million appropriation is included in the state's FY 2022 budget.

Eligibility

All recipients must:

- Be Rhode Island residents that qualify for in-state tuition and fees;
- Be a high school graduate (public, private or homeschooled) or a GED® recipient who was younger than 19 years of age when they completed high school or the GED® program.
- Be admitted to CCRI and enroll in the semester immediately following high school graduation.
- Additionally, students need to take the following steps to receive/maintain the Promise:
- Apply to CCRI and register for a full-time fall course load;
- Fill out the FAFSA;
- Get an official, final high school or GED transcript from their high school or GED program and submit it to the Office of Enrollment Services at any CCRI campus;
- Fill out the Rhode Island Promise Attestation form;
- Earn at least 30 credits each college academic year;
- Enroll each semester for two years; and
- Maintain at least a 2.5 GPA in college.

South Carolina Workforce Scholarships for the Future

Description

South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster established the \$17 million Workforce Scholarships for the Future pilot program in November 2021 and has requested that the legislature provide \$124 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to extend the program through June 30, 2024. Initial funding for program comes from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund in the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act).

The scholarship covers tuition and required fees at the state's 16 technical colleges for state residents – both adults and recent high school graduates – enrolled in a high-demand field such as manufacturing, healthcare, computer science and information technology, transportation, distribution and logistics or construction.

Website

<http://www.sctechsystem.edu/students/sc-workforce-scholarships-for-the-future.html>

Funding Source

\$17 million of Governor's Emergency Education Relief funding.

Eligibility

The scholarship does not require a separate application beyond completion of the FAFSA. Students in college must maintain a 2.0 GPA. All participating students must also complete one of the following requirements:

- be employed;
- take a financial literacy course offered at the technical college;
- complete 100 hours of voluntary time contributing to a nonprofit or public service organization.

Tennessee Promise

Description

The Tennessee Promise is both a scholarship and mentoring program focused on increasing the number of students attending college in Tennessee. It provides students a last-dollar scholarship, meaning the scholarship will cover tuition and fees not covered by the Pell grant, the HOPE scholarship, or state student assistance funds. Students may use the scholarship at any of the state's 13 community colleges, 27 colleges of applied technology, or other eligible institution offering an associate degree program.

Website

<http://tennesseepromise.gov/>

Enacting Legislation

<http://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/108/Bill/SB2471.pdf>

Funding Source

A \$300 million endowment that was established from surplus lottery funds. The program cost just over \$32 million for the 2019-20 Academic Year.

Eligibility

A student must enroll in an eligible postsecondary institution and participate full-time in the fall term following graduation from an eligible high school or homeschool program, or completion of a GED/HiSET diploma earned before he/she reached 19 years of age.

Eligible students must apply by November of their senior year in high school or the year in which he/she will obtain a GED/HiSET diploma. Applicants must also complete the FAFSA, qualify for in-state tuition, and possess a valid Social Security number. Additionally, they must attend mandatory meetings and participate in a mentoring program. In college, students must maintain full-time enrollment, complete eight hours of community service per term enrolled, maintain satisfactory academic progress (2.0 GPA) at their institution, and annually complete the FAFSA.

Legislative Fiscal Note

<http://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/108/Fiscal/SB2471.pdf>

Endowment Fund Information

<http://www.tnpromise.gov/files/Tennessee%20Promise%20Investment%20Information.pdf>

Tennessee Reconnect

Description

Tennessee Reconnect is a last dollar scholarship for adults to attend a community or technical college tuition-free. It was established in its present form in 2017 as an extension of Governor Bill Haslam's Drive to 55 initiative, which seeks to equip 55% of Tennesseans with a postsecondary degree or certificate by the year 2025.

Website

<http://tnreconnect.gov/>

Enacting Legislation

<https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/acts/110/pub/pc0448.pdf>

Funding Source

The Lottery for Education Account. Officials expect the Reconnect scholarship will cost the state \$10 million annually.

Eligibility

To be eligible for Tennessee Reconnect, the applicant must:

- Be a Tennessee resident;
- File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by the deadline date, and be classified as an independent student;

Fall – September 1

Spring – February 1

Summer – February 1

- Be enrolled in a federal Title IV eligible curriculum of courses leading to a certificate or associate degree;
- Not have previously earned an associate degree or a more advanced degree;
- Enroll in and attend at least six (6) credit hours at an eligible institution;
- Maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA) at the end of each academic year, as determined by the institution, and;
- Participate in a college success program, as determined by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC).

Legislative Fiscal Note

<http://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/110/Fiscal/HB0531.pdf>

Vermont 802 Opportunity Grant

Description

The last dollar scholarship program allows Vermonters with a family income of \$50,000 or less the opportunity to attend the Community College of Vermont (CCV) tuition free. In addition to tuition, it covers CCV's \$100 administrative fee. Course fees and textbooks are not covered by the program.

The 802 Opportunity Grant is currently open to new or returning students of any age through the Spring 2023 semester. Governor Phil Scott has proposed adding \$1.5 million in funding to expand eligibility to Vermonters with a family adjusted Income of less than \$75,000.

Website

<https://www.vsac.org/free-tuition-ccv-yes-really>

Funding Source

The State's FY 2022 budget appropriates \$3.2 million for grants in FY 2022 and FY 2023.

Eligibility

A Community College of Vermont student is eligible for the 802 Opportunity grant if he or she is:

- A Vermont resident;
- A U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen;
- Pursuing an associate degree or certificate;
- Has completed a FAFSA and a Vermont grant application;

- Has a family adjusted gross income less of \$50,000 or less as reported on the FAFSA;
- A high school graduate or equivalent;
- Does not already have a bachelor's degree;
- Making Satisfactory Academic Progress if already enrolled in CCV; and
- Not in default on an education loan.

Virginia Get a Skill, Get A Job, Get Ahead (G3) program

Description

G3 makes tuition-free community college available to low- and middle-income Virginia residents who pursue jobs in high-demand fields. The last dollar program, established in 2021, can be used for designated programs in the following industries: early childhood education, healthcare, information technology, public safety and skilled trades.

The enacting legislation also makes frontline healthcare workers, first responders and other essential workers, as defined under Phase 1a and 1b of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Virginia Department of Health (VDH), eligible for the G3 program. They can utilize the G3 program to enhance or upgrade their skills at no cost during Virginia's state of emergency and for two years thereafter.

The program is funding by the state's biennial budget and pays for tuition, mandatory fees, and a textbook stipend. The enacting legislation allows for proration of financial assistance if sufficient funding for maximum awards is not available. Additionally, full Pell Grant recipients enrolled full-time are eligible for a \$2,250 Student Support Incentive Grant.

Enacting Legislation

HB 2204/SB 1405 (2021) - <https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?212+ful+CHAP0397+pdf>

Funding Source

The program is funded by the state's general fund. The 2020-2022 biennium budget contains \$34.5 million (in FY 2022) to provide the necessary financial assistance.

Eligibility

Initial applicant qualifications include:

- A total household income less than or equal to four hundred percent of the Federal Poverty Level;
- Acceptance and enrollment as a full-time or part-time student – a minimum of six credit hours per semester – at an approved institution in an approved program specific to a high-demand field;

- Completion of a FAFSA and/or state financial aid applications.

Continue eligibility requirements include:

- Meeting standards for Satisfactory Academic Progress;
- Demonstrating reasonable progress to complete their specific program of study to earn an associate degree in no more than three years;
- Not exceeding 150 percent of required credits of certificate or degree.

Washington College Grant

Description

The 2019 enactment of the Workforce Education Investment Act (HB 2158) established the Washington College Grant (WCG) to replace the State Need Grant (SNG). The program began in Fall 2020 and allows families with incomes up to 100% of the state's median family income to qualify per the chart below.

Income Level (% of WA Median Family Income)	Income at MFI Cap For Family of 4 (2021-22 levels)	Award Proration
0 – 55%	\$56,000	100%
56 – 60%	\$61,000	70%
61 – 65%	\$66,000	60%
66 – 70%	\$71,000	50%
71 – 75%	\$76,500	24.5%
76 – 100%	\$102,000	10%

According to an official bill summary, “a maximum Washington College Grant covers tuition fees, building fees, and services and activities fees at public institutions of higher education (both two- and four-year). Grants for students attending private institutions are tied to the current SNG levels, with increases per year equal to the tuition growth factor.”

Enacting Legislation

<http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2019-20/Pdf/Bills/House%20Passed%20Legislature/2158-S2.PL.pdf>

Funding Source

The enacting legislation establishes a three-tiered Workforce Education Investment surcharge to the state's business-and-occupations tax that is expected to raise approximately \$1.6 billion over the next five fiscal years. The legislature appropriated \$160.3 for the Washington College Grant in the 2019-2021 biennium.

Eligibility

The Washington College Grant is available to eligible Washington residents, including undocumented students, based on median family income. There is no age limit.

Eligibility and awards are determined by the FAFSA or a state student aid application. Recipients must meet program requirements and attend an approved institution or program, part-time or full-time.

WV Invests Grant Program

Description

WV Invests Grant Program, enacted in March 2019, provides last dollar scholarships to make eligible certificate and associate degree programs at community and technical colleges tuition free. The state's Department of Commerce determines the programs based on workforce needs. Associate degree programs at public baccalaureate institutions are also eligible, but the grant amounts are limited to the average cost of tuition and mandatory fee of the community and technical colleges.

Beginning with the 2021 Fiscal Year, community and technical colleges or public baccalaureate institutions that form one or more partnerships with public secondary schools to establish Advanced Career Education (ACE) programs and pathways will have priority in offering WV Invest Grant eligible programs. Such partnerships feature "defined pathways" that start when a student is in secondary school and ultimately lead to an advanced certification or associate degree.

Website

<http://wvinvests.org/>

Enacting Legislation

http://www.wvlegislature.gov/Bill_Text_HTML/2019_SESSIONS/RS/bills/SB1%20SUB2%20ENR.pdf

Funding Source

The enacting legislation establishes a special revenue account – the WV Invests Fund – to fund the grants. The fund may consist of:

1. All appropriations by the Legislature for the WV Invests Fund;
2. Any gifts, grants, or contributions received for the WV Invests Fund; and

3. All interest or other income earned from investment of the WV Invests Funds.

The state's FY 2021-22 budget appropriations just over \$7 million for the program.

Eligibility

To be eligible for a WV Invests Grant, applicants must:

- Be a citizen or financial aid eligible resident of the United States;
- Be a resident of West Virginia for at least one year immediately preceding the date of application for a grant;
- Complete a FAFSA and a WV Invests Grant application;
- Have completed a secondary education program in a public, private, or home school;
- Have not previously received a postsecondary degree or have attempted 90 or more college credits;
- Meet the admission requirements of and be admitted into an eligible postsecondary institution;
- Enroll in an eligible postsecondary program for at least six credit hours per semester;
- Pay for and pass a drug screening during the 60 days before the start of their first term each academic year;
- Agree to reside in West Virginia for the two years following obtainment of the degree or certificate for which the grant or grants were awarded. Violation of this agreement would require repayment of the awards with interest. The Act has exemptions for individuals serving in the armed services or attending an out-of-state postsecondary institution at least half-time; and
- Satisfactorily meet any additional qualifications of enrollment, academic promise, or achievement established by the state's Council for Community and Technical College Education through rule.

Grants may be renewed until the course of study is completed or until the student has reached 90 attempted credit hours if they meet the following criteria:

- A check at the beginning of each term to verify that the student has not attempted 90 credit hours;
- Annual completion of the FAFSA;
- Maintenance of satisfactory academic standing, including a 2.0 cumulative grade point average, and adequate progress towards completion of the eligible postsecondary program;
- Maintenance of continuous enrollment for at least 6 credit hours each semester;
- Compliance with drug screening requirements, and;

- Completion of at least two hours of unpaid community service during each academic term.

Wyoming Hathaway Scholarship

Description

The scholarship has its roots in Governor Stanley Hathaway's 1974 decision to create the state of Wyoming Permanent Mineral Trust Fund. Nearly two decades later, legislators created a scholarship fund that rewards eligible Wyoming students with both merit- and need-based scholarships to attend the University of Wyoming or a Wyoming community college.

Hathaway offers four individual scholarships, and a need-based scholarship that can supplement these merit-based awards. They include:

- Honors (min 3.5 GPA/25 ACT): \$1,680 per semester
- Performance (min 3.0 GPA/21 ACT): \$1,260 per semester
- Opportunity (min 2.5 GPA/19 ACT): \$840 per semester
- Provisional Opportunity (min 2.5 GPA/17 ACT): \$840 per semester

In-state tuition at a Wyoming community college ranges from \$3,456 to \$4,500 per year.

Website

<http://hathawayscholarship.org/>

Enacting Legislation

<http://law.justia.com/codes/wyoming/2014/title-21/chapter-16/article-13/>

Funding Source

A \$400 million permanent endowment.

Eligibility

Minimum eligibility includes a 2.5 HS GPA, completion of Hathaway approved HS courses, and a score of 17 on the ACT. Continued eligibility for college students requires continuous enrollment, meeting satisfactory academic progress criteria, and maintaining a minimum GPA of 2.25 or 2.5 depending upon a recipient's scholarship level.

Additional eligibility information can be found at: <https://hathawayscholarship.org/bin/eligibility-requirements/>

Chapter II —

The Case for Making College Tuition Free

Free college tuition is a simple and effective solution to a difficult problem.

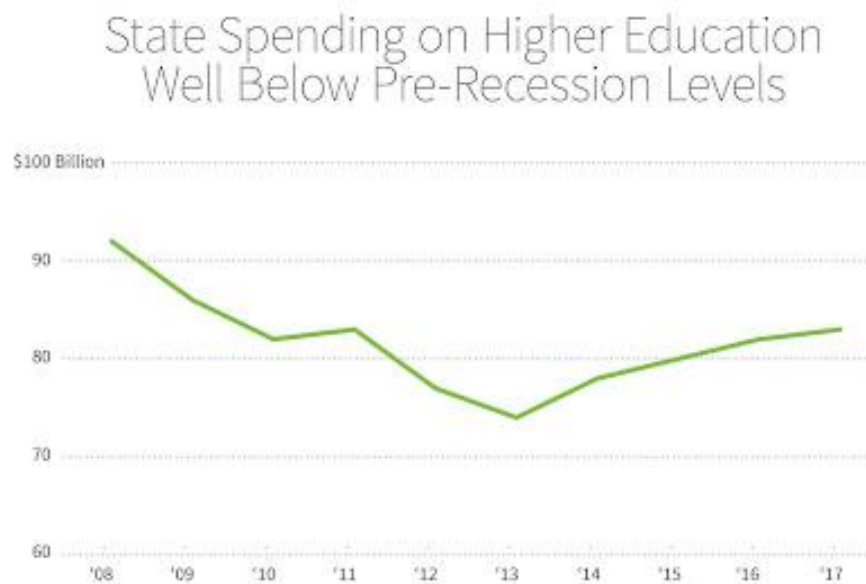
The new economic reality means higher education – whether it’s a technical credential, an associate degree, or a bachelor’s degree – is essential to earning a good job in good times and bad.

From January 2008 to January 2013, millions of people without college degrees lost jobs when the Great Recession hit and never regained them, while all of the job gains went to the one-third of the labor force (as of January 2008) with at least a B.A. degree. So, while total employment in January 2013 was just 341,000 less than in January 2008, the number of Americans without a high school diploma who were employed fell by more than 1.6 million. The number of high school graduates with jobs fell by more than 2.8 million, and the number of working people with some college training but no B.A. degree fell by 227,000. Over those same five years, the number of college-educated Americans with jobs increased more than 4.3 million.

The pattern persisted after the Great Recession ended. Bureau of Labor Statistics data show Americans with college degrees accounted for all the net new jobs created over the last decade. In stark contrast, the number of Americans with high school diplomas or less who were employed has fallen by nearly three million since the Great Recession. [As economist Rob Shapiro points out](#), from the first month of the last recession in January 2008 to December 2017, well into year nine of that economic expansion, the number of employed Americans with high school diplomas contracted by 2,095,000, and the number of people working without a high school diploma fell by 900,000. Through it all, the number of college-educated Americans with jobs jumped by 11,909,000. That’s 1,253,000 more than the total 10,656,000 net new jobs created across the economy, suggesting that college graduates are also now claiming new jobs that used to go to people without a B.A. degree.

How much people earn has also become increasingly dependent on how much higher education they have completed. According to [a report by the Pew Research Center](#), in 2018, the median annual earnings of full-time workers ages 25-37 was \$56,000 for those with a B.A. degree, but \$20,000 less for those who attended but did not complete college, and only \$31,000 for high school graduates. This gap in earnings between those with a B.A. degree and those without began to emerge in 1980 and has grown wider every year since.

Despite this new economic reality, in many states, even as state revenues began to recover, postsecondary education funding per student remained less than before the Great Recession.



Source: CBPP analysis of data from Grapevine survey and State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, 2017

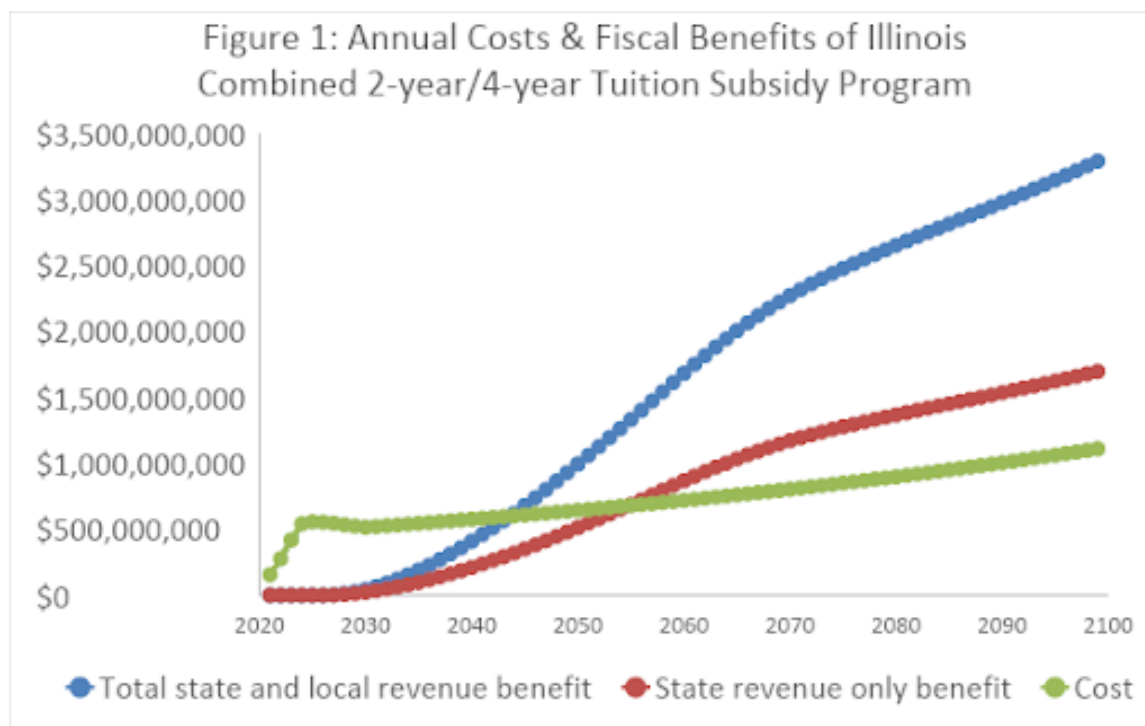
[The Century Foundation estimates](#) that nearly one-quarter of the growth that did occur in state higher education aid has come from those states that have also made some part of their higher education system tuition free. Total investment in such programs enacted since 2014 has risen by an average of \$107 million per year.

Of course, the pandemic threw a gigantic wrench into every aspect of state budgets, but fortunately the Congress recognized this problem when it passed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in March of 2021. It provides \$195.3 billion to help states and the District of Columbia cover COVID-19 related expenditures, replenish lost revenue and mitigate the economic harm caused by the pandemic. States can use these funds for several specified uses including assistance to households or populations facing negative economic impacts due to COVID-19. According to an [Interim Final Rule](#) from the U.S. Department of the Treasury this includes “job training to address negative economic or public health impacts experienced due to a worker's occupation or level of training.”

To this end, a smart use for ARPA funds – or rebounding state revenue streams – would be to establish programs that make public colleges tuition-free. Research from Robert Shapiro and Isaac Yoder of Sonocom, as well as research from the W.E. Upjohn Institute, shows that the private and public economic benefit of free college tuition outweighs the cost in the long run.

The economic benefits of free college tuition are higher earnings for workers with degrees and spillover benefits for other residents. Fiscal returns occur when projected tax revenues exceed the cost of a free-college program. Of course, there are many other benefits to increasing educational attainment. Employers have access to a better-trained workforce, which spurs innovation and productivity. Higher educational attainment can also reduce crime and substance abuse, help create more stable families, and lead to better outcomes for the children of college graduates. These ancillary impacts, however, are harder to quantify.

A study, done by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for the State of Illinois showed that a program of free college tuition would pay for itself over time. It found that for a combined two-year and four-year program, run from 2021 to 2030, the present value of total state and local revenue collections would be slightly under \$4.8 billion, which exceeded the present value of program costs of around \$4.0 billion. For the tuition subsidy program for just two-year degrees, running from 2021 to 2030, the present value of state and local revenue collections would be almost \$860 million, compared to the present value of program costs of almost \$440 million.



In sum, the study showed an investment by the state in either a two-year only, or a two-year and four-year combined tuition subsidy program, would yield benefits far beyond the costs of either program, although not immediately. As resident income increases, due primarily to enhanced earnings by degree recipients, a share of this increased income would be paid to Illinois state and local

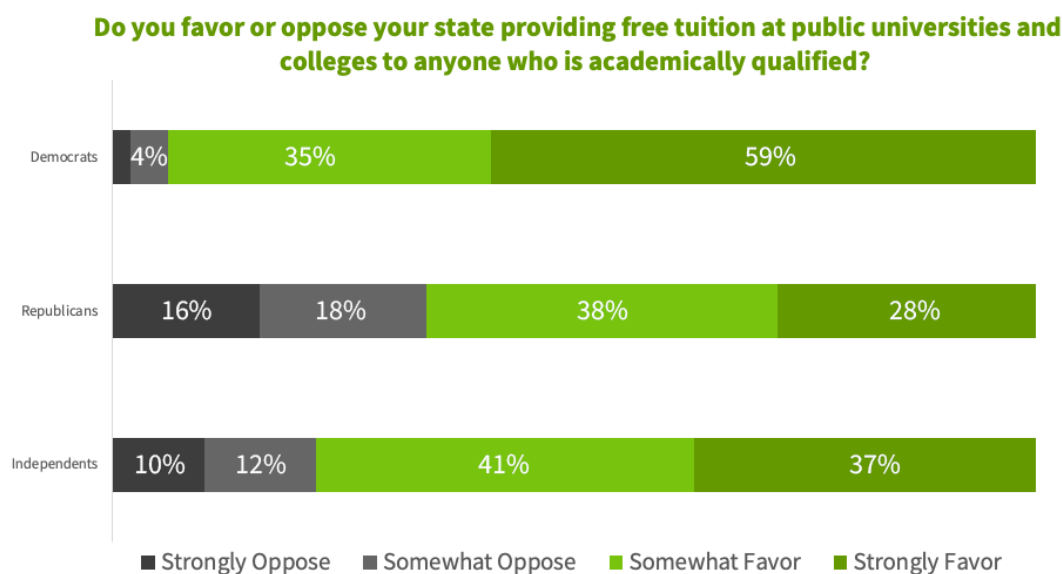
governments. Accordingly, annual fiscal benefits would eventually exceed the tuition subsidy programs' costs. The study's research brief and full report can be found [here](#).

Free college tuition is sound public policy. It encourages states to invest in their higher education institutions, helps prepare their workforce for success in today's economy, reduces the number of students who have to go into debt to attend college and/or reduces the state's average student debt, and continues the country's historic commitment to an educated citizenry. It's also popular—and it works.

Support for Free College is Strong and Stable

Between December 2016 and February 2022, the Campaign for Free College Tuition has conducted extensive public opinion research on states providing free college tuition to all those who are academically qualified. The polling is conducted in partnership with CollegeAPP, PSB Research and SurveyGizmo with roughly 1,000 respondents age 18+. Each sample has a Margin of Error of +/-2.9% and is weighted to US Census data on age, gender, race, educational attainment and region of the country.

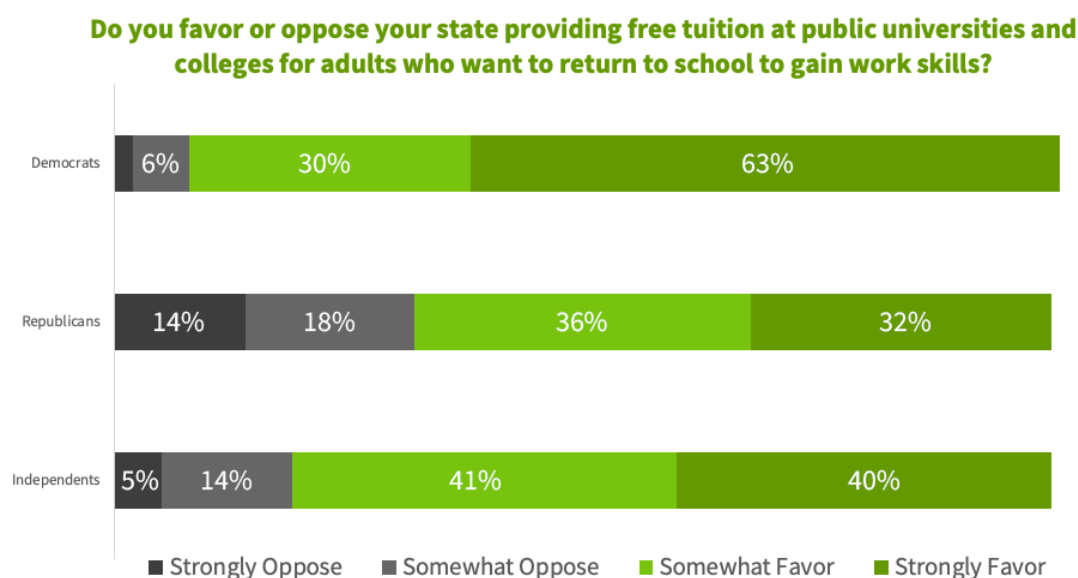
Support for this public policy has been remarkably stable over this time period despite the political turmoil the country has been experiencing at the national level. Overall support has ranged from 70% to 81% in the 16 surveys conducted. In our February 2022 survey 79% of US adults supported the concept of states providing free public education to people who are academically qualified.



Sixty-six percent of Republicans strongly or somewhat support the idea; so do 78% of independents. In an era of distinct and real policy differences by political party, free college might be THE issue that bridges those gaps better than any other.

To garner support that strong, an issue must have support from all demographic groups – age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and, even by political affiliation. That continues to be the story for free college tuition. Going inside the overall numbers, the percentage of those who strongly support the concept hit the 50% mark in November 2017 and was 42% in February of 2022. The subgroups with the highest levels of “strong support” were African-Americans (40%), Hispanics (42%), those between the ages of 18 and 24 ((56%) and those between the ages of 25 and 34 (53%). The concept also has majority support with Americans at all income levels.

Our February, 2022 survey also addressed the hot button issue of what we should do about skilling, re-skilling and up-skilling adults for the millions of open jobs and for the types of jobs that are being created for the future. Once again, and with possibly more impressive unanimity, Americans believe that public education and training should be tuition free for adults who want and need it.



These results should be a clarion call to the 46 states that have set education attainment goals as success is not possible without addressing postsecondary education and training for under-educated adults.

Our September 2019 survey tested the important issue of how universal such free college tuition programs should be. It found that the highest support (43%) was for state programs “available to all students regardless of family income.” This response was led by men under age 35 (58%) and

individuals with incomes between \$75,000 and \$149,999 (49%). Programs that would limit eligibility based on family income were less popular. Just 30% of those surveyed supported programs “available only to students who otherwise couldn’t afford college,” while 27% supported programs “available to middle class and lower income families but not wealthier ones.”

Requirements for minimal academic performance in order to be eligible for free tuition remained among the most popular eligibility requirements of all those tested, with college and high school GPA scores garnering 69% support and 58% support, respectively. However, limiting free college programs to U.S. citizens and permanent residents who qualify for in-state tuition and pledging to remain drug-free while receiving free college tuition were even more popular, garnering 63% and 62%, respectively. Only one other qualification found favor with a majority of those responding — attending college full-time (55%).

The results send a simple message to legislators and other policymakers considering making their state’s public colleges tuition free: Make college tuition free for those who are academically capable as universally available as you can in order to make sure the message is heard loud and clear in kitchen table conversations of families throughout the state.

The Campaign for Free College Tuition has also conducted three polls that tested specific messaging around free college. In general, the surveys found that speaking about the benefits to people – young people, students, etc. – was more powerful than speaking about the overall value to society. But there is so much support for the idea that almost all messages, except statements without specifics, such as calling the program a “game changer,” were compelling.

The most powerful way to talk about free college tuition in our public opinion research was:

- “Lack of money shouldn’t keep qualified students from going to college, and my state government should help.”
- “We need to make college free so young people don’t have a mountain of debt when they finish school” was the second most believable and persuasive statement among most demographic groups.
- One other message was almost as persuasive in all three polls with a wide swath of the adult population: “Free college tuition will strengthen our nation by providing people the tools they need to provide for their families.”

CFCT polled 16 statements in July 2021 that policy makers and other proponents and opponents of tuition-free college have made to support their position(s). Jack MacKenzie, who coordinated the survey research for CFCT, said, “statements for and against free college show a consistent pattern: Americans believe the programs provide the greatest benefit to individuals -- and they don't believe it's too expensive for the government to offer it.”

The statement that had the most net support overall was “lack of money shouldn't keep qualified students from going to college, and government should help.” Net support was calculated by subtracting the percent who strongly agreed with the statement (9 or 10 on a 10-point scale) from the percentage of those who strongly disagreed with the statement (1 or 2).



Strong agreement or disagreement with the statements often split along partisan lines. For instance, Democrats' net support for the statement beginning “lack of money” was an astounding 54 points, but Republican net support was only 5 points. Independent respondents agreed with the statement by a 24-point margin.

Similarly, Democratic net support for the statement “free college tuition will help more minorities and poor people get a college degree” was 59 points with Republican and Independent net support at 4 and 20 points, respectively.

The full results for each message tested are shown in the following table.

Tell us how much you agree with each statement. “1” means you don’t agree at all. “10” means you agree completely.	Percent of Responses Indicating 9 or 10	Percent of Responses Indicating 1 or 2	Net Support
Lack of money shouldn’t keep qualified students from going to college, and government should help.	42%	11%	+31
Free college tuition will help more minorities and poor people get a college degree.	40%	12%	+28
America would be better able to compete globally if we made college tuition free.	36%	9%	+27
We need to make college tuition free so young people don’t have a mountain of debt when they finish school.	40%	14%	+26
Free college tuition will strengthen our nation by giving people the skills they need to provide for their families.	39%	13%	+26
Adults who need new and improved skills should be able to get that education and training tuition free.	38%	12%	+26
College graduates get better, higher paying jobs helping our economy grow.	34%	10%	+24
Free college tuition would help make our educational system more equitable.	38%	15%	+23
Free college tuition will create a better trained workforce, providing an economic boost to the country.	37%	14%	+23
A federal/state partnership to make college tuition free is a smart investment in our nation’s economic recovery.	35%	15%	+20
Providing free college tuition through a federal/state partnership is the best investment we can make in our young people’s future.	35%	15%	+20
Making college tuition free will pay for itself because government gets more money from people who earn more.	29%	17%	+12
Free college tuition is another government giveaway.	27%	25%	+2
Free college tuition programs should be restricted to lower and middle class students.	25%	23%	+2
America can’t afford to make college tuition free.	22%	29%	-7
Free college tuition would be a major government spending program and is not worth the cost.	21%	32%	-11

Among the negative statements tested, there was more disagreement than agreement on the following two statements: “free college tuition would be a major government spending program and is not worth the cost” (-11 point net support) and “America can't afford to make college tuition free” (-7 point net support). CFCT President and CEO Morley Winograd stated, “these results demonstrate once again that Americans think that the government can afford to make college tuition free – and ought to.”

The most polarizing statements were “free college tuition programs should be restricted to lower- and middle-class students” and “free college tuition is another government giveaway.” Sixteen percent of the respondents agreed with the idea of means testing free college tuition eligibility (at the 10 level) but an equal percentage disagreed strongly with the idea (at the 1 level). Similarly, for the “government giveaway” statement, 19 percent strongly disagreed (at the one level) while 21 percent strongly agreed (at the 10 level), including 28 percent of Republicans.

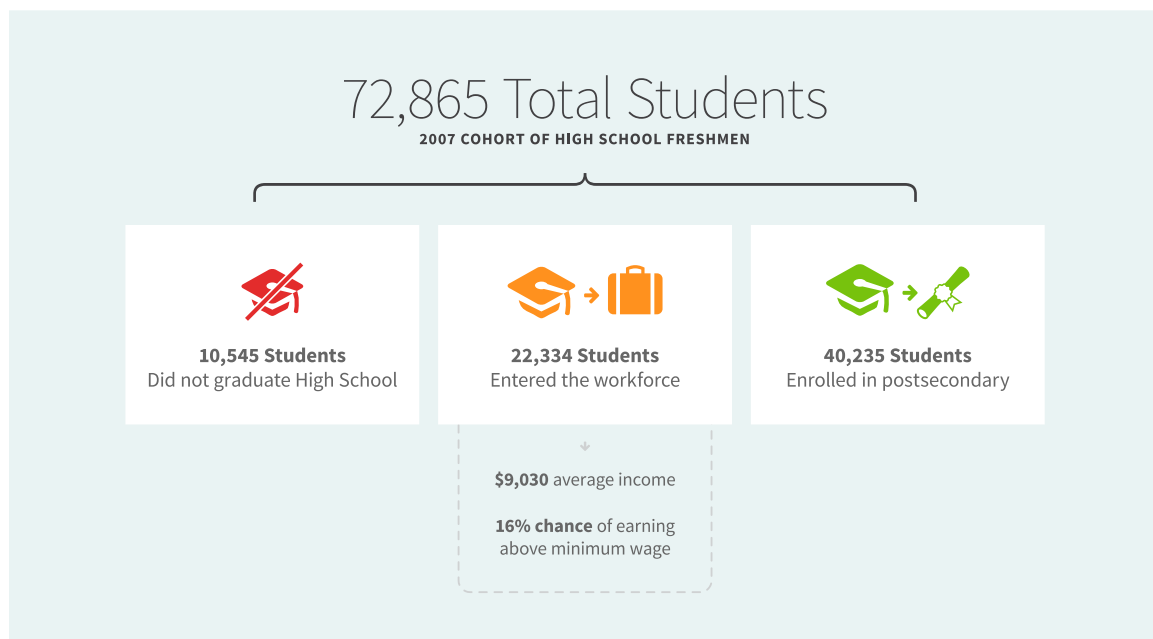
Independent net support was highest for the following two statements: “adults who need new and improved skills should be able to get that education and training tuition free,” and “free college tuition would help make our educational system more equitable.” Both received 27-point net support from Independents, which is slightly higher than the overall net support for these statements.

The New Economic Reality

It's a simple fact that our nation's economic success depends on a highly educated and skilled workforce. According to a June 2016 Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce [report](#) entitled America's Divided Recovery: College Haves and Have-Nots, “there has been a clear shift in job creation since the second half of the 20th century toward industries that employ a high share of workers with post-secondary attainment, such as healthcare services, consulting and business services, financial services, education services, and government services. These industries accounted for 28% of the workforce in 1947; they now account for 46% of the workforce.”

The need for a state to increase its skilled workforce by altering the current trajectory of college enrollment and graduation was illustrated by Mike Krause, the former Executive Director of the Tennessee Promise in the Office of Governor Haslam and then Executive Director of the Tennessee Higher Education Committee, at the Campaign for Free College Tuition Southern Summit on College Affordability in the spring of 2016. He noted that Tennessee was 43rd in the nation in 2015 in terms of education attainment by state and showed longitudinal data from the 2007 cohort of high school freshmen indicating that 30% of them entered the workforce directly after high school. This subgroup had a \$9,030 annual income and only a 16% chance of earning above the minimum wage. The Tennessee Promise – which incorporates mentorship, a last dollar scholarship to a two-year community or technical college, and a framework focused on college success – advanced with

overwhelming support through a Republican-controlled legislature to help change these outcomes for a state seeking to be a national leader in advanced manufacturing.

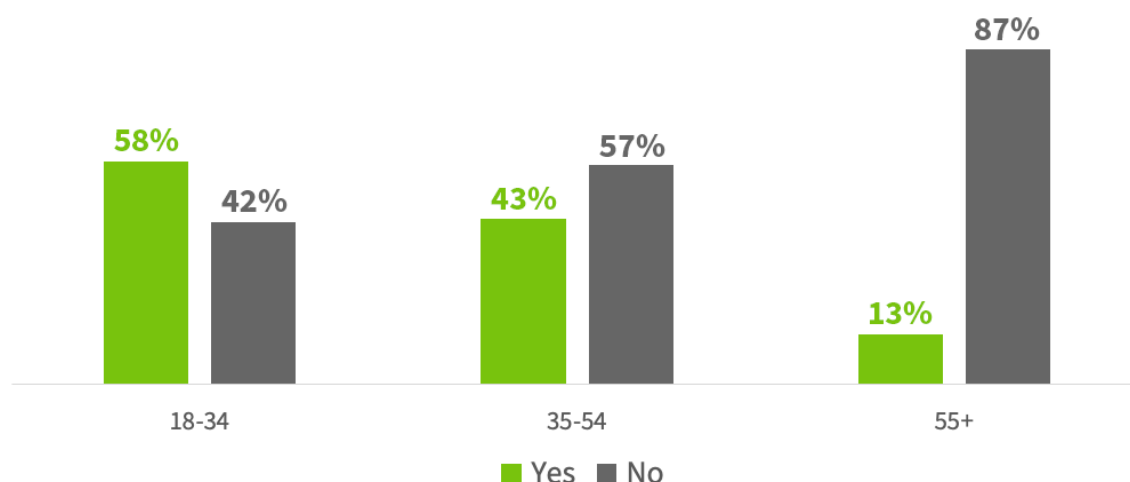


But free tuition at public colleges and universities is not just an issue for high school graduates. Sarah Pingel, Emily Parker and Lauren Sisneros from the Education Commission of the States (ECS) [pointed out](#) that “there are simply not enough traditionally-aged high school and college students to create the educated workforce required for the 21st century economy. Compounding this issue, postsecondary policy at both the federal and state levels generally tips toward a myopic focus on serving 18 to 24 year-old students. This focus is not ill-placed, but alone, it excludes the needs of millions of Americans who have the potential to complete a credential and contribute meaningfully to state economies nationwide.”

A significant number of adults recognize the new reality that many workers will need new skills to do their jobs successfully. Data from the Strada Education Network’s Education Consumer Survey indicates that an estimated 20.5 million working-age adults 25 to 64 years old say they intend to enroll in community or technical college in the next two years. That data was compiled by the company CollegeAPP, which utilizes survey results, data science and machine learning techniques to create probability scores of how adults would answer certain questions.

When CFCT asked the question— “do you Intend to enroll in any education or training programs in the next two years?”—in our February 2022 survey, 37% of all adults said they intended to do so, either immediately or in the near future.

Do you intend to enroll in any education or training programs in the next two years?



Even 13% of those over the age of 55 said they intended to access education or training in the next two years. With nearly 110 million people in America over the age of 55, there are roughly 14 million people in that age bracket in the country who believe they will enroll in education and training soon.

The numbers for every age group show that as the economy changes and Americans assess their challenges, needs and opportunities, they believe education and training is a key part of their individual strategy to get a better job. And, importantly, Americans of all ages believe those opportunities should be provided tuition free by their states.

Price of College Can Be a Barrier to Educational Attainment

According to a [New America 2019 survey](#), “only half of Americans think education after high school is affordable. Over four out of five Americans believe that the federal and state government should spend more taxpayer dollars on education after high school to make it more affordable.” For lower and even middle-class families who see higher education as a key to improving the lives of their children, the money required to pay for tuition is seen as a huge barrier.

According to a [2015 survey](#) of college freshmen conducted by UCLA’s Cooperative Institutional Research Program, 84.1% of Pell Grant recipients expressed concerns about their ability to pay for college compared to just 56.7% of students not receiving Pell Grants. The [2017 version of the survey](#) found a record 12.2% of freshmen felt they could not afford their first-choice institution, which is a 30% increase from when the question was first asked in 2004 (9.4%).

Another [study](#) found that compared to nearby community colleges without free tuition, community colleges that did offer free tuition saw an average enrollment increase of 22%. The same study showed that colleges with free tuition increased female minority enrollments by over 50% and male minority enrollments by 47% for blacks and 40% for Hispanics.

The impact of free tuition on a student's decision to attend college has been found to be just as great for four-year institutions—not surprisingly given their tuition rates are much higher than community colleges. The University of Michigan, for example, [found](#) that when it conducted targeted outreach programs for its “HAIL” program, which offers free tuition for low income students who meet their academic standards, application rates for low income students increased from 26% to 58% and enrollment rates increased from 13% to 28% for the very same students who were entitled to be part of the HAIL program but didn’t know about it.

Student Loan Debt

About six in ten (62%) college seniors who graduated from public and private nonprofit colleges in 2019 had student loan debt, according to a [report](#) by the Project on Student Debt at The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS). These borrowers owed an average of \$28,950.

Research suggests that student loan debt impacts Americans in the following ways:

- **Career Choice.** Studies suggest that student loan debt drives graduates away from low-paying and public-sector jobs. A [2015 survey](#) conducted by the American Student Assistance® (ASA) found 30% of respondents indicated that “student loan debt was the deciding factor, or had considerable impact, on their choice of career field.”
- **Retirement Savings.** 59% of those responding to [ASA’s 2017 survey](#) said “paying off my student loans” is a higher priority than saving for retirement.
- **Home Ownership.** The Federal Reserve of New York [reported in 2017](#) that “the increase in the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI) of college and student debt that our sample cohorts experienced from 2001 to 2009 is able to explain around 11% to 35% of the measured 7.7 percentage point drop in the rate of age 28 to 30 homeownership in the U.S. from 2007 to 2015.”
- **Small Business Formation.** The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia [found](#) a significant and economically meaningful negative correlation between changes in student loan debt and net business formation for those firms with one to four employees. This is important because these small businesses depend mostly on personal debt to finance new businesses. Based on the researcher’s model, “student debt reduced the number of businesses with one to four employees by 14% between 2000 and 2010.”

America's Historic Commitment to Free Education

Rising student debt levels are a dangerous warning sign that our country's historical commitment to education as a key component of the promise of upward economic mobility is being abandoned. America has always used the instrument of government to try and provide sufficient funds to those willing to undertake their studies seriously to acquire the skills and knowledge they needed to engage in economic, civic, and artistic pursuits without overburdening them financially either during their studies or after. Until now.

In every era, beginning with the Northwest Ordinance setting aside land for one room schoolhouses, to the institution of mandatory education through the establishment of free primary education in all states at the time of the Civil War, the country has made educational opportunity a lynchpin of American society. In the 20th Century, the expansion of educational opportunities continued as our growing Industrial Age economy required workers with a high school education for our factories and offices. Government funds in every state and community were set aside to provide a free, public high school education for boys and girls to respond to these new demands. Later in the century, after WWII, the GI Bill of Rights and then the Higher Education Act of 1965 were enacted to further encourage college enrollment, thereby establishing the educational foundation for our rapidly expanding middle class. It is only in this century that we have asked our young generations to self-finance the education they need, and our country needs, to be economically successful. This wrongheaded inter-generational and economically disastrous policy needs to end before America loses its global competitive edge for good.

America has always used government resources to make primary and secondary education (K-12) free for those willing and able to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to succeed. Now it's time to expand that concept to higher education to ensure we have a skilled workforce capable of competing in the 21st Century economy.

Tuition Free College Programs Work

A [recent study](#) by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that high school juniors who believe they can't afford to go to college are about 20 percentage points less likely to attend college than those who don't think their family's finances will make college unaffordable. The study found that the group most likely to enroll in college were those who believed they could afford college and had at least one parent who graduated from college. The group least likely to enroll not only believed they couldn't afford it but also had at least one parent whose education ended with high school. Just 55% of such students enrolled in college within three years of graduating from high school.

The study's findings are confirmed by the gains in enrollment that states with Promise programs have experienced, especially when they have been able to market such programs with a simple message—Tuition is Free. It is critically important to a state's free tuition program's success that the message not only be simple but repeated throughout the student's K-12 educational experience so that each student knows early on that they can in fact afford to go to college.

Tennessee Promise Outcomes

College Enrollment

- In the first year of the Tennessee Promise, enrollment in the state's community colleges increased by 24.7% and by 20% in their colleges of applied technology (TCAT). Overall, there was a 10.1% increase in the number of students in the state's institutions of higher education.
- Overall, the statewide rate of college enrollment by high school graduates increased by 4.6 percentage points, from 57.9 to 62.5 percent. This single-year increase was larger than the past 7 years combined (2007 to 2014). Approximately 4,000 additional students entered into some type of higher education institution in the first year of the Tennessee Promise.
- Enrollment of Tennessee Promise students at Promise-eligible institutions has increased with each cohort, from 16,207 in Cohort 1 to 18,054 in Cohort 4.
- In the first year of Tennessee Promise, community colleges saw a substantial increase in first-time freshmen (FTF) enrollment and universities saw a moderate decline. These trends have largely leveled off. Compared to fall 2014, FTF enrollment in fall 2017 was up by 12.4% overall, with the increase distributed across all sectors.
- The racial composition of students at the state's community colleges also shifted after the Tennessee Promise was put in place. The percentage of black students increased from 14% to 19% and the share of Hispanic students went up from 4% to 5%. The percentage of white students enrolled in community colleges declined from 74% to 70%.
- Over time, Tennessee Promise students have become slightly more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, with a smaller share of white students and a larger share of African American and Hispanic students in Cohort 3 compared to Cohort 1. Specifically, white students comprised 77% of Cohort 1 students and 71.8% of Cohort 3 students. African American students comprised 12% of Cohort 1 students and 13.3% of Cohort 3 students. Similarly, Hispanic students increased from 3.5 to 4.1 percent from Cohort 1 to Cohort 3.
- The Tennessee Promise has also brought more federal dollars in support of higher education into their state through its focus on FAFSA completion as a condition for becoming a Tennessee Promise scholar. As a result, the FAFSA filing rate in Tennessee has increased over the last four years (2015 – 2018) and was 79.4% in 2018. Tennessee has led the nation in FAFSA filing since the implementation of Tennessee Promise.

College Persistence

- The Year 1 to Year 2 retention rate for the first cohort of the Tennessee Promise was 65.8%, including the 5.1% of students who completed a credential prior to fall 2016.

- The second cohort had a slightly better 67.4% Year 1 to Year 2 retention rate, including the 4.8% of students earning a credential prior to Fall 2017.

College Completion

- The overall success rate for the first cohort of Tennessee Promise who enrolled in one of the state's 13 community colleges was 52.2%. This means over half the students who enrolled in 2015 earned a degree or certificate, transferred, or were still enrolled after five semesters.
- The success rate for first cohort Promise students was higher than for non-Promise peers. After four semesters of eligibility, 14.5% of Promise students at community colleges had earned a degree or certificate, compared to 5.5% of non-Promise students.

Note: Additional data can be obtained at:

<https://www.tn.gov/thec/research/redirect-research/tn-promise-annual-report.html>

https://www.tbr.edu/sites/tbr.edu/files/media/2018/03/TN-Promise-2015_Executive%20Summary%20and%20Slides_Jan2018.pdf

Rhode Island Promise Outcomes

College Enrollment

- Rhode Island's Promise has more than doubled the enrollment of full-time Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) students directly from high school. According to President Megan Hughes, more than 1,400 such students enrolled in the Fall 2017 semester, compared to 950 the previous year.
- There was an even greater percentage growth among first-time, full-time student enrollment straight from high schools (FTFTHS) receiving Federal Pell Grants (54%). This growth brought \$3.6 million in federal Pell grants to support the first Rhode Island Promise class
- CCRI saw a 62% increase in FTFTHS students of color due to the changing demographics in their first cohort of students who were able to take advantage of the Rhode Island Promise.
- The second cohort of the Rhode Island Promise also had a positive impact on the enrollment of both low-income students and students of color. According to Sara Enright, CCRI Vice President for Student Affairs, first-time full-time students from low-income families more than doubled from 527 in the fall of 2016 (before free tuition) to 1,280 in the fall of 2018. Similarly, the enrollment numbers for first-time full-time students of color have nearly tripled from 355 in 2016 to 936 in 2018.

College Persistence

- The Fall Year 1 to the Fall Year 2 retention rate for the first Rhode Island Promise cohort was 62%.
- Rhode Island Promise also dramatically increased the number of students at the Community College of Rhode Island on-track to graduate within a two-year time frame from 6% to 22%.

Note: Additional information on Rhode Island's Promise can be found at:

http://www.freecollegenow.org/rhode_island_promise

<http://www.ccri.edu/president/PromiseUpdate.html>

Nevada Promise

- A UNLV survey on the implementation of the first year of the Nevada Promise Scholarship (NPS) found that 57% of student respondents said the Promise Scholarship influenced their decision to attend college. Hispanic NPS and first-generation NPS applicants said 69% and 68% respectively that the Promise program influenced their decision to attend college.
- Additionally, 8% of Nevada Promise applicants did not intend to go to college before they heard about the scholarship.

Note: Additional information can be obtained at:

https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/80th2019/ExhibitDocument/OpenExhibitDocument?exhibitId=38602&fileDownloadName=SB350_Presentation_Nevada%20Promise%20Scholarship_Dr.%20E.%20Lee%20Bernick.pdf

https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/80th2019/ExhibitDocument/OpenExhibitDocument?exhibitId=38692&fileDownloadName=SB350_Research%20Brief_Dr.%20E.%20Lee%20Bernick.pdf

Chapter III –

What's in Your Promise?

The first decision policymakers designing programs to make college tuition-free will need to address is if and how other, existing financial aid money is used to cover the price of tuition. In a first-dollar model, existing aid money will be made available regardless of other forms of tuition aid, particularly federal Pell Grants. A last dollar model – which is the most-popular at the state level – will only cover the price of tuition after students exhaust all other forms of financial aid available to them.

First Dollar Scholarships

Only two states – California and New Mexico – have established free college tuition programs that are available regardless of other forms of financial aid. The California College Promise program, fully funded in 2019, provides two years of community college tuition for first-time, full-time students – defined as taking at least 12 credit hours per semester. New Mexico's legislature established the nation's most comprehensive and universal free college tuition program in February 2022. Effective July 1, 2022, eligible New Mexicans will be able to attend two- and four-year public colleges tuition free. In both states, students are free to use federal Pell Grant and state grants, if eligible, to pay for the other costs associated with going to college without impacting their eligibility for free tuition.

Indeed, the principal argument in favor of such a “first dollar” Promise program is that it allows low-income students to use Pell Grants and state aid to address non-tuition related costs, increasing the likelihood that recipients will be able to stay in school and have more time to focus on their studies. According to Sara Goldrick-Rab of Temple University, [non-tuition costs](#) as a share of attendance costs are 50% at four-year institutions and over 70% at two-year colleges. The main argument against first dollar scholarships is the cost of such an approach. Using data derived from the US Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS), CFCT [estimates](#) total foregone revenues, if free college tuition was offered to all in-state undergraduates, range from \$42.8 million in Delaware to \$4.96 billion in California.

Last Dollar Scholarships

The pioneering Tennessee Promise and almost all other state free college tuition programs provide “last dollar” scholarships. This means that the scholarship will only cover tuition and fees not covered by Pell Grants or state aid.

The main advantage of a last dollar scholarship is that it takes advantage of existing Pell Grant and state aid dollars to reduce the cost of the program. While tuition at Tennessee community colleges is about \$4,500 annually, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) reports that the average Tennessee Promise award was \$935 in the 2015-16 award year, \$1,062 in 2016-17 and \$1,035 in 2017-18.

Robert Kelchen, Assistant Professor of Higher Education at Seton Hall University, [argues](#) that “another important benefit of last-dollar scholarship programs is informational. Students may be induced to attend college simply by having better knowledge of what college costs, even if they do not receive any additional money.”

Last dollar scholarships are criticized for not providing benefits to some Pell-eligible students. U.S. Representative Steve Cohen [writes](#) in The Tennessean, “the federal need-based Pell Grant provides up to \$5,700 – nearly \$2,000 more than the cost of full-time tuition at a community college in Tennessee. So, the neediest students will not benefit at all.” He also expressed concern that “ill-prepared students will receive Promise and then fail to complete community college.” But as Tennessee has demonstrated, a well designed free college tuition program can address both of these issues and lead to greater enrollment among traditionally under-represented populations as well as greater persistence in college attendance by those who do become “Promise scholars.”

A Middle Dollar Approach

The Oregon Promise, enacted in 2015, takes a middle ground in this debate, offering what many have termed a “Middle Dollar” approach to the issue. Starting with the high school class of 2022, their plan provides a minimum benefit of \$2,000 even if the student’s Pell Grant and/or Oregon Opportunity Grant would cover all their tuition costs. By providing low-income students, who have tuition covered by federal and state grants, funds to assist with books, transportation, food, housing, and other costs outside of tuition, the state’s program partially addresses the criticism often leveled at last dollar programs such as Tennessee’s.

Data from the Oregon Student Aid Commission shows 6,634 students entered a community college in fall 2016 having received an Oregon Promise grant. A [2016 survey](#) conducted by Education Northwest of over 1,400 Oregon high school graduates found that among those familiar with the Oregon Promise,

75% agreed, and 69% strongly agreed that the program helped them see that college could be affordable and made them think more about going to college.

Eligibility Criteria

Once this fundamental question of how the state will cover the cost of a student's college tuition bill has been answered, the program must then address a series of eligibility questions that often dominate legislative debates. But, with a few exceptions, CFCT's exclusive polling suggests these questions have little impact on the overall support for the concept of free college tuition.

One question that does impact the level of political support for a program of free college tuition is whether the income of a student's family should have any impact on their eligibility to receive a tuition free college education. There are three policy options a state can choose in developing their free college tuition program – a universal model, or a family income cap model, or a strictly needs based model. Each of them has its own pros and cons depending on what the overall goal of the program is. However, in practice, which one a state chooses is usually based on the amount of money available to fund the program and the political dynamics of the particular state legislature.

Highest support for Universal Free College Tuition



QUESTION: Many states are now considering programs to provide residents free public college tuition. States are also considering several financial requirements. Which of the following comes closest to your opinion of the financial requirements of a free public tuition program in your state?

SOURCE: Penn Schoen Berland - Q Tuition I

Universal Model

Universal Promise programs do not stipulate any income limit for initial scholarship eligibility. This does not mean that these programs are without eligibility criteria. The Tennessee Promise, for example, requires adherence to a strict application deadline, completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), attendance at two mandatory meetings with mentors from the local partnering organization, the completion of eight hours of community service per semester, and full-time enrollment in an eligible institution.

Research from the W.E. Upjohn Institute [indicates](#) that the Kalamazoo Promise, which only requires attendance at that city's public schools and has no income eligibility requirements, has had a 12-percentage point positive effect on overall education attainment and 10 percentage points on the attainment of a college degree. "These overall effects are larger than found in recent studies of scholarships that are more targeted. For the merit-based West Virginia PROMISE program, Scott-Clayton (2011) finds a 4–5 percentage point increase in bachelor's completion, a little more than 10% of the pre-treatment mean. For the need-based Florida Student Access Grant, Castleman and Long (forthcoming) find bachelor's completion effects of about 4–5 percentage points (22%). For the need-based Wisconsin Scholars Grant, Goldrick-Rab et al. (2015) find a 4–5 percentage point (29%) increase in bachelor's attainment." In general, the research shows that the more universal the program, the greater its impact on increasing college enrollment.

Family Income Cap Model

To avoid being accused of giving away government money to families who don't need the help, some states have limited the benefit based on a dependent student family's income or an independent student's own income. This type of eligibility requirement also helps limit the program's cost, making it a policy option likely to be negotiated. Surprisingly, the idea is more popular with women than men, but its overall popularity is not as great as making the program as universal as, for example, Social Security.

This political dynamic impacted the negotiations that established the nation's first program for free college tuition for four-, as well as two-year state universities, New York's Excelsior Scholarship program. Excelsior scholarships were first made available to students in the 2017-2018 school year to students whose family's adjusted gross income on their federal income tax filing for the year 2015 was \$100,000 or less. In the 2018-19 school year the limit was raised to \$110,000, and in the 2019-20 school year and every year thereafter the family income cap is set at \$125,000.

The Maryland Community College Promise requires applicants to have an annual adjusted gross income of not more than \$100,000 if he/she is single or resides in a single-parent household, or \$150,000 if he/she is married or resides in a two-parent household.

Need Based Model

The main argument for a need-based model is that it targets limited resources to students with the most need. It is a relatively common-place approach to awarding state financial aid.

According to the [National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs](#), exclusively need-based aid constituted 46% of all state aid to undergraduates, exclusively merit-based aid accounted for 17%, with the rest, 36%, accounted for by other programs and by programs with both need and merit components. Eight states (California, New York, Texas, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Illinois, Washington, and Virginia) collectively awarded about \$5.6 billion in undergraduate need-based grant aid, accounting for about 70% of all aid of this type.

It is the move away from such need-based models in favor of a more universal approach to free college that often causes some to be resistant to the idea of free tuition, fearing the impact such an approach might have on those whose financial needs are greatest. However, in practice, effectively implemented free college tuition programs can expand the number of students who enroll in college, particularly among underrepresented minority populations. In Tennessee, the racial composition of students at the state's community colleges shifted after the Tennessee Promise was put in place. The percentage of black students increased from 14% to 19% and the share of Hispanic students went up from 4% to 5%. The percentage of white students enrolled in community colleges declined from 74% to 70%.

Researchers Sara Goldrick-Rab, Professor of Higher Education Policy and Sociology at Temple University and Michelle Miller Adams, senior researcher at the W.E. Upjohn Institute, summed up the reasons to move away from need-based models to free college tuition this way: “Free-college programs are wise to take a new approach to college affordability. They not only seek to support low-income students but to actually transform the systems where they are educated. By amplifying the message that going to college is possible and valuable, and by simplifying the financial aid journey by communicating in clear terms that tuition costs will be covered (not just ‘affordable’), they inject elements of a college-going culture into the K-12 setting, elicit new student support resources from schools and community members, and create incentives for colleges and universities to better serve their students.”

State officials attempting to enact a program of free college tuition should keep in mind that the public, overall, is much more in favor of a universal model and least supportive of a need-based model that makes the program, in its critic's words, “a poor people's program.” Most Americans have come to expect that state funded education should be provided to everyone who wants to take advantage of it, just as K-12 education is offered universally to everyone who wants their kids to attend public schools.

Merit Based Model

Some state programs, such as the Oregon Promise, have merit components. Both the Oregon Promise and the Rhode Island Promise, for example, require a 2.5 high school grade point average. However, some programs, such as Wyoming's Hathaway Scholarship program also have ACT or SAT score requirements beyond GPA. Missouri's long-standing A+ scholarship program even requires demonstrated academic proficiency in math. Applicants must achieve a score of "proficient" or "advanced" on the Algebra I exam at the end of the course or a higher level DESE approved end of course exam in some other course in the field of advanced mathematics.

Proponents of merit-based criteria argue that such requirements ensure post-secondary readiness and allow students to "earn" tuition-free college. But, [according to Donald Heller of the University of San Francisco](#), "the research has demonstrated that merit aid programs do not increase college access for students who would otherwise be unlikely to attend college." He also notes that data from Michigan and Florida indicate that the rate at which scholarships were awarded differed greatly among students from different racial and ethnic groups, and among students from communities of different income levels. "In both states, students in the 20% of schools in the wealthiest communities (as measured by the proportion of students on free- or reduced-price lunch in high school) received scholarships at rates more than twice that of students in the poorest communities."

Despite this research and the relative paucity of merit-based models at the state level, the single thing any state can do to improve the public's support for a program of free college tuition is to include some sort of academic performance in its requirements.

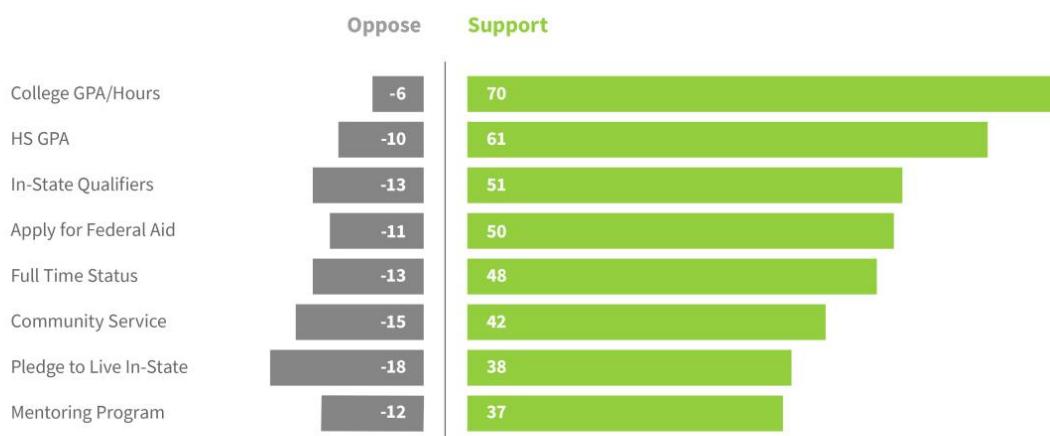
Our exclusive polling shows that 58% of the public considers having a High School GPA requirement an essential component of a free college tuition program. The problem is that free college tuition programs are usually designed to get students who wouldn't otherwise do so, to enroll in college. And those who are at the margin of making that decision often have not demonstrated outstanding academic performance in high school. Just raising the HS GPA requirement from 2.0 to 2.5, for instance, has been estimated to eliminate one quarter of the number of eligible students from the program. This tradeoff, between gaining increased public support by imposing a high school GPA requirement versus getting the highest number of students to enroll in college, is one policymakers must make with their eyes wide open.

By contrast, requiring maintenance of a minimum GPA level once enrolled in college is a feature of just about every state free college tuition program, although the exact requirements vary between them. Indeed, the high level of bipartisan support for free college tuition programs being provided by the state is partially contingent upon the program being described as being for "those who are academically qualified." Without such a requirement, Republican support, in particular, drops off quite a bit.

However, just as with high school GPA requirements, adding a minimum level of academic performance in college also has an impact on the success of a program. Of course, if enrollment without regard to graduation is the program's purpose, this is not an issue at all. But since all state programs seek to boost graduation rates through increased enrollments, state policymakers have to be careful to not impose academic requirements that are either unrealistic or unsupported by other reforms designed to provide students the support they need to succeed academically. The type of support can vary greatly and can add to the program's cost, but should be part of policymaking discussions from the beginning.

GPA requirements in high school and college garner highest support

Support vs. opposition for various requirements to access free tuition



QUESTION: Many states are now considering programs to provide residents free public college tuition. They are considering several requirements for students to qualify. Some of those requirements are listed below. Using the scale provided, how important is it that your state would include the following requirements in a free public college tuition program?

SOURCE: Penn Schoen Berland - Q7tuition1

Other Eligibility Criteria

FAFSA Completion

Completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a near universal requirement for last dollar free college tuition programs to ensure the state doesn't pay money for the program that the Federal government is prepared to subsidize through Pell Grants. However, some states, including Oregon, California, and Maryland, permit alternative applications for otherwise eligible undocumented students.

The Tennessee Promise, and the required mentoring program that provides constant reminders to prospective Promise scholars, has bolstered Tennessee's FAFSA completion rate to the highest in the nation. A joint statement by Governor Bill Haslam (R) and Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) Executive Director Mike Krause estimates that "that 70.3% of 2015-16 high school seniors in Tennessee filed a FAFSA." This is at least ten percentage points higher than FAFSA completion rates in the other three states – New Jersey, Delaware, and Massachusetts – that rank near the top of FAFSA submissions.

Mentorship

Mentorship is a central component of the Tennessee Promise and many believe it is the key to its success. In Tennessee, the non-profit tnAchieves serves as the partnering organization to Tennessee Promise in 85 of the state's 95 counties.

According to Governor Haslam's office, "Tennessee Promise mentors are required to be at least 21 years old and attend a one-hour training session and two, one-hour meetings with their students over the course of a year. On average, mentors spend about an hour a month working with three to seven students as they transition from high school to college, reminding them of important deadlines, encouraging them and serving as a trusted resource."

A paper authored by Randy Boyd, the Founder of tnAchieves and Tennessee's former Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, and Teresa Lubbers, Indiana's Commissioner of Higher Education, indicates that "tnAchieves relies heavily on its local advisory councils to provide guidance on the best place to recruit mentors in each community. In addition to assisting students through the Tennessee Promise process, tnAchieves is building advocates for education through the mentoring program. tnAchieves forms partnerships with the business community to engage its employees to serve as mentors, particularly in metropolitan areas. In 2015, 35% of mentors came from business/industry. It is logical for this sector to participate and support tnAchieves, as the ultimate goal is to provide the state's business and industry with a more qualified workforce."

A University of Tennessee Working Paper found that Knox Achieves participants were 24.2 percentage points more likely to seamlessly enroll in college within nine months of graduation and 29.6 percentage points more likely to seamlessly enroll in community college. For the 2011-12 school year, this scholarship and mentoring program expanded to serve 22 counties across the state and changed its name to tnAchieves.

Nevada's free college tuition program incorporates a mentorship program similar to Tennessee's, but places responsibility for developing such a program on each of their community colleges, which are not permitted to use existing government funding to create the program. The law, however, gives each community college express permission to raise the money for mentoring from local resources. If

a community college does not create such a program the state will not provide them the money to make their tuition free for incoming high school graduates.

Arkansas and Oregon also have their own versions of mentoring programs designed to ensure new students are able to navigate the often-unfamiliar nature of college life.

Community Service

The Tennessee Promise also requires the completion of eight hours of community service per semester. Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam said, “the research shows that students who serve in their communities are more engaged and more successful, and it’s a great lesson to teach them – that while we’re engaged in assisting you in your higher education goals, we’re also asking you to give back.”

Even greater community service requirements are part of plans in Arkansas (15 hours per semester) and Missouri (50 hours of mentoring or tutoring in high school). Each of these states have used this type of provision to respond to the frequently heard argument that students getting free tuition should have some “skin in the game.”

However, CFCT's exclusive polling suggests Americans are more likely to object to this type of provision more than almost any other eligibility requirement. The best way to respond to the “skin in the game” argument is to require some sort of academic performance related to the student’s success in completing college.

In 2019, Nevada’s legislature slightly reduced the number of community service hours required for Nevada Promise Scholarship eligibility. The number of required community service hours prior to receiving the scholarship was reduced from 20 hours per year to 8 hours per semester. College students must also complete eight community service hours per semester to retain the scholarship.

Age at Time of College Enrollment

Many studies have shown a strong correlation between how soon after high school graduation a student enrolls in college and completion of their chosen college program. For that reason, many free college tuition programs require applicants to be an immediate high school graduate or complete a home school program prior to turning 19 or at least enroll in college no later than their 20th birthday. States with such eligibility requirements including Missouri, Nevada, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Wyoming.

By contrast, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) argued in a [recent report](#) that states serious about achieving their goals for a college educated workforce cannot attain those goals without free college tuition programs open to students who dropped out of college without a degree or who failed to enroll upon graduation from high school. The report points out that most states do not have a sufficient number of high school students to meet their targets even if a large percentage of

them graduate and enroll in college. Accordingly, they call for free college tuition programs to include revised state residency and dependency status requirements.

Specifically mentioned is the inclusion of “independent” students in the scholarship programs’ eligibility requirements. The federal government considers students who are at least 24 years of age or who are married or who have children as “independent” in calculating financial aid benefits, but it also includes younger students who are in foster care or are homeless. Military veterans regardless of age are also considered independent under FAFSA rules.

Additionally, current free community college proposals require students to graduate from an in-state high school. ECS argues that the eligibility criteria for in-state college tuition should be used instead so as not to exclude current adult residents who may have graduated from high school in another state.

This issue of age or time of college enrollment is clearly related to the goals a state adopts for its college completion policies. Tennessee has addressed the potential conflict by creating two programs – one for recent high school graduates and another, called Tennessee Reconnect, for adults. Student eligibility criteria include: not already having an associate or bachelor degree; being a Tennessee resident for at least one year preceding the date of application for the grant; completion of the FAFSA and designation as an independent student; admission in an eligible postsecondary institution; enrollment in a degree or certificate program at least part time (6 semester hours); and participation in an advising program approved by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. Unlike the state’s Promise program for high school graduates, there is no community service requirement.

Other states are discussing adopting “adult promise” programs of their own. Maryland’s newly enacted promise program includes a separate provision designed to entice students who failed to complete their course of college study to re-enroll and earn a degree.

Stay or Pay Requirements

Just as corporations often debate the value of training employees who might then change their employment, some legislators have argued in the course of debates about implementing a free college tuition program that it should contain a “stay or pay” provision to ensure those who enjoy the state’s largesse stay in the state upon graduation long enough to return a benefit to the economy of the state who paid for their education. Even though such a provision was the most controversial of all eligibility requirements tested in our polling, adding such a provision has often been the key to winning passage of the overall program.

In New York, for instance, Governor Cuomo accepted a Republican amendment to his Excelsior scholarship proposal that requires students to live in New York state upon graduation for a number of years equal to the years for which they received a scholarship. It also requires that if the student works

during the time they are receiving the scholarship, the employment must be in New York state. Failure to abide by the post-graduation residency requirements converts the amount of Excelsior scholarship money received during the length of time the residency requirement was not met into a zero-interest loan that must be repaid to the state. The complexity of this and other eligibility criteria has led some to conclude it has caused a significant reduction in the take up rate for Excelsior scholarships. Although it is too early to come to such conclusions, there is no question that the administrative burden of managing such a provision adds to the program's overall cost.

By contrast, Rhode Island's "stay or pay" provision, also added in negotiations by the Governor with the legislature, is much simpler and requires no additional administrative expense. It simply requires those who apply for free community college tuition to pledge to remain in the state upon graduation.

Additional "stay or pay" provisions can be found in Arkansas, Kansas, and West Virginia. The Arkansas Futures Grant Program requires those who receive the benefit of free college tuition to be employed in Arkansas within six months of graduating and continue to reside in the state for three years upon graduation. The 2021 Act to establish the Kansas Program Scholarship stipulates that recipients sign an agreement to live and work in Kansas for at least two-years following the successful completion of their college program. West Virginia's Invests Grant Program requires recipients to reside in West Virginia for the two years following obtainment of the degree or certificate for which the grant or grants were awarded. In all three cases, the grant turns into a loan that must be repaid to the state if the residency and/or employment provisions are not met. However, many states allow deferrals or exemptions to "stay or pay" requirements for military service and to pursue additional postsecondary education. West Virginia, for example, exempts individuals serving in the armed services or attending an out-of-state postsecondary institution at least half-time.

Drug Testing

The West Virginia Invests Grant Program [requires recipients to pay for and pass a drug screening](#) before the start of their first term each academic year. Students have a 60-day window to pass the screening. Students who fail one drug screening test are eligible for the Program but must successfully pass a subsequent drug screen before their next term. If a student has a second non-successful drug screening, he or she must complete a drug rehabilitation program to remain eligible for participation in the Program.

A list of the states that have adopted some or all of the eligibility requirements described in this chapter follows.

State Program Requirements

High School GPA and SAT/ACT

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Delaware	SEED Scholarship	A 2.5 GPA is required for an associate's degree program. Eligible residents who graduate high school with less than a 2.5 GPA may obtain an associate degree through the SEED scholarship program if they are enrolled in a pathway program and successfully complete each step. Workforce training certificates do not require a minimum GPA but do require graduation from a Delaware high school/GED program.
Louisiana	TOPS	Eligibility requirements for the HS class of 2022 include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. TOPS Opportunity Award - requires a 2.5 HS GPA in core courses and a ACT composite score of at least 20. 2. TOPS Performance Award - requires a 3.25 HS GPA in core courses and a ACT composite score of at least 23. 3. TOPS Honors Award - requires a 3.5 HS GPA in core courses and a ACT composite score of at least 27. 4. TOPS Tech Award - requires a 2.5 HS GPA in core courses and a ACT composite score of at least 17 or a silver level score on the ACT WorkKeys assessments.
Maryland	Maryland Community College Promise	A high school cumulative GPA of at least a 2.3 (or its equivalent) is required if enrolling directly from high school. Applicants currently or previously enrolled at a community college must have earned either: a cumulative GPA of at least a 2.5 from the community college; or a high school unweighted cumulative GPA of at least a 2.3 or its equivalent.
Missouri	A+ Scholarship	Graduate HS with an overall unweighted grade point average of 2.5 or higher.
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Promise	A minimum 2.50 cumulative GPA for all coursework attempted in grades 9 through 12.
Oregon	Oregon Promise	Document a 2.0 cumulative high school GPA or higher, or a GED score of 145 or higher on each test.
Wyoming	Hathaway Scholarship	Honors (min 3.5 GPA/25 ACT): \$1,680 per semester Performance (min 3.0 GPA/21 ACT): \$1,260 per semester Opportunity (min 2.5 GPA/19 ACT): \$840 per semester Provisional Opportunity (min 2.5 GPA/17 ACT): \$840 per semester

State Program Requirements

Residency

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Arkansas	ArFuture	Arkansas residency demonstrated by having graduated from an Arkansas public school, private school, home school or received a high school equivalency diploma approved by the Department of Career Education; or verification that the applicant has resided within the state for the three (3) years immediately preceding application and has either: graduated from an out-of-state high school, private school, home school or received a high school equivalency diploma approved by another state.
California	California College Promise	Eligible students must be California residents or an eligible AB 540 or AB 1899 student.
Connecticut	Pledge to Advance Connecticut	Recipients must be eligible for in-state tuition.
Delaware	SEED Scholarship	Applicants under age 25 must satisfy Delaware residency requirements at Technical Community College or University of Delaware. Adults 25 years of age and over must meet a five-year Delaware residency requirement.
Hawaii	Hawai'i Promise	Students must be a Hawaii resident or qualify for exempt status that pays in-state tuition.
Indiana	Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant	Applicants must be an Indiana resident and U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen.
Indiana	21 st Century Scholarship	Applicants must be an Indiana resident when applying for and receiving the scholarship. They also must be enrolled in the 7th or 8th grade at an Indiana public or private school accredited by the Indiana Department of Education.
Iowa	All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship	Eligibility is limited to Iowa residents who graduated from an eligible Iowa high school or completed a high school equivalency diploma within the last 2 years.
Kansas	Kansas Promise	Applicants must be a Kansas resident, and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have graduated from a Kansas high school within the preceding 12 months or have received a GED or other high school equivalency credential within the preceding 12 months, OR • Be 21 years of age or older and a Kansas resident for the preceding three consecutive years, OR • Be a dependent child of a military servicemember who is stationed in another state and who, within the preceding 12 months, graduated from an out-of-state high school or obtained a GED or other high school equivalency credential.
Kentucky	Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship	All applicants must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident; • Be a Kentucky resident.
Louisiana	TOPS	The programs requires Louisiana residency and the completion of a core HS curriculum. Any independent or dependent student who actually resides in Louisiana while attending his last two full years at an eligible Louisiana high school, graduates from such a school, and FASFA or TOPS on-line application lists Louisiana as state of residency for at least two full years preceding the date of high school graduation is considered a Louisiana resident.

State Program Requirements

Residency (CONTINUED)

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Maine	Maine Free College Scholarship	Maine residency is required at the time of enrollment in community college and while enrolled in the program.
Maryland	Maryland Community College Promise	Applicants must be eligible for in-state tuition, as determined by the community college.
Massachusetts	MassGrant Plus	Students must be a permanent legal resident of Massachusetts for at least one full year prior to enrolling in college.
Michigan	Michigan Reconnect	Applicants must have lived in Michigan for a year or more.
Minnesota	Minnesota Future Together Grants	Minnesota resident, including students who apply for state financial aid via the MN Dream Act Application.
Missouri	A+ Scholarship	Applicants must: be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident; attend a designated A+ high school for 2 years prior to graduation; and have at least a 95% attendance record overall for grades 9-12.
Missouri	Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant	Applicants must be a Missouri resident and a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.
Nevada	Nevada Promise	A student must be classified as a Nevada resident for tuition purposes by the institution where they plan to receive the Nevada Promise Scholarship.
New Jersey	Community College Opportunity Grant	All students must be eligible for state financial aid. This requires legal residency in the state for a period of not less than 12 consecutive months immediately prior to the academic period for which aid is being requested. Non-citizen and resident alien students may obtain grants by providing evidence that they are not in the United States for the temporary purpose of obtaining an education.
New Mexico	New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship	Students must be a New Mexico resident, which requires proof of living in the state for the past 12 consecutive months. There are limited exceptions for Tribal members, active members of the armed services, and others.
New York	Excelsior Scholarship	An applicant must: be a resident of New York State (NYS) and have resided in NYS for 12 continuous months prior to the beginning of the term, and; be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen.
North Carolina	Longleaf Commitment Grant	Students must be a North Carolina resident eligible for in-state tuition.
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Promise	Applicants must be Oklahoma residents and a U.S. citizen or lawfully present in the United States.
Oregon	Oregon Promise	Applicants must be an Oregon resident for at least 12 months prior to enrolling in community college. Undocumented and DACA students must complete the Oregon Student Aid Application (instead of the FAFSA) and the Oregon Promise application.

State Program Requirements

Residency (CONTINUED)

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Promise	Recipients must be Rhode Island residents that qualify for in-state tuition and fees. Non-citizens may qualify for the Rhode Island Promise if they meet the criteria to be considered RI residents.
South Carolina	SC Workforce Scholarships for the Future	Recipients must be South Carolina citizens enrolled in a qualified program.
Tennessee	Tennessee Promise	A student must: be a Tennessee resident, and be able to complete the FAFSA, qualify for in-state tuition, and possess a valid Social Security number.
Tennessee	Tennessee Reconnect	Applicants must be a Tennessee resident and be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen.
Vermont	802 Opportunity Grant	Eligible Community College of Vermont students must be a state resident and a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen.
Virginia	G3 Program	A student must be eligible for in-state financial aid, which requires them to be domiciled in Virginia for at least 12 months preceding the first day of classes. State law however contains several exemptions.
Washington	Washington College Grant	Eligible Washington State residents, including undocumented students, must maintain a primary residence in Washington for at least 12 consecutive months immediately before their first term in college.
West Virginia	WV Invests Grant	Applicants must be a citizen or financial aid eligible resident of the United States and have been a resident of West Virginia for at least one year immediately preceding the date of application for a grant.
Wyoming	Hathaway Scholarship	Students must demonstrate Wyoming residency, which is determined by the postsecondary institution.

State Program Requirements

Merit- or Need-Based – Initial Eligibility

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Colorado	Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative	Need-based Students must have a household income less than 250% of the maximum permissible income for the purpose of determining eligibility for PELL grants.
Delaware	SEED Scholarship	Merit-based Students who graduate high school with less than a 2.5 GPA may obtain an associate degree through the SEED scholarship program if they are enrolled in a pathway program and successfully complete each step. Workforce training certificates do not require a minimum GPA but do require graduation from a Delaware high school/GED program.
Hawaii	Hawai'i Promise	Need-based Students must have unmet financial need based on their FAFSA submission.
Indiana	21 st Century Scholarship	Need-based Students must meet family income eligibility guidelines – currently \$49,025 for a family of four.
Iowa	All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship	Need-based Students must have an eligible Expected Family Contribution on the 2022-23 FAFSA. For reference, the eligible EFC range in 2021-22 was \$0 - \$9,543.
Maryland	Maryland Community College Promise	Merit-based Applicants must have earned an unweighted high school cumulative GPA of at least a 2.3 (or its equivalent) if enrolling directly from high school. Applicants currently or previously enrolled at a community college must have earned either: a cumulative GPA of at least a 2.5 from the community college; or a high school unweighted cumulative GPA of at least a 2.3 or its equivalent
Massachusetts	MassGrant Plus	Need-based Student eligibility for the MassGrant Plus funds is based upon a student's unmet financial need as determined by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the receipt of other grant aid. Four-year college students must be Pell eligible.
Minnesota	Minnesota Future Together Grants	Need-based Prospective students must meet one of the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a Family Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) of less than \$100,000 and have worked in a critical industry listed in Executive Order 20- 74 at least part-time between March 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021; • Received unemployment benefits between March 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021; • Have a Family AGI of less than \$50,000.
Missouri	A+ Scholarship	Merit-based All applicants must graduate HS with an overall unweighted grade point average of 2.5 or higher, and achieve a score of proficient or advanced on the Algebra I end of course exam or a higher level DESE approved end-of-course exam in the field of mathematics.

State Program Requirements

Merit- or Need-Based – Initial Eligibility (CONTINUED)

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Missouri	Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant	Need-based Eligible students must have an adjusted gross income, as reported on the FAFSA, that does not exceed \$80,000 if married or \$40,000 if filing under any other tax status.
New Jersey	Community College Opportunity Grant	Need-based Recipients must have an annual family income of less than \$65,000.
New York	Excelsior Scholarship	Need-based Applicants must have a combined federal adjusted gross income of \$125,000 or less.
North Carolina	Longleaf Commitment Grant	Need-based Applicants must have an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of less than \$15,000.
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Promise	Both Need- and Merit-based Students must achieve at least a 2.50 cumulative GPA for all coursework attempted in grades 9 through 12, and indicate that their parents' federal adjusted gross income for the most recent federal tax year does not exceed \$60,000.
Oregon	Oregon Promise	Merit-based Students must document a 2.0 cumulative high school GPA or higher, or a GED score of 145 or higher on each test.
Vermont	802 Opportunity Grant	Need-based Students must have a family adjusted gross income of less than \$50,000.
Virginia	G3 Program	Need-based Except for frontline healthcare workers, applicants must have a total household income less than or equal to four hundred percent of the Federal Poverty Level.
Washington	Washington College Grant	Need-based Students with a family income up to 100% of the state's median family income qualify on a sliding scale.
Wyoming	Hathaway Scholarship	Merit-based A minimum 2.5 GPA/17 ACT is required.

State Program Requirements

Merit- or Need-Based – Continued Eligibility

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Arkansas	ArFuture	Satisfactory Academic Progress
Connecticut	Pledge to Advance Connecticut	Satisfactory Academic Progress (2.0 GPA)
Delaware	SEED Scholarship	Associate degree students must maintain a 2.5 minimum cumulative GPA, which is calculated using all college-level credits attempted. The cumulative GPA is verified at the end of the summer semester to determine eligibility for the next academic year. In extenuating circumstances, students may submit a SEED scholarship appeal to request consideration to maintain eligibility with a lower cumulative GPA.
Hawaii	Hawai'i Promise	Satisfactory Academic Progress
Indiana	Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant	Satisfactory Academic Progress
Indiana	21 st Century Scholarship	College students must maintain satisfactory academic progress, earn at least 30 credits each academic year, and complete the College Scholar Success Program annually.
Kansas	Kansas Promise	Satisfactory Academic Progress. Institutions can provide an appeals process.
Kentucky	Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship	Satisfactory Academic Progress
Louisiana	TOPS	Steady Academic Progress -- cumulative 2.00 GPA on a 4.00 scale -- at the end of every semester, quarter, term, session, or intersession for which grades are reported.
Maryland	Maryland Community College Promise	Students must maintain at least a 2.5 cumulative community college GPA if enrolled in a credit bearing program; make satisfactory academic progress toward a vocational certificate, or; participate in a registered apprenticeship program.
Maine	Maine Free College Scholarship	Students need to stay on track for an on-time graduation.
Michigan	Michigan Reconnect	Students must maintain a cumulative 2.0 community college GPA by the end of each 12-month period.
Minnesota	Minnesota Future Together Grants	Satisfactory Academic Progress. Eligibility is determined every semester.
Missouri	A+ Scholarship	Postsecondary students must also maintain satisfactory academic progress – 2.0 GPA at the end of the initial fall semester, and a 2.5 minimum GPA thereafter.

State Program Requirements

Merit- or Need-Based – Continued Eligibility (CONTINUED)

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Missouri	Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant	Satisfactory Academic Progress (2.5 GPA)
Nevada	Nevada Promise	Satisfactory Academic Progress
New Jersey	Community College Opportunity Grant	Satisfactory Academic Progress
New Mexico	New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship	Students must maintain a 2.5 (or higher) cumulative GPA each semester of enrollment.
New York	Excelsior Scholarship	The program requires students to be on track to complete an associate's degree in two years or a bachelor's degree in four years.
North Carolina	Longleaf Commitment Grant	Satisfactory Academic Progress
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Promise	Satisfactory Academic Progress
Oregon	Oregon Promise	Satisfactory Academic Progress
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Promise	Students must maintain at least a 2.5 GPA.
South Carolina	SC Workforce Scholarships for the Future	Credit-seeking students must maintain a 2.0 GPA.
Tennessee	Tennessee Promise	Satisfactory Academic Progress (2.0 GPA)
Tennessee	Tennessee Reconnect	Students must maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA) at the end of each academic year.
Virginia	G3 Program	Satisfactory Academic Progress
Washington	Washington College Grant	Satisfactory Academic Progress
West Virginia	WV Invests Grant	Satisfactory Academic Standing – including a 2.0 minimum cumulative GPA.
Wyoming	Hathaway Scholarship	Students need to maintain a minimum 2.25 to 2.5 GPA depending on the scholarship level.

State Program Requirements

Mentorship

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Arkansas	ArFuture	Students receive monthly mentoring from an organization determined by the Department of Higher Education. Mentors certify that at least one time each month they provided mentoring services by email, phone, or in-person to each student he or she is mentoring.
Indiana	21 st Century Scholarship	Students need to complete Scholar Success Program activities in high school and college in order to earn the 21st Century Scholarship. They include: creating a graduation plan, participating in an extracurricular or service activity, watching a “paying for college” video, taking a career interest assessment, visiting a college campus, taking a college entrance exam, and submitting college applications.
Michigan	Michigan Reconnect	Recipients are required to participate in any academic coaching programs or other college success services offered by their college to Reconnect students.
Nevada	Nevada Promise	Recipients must meet at least once with a mentor (assigned by the college) before the first semester of enrollment and at least twice during each academic year while in the program.
South Carolina	SC Workforce Scholarships for the Future	Taking a financial literacy course offered at the technical college is an optional eligibility requirement. They could also work or fulfill a volunteer requirement, but must complete one of the three options.
Tennessee	Tennessee Promise	All applicants must view a mandatory webinar and connect with a mentor from a partnering organization.
Tennessee	Tennessee Reconnect	Recipients must participate in an advising program approved by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.
Michigan	Michigan Reconnect	Students must maintain a cumulative 2.0 community college GPA by the end of each 12-month period.

State Program Requirements

Volunteer

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Arkansas	ArFuture	15 hours each semester the students receives a grant.
Missouri	A+ Scholarship	Applicants are required to perform at least 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring, of which up to 25% may include job shadowing, prior to HS graduation.
Nevada	Nevada Promise	8 hours of eligible community service as a HS Senior and during each semester of college enrollment.
South Carolina	SC Workforce Scholarships for the Future	Completing 100 hours of voluntary time contributing to a nonprofit or public service organization is an optional eligibility requirement. Students could also work or take a financial literacy course.
Tennessee	Tennessee Promise	8 hours for each semester. HS applicants must complete the community service requirement by July 1.

State Program Requirements

Age

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Arkansas	ArFuture	None
California	California College Promise	None
Connecticut	Pledge to Advance Connecticut	None
Delaware	SEED Scholarship	None. Applicants aged 25 years old and older are however subject to a five year residency requirement.
Hawaii	Hawai'i Promise	None
Indiana	Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant	None
Indiana	21 st Century Scholarship	Requires enrollment in the 7th or 8th grade at an Indiana public or private school accredited by the Indiana Department of Education.
Iowa	All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship	Eligibility is limited to students who have graduated HS or completed a high school equivalency diploma within the last two years.
Kansas	Kansas Promise	Applicants must be 21 years of age or older OR have graduated from a Kansas HS, or received a GED, within the past 12 months.
Kentucky	Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship	None
Louisiana	TOPS	Most programs require enrollment as a first-time freshman by the fall semester following the first anniversary of high school graduation.
Maine	Maine Free College Scholarship	None for students who graduated high school or earned a HiSet/GED in 2020, 2021, 2022, or 2023.
Maryland	Maryland Community College Promise	None
Massachusetts	MassGrant Plus	None
Michigan	Michigan Reconnect	Applicants must be at least 25 years old.
Minnesota	Minnesota Future Together Grants	None

State Program Requirements

Age (CONTINUED)

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Missouri	A+ Scholarship	<p>Eligibility expires when the earliest of the following occurs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 48 months after the graduation date documented on your high school transcript. Students providing service to any branch of the U.S. armed forces can defer their eligibility. Students graduating from high school in mid-year may be eligible for a spring award if their high school transcripts indicate the mid-year graduation date. 2. Receipt of an associate's degree. 3. Completion of 105% of the hours required for the program in which you are currently enrolled.
Missouri	Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant	The program has three eligibility categories, including: individuals who are 25 years or older or individuals who have not been enrolled in any school within the last two years.
Nevada	Nevada Promise	Community college enrollment in the school year immediately following high school graduation is required. GED General Equivalency Diplomas (GED) or equivalent documents must be obtained before 20 years of age.
New Jersey	Community College Opportunity Grant	None
New Mexico	New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship	None after July 1, 2022
New York	Excelsior Scholarship	None
North Carolina	Longleaf Commitment Grant	None
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Promise	Students must start taking college courses within three years after graduating high school.
Oregon	Oregon Promise	Applicants must enroll at least half-time at an Oregon community college within 6 months of high school graduation or GED completion.
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Promise	Recipients must be a high school graduate (public, private or homeschooled) or a GED recipient who was younger than 19 years of age when they completed high school or the GED program.
South Carolina	SC Workforce Scholarships for the Future	None
Tennessee	Tennessee Promise	A student must enroll in an eligible postsecondary institution and participate full-time in the fall term following graduation from an eligible high school or homeschool program, or completion of a GED/HiSET diploma earned before he/she reached 19 years of age.

State Program Requirements

Age (CONTINUED)

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Tennessee	Tennessee Reconnect	Applicants must be "independent" students. Per federal guidelines, an independent student is defined as one of the following: at least 24 years old, married, a graduate or professional student, a veteran, a member of the armed forces, an orphan, a ward of the court, someone with legal dependents other than a spouse, an emancipated minor, or someone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
Vermont	802 Opportunity Grant	None
Virginia	G3 Program	None
Washington	Washington College Grant	None
West Virginia	WV Invests Grant	Applicant must be at least 18 years of age. However, younger individuals may qualify for the grant upon completion of a secondary education program.
Wyoming	Hathaway Scholarship	Students must apply for the Hathaway Scholarship within 48 months of their HS graduation date.

State Program Requirements

College Attendance (full-time or part-time)

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Arkansas	ArFuture	Full- or part-time attendance is allowed.
California	California College Promise	Full-time enrollment is required.
Connecticut	Pledge to Advance Connecticut	Full-time enrollment is required.
Delaware	SEED Scholarship	Student may attend part-time after their first semester.
Hawaii	Hawai'i Promise	Student are required to enroll for at least 6 credits per semester.
Indiana	Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant	Full-time enrollment is required for dependent students. At least half time enrollment is required for independent students.
Indiana	21 st Century Scholarship	Students are required to earn at least 30 credits each academic year.
Iowa	All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship	Part-time enrollment is allowed.
Kansas	Kansas Promise	Full- or part-time attendance is allowed.
Kentucky	Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship	Full- or part-time attendance is allowed.
Louisiana	TOPS	Continuous full-time enrollment is required.
Maine	Maine Free College Scholarship	Full-time enrollment is required.
Maryland	Maryland Community College Promise	12 credits per semester are required for credit bearing programs.
Massachusetts	MassGrant Plus	Community college students may enroll full-time (minimum of 12 credits per semester) or part-time (minimum of 6 credits per semester). Eligible student attending public four-year colleges and universities must attend full-time.
Michigan	Michigan Reconnect	Full- or part-time attendance is allowed.
Minnesota	Minnesota Future Together Grants	Full- or part-time attendance is allowed.
Missouri	A+ Scholarship	Full-time enrollment is required.

State Program Requirements

College Attendance (full-time or part-time)

(CONTINUED)

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Missouri	Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant	At least half-time enrollment is required.
Nevada	Nevada Promise	At least 12 credits per semester are required (with the exception of the last semester if fewer credits are required to graduate).
New Jersey	Community College Opportunity Grant	At least 6 credits per semester are required.
New Mexico	New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship	Full- or part-time attendance is allowed.
New York	Excelsior Scholarship	Enrollment in at least 12 credits per term and successfully completion of at least 30 credits each year.
North Carolina	Longleaf Commitment Grant	At least 6 credit hours per semester are required.
Hawaii	Hawai'i Promise	Student are required to enroll for at least 6 credits per semester.
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Promise	Full- or part-time attendance is allowed. However, recipients can only receive awards for up to five consecutive years after enrolling in college.
Oregon	Oregon Promise	At least 6 credit hours per term are required.
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Promise	Full-time enrollment is required.
South Carolina	SC Workforce Scholarships for the Future	Full- or part-time attendance is allowed.
Tennessee	Tennessee Promise	Continuous full-time enrollment is required.
Tennessee	Tennessee Reconnect	Continuous enrollment at least part-time (6 credit hours per semester).
Vermont	802 Opportunity Grant	Full- or part-time attendance is allowed.
Virginia	G3 Program	Full- or part-time attendance is allowed. However, students have only three years of eligibility to complete an associate degree.
Washington	Washington College Grant	Full- or part-time attendance is allowed.
West Virginia	WV Invests Grant	At least 6 credit hours per semester are required.

State Program Requirements

College Attendance (full-time or part-time)

(CONTINUED)

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Wyoming	Hathaway Scholarship	Continuous enrollment -- students must be enrolled in at least one college-level course during the fall and spring semesters -- is required.

State Program Requirements

Drug/Alcohol/Criminal

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Delaware	SEED Scholarship	A 2021 expansion of the program made individuals with non-violent felonies eligible for scholarships.
Indiana	21 st Century Scholarship	Students pledge to not use illegal drugs, commit a crime or delinquent act, or consume alcohol before reaching the legal drinking age.
Maryland	Maryland Community College Promise	Students pledge to remain drug free for the full term of the award.
Missouri	A+ Scholarship	HS students must maintain a record of good citizenship and avoid the unlawful use of drugs and/or alcohol. Additionally, students cannot have a criminal record preventing receipt of federal Title IV student financial aid.
Missouri	Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant	Students cannot have a criminal record preventing receipt of federal Title IV student financial aid.
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Promise	High school applicants are required to refrain from substance abuse and criminal or delinquent acts. College students will permanently lose eligibility if they are suspended from college for more than one semester for conduct reasons.
West Virginia	WV Invests Grant	Students must pay for and pass a drug screening before the start of their first term each academic year. They retain Grant eligibility for failing one drug screening test but are then required to successfully pass a subsequent drug screen before their next term.

State Program Requirements

Post-College Residency

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Arkansas	ArFuture	Recipients must reside and work in Arkansas for a minimum of three years following community college graduation. The grant converts into a loan if the residency and employment stipulation are not met.
Kansas	Kansas Promise	Recipients sign an agreement to live and work in the State of Kansas for two consecutive years following the successful completion of their program of study. Failure to do so requires repaying the scholarship with interest.
Missouri	Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant	Recipients are required to verify residency and qualifying employment in the state for 12 months after graduation and maintain residency/qualifying employment for at least three years. One-third of the aggregate amount received through the Fast Track program will remain a grant for each year of residency and employment. If the recipient maintains residency and qualifying employment for less than the full three years, any remaining balance will be converted to a loan and will be repayable with interest.
New York	Excelsior Scholarship	Recipients are required to reside in New York State for the same number of years in which they received the award, or it will be converted into a loan. The student does not need to be employed during this period, however they cannot be employed in another state.
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Promise	Recipients commit to live, work, or continue their education in Rhode Island after graduation. However, the program does not contain a penalty for leaving the state.
West Virginia	WV Invests Grant	Recipients agree to reside in West Virginia for the two years following obtainment of the degree or certificate for which the grant or grants were awarded. Violation of this agreement would require repayment of the awards with interest. The Act has exemptions for individuals serving in the armed services or attending an out-of-state postsecondary institution at least half-time;

State Program Requirements

Term or Semester Limitations

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
Arkansas	ArFuture	Up to 5 semesters or the completion of an Associate degree.
California	California College Promise	Two academic years.
Connecticut	Pledge to Advance Connecticut	Eligibility is limited to 72 earned credit hours (3 academic years).
Delaware	SEED Scholarship	Up to 10 continuous semesters.
Indiana	Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant	The grant is available for up to two years.
Indiana	21 st Century Scholarship	Eligibility is limited to no more than eight (8) semesters or twelve (12) trimesters or quarters.
Iowa	All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship	Up to eight full-time semesters or 16 part-time semesters.
Kansas	Kansas Promise	Recipients have 30 months from the date that the scholarship was first awarded to complete a Promise eligible program.
Kentucky	Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship	Eligibility expires when the first of the following conditions is met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt of scholarship funding for four academic terms; • Receipt of the scholarship for 60 credit hours of enrollment; or • Receipt of a first associate's degree.
Louisiana	TOPS	With limited exceptions, eligibility is limited to eight semesters or 12 quarters.
Maine	Maine Free College Scholarship	Up to two academic years.
Maryland	Maryland Community College Promise	Up to three academic years.
Missouri	A+ Scholarship	Eligibility expires when the earliest of the following occurs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48 months after the graduation date documented on your high school transcript; • Receipt of an associate's degree; or • Completion of 105% of the hours required for the program in which the student is enrolled.
Missouri	Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant	A student's eligibility expires when any of the following occur: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt of the grant for four semesters or the equivalent • Receipt of a bachelor's degree • Reaching 200 percent of the academic time typically required to complete the program of study.
Nevada	Nevada Promise	Up to three academic years.

State Program Requirements

Term or Semester Limitations (CONTINUED)

STATE	PROGRAM	REQUIREMENT(S)
New Mexico	Opportunity Scholarship	Up to 90 credit hours on towards an Associate degree or up to 160 credit hours toward a bachelor's degree.
New York	Excelsior Scholarship	A recipient of an Excelsior Scholarship is eligible to receive award payments for not more than two years of full-time undergraduate study in a program leading to an associate's degree or four years of full-time undergraduate study, or five years if the program of study normally requires five years, in a program leading to a bachelor's degree.
North Carolina	Longleaf Commitment Grant	The grant will end after the Spring 2023 semester.
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Promise	A student may receive awards for no more than five consecutive years after enrolling in postsecondary education. There are limited exceptions for students on active military duty.
Oregon	Oregon Promise	Eligibility is limited to 90 attempted college credits.
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Promise	Up to two academic years.
Tennessee	Tennessee Promise	Up to five semesters, exclusive of approved leaves or absence, or the completion of an associate's degree.
Tennessee	Tennessee Reconnect	Recipients will receive the grant until they either (1) earn an associate degree, (2) complete the total number of semester hours necessary to complete the degree, or (3) fail to maintain either continuous enrollment or a minimum 2.0 GPA.
Virginia	G3 Program	Up to three years to complete an Associate degree.
Washington	Washington College Grant	Up to ten full-time semesters or fifteen full-time quarters or the equivalent combination of these two or the clock hour equivalent.
West Virginia	WV Invests Grant	Up to 90 attempted credit hours.
Wyoming	Hathaway Scholarship	Most students are limited to the equivalent of eight full-time semesters.

Chapter IV —

Funding and Sustaining Promise Programs

The original community-based Promise programs were funded using philanthropic donations either from individual donors, as in Kalamazoo, Michigan, or the corporate sector, as in El Dorado, Arkansas. However, these funds are inherently difficult to scale to the size and sustainability required for a statewide Promise program. Instead, states have turned to existing revenue streams, such as Tennessee's lottery, or new revenue streams, as Michigan did originally with property tax reform, to make their colleges tuition free. The vast majority of states, including Oregon, New York, California, Nevada, New Mexico and Rhode Island, simply appropriate a fixed sum in the state's annual or biennial budget cycle. As free college tuition becomes an even more popular idea for states to undertake, the need to secure stable funding streams to fulfill the "promise" the state is making in the future becomes more critical.

Designing Sustainable Promise Programs

No matter what funding source is chosen, the long-term sustainability of any Promise program is crucial to its success. A report by The Century Foundation of six early state programs that made college tuition free for some residents found that such place-based scholarships fared better in receiving appropriations, even in fiscally difficult times, than more traditional higher education financial aid programs. The report indicated that in and around the time of the Great Recession:

- The funding per full-time equivalent ("FTE") student for all six existing Promise programs grew between 12 and 142 percent, while overall appropriations per FTE student for higher education fell in each state between 18 and 38 percent.
- Promise programs retained and increased funding even in states where their legislatures cut funding for other financial aid programs.
- The six Promise programs grew at a time when state financial aid budgets fell by an average of 6% per FTE nationally.

This suggests that the first step to creating a sustainable free college tuition program at the state level is to make a promise, not based on merit or need, to the state's residents. It is the best way to avoid having such financial aid programs' funding reduced in hard times.

To further enhance the ability of a state to make a long-term commitment to students early in their K-12 education, which will be payable as much as twelve years later, CFCT recommends the creation of a “Dynamic Endowment Fund” or DEF as the vehicle for holding, investing, and managing the funds. Such a structure, with its own board and management, provides the greatest assurance that a multi-year promise to future generations of students will be kept and protects the funds from any short-term raids in times of fiscal emergencies. The Tennessee Promise takes these issues into consideration in its design.

The 2014 legislation creating the Tennessee Promise [established](#) an irrevocable trust consisting of the Tennessee Promise endowment account and the Tennessee Promise special reserve account. Funding for the endowment came from two sources: 1) Total unexpended lottery scholarship revenues from the previous 10 years had accumulated to more than \$400 million. From these reserves, approximately \$312 million was transferred to the endowment; 2) A transfer of \$47 million from TSAC’s student loan guaranty operating reserve (“Tennessee Promise Scholarship Act of 2014,” 2014). These two deposits brought the initial endowment balance to approximately \$360 million. Investment of the endowment is administered by the Treasurer of the State of Tennessee. The Promise sustainability model included long-term endowment earnings of 4%, yielding approximately \$7.2 million on an annual basis. Funding for the special reserve is derived from the following sources: 1) Interest earnings from the Promise endowment; 2) total annual net lottery proceeds (i.e., lottery revenues in excess of expenditures on scholarships and TELS administration); and 3) interest earnings on the special reserve. The special reserve is invested in similar long-term instruments as the endowment, thus yielding a similar rate as the endowment. Annual interest earnings on the special reserve will fluctuate, however, depending on the current balance.

Most states, however, will not be as fortunate as Tennessee in finding surplus funds to establish a Promise DEF. Instead, states will need to find new sources of revenue to fund their investment in making college tuition free.

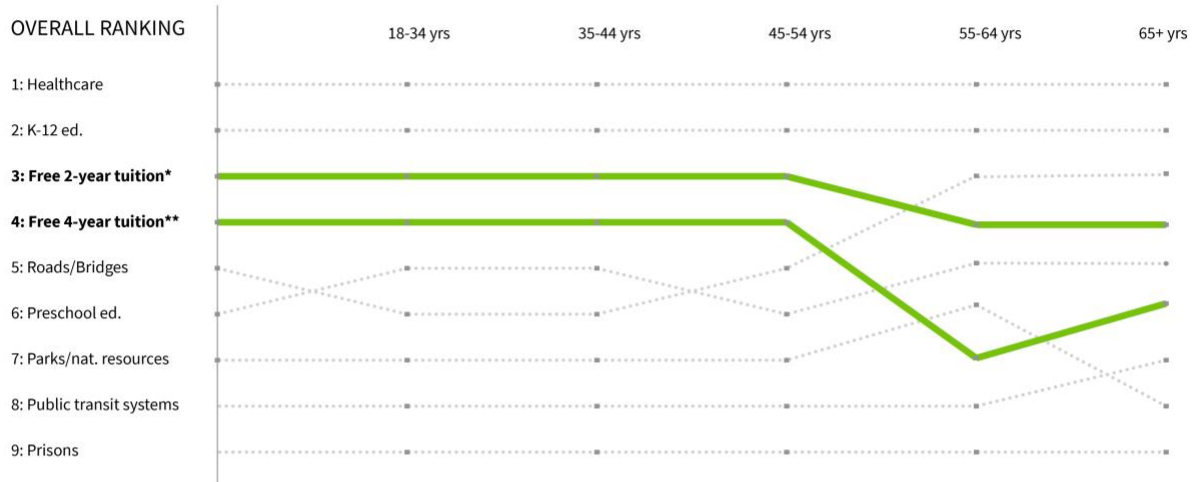
Where to Find the Money to Pay for Free College Tuition

The first place to look for at least some of the revenue to fund free college tuition is in places where a new revenue stream has been created without any designation of how the money should be spent. In such situations, the popularity of the idea of free college tuition can be used to trump competing claims for the money. CFCT’s exclusive polling shows the idea of using new money to pay for making college tuition free is more popular than any other program states might use the money for, excluding health care and K-12 education.

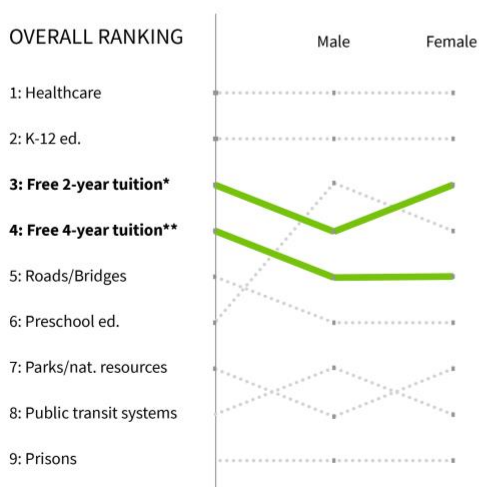
Spending Priorities- Where Does Free Tuition Fit In?

Q: Imagine your state had a **new amount of money** to fund any of the following programs, and you could choose which programs received this funding. Which programs would be your highest priorities, and which would be your lowest?

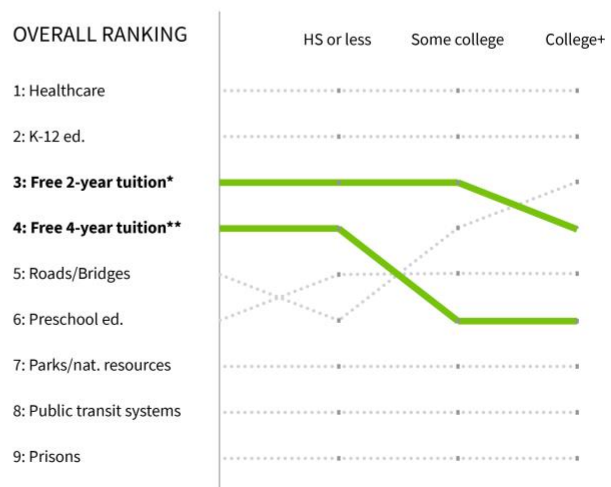
BY AGE



BY GENDER



BY EDUCATION LEVEL



* Free tuition at 2-year public technical and community college
 ** Free tuition at 4-year public universities and colleges

Several states have used the overriding popularity of making college more affordable to lay claim to new revenues generated by tax reform. In 2012, the voters of California passed Proposition 39 which closed a loophole in the way out-of-state corporations were taxed. The proposition set aside half of the incremental revenues that would flow from this change to the tax code for the legislature to allocate as part of its general fund budget. With the strong support of the Speaker of the House at the time, some of those general fund monies were successfully set aside to be used to fund a middle-class college scholarship program that would pay for up to one-third of the tuition costs for students in California from middle class families, as defined by family income. While the initial amounts were smaller than that, by designating these funds for this purpose, the legislature created a source of revenue that could grow over time to achieve the program's goal. Even though some legislators later tried to end or limit the program to find funds for other purposes, the middle-class scholarship program survived all such attempts, long after the Speaker who sponsored the program had retired.

Similarly, when Michigan reformed its personal property tax assessment process, the Republican legislature and the Democratic governor agreed to set aside 50% of the incremental revenues under the new law to fund Promise programs in ten communities in the state so long as those communities also raised private money to get their Promise program started. The program has since been expanded to include up to fifteen community-based Promise programs, most notably the City of Detroit.

And, in Arkansas, under the leadership of then Lt. Governor Bill Halter, a lottery to fund college scholarships by constitutional amendment received over 63% voter approval. Although previous efforts to establish a lottery in the state had failed, a favorable vote was obtained by restricting the use of the funds solely for college scholarships and requiring the state to maintain a baseline level of spending on scholarships.

This option of finding new revenue streams to fund free college tuition has become much more viable, thanks to two recent Supreme Court rulings.

On May 14, 2018, the United States Supreme Court [ruled](#) in response to a lawsuit from the state of New Jersey that the federal law, known as the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PAPSA) preventing states other than Nevada from conducting online sports betting, was unconstitutional. Instead, the Court ruling said, it was up to each state to determine if it wanted such activities to be conducted in its state and if so under what rules. In addition to New Jersey, West Virginia, Delaware, and Mississippi have legal mechanisms in place to implement online sports betting should they choose to do so. All told, 20 states were considering sports betting as a potential source of new revenue at the time of the Supreme Court's decision – a number that is likely to rise with the clarity of the Court's ruling.

An unrelated 2018 Supreme Court decision also created a possible new revenue stream for states to use to fund free college tuition. By a 5-4 vote the Court overturned its 1992 decision (*Quill Corp. vs. North Dakota*) limiting the circumstances under which states could collect sales tax from online purchases made by their residents from out-of-state online retailers. Although there will be many claimants in any political debate over what to do with this revenue windfall, identifying a new program with such broad-based popularity as free college tuition is a sound way to sort out the competing claims. Additionally, it's a great way to fund free college tuition programs since sales taxes are a very stable source of state revenues that will increase over time along with the population.

In addition to collecting sales tax from out-of-state retailers, states may consider extending their sales taxes to the purchase of services, rather than products. If the funding of free college tuition was promoted as the end goal of such a shift, the chances of it being approved would improve dramatically.

These examples highlight the importance of not being constrained by existing tax structures and budgeting priorities in the establishment of a state free college tuition program. States can also look beyond the power to tax for ways to fund a free college initiative.

Community Promise Programs

The Michigan Promise Zone legislation created an incentive for communities who wanted to create their own version of the Kalamazoo Promise by making state funding available depending on a community's own efforts to fund their Promise. This model need not be limited to what is in effect a "matching grant" approach like federal/state programs for highways or health care.

Even for states without a new revenue source, incentives can be created to encourage communities to enact Promise programs, which can then serve as the first step toward a statewide program. For instance, in those states where property taxes are levied to fund local schools, states could enact legislation allowing such levies to be used to make their community colleges tuition free as well. Increasing property taxes by a vote of the community to enable residents to send their children to their local community college for all or part of their higher educational experience can be especially attractive in cities with lower income families who pay less in property taxes and large concentrations of major corporations that pay a larger share of the existing property tax revenue. Of course, the details of this approach will vary widely depending on the state's structure for collecting and distributing property tax revenues, but it is a step that can be taken with literally no cost to the state.

Before California established its "Promise Grants" program that made its community colleges tuition free for all high school graduates enrolling full time, a number of the state's community colleges adopted their own Promise programs, using philanthropy as the funding source. The president of the

Long Beach Community College, Eloy Oakley, was the leader among his peers in pursuing this approach to make the education of its youth a city-wide effort in partnership with Long Beach's K-12 District. When Oakley was named as the next Chancellor of the state's entire Community College system, he used his experiences to encourage other community college districts to follow his lead. That in turn, helped build political support for the legislation that made the first year free for all high school students enrolling in fall 2019, and the first two years in fall of 2020.

New Federal Sources of Revenue for State's Tuition Free College

States are newly flush with resources thanks to the unprecedented COVID-19 relief package – the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – enacted in March of 2021. A state-by-state listing of Federal Relief Funds (FRF) based upon US Treasury and Census Bureau data shows a total of almost \$200 billion, of which over three-fourths was distributed in 2021, was authorized for states to use in helping deal with the effects of the pandemic on their workforce. Per capita revenue amounts vary widely by state with Utah's \$424 being the lowest number for any state and Wyoming's \$1,835 the highest per capita amount of any state. In addition, a review of individual state budget revenue estimates shows 36 states have exceeded their original revenue estimates, another ten are on target, and not a single one has seen actual revenue collections come in under their budget estimates.

This means states have the money right now to help many of their residents get the short-term certificates and associate degrees they need for success. Such programs require only a modest draw on the federal financial windfall and can gain bipartisan support in state legislatures.

Two states, as of July 2021, had used federal COVID-19 relief funds to fund programs to make public colleges tuition-free. The first was Michigan's Futures for Frontliners, which was inspired by the GI Bill, and launched utilizing \$24 million of Governor's Education Emergency Relief (GEER) Funds from the 2020 CARES Act. The last dollar scholarship program initially offered tuition-free community college or a technical certificate to essential workers working in the second quarter of 2020 who did not have a college degree. In June 2021, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer (D) called for the legislature to appropriate \$100 million of ARPA funds to expand Futures for Frontliners to include frontline workers who served between November 1, 2020 and January 31, 2021.

The initial eligibility criteria for the Futures for Frontliners program included:

- A Michigan residency requirement;
- Working in an essential industry at least part-time for 11 of the 13 weeks between April 1 and June 30, 2020;
- A requirement by their job to work outside the home at least some of the time between April 1 and June 30, 2020;
- Having not previously earned an associate or bachelor's degree;

- Not be in default on a federal student loan; and
- Completing a Futures for Frontliners scholarship application by 11:59 p.m., Dec. 31, 2020.

Successful Futures for Frontliners applicants were also required to complete the following three steps to receive the award:

- Apply to and be admitted to a Michigan public community college;
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA);
- Enroll in class at least half-time (six credits).

More than 120,000 Michiganders applied for the Futures for Frontliners during the three-month application window last year, and according to a June 2021 press release, 16,000 of the scholarship recipients have already completed a semester at their local community college.

Vermont's legislature appropriated \$3 million of the state's ARPA funds to provide up to two free classes in the summer or fall of 2021 and spring 2022 at any of the Vermont State Colleges for any Vermont resident who is seeking to transition to a new career or to enhance the resident's job skills. The last dollar program also assists with textbook costs, childcare and/or other school-related needs. According to a Vermont State College System (VSCS) press release, VSCS piloted an initial workforce initiative, funded with federal Coronavirus Relief Funds, last year. "This first initiative served 971 Vermonters who took over 1,398 courses in fall 2020. Inspired by the success of the first program, the legislature funded additional opportunities for Vermonters," including the free courses announced in July 2021. Vermont's legislature also appropriated \$1.0 million to provide up to two free classes at the flagship University of Vermont (UVM) "for any Vermont resident who is seeking to transition to a new career or to enhance the resident's job skills." All slots for the UVM program were reportedly filled within 48 hours. Additionally, Vermont's legislature appropriated \$2.8 million of ARPA funds for a separate last dollar program that provides recent high school graduates with two free classes in the summer or fall of 2021 and spring of 2022 at any Vermont State College.

Even though legislation to create a federal/state partnership to create tuition free community college did not survive the Congressional debate over President Biden's Build Back Better plan, the amount of federal money that has been made available in pandemic relief legislation provides a great new opportunity for states to establish tuition free college programs, especially those designed to improve the skills and capability of their workforce. In addition, several states, including North and South Carolina, Kansas and New Mexico have used their newly replenished state coffers to fund tuition free college programs, even without tapping ARPA funds directly.

Conclusion

Finding the funds to support a free college tuition plan is usually the most difficult part of the policy process. Tough, inter-branch battles have erupted in states between Governors seeking to institute such a policy and legislators, even from their own party, preferring to use the funds for other purposes. For this reason, it's important to be very clear about the estimated costs of such a program and the funding sources that will be used to pay for it. Bringing the debate to a successful conclusion often requires both sides making compromises that lower the cost of the program – albeit by adding eligibility criteria that reduces the number of students eligible to receive free college tuition.

Chapter V –

Putting It All Together

A Three Step Process for Designing Your State’s Promise Program

This briefing book is designed to help state policymakers think through the elements of making college tuition free, so they can develop and effectively implement programs that can reap significant economic and societal benefits. We realize that each state has its own unique challenges, tax structures, higher education systems, and political make up. So, while we have provided many proven examples on different elements that we believe will both justify the expenditures and prove to be politically popular, we have not attempted to provide a single, “model legislative proposal” or suggest there is only one path that states must follow to address the challenge of college affordability.

The purpose of this concluding chapter in the briefing book is to provide a guide for policymakers that will enable each one to make an informed decision on what should be included in their state’s free college tuition program, considering all the variables that must be addressed to make the program effective.

Here are the steps we recommend each state take to put together a program tailored to its fiscal and political environment.

STEP 1. Begin by gaining clarity on what goals you are trying to achieve by creating a free college tuition program.

A great example of a clear policy goal that helped define and focus a state’s program is the “Drive for 55” plan of then Tennessee Governor Haslam. By making it clear that increasing the number of higher education trained workers in the state was the reason for the program, the Governor won support from the business community and other constituencies that might have otherwise questioned the expenditure of funds required to make their community colleges tuition free. Many states have followed Governor Haslam’s model and begun their push for a more educated workforce by stating the percentage of the workforce they want to have degrees by a specific date in the future.

Undertaking such an exercise almost inevitably leads policy makers to agree with Sarah Pingel, Emily Parker and Lauren Sisneros from the Education Commission of the States finding that “there are simply not enough traditionally aged high school and college students to create the educated

workforce required for the 21st century economy.” This often leads states to offer two different free college tuition or Promise programs--one for recent high school graduates and another for adults already in the workforce.

Clear goals not only help generate support for the program, they also greatly increase the effectiveness of the program’s design. The following chart provides examples of the relationship between goals and program design for two different policy goals often associated with free college tuition programs.

Define Promise Program Goals and Design Policy Accordingly		
Before designing the program and calculating costs, the strategy and need for the program must be defined.		
PROGRAM GOAL	DESIGN LEVER	DESIGN LEVER IMPLICATION
Increasing access, affordability, and attainability of higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove financial barrier Increase capacity and productivity of HE institutions Reduce HE costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal rather than need-based financial support Lower residency requirements Less restrictive eligibility constraints Innovation incentives for colleges Performance based HE funding
Increasing economic growth by upskilling workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create college going culture in K-12 Improve public school quality Focus community college funding on transfer degrees and career technical education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic and mentoring support services in high school and college Provide career pathways from HS through college Wide array of post-secondary school options including private schools Tighter residency requirements post-graduation Less restrictive application time limits post HS Support for adult learners seeking degree completion

Once the policy goal has been agreed upon, each design lever will need to be considered in the context of the funds available to pay for them and the political implications of each decision. Fortunately, free college tuition programs have demonstrated the ability to change outcomes at both the K-12 and college level, so the same investment can be used to help achieve more than one goal if a state is reluctant to choose among them. Nevertheless, clarity of goals will help you decide which specific design levers you will want to pull.

By way of example, here are the questions that guided policymakers in Tennessee as they drafted their Promise program once the overall goal was agreed upon:

- a) What is the Promise you are making?

- b) To whom is the Promise being made? (traditional, non-traditional students, or both)
- c) Who will provide the Promise?
- d) What services will be included in the Promise?
- e) What will the metrics of success be for the Promise?
- f) How will the Promise be funded?
- g) How will the Promise be diversified and sustained over time – financially, politically, and programmatically?

The next step in the process in order to settle upon an affordable and effective free college tuition program for your state is to focus on answering those last two questions.

STEP 2. Compare your goals and policy design choices to the potential cost of implementing a system of free college tuition.

Each state will need to make its own estimates of the cost in terms of revenue lost by making any part of their system of higher education tuition free. Start by gaining an in-depth understanding of what revenues are currently being generated from instate tuition by institution and year of attendance. This information is publicly available in the U.S. Department of Education's IPEDS database but may not be as current as your state's own fiscal information. The data by year, as in Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, or Senior, will let you calculate the revenue that will be lost by making the first year, for example, of college free in the first year of the program's implementation. The calculations for the out years of the program are more complicated. They will need to incorporate, if possible, the state's experiences with dropout rates after the first year, potential shifts in attendance from private to public colleges in response to the offer of free college tuition, historic transfer rates between community colleges and four-year institutions, etc.

If the state's own budget systems and personnel are not able to make this estimate given the number of variables involved, there are services available – some of which are fee based – for doing so. These include the Upjohn Institute in Kalamazoo, MI, which has dedicated staff who have done such analyses for a number of states as part of their overall research on Promise programs, and MDRC which has [an online cost calculator](#).

There are two potential sources of money, already in a state's higher education financial system, that can be used to offset whatever number is initially agreed upon as the cost of making college tuition free. The first is Pell Grant revenue, which is currently the major federal program to provide money to students to cover the price of tuition based on their family's financial need. If a decision has been made to make the state's free college tuition program a "last dollar" program, then the money each student receives from Pell Grants will reduce your calculation of the amount of tuition revenue "lost" by creating a Promise program, since the state will only be obligated to pay a student's tuition for what the Pell Grant revenue does not cover. Keep in mind this amount will change as the program

impacts student enrollment and therefore the number of people who apply for federal aid. The more who do so, the lower the cost to the state, assuming the state's Promise is a "last dollar" program.

One of the keys to the success of the Tennessee Promise is their requirement that each applicant for a Tennessee Promise Scholarship must complete a FAFSA application for federal student aid. Although every state with a last dollar Promise program requires completion of this application for federal aid, the University of Tennessee's Center for Business and Economic Research [found](#) that a strong mentoring program coupled with a last-dollar scholarship increased a student's likelihood of attending college by more than 500%.

Tennessee's mentoring program pairs all applicants with mentors from the private sector to assist students in eliminating the barriers associated with postsecondary access and success. The state hires non-profits to recruit and train their mentors enabling them to run the program at a greatly reduced cost to the state. For example, tnAchieves, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, currently serves as the partnering organization in 85 of the state's 95 counties. They have established county-based advisory councils of local higher education, secondary education, and business leaders, as well as public officials to ensure local ownership and sustainability. They have recruited and trained over 7,500 mentors annually since the establishment of the Tennessee Promise; and established summer bridge programs for students requiring remediation.

Mentors serve three roles: resource, taskmaster, and encourager. The mentor plays the role of trusted resource when the student has questions and/or encounters a barrier to post-secondary entry. The role of taskmaster is also incredibly important as the program seeks to ease the transition from high school to college. Ensuring students understand the critical nature of deadlines is essential to the mentor's role. Finally, students often face difficulties as they attempt to break family cycles. The role of "encourager" is invaluable to these students' success.

Randy Boyd, the former head of Tennessee's Department of Economic and Community Development and the current President of the University of Tennessee, underlined the importance of their non-profit partners' training of each mentor, "Mentors receive high-level information about filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), completing the post-secondary admissions process and all other Tennessee Promise requirements and deadlines. Each mentor is also provided a 50-page handbook that outlines the process and provides insight on working with the target population...The handbook includes a specific outline for their bi-weekly communication with students."

Tennessee Promise mentors are asked for a one-year commitment of 10 hours, working with 5 to 10 students from the high school of their choice. Mentors and students work together from March of a student's senior year of high school through their first semester of college. Mentors and students attend two structured meetings and communicate at least twice per month. Many mentors and

students build a stronger bond and continue working together throughout the student's college career.

Mentors receive a weekly email from tnAchieves every Monday, outlining details/deadlines to share with students. Monday mentor emails also include inspiring student stories as well as tips from other mentors. Mentors are placed into teams of four to six and receive one another's contact information from tnAchieves for additional support. Mentor teams are seated together at the meetings with their students to work together through the activities, assist each other in answering student questions, and ensure students are on track to succeed.

The effectiveness of Tennessee's mentoring program can be seen in the results the state achieved in the annual challenge of getting students to fill out the FAFSA form. In its first year more than 38,000 students filled out the FAFSA form. The state experienced the highest year over year gain in FAFSA completion and led the nation in the number of students filing for Pell Grants. Tennessee comprised 40% of all growth in the FAFSA filing rate nationwide from 2014 to 2015 and has led the nation in FAFSA filing ever since. Based on their experience and your state's own plans for encouraging every high school student, regardless of need, to "fill out their FAFSA", the normally stable amount of Pell Grant revenue flowing to a state should be adjusted based on estimates of the impact the overall program will have on Pell Grant applications.

As noted in Chapter II, Tennessee added about 4,000 students into post-secondary education and improved its college-going rate among high school graduates by 5-6 percentage points in the first year of its Promise program. That gain was achieved with only a \$15 million dollar expenditure of state funds with Pell Grant scholarships covering the rest of the cost. Rhode Island's Promise of free community college tuition increased enrollment of full-time Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) students directly from high school by a staggering 47% in its first year. The program was funded by an initial appropriation of \$2.75 million in the first year. Other states with last dollar tuition free college programs have experienced enrollment gains within the range of these two states' experiences.

The other potential source of existing revenue to offset the cost of making tuition free is state and/or private college scholarship programs that currently exist. Some states, such as Washington and California, have robust systems for providing grants to students based on need or family income. This money can be aligned with the state's Promise program to reduce the amount of new revenue that is needed. It is therefore important to properly identify the amount of state aid currently being provided and how a Promise program might impact those expenditures.

However, there are arguments against taking this step. Advocates for free public college tuition, such as [Sara Goldrick-Rab](#), point out that the cost of attending college is not limited to tuition, and therefore, scholarship money should not be used to offset the cost of a free tuition program but

instead continue to be given to students to help offset those costs. This is an important policy choice that should be made in the context of each state's unique fiscal and political environment. Oregon responded to this argument by having the Oregon Promise pay a minimum \$1,000 benefit for any student whose tuition is fully covered by a Pell Grant, creating a so-called "Middle Dollar" Promise program. Both California and New Mexico have made their tuition free college programs "first dollar scholarships," allowing students to use whatever Pell Grant money they are able to secure to be used to cover the other costs of attending college.

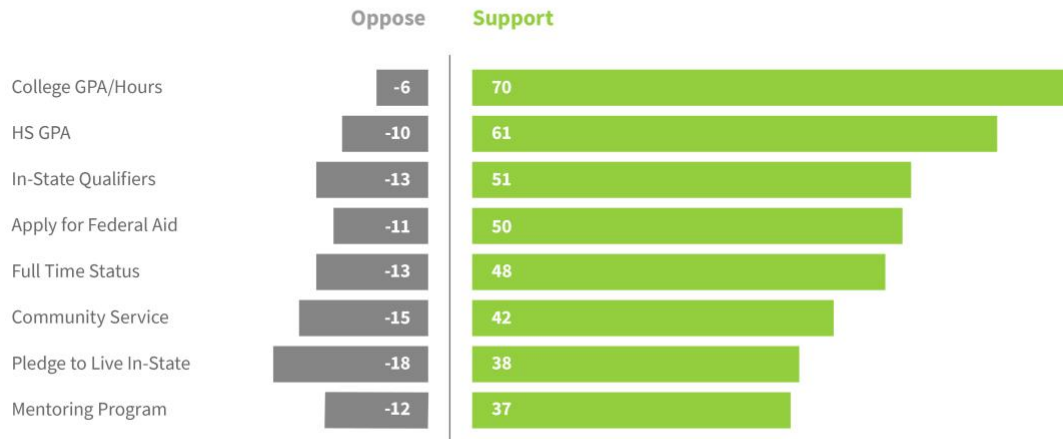
Of course, the cost of a free college tuition program can be further reduced by adding requirements that will ultimately lessen the number of students eligible to receive the Promise program's "scholarship." It is important to keep in mind that these requirements reduce the cost of the program by reducing the number of students who can apply, potentially working at cross purposes to a state's overall goal. They also can quickly become the subject of vigorous political debate.

Still, academic requirements, particularly high school grade point averages, or residency requirements, such as how long the student or family has resided in the state, are not uncommon. Other requirements, such as requiring community service or staying in the state upon graduation, are often included to make sure students have some "skin in the game," in the words of those often advocating for such provisions. The experience of many states, such as New York and Arkansas, particularly with regard to "Stay or pay" requirements, however, suggest including such provisions greatly reduces the desired impact on enrollment gains, in effect working at cross purposes with the overall goal of creating a more educated workforce.

Even though political debates surrounding free college tuition during the legislative process often focus on these types of requirements, CFCT's polling suggests there is a large difference between what legislators might advocate and what the public supports.

GPA requirements in high school and college garner highest support

Support vs. opposition for various requirements to access free tuition



QUESTION: Many states are now considering programs to provide residents free public college tuition. They are considering several requirements for students to qualify. Some of those requirements are listed below. Using the scale provided, how important is it that your state would include the following requirements in a free public college tuition program?

SOURCE: Penn Schoen Berland - Q-Tuition!

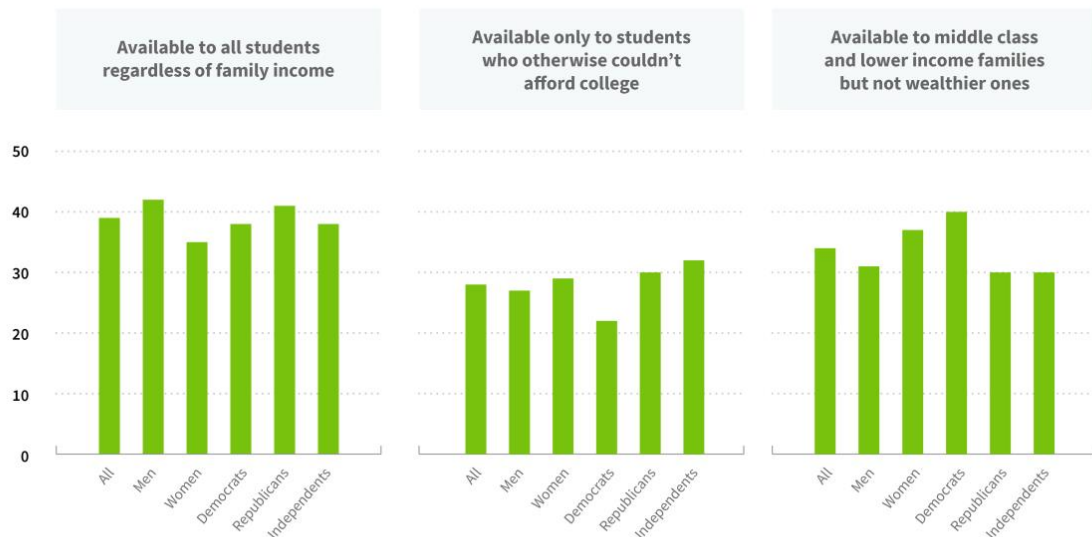
Our research shows that academic requirements generate the highest percentage of those who say such a requirement “must be included in the program” (the right side of the chart above) and the least opposition (the left side of the chart above). Those that require students to be part of the state’s population, maximize federal monies and attend full time, also are relatively popular requirements. However, other popular provisions that can be found in some state programs – such as requiring community service or residing in the state after graduation – draw the greatest amount of opposition and do little to add to a program’s popularity. That doesn’t mean such requirements shouldn’t be included in a state’s plan for reasons other than gaining popular support. For example, CFCT strongly supports the inclusion of mentoring programs because of their positive impact on student graduation rate, even though our polling suggests the public is not particularly fond of such a requirement being part of a free college tuition program.

The other major requirement that will spark a great deal of debate is whether the program should be universal, as is true of all states’ K-12 education programs, or only available to students from families with a certain level of income, i.e., means tested.

As noted in Chapter II, CFCT’s polling shows that universal programs tend to generate more political support across partisan lines and, therefore, are more sustainable over time. However, universality has made some programs a target for those who say they “don’t want to use taxpayer dollars to subsidize the education of rich families’ children.” Oregon initially addressed this issue, and the

question of “skin in the game,” by making their Promise program fairly universal and requiring every student to pay \$50 toward their tuition. The \$50 co-pay was eliminated, starting in the 2022-23 academic year, due to the legislature’s passage of equity-focused reforms in the 2022 legislative session. It is also quite common for those invested in existing financial aid programs to criticize free college tuition programs because in their opinion it “spends scarce tax dollars on people other than those most in need of the help,” i.e., students from poorer families. Whatever the merits of this argument, CFCT’s polling shows focusing free college tuition only on middle class and lower income families and not wealthier ones is not a popular idea — particularly with Republicans and Independents.

Highest support for Universal Free College Tuition



QUESTION: Many states are now considering programs to provide residents free public college tuition. States are also considering several financial requirements. Which of the following comes closest to your opinion of the financial requirements of a free public tuition program in your state?

SOURCE: Penn Schoen Berland - Q Tuition

Policymakers should anticipate that eligibility requirements will occupy a great deal of the political debate over the program and be prepared to provide an estimate of the fiscal impact of each requirement on overall costs.

Extending Your Promise Program to Adults

Policymakers will encounter an entirely different set of policy issues when they turn to the question of whether or not to make college tuition free for adults who want to finish or even start their post-secondary education. Tennessee addressed this challenge by creating an entirely separate tuition free college program called Tennessee Reconnect. Mike Krause, who was the point person for designing Tennessee’s adult promise program, underlined how [different the challenges](#) facing such learners are from those of a recent high school graduate in an interview with EdNC.org:

“When an adult has made the decision to crossover and go to college, if we can just get them through the first week, their retention rates are through the roof. Adult learners succeed, once they’ve made the decision to cross the Rubicon, at much higher rates than traditional students, in my experience, but there’s a really risky week to a month to first semester in there that we’ve got to be sensitive to.”

Krause found his own experience in returning to college after military service helped give him insights on how to build a successful program for adult learners. He found that the campus structures that were built for 18-year-olds don’t work for adult learners. They are built for somebody that is always going to take four to five courses, and that’s just not realistic for some adults. His campus’s counseling center, for example, was closed at 4:30, just when people in the workforce began to have time to visit them.

Based on that experience, his office made sure that support services were available after hours and on weekends. They required that their colleges recognized prior work experience by giving the returning student credits toward their degree based on what they had already learned by doing the work. And they encouraged each campus to hire or train faculty that understood how to teach adult learners.

Despite the differences between each campus’s capability to assure the success of those in the workforce returning to college, when Governor Haslam made it clear to the entire state that any adult could go to college tuition free the message resonated with its target audience. Tens of thousands of adults went back to college tuition free and then returned to the workforce with a fundamentally different earning capacity.

Combined with the success of their path breaking Tennessee Promise, Tennessee Reconnect’s success has enabled the state to increase its [college attainment rate](#) from 32% in 2013 to a projected 46.8% in 2025 according to the Lumina Foundation.

Based on Tennessee’s success, Michigan’s Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer created the Michigan Reconnect program in 2020 with the support of Republican legislators who had a majority in both houses of the state legislature, despite being a major initiative committing the state to tens of millions of dollars in current and future expenditures. 70,000 adults applied for tuition-free community college in four months under the program which offers free community college tuition to any one 25 or older without a college degree.

The organized business community was the key to the program’s enactment. It started with business and industry groups, including the state Chamber of Commerce, communicating to both candidates for Governor in 2018 that lack of skilled workers had become the biggest obstacle to business growth in Michigan. So when she introduced her Michigan Reconnect proposal she had her staff look for Republicans to be the chief sponsors of the proposal in both houses; and she asked the business

community to formally support this initiative to increase the number of available skilled workers. With business on board, labor and education groups that supported new opportunities for adults to acquire more skills came out publicly for Reconnect—which they did at a high-visibility press conference with business leaders, the Governor, and Republican bill sponsors in the spring of 2019. Even though the pandemic put a temporary hold on funding the program, the bipartisan coalition held together and supported full funding of the program as soon as the state received its share of the American Rescue Plan funding from the federal government.

Michigan went even further, expanding its program for free college tuition for adults by enacting a program Governor Whitmer called “Futures for Frontliners.” The last dollar scholarship program, initially funded by Governor’s Education Emergency Relief (GEER) Funds from the 2020 CARES Act, offered tuition-free community college or a technical certificate to essential workers working in the second quarter of 2020 who did not have a college degree.

Motivated by the same issue of the pandemic’s impact on employment, other states, such as Delaware, Maryland, and New Mexico, have chosen to expand their existing Promise program originally designed for high school graduates, to the entire state population, usually by simply eliminating any age or being a recent high school graduate requirements from their eligibility requirements. It’s a welcome development but it does not obviate the need to provide the necessary support services to adult students.

STEP 3. Once you have decided the scope of your tuition free college program (high school graduates and/or adults), and how much it will cost, it’s important to turn your attention to making the program as effective as possible in achieving your goal and delivering its expected return on the state’s investment.

Obviously, each state will need to determine how many support services and success strategies it wants to implement and can afford. We strongly recommend that at a minimum your tuition free college program legislation address the issues of college readiness and preparation, mentoring, and counseling at both the high school and college level, as well as some form of performance-based incentives for those schools that will be gaining the benefit of free tuition under the state’s program. Coupled with effective marketing strategies to ensure students and families know the benefits a free college tuition program offers, these additional strategies will help ensure the program enjoys the success it will need to ensure its long-term popularity.

A Promise is More than Money

EARLY OUTREACH

So students and parents, especially lower income families, can understand that cost will not be an obstacle to college attendance.

MENTORSHIP

Including outreach to high school students that continues through completion.

MEANINGFUL REMEDIATION

States and/or school districts offer meaningful educational remediation for students not college ready.

HOLD SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE

Create higher but reasonable expectation of schools themselves, including high schools and community colleges.

Once an agreement has been reached on eligibility requirements and support services, it is time to compare the estimated costs of that proposed policy design with available revenue. Developing a free college tuition program that is fiscally responsible and effective is inevitably an iterative process, requiring several attempts to bring funding into balance with estimated costs. To help with those discussions, here is an example of a summary of the type of policy choices a state thinking about implementing a middle dollar Promise program went through before settling on their ultimate tuition free college policy program:

Promise Program Policy Options

DESIGN PRINCIPLE	DESIGN PARAMETER	RATIONALE
Academic	No requirement such as GPA or SAT score other than acceptance into applicable university/college	Current scope includes those first entering higher education. Not adult, GED or continuing education
Eligibility	All seniors graduating from a public high school enrolling in college within one year of graduation	Must enroll immediately or within one year of graduation
FAFSA	Yes	Determines Middle Dollar award based on funding gap. Is an “equal” approach, not “equity”
Applicability (Institutions)	Applies to degree-seeking programs at state universities and community colleges	Application of state dollars must be at public institutions
Applicability (Degree Application)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funds can be applied for up to three years or until the attainment of an Associates degree, whichever comes first; OR Funds can be applied for up to six years or until the attainment of a Bachelors degree, whichever comes first. Time spent away in an active military role or federally-recognized service organization does not count against eligibility period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion-focus results in applicability period of 150% of traditional degree time, thus controlling for remediation and other personal and educational delays Monetary cap is not explicit. Implied cap at max tuition and fees for time allotted
Need Based	No	Need-based funding is addressed through FAFSA and institutional based aid opportunities
Total Costs v. Tuition and Fees Only	Tuition and Fees only (not room and board, books, transportation, etc.)	Limits exposure and cost
Last Dollar/First Dollar/Middle Dollar	Middle Dollar	Reduces cost. In comparison to First Dollar models, and distributes funds based on award gap need. Gives students and their families some “skin in the game”
Residency	Must be continuous attendance K-12 100% scholarship money 5-12 85% scholarship 6-12 80% scholarship 7-12 65% scholarship 10-12 50% scholarship 12 only not eligible	Promotes increased enrollment in public schools, with most benefits for K12 enrollees
College student performance requirements	Maintain in good academic standing as defined by the university. Usually mandates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a 2.0 GPA Maintain full-time status (12 semester hours minimum course load per semester or the equivalent) 	These align with standards of university or college for students to retain “good standing” status
Support Services	Must be included. Options include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary — <i>Examples:</i> Math skills program in high school (TN); Future centers for college advisor, college application and FAFSA supports (CO); SAT/ACT and college preparatory courses (AR); Say Yes to Education (NY); SAILS (TN) Post-Secondary — <i>Examples:</i> Dedicated academic supports on every partner campus (CO); Student success centers for mentoring and advising (NY); Bright Prospects (CA); ASAP CUNY 	Based on lessons from other programs, supports should be built in on the front end to support student success and program requirements. TN saved \$5M by moving remedial education to high school in math alone. Estimated costs are around 2.3M/yr with a focus on high school remediation and application support programs

For answers to further questions you may have about the process of designing a program for free college tuition in your state, please contact the Campaign for Free College Tuition and be sure to review all the resources included in this book.

CONTACT US

About the Campaign for Free College Tuition

The Campaign for Free College Tuition (CFCT) is a bipartisan, inter-generational coalition of individuals and groups who believe today's economy requires the country to make higher education affordable for everyone if we are going to have a workforce with the skills needed for us to compete in the global marketplace. Established as a 501(c)(3) non-profit in 2014, CFCT has been at the forefront of the free college tuition movement since its inception.

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