

# What is a promise scholarship?

Promise scholarships are defined as institutional or place-based initiatives that address the challenge of higher education affordability by offering funding for students who live in the program's geographic area.

## What makes promise scholarships different?

These programs usually involve a partnership between a municipality and local philanthropists and/or businesses who agree to fund in-state public college tuition for local public high school graduates. Promise scholarships are unique in that they emphasize early awareness, ensuring students understand how the scholarship program works and what they are eligible to receive long before they apply to college.

## What does research tell us about promise scholarships?

"Yes, you can go to college!" The clear and direct statement delivered by promise scholarships not only sends a strong message to students, it's backed by research. Making eligibility criteria and program benefits easy to understand, incentivizing increased academic preparation in high school and targeting aid to underserved students who would benefit the most from such programs have each been identified as best practices in financial aid design by researchers.

## How many promise programs are currently in existence?

According to the College Promise Campaign, more than 190 promise programs have been launched in 40 states.

## What are some examples of promise scholarships?

**Kalamazoo Promise:** Widely recognized as the nation's first promise scholarship program, The Kalamazoo promise began in 2005 and guarantees four years of tuition and fees at public in-state colleges or universities to Kalamazoo Public High School graduates.

**Florida State College at Jacksonville "FSCJ Promise":** Beginning in the fall of 2017, public high school graduates in Nassau and Duval counties will be able to receive a free community college education at FSCJ and covers tuition, fees, and books for students who have graduated from high school within the past 3 years, who are first-time college students, and who qualify for a federal Pell Grant.

**Long Beach College Promise:** One of the most established promise programs to date, this program enables all eligible high school graduates from Long Beach Unified School District to receive one free year of college tuition at Long Beach Community College and guaranteed admission to California State University, Long Beach upon completion of minimum community college transfer requirements or college preparatory requirements.

## Where to learn more about promise scholarships

Perrault, Paul and Michelle Boehm. *Beyond Scholarships: An Exploration of How Philanthropic Organizations and Communities are Partnering with Colleges and Universities to Design Innovative Programs to Serve Underserved Students*. Helios Foundation, December 2017.

Dannenberg, Michael and Konrad Mugglestone. *Making Promises: Designing College Promise Plans Worth Keeping*. Education Reform Now, November 2017.