



"Forty percent of our college students choose community college. Some are young and starting out. Some are older and looking for a better job. Some are veterans and single parents trying to transition back into the job market. Whoever you are, this plan is your chance to graduate ready for the new economy, without a load of debt."

President Barack Obama, 2015 State of the Union

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The College Promise Campaign (CPC or Campaign) was born to build widespread support for universal community college programs throughout the nation to ensure that our students have the tools and services they need to succeed. Actively supporting the Campaign and promoting the notion of universal community college allows you to engage in the national dialog about the importance of community colleges to the future of the country.

AACC and ACCT are proud to serve on the national advisory board and support the College Promise Campaign (CPC). CPC is run by Civic Nation and led by Martha J. Kanter, Ph.D., former United States Undersecretary of Education and community college administrator. The Campaign will be chaired by Dr. Jill Biden and former Wyoming Governor Jim Geringer will serve as Vice Chair. CPC will be run by a national advisory board of leaders from business, philanthropy, higher education, student, labor, and non-profit communities.

This toolkit is designed to help you participate in the College Promise Campaign.

How to Contribute to the College Promise Campaign Conversation

1. Know the facts. See the attached talking points that explain the proposal design, goals, and points of discussion.
2. Understand the relevant local, state, and federal “Promise” legislation and their ramifications for America’s students and families.
3. Adopt and disseminate a public resolution in support of the College Promise Campaign *and/or* for increased public and private support for our nation’s community colleges.
4. Reach out to the public—news outlets, your community, businesses, nonprofits, foundations, colleagues, and students—with a news release that explains the proposal and why it must be discussed now.
5. Engage with social media. Engage in the conversation about the College Promise Campaign via college and personal accounts. Don’t be shy about reaching out to legislators, journalists, business leaders, and other influencers—and encourage your campus community to do the same. Sample tweets for Twitter and Facebook posts are included here. Encourage your college’s social media gurus to use all available channels, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, and others. (Please see page 12 for suggested social media posts.)
6. Make sure to engage us in your social media campaign. Please copy ACCT and AACC in your social media by including @comm_college and @cctrustees in your posts.

Talking Points for Public Comment

About the College Promise Campaign

- Making 2 years of college universal for all Americans was initially proposed in a 1947 report to U.S. President Harry S. Truman, (*Higher Education for American Democracy*). In 2014, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam and U.S. President Barack Obama introduced The Tennessee Promise and America’s College Promise respectively, proposals to make 2 years of community college education free to all qualifying students. The College Promise Campaign was inspired by these two initiatives (one state and one federal) which pay for 2 years of community college tuition, but the Campaign is not designed to promote any single approach. In fact, both the state and federal proposals were stimulated by many successful earlier public and private efforts from around the country, for example, the Kalamazoo Promise, the Tulsa Promise, the Long Beach Promise, the Miami-Dade Promise, and many others.
- The Campaign’s effort focuses on amplifying attainment—students completing high school and graduating from college with their certificates and degrees. While starting college is critical, every state and our nation as a whole needs to prioritize the importance of finishing high school and college—seeking input from state, regional, and community stakeholders to incorporate proven methods that work to achieve high school and college graduation.
- The College Promise Campaign seeks to make 2 years of community college debt-free for qualifying first-time students.
- The College Promise Campaign is a national movement that seeks to build upon the variety of Promise initiatives throughout America and to harness the best models to enable states and the federal government to sustain the Promise for the current and future generations of students.

College Promise Campaign Goals

- Make 2 years of college as debt-free and universal as high school
- Enhance student responsibility and cut cost of college for all Americans
- Help build high-quality community colleges
- Improve 2-to-4-year institution transfer processes and outcomes
- Ensure states share responsibility for educating citizens
- Expand technical training for middle-class jobs
- Build on local, state, and national programs that support college access, academic persistence, and completion

Support for the College Promise Campaign

- Diminished state and federal support for community colleges since the Great Recession has challenged our institutions' capacity to make good on the promise of a high-quality, affordable community college education for all eligible students.
- The College Promise Campaign proposal identifies community colleges as worthy of significant local, state, and federal investments while at the same time requiring that participating communities and states increase and sustain support for their local community colleges.
- The proposal would enhance accessibility to higher education for many who think it is out of reach.
- The financial assistance would allow many students to borrow less, and enable them to persist at a faster rate.
- A 2014 study by Economic Modeling Specialists, Intl. (EMSI) revealed that "for every dollar that federal, state, and local taxpayers spent on America's community colleges in 2012, society as a whole will receive a cumulative value of \$25.90 in benefits, for as long as the colleges' 2012 students remain active in the U.S. workforce."

Support for Legislation

Enactment of federal, state, and local proposals to fully fund community college tuition and fees across our nation would also encourage students who otherwise would not enroll in community college, or any college, to aspire to do so. Establishing this program could ultimately make a college education as universally valued as a high school education was 50 years ago.

The resources proposed for the America's College Promise Act of 2015 are proportionate to its potential impact and current federal education expenditures. On average, the program would represent less than 10% of the annual budget of the U.S. Department of Education (ED), which comprises less than 3% of all annual federal expenditures. Making community college education significantly more affordable is an appropriate federal priority, and consistent with the existing federal student aid programs.

Congress should constructively engage in a conversation regarding the America's College Promise proposal, and the role of community colleges in supporting educational attainment as well as access to higher education. Community college students need and deserve further support. The proposal is complex and far-reaching, and many of its details have not been released, but there are a variety of 'promise' models to consider in a bi-partisan effort to keep college within reach for the middle class.

In order for any program of this nature to be effective, legislation should have the following characteristics:

- Financing must be realistic and reliable. The program cannot succeed if its resources are subject to significant fluctuation. Stable federal financing also will be necessary to draw state partners.
- Program eligibility/participation must also be stable. In the absence of this predictability, students and institutions will not be able to adequately plan for their education.
- The proposed America's College Promise Act of 2015 would be "first dollar," reducing tuition and allowing students to use federal student financial aid and other student aid to cover the costs of books, supplies, equipment, transportation, and living expenses. Some other College Promise programs, such as the Tennessee Promise, are not "first dollar," but nevertheless provide additional support to community college students who need it. "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water"; support College Promise programs that support access to higher education through community colleges.
- Clear standards for program eligibility are essential. The legislation should include accurate measurements of community college performance, which currently are lacking in federal law, and ensure that these are also incorporated into the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.
- Some portion of program funds should be made available to community colleges to provide services to help students succeed. This includes academic counseling, advising, mentoring, and essential student support.
- The America's College Promise Act of 2015 requires states to maintain current levels of funding for higher education and student financial aid programs.
- Current standards of satisfactory academic progress should be applied to the program to establish consistency for students, instructors, student affairs professionals, and other program administrators.
- Use all resources available to you. Talk with your federal, state, and local elected officials about the importance of College Promise programs, and encourage them to support the federal America's College Promise Act of 2015, as well as any state-, community-, or institution-specific proposals to make community college tuition universally available.

Sample Resolution

Resolution

Support for Increased Public Investment in Community College

WHEREAS, community colleges are the largest group of higher education institutions in the United States, educating more than 46% of all undergraduate students and more than 5 million additional non-credit students; and

WHEREAS, it is a national priority—in fact a moral, social, and economic imperative—to improve the numbers and percentages of American college graduates; and

WHEREAS, the accumulated contribution of former community college students employed in the U.S. workforce in 2012 contributed \$809 billion in income—5.4% of the Gross Domestic Product—to the national economy; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 60% of job openings will require at least an associate degree or higher by 2020; and

WHEREAS, the average annual internal rate of return for the nation's taxpayers' investments in community colleges is 14.3%; and

WHEREAS, momentum is growing in communities and states to support the principle of the first two years of tuition and debt-free higher education; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Promise, America's College Promise, and related College Promise initiatives underway across our nation recognize that community colleges are integral to America's prosperity, and the need for greater public support to provide millions of graduates for a well-educated workforce each year; and

WHEREAS, the national Association of Community College Trustees strongly supports the College Promise Campaign to foster the national conversation and advance public understanding about the centrality of community colleges to the nation's well-being and the future of our democracy in the 21st century;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that We, the Board of Trustees of Our Community College District, Our State, do hereby formally support the College Promise Campaign, which calls for increased public investment in community colleges at the local, state, and federal level to increase success for America's students and families for generations to come.

Sample Press Release 1

ABC Community College Lauds 'Conversation Starting' America's College Promise 'Free Community College' proposal focuses national spotlight on the true value of community college.

WASHINGTON—Today, the ABC Community College Board of Trustees issued a resolution supporting President Obama's America's College Promise proposal, which proposes to make the first two years of college "as free and universal as high school." In the resolution, the board "formally supports support initiatives such as America's College Promise, which call for increased public investment in community colleges."

"America's College Promise has ignited an unprecedented and, frankly, overdue conversation about the role of community colleges in our nation's education system and workforce," said Jane Doe, the chair of the ABC board of trustees.

The president's proposal guarantees that two years of tuition-free college education would be granted to all qualifying students. Among the qualifications, students must maintain a grade-point average of at least 2.5, be enrolled in a qualifying academic or workforce-training program, and belong to a household earning less than \$200,000 annually. In addition, the program requires that any participating community college must implement promising and evidence-based reforms to support student success, and that states must 'pay to play,' contributing approximately one-fourth of the cost of student tuition and fees.

The estimated federal budget for the program is \$63 billion over 10 years, which some say is too expensive in the wake of the Great Recession. ABC College President John Smith points to evidence showing the real value of community colleges.

"In recent years, our state has reduced funding for the college XX percent," said President Smith. "Granted, the price tag for making two years of college free is a big one, but when we look at it as an investment rather than a payout, the evidence strongly supports the idea."

A 2014 report from Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. stated that "taxpayers fully recover the cost of the original investment [in community colleges] and also receive a return of \$5.80 in addition to every dollar they paid. The average annual internal rate of return for taxpayers is 14.3 percent."

When confronted with the costs, Chair Doe reminds those against the proposal that public K-12 education was for a long time regarded as too expensive, "and where would our country be today without public schools available to every child?" she asks. "And where could we be if every American had access to two more years of education in the same way?"

The ABC Community College Board of Trustees Resolution can be found here [insert link].

Sample Press Release 2

ABC Community College Joins College Promise Campaign *Universal Community College is Key to the Success of the Nation*

Heads Up, XXXXXXX. Thanks to XXXXXX community colleges, millions of Americans—of all ages and backgrounds—are getting a first-rate, affordable education that equips them with the skills to attain a good-paying job, transition to a four-year institution, advance in their current careers, and move into the middle class.

XXXXXX College is proud to join the Heads Up, America! Campaign in support of universal community college for responsible students. President Obama noted in his State of the Union address that community colleges are a vital pathway to the middle class for many Americans. Heads Up, America builds awareness of the importance of obtaining higher education in order to be successful in the 21st-century job market and the success of College Promise programs throughout the nation.

“With the spotlight on community colleges at the federal level, it is critical that we spread the word about how finances create a huge barrier for many students,” said XXXXXXX. “College Promise programs are successful in many states and we believe they will be successful here for students that are willing to earn an education.”

College Promise programs would help the full range of students at communities and the nation. A report by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) found two-year colleges contributed \$809 billion in added income to the U.S. economy in 2012, which is equal to 5.4 percent of the gross domestic product.

“Community colleges offer pathways to economic success – and hope for the future – to lower-income students, first-generation college-goers, minority students, veterans, single parents, and anyone looking to advance their skills,” says XXXXX College President. “College Promise programs will eliminate the financial barriers facing students and allow them to focus on education and not on looming student debt.”

According to a national study, as community college graduates move into higher-paying jobs they will contribute \$285.7 billion in increased tax revenue and will save taxpayers \$19.2 billion in decreased social and safety net services while experiencing better health and lower crime rates. “This is an investment that will pay off for the students, the local economy, and our local businesses,” XXXXX President stated. “It is truly a win-win and we are proud to be a part of it.”

Sample Opinion-Editorial (Published in *Roll Call*, February 4, 2015)

America's Community Colleges:

President Barack Obama reminded us in his State of the Union address, "America thrived in the 20th century because we made high school free, sent a generation of GIs to college, and trained the best workforce in the world. But in a 21st century economy that rewards knowledge like never before, we need to do more." He unveiled a plan for free community college education.

With these words, and Monday's federal budget release, the president is presenting Congress with an unprecedented opportunity to solve many of our nation's greatest challenges — a lack of affordable higher education, stagnant wages, stubborn pockets of poverty and fierce global economic competition. We welcome the debate around potential policy options that is sure to follow the release of the budget, but it's clear now the keys to unlock economic growth through education are now firmly in the hands of Congress. As leaders of the nation's community college campuses, trustees, policy advisers and advocates, we all stand ready to work with one another and with Congress to make this promise a reality.

Our students often come from families and communities on the losing side of the country's expanding economic inequality. Millions are priced out of college, or taking on debt that will drag them down for decades. As mission-driven not-for-profits, we offer the best value in higher education, and we have fought against the odds to keep our tuition and fees low. Our average annual cost to students is \$3,264, compared to \$8,893 for a public four-year college and \$30,090 for a private four-year college. But students still have to pay rent, use transportation, buy books, feed themselves and, often, their children.

Let's remember that the nearly 14 million community college students are red, blue and independents. They are old and young. They are black, white, Latino and Asian — the very mosaic of our society. Our students are diverse, but they are all striving to obtain skills for good jobs, launch a four-year degree, and to achieve economic security for themselves and their families. But their demand is outpacing what we can supply.

This proposal, with the federal dollars to back it, offers the additional support we need to expand our underfunded system. With open doors to all, we are 1,200 colleges strong, in cities, suburbs and rural areas nationwide. Our leaders have worked successfully for decades with both Republican and Democratic administrations, as well as many for-profit institutions. As members of local communities in every state in the nation, community colleges know about collaboration.

By funding community college education, Congress can make one of the most profitable investments in the national economy. The business community is clamoring for a better educated workforce. It is estimated as many as 3 million job openings in the U.S. go unfilled for months on end, as roughly half of employers now say they are having a hard time finding qualified workers to hire, particularly in technical fields. Community colleges provide students

with the necessary training to fill that gap. A recent study found that on an individual level, every \$1 a student invests in his or her community college education yields, on average, a return on investment of \$3.80. But for taxpayers, the ROI per dollar is even better: \$6.80 over the course of students' working lives.

Consider that with the unsustainable escalation of tuition, our nation has amassed \$1 trillion in student loan debt — and many end up defaulting. Every dollar we invest now is one we don't have to pay later— particularly when Americans are without the skills they need, unemployed, or working for such low wages that they are forced to depend on social services. Community college graduates earn 20 percent more than their peers with high school diplomas. We applaud the president's suggestion for sharing the burden — students do their part through maintaining solid grades, and the State and Federal governments use the people's money to create more graduates, well-paid workers and contributing taxpayers.

The 78th U.S. Congress passed the GI Bill, creating the catalyst for the greatest economic expansion in our nation's history and constructing a middle class that the world would envy. The members of the 114th Congress can go down in history having opened the doors of opportunity to the American people. We ask, respectfully, that Congress seize this significant moment to fulfill America's College Promise.

Authors: Walter G. Bumphus is president and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges, the primary advocacy organization for the nation's community colleges. J. Noah Brown is president and CEO of Association of Community College Trustees, a non-profit educational organization representing the trustees who govern community, technical and junior colleges in the U.S. and beyond. Gerardo de los Santos is president and CEO of the League for Innovation in the Community College, an international organization serving community colleges. Evelyn Waiwaiole is director of Center for Community College. Student Engagement, a research and service initiative dedicated to providing important information about effective educational practice in community colleges. Rod Risley is executive director and CEO of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society serving to recognize and encourage the academic achievement of two-year college students. William Trueheart is president and CEO of Achieving the Dream, the national reform network dedicated to helping community college students succeed.

Sample Social Media Postings

Sample Posts

@CCTrustees & other #CommCollege leaders urge Congress to support #CollegeOpportunity for all. #headsupamerica [INCLUDE LINK TO YOUR PRESS RELEASE/RESOLUTION/STORY]

#headsupamerica is a smart investment. Read today's commentary calling Congress to action on

#CommunityCollege. [INCLUDE LINK TO YOUR OP-ED]

With the rising costs of higher education, the need for #CommunityCollege grows. Support #headsupamerica.

Read [INSERT YOUR COLLEGE'S TWITTER HANDLE]'s board of trustees resolution on #headsupamerica [INCLUDE LINK TO YOUR RESOLUTION] #CommunityCollege

A Few Tips

- Remember to use hashtags so that others searching for the topics you're writing about will be able to find your comments. Use #CommunityCollege, #headsupamerica, #CollegeOpportunity #CommunityCollege and #FreeCommunityCollege to be part of the movement on social media. Please note that #headsupamerica is the hashtag used by the College Promise Campaign.
- Locate individuals and organizations you want to influence on Twitter and Facebook, follow them, and make sure you tag them in your messages to get their attention. These can include elected officials and other policymakers, thought and opinion leaders, journalists, and anyone else who needs to hear your message.
- You can tell the White House and Departments of Education and Labor what you think directly through Twitter. Some useful tags include @WhiteHouse @BarackObama @JamesKvaal @DrBiden @USEdGov @ArneDuncan @EdUnderSec @USDOL @LaborSec
- Members of Congress don't follow any specific Twitter handle formula, so look up your representatives via their official websites or by searching Twitter. (Be careful to follow and tag official profiles.)
- Include infographics, photos, and other attention-getting attachments when possible (but only when relevant to your communications).
- Tag us @Comm_College and @CCTrustees so we don't miss your messages! (Feel free to send us questions via Twitter, too.)

College Promise Campaign Overview

In the 21st century, a high school diploma is no longer enough to lead Americans to a good job and decent quality of life. The College Promise Campaign (CPC or the Campaign) is a national, nonpartisan, local, and state-led higher education initiative—beginning in America’s community colleges. The Campaign will build widespread support for a free community college education for all responsible students and broad public understanding that a free community college education is an investment in America’s future and a necessary continuation of K-12 education.

The College Promise Campaign was inspired by Governor Haslam’s Tennessee Promise proposal and President Obama’s America’s College Promise plan, but the Campaign is not designed to promote any single approach. It will focus on building a movement around the broader vision of making the first 2 years of higher education free for all students who enter community college, work hard, and earn their certificates and degrees.

To accomplish these broad goals, the Campaign will launch a national public awareness campaign that promotes access and emphasizes community college completion by encouraging community, regional, and state stakeholders to incorporate proven methods that work. The Campaign will leverage the results of evidence-based research to support investing in the College Promise as it implements its outreach, field-building, communications, and publication plans.

Over a 3-year period, the Campaign will promote public policy development at the local and state levels to increase College Promise programs benefitting community college students; implement a national communications and digital media plan to educate students, families and policy leaders; engage in field-building in 11 states to galvanize local and state leaders to take action on these goals; build the campaign to add 20 additional states in the second phase of the Campaign, and showcase College Promise models and strategies to increase college access and completion. Success will be measured by the effectiveness of the Campaign on student, institutional and state indicators that track College Promise support and adoption locally and statewide.

The College Promise Campaign is located within Civic Nation, a non-profit, non-partisan 501(c)(3) organization focused on implementing sensible solutions to America’s most pressing issues.

FAQs

The following frequently asked questions are provided by Civic Nation. Please visit civic.nation.org for more information.

What is the College Promise Campaign?

In the 21st century, a high school diploma is no longer enough to lead Americans to a good job and decent quality of life. The College Promise Campaign (CPC or the Campaign) is a national, nonpartisan, local and state-led higher education initiative—beginning in America’s community colleges. The Campaign will build widespread support for a free community college education for all responsible students and broad public understanding that a free community college education is an investment in America’s future and a necessary continuation of K-12 education.

What is Civic Nation and why is the College Promise Campaign being spearheaded by this organization?

Civic Nation is a charitable and educational 501(c)(3) organization. Founded in 2015, Civic Nation is organized to promote sensible policies to challenges in the areas of federal, state, and local policy. Civic Nation educates the public about such policies, about public policy issues arising in these areas, and for related purposes. Further, Civic Nation is the legal entity that houses and supports the infrastructure for the College Promise Campaign. No federal or state lobbying is conducted by Civic Nation on behalf of the College Promise Campaign.

Is the College Promise Campaign a federal or state-led effort?

The Campaign is a local and state-led initiative, inspired by Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam’s (R) Tennessee Promise program, President Obama’s (D) America’s College Promise proposal, the more than 59 local College Promise programs spread across the country (e.g., Kalamazoo, Miami, Chicago, Long Beach, Tulsa, etc.), and the America’s College Promise Act of 2015 introduced by Senator Baldwin (D-WI) and Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA).

The Campaign is not designed to promote any single approach, but seeks to build a movement around the broader vision of tuition and debt-free college education for the first 2 years, greater state and federal investment in higher education, and the imperative to increase student access and success in higher education. The Campaign assists states, cities, towns, and colleges that want to implement a tuition-and debt-free college education for responsible students by sharing financing strategies, best practices, and complementary efforts to help students succeed, such as mentoring and counseling, reforming developmental education, community service, and other proven strategies.

In short, the Campaign collaborates with federal, state, and local leaders across the sectors of education, business, government, philanthropy, students, labor, and non-profits to develop and foster College Promise programs.

What if no federal legislation is passed by the United States Congress to support College Promise?

In July 2015 the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives introduced the America's College Promise Act of 2015. This legislation is currently being considered by Congress and most likely will be the subject of great debate and undergo extensive rewrites, as is typical of most legislative proposals. Amendments and/or new bills could be introduced in future sessions of Congress. This is one reason that the Campaign's goal may be accomplished years down the road.

The College Promise Campaign encourages states and communities to introduce their own College Promise legislation. States and communities have the unique opportunity to identify the ways and means to implement College Promise legislation tailored to their particular needs. The Campaign endorses and assists in the development of College Promise proposals at federal, state, and local levels.

Can states implement the College Promise Campaign without federal support?

Yes. A successful example of a fully state-supported version of College Promise is the Tennessee Promise program. Similarly, states like Oregon, Minnesota, Wyoming, and Oklahoma implemented or are currently initiating College Promise programs. While federal support would significantly bolster any College Promise campaign, states and communities can move ahead without federal support. The College Promise Campaign will study models of promising programs for replication and scaling. The College Promise Campaign welcomes and encourages direct collaboration with states and local communities to initiate tailored College Promise campaigns and specific programs, and to educate policymakers and the public alike on the tremendous value inherent in supporting the College Promise.

What does "truly bi-partisan" mean in the context of this campaign?

The College Promise Campaign is non-partisan, meaning that it has no affiliation with or investment in any political party. The Campaign is focused on supporting College Promise programs led by elected and appointed officials from any and all parties. Because the American political landscape is dominated by the Democratic and Republican parties, the term "bi-partisan" is used to denote collaboration—often referred to as "working across the aisle"—on projects that are valued and prioritized by both of the major political parties. The Campaign also welcomes collaboration with elected officials from other political parties like the Tea Party. Universally accessible education at all levels is an American value that is not divided by party lines, and the College Promise Campaign exists in the same spirit. The Campaign is led by a national advisory board and bi-partisan Honorary Chairs, Second Lady of the United States Dr. Jill Biden, arguably community colleges' greatest advocate, and Governor Jim Geringer, who initiated a College Promise for the state of Wyoming and earned a distinguished career while serving two terms as Wyoming's governor.

Could the College Promise become another unfunded mandate?

The College Promise Campaign is building on a national vision to provide a free community college education for students willing to work hard and complete their certificates and degrees. The Campaign promotes strategies for communities and states to adopt sustainable budget and allocation plans. Experience shows that in difficult economic times, elected officials face unforeseen challenges and unintended consequences, but at the same time, they continue to support policies that have successful outcomes. The Campaign is confident that government leaders and taxpayers will benefit economically, socially, and civically from a better educated society and that they will be more favorably inclined to support the College Promise based on positive results for the long-term prosperity of our nation.

Will the College Promise Campaign address education and income inequality?

Community colleges already reduce inequality in education and income by serving more than 40% of all undergraduates in the U.S. at more than 1,100 community colleges throughout the nation. However, in the next 10 years, more than 6 out of 10 jobs will require employees to have more than a high school diploma, while today only 40% of US adults ages 25–64 are adequately prepared for the workforce. The College Promise Campaign's goal is to increase access to higher education through free community college for all responsible students. Because low income students comprise such a large portion of the community college population, the Campaign is designed to increase opportunities for low-income and first-generation students, for whom a college education may seem otherwise unattainable.

How will the College Promise be applied to Tribal Colleges and Minority-Serving Institutions in general?

There are a variety of College Promise programs across the country. The Campaign will identify strategies for communities and states to provide a free community college education for all responsible students, specifically by showcasing details from successful College Promise programs such as the eligibility requirements and evidence-based student outcomes. Where communities and states have already taken leadership to provide a free community college education to their students with or without federal funding, the Campaign will examine their program incentives and funding mechanisms to communicate the details of these models for replication and scaling to other regions, enabling more students to benefit from the College Promise as these models are better understood and adopted.

How and why were the initial host states selected?

A goal of the initial phase of the College Promise Campaign is to impact a manageable number of states serving at least half of community college students. As such, the Campaign identified initial host states on the basis of demographic and geographic diversity, size, and variance in state vs. local governance authority. The specific states that were selected have strong local and state leaders who were receptive to the College Promise concept. The Campaign is by no means limited to these states and ultimately intends to reach every state in the country. We strongly encourage individuals from any and all states and communities to join the Campaign.

Why aren't 4-year colleges included in the College Promise Campaign?

The College Promise Campaign greatly values higher education. At the same time, community and technical colleges are institutions that fill a unique role within American higher education, and serve nearly half of the nation's undergraduates. The Campaign emphasizes that College Promise students are expected to pursue and earn a 2-year college degree, a technical certificate, and/or transfer to a 4-year university bachelor's degree program.

Another important reason the Campaign is focused on 2-year colleges is that these institutions serve a large number of first-generation and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. An expected outcome of College Promise programs is to offer opportunities to students who otherwise may not receive them. The Campaign sees community colleges as gateway institutions that admit and support students who in many cases have a tremendous number of obstacles preventing them from pursuing or completing higher education, releasing them back into the workforce where they can make a real living wage with their college credentials, and helping those interested in getting on the track to attaining higher levels of education at an affordable cost.

The Campaign underscores that community colleges are the starting point for making the first 2 years of a college education tuition and debt-free. Some College Promise programs have already extended their initiative to 4-year institutions. Communities and states are encouraged to adopt the larger vision if they wish.

In short, the College Promise campaign values and supports all education, but identifies community colleges as gateway institutions for helping the greatest number of first-generation and otherwise disadvantaged students enroll and complete their certificates and degrees.

What are the requirements for students to participate in College Promise Programs where available?

The College Promise Campaign does not support any one College Promise plan. Across states, cities, and communities, College Promise programs have different eligibility criteria and requirements for students, with respect to maintaining a minimum grade-point average, level of earned income that qualifies students from receiving College Promise financial support, qualifying academic or technical programs, and other criteria unique to a particular community, state or institution. In most College Promise programs, students must be enrolled in an approved academic or technical program at an accredited institution of higher education.

What does the College Promise Campaign mean by "debt-free" education?

The vision of the College Promise Campaign is that all students should have the opportunity to complete 2 years of higher education debt free. Specifically, this refers to earning an associate degree, a certification, or transferring to a 4-year baccalaureate program at another institution without having incurred any debt from loans or credit taken out specifically to pay for college tuition, associated fees, basic living expenses, and textbooks.

The term “free community college” has been used colloquially to refer to some College Promise programs. It is important to understand that the goal of these programs is to make 2 years of high-quality higher education universally available to all Americans in the same way that elementary and secondary education are American rights; it’s that simple. We believe that just as every American is expected to earn a high school diploma, every American should have the opportunity to earn a college credential.

What is the difference between first-dollar and last-dollar College Promise programs?

First-dollar and last-dollar programs refer to two distinct methods of distributing funding for College Promise programs.

The term “first-dollar program,” means that College Promise funds are provided to students *first*, or before any other grant or awarded funding. By contrast, the term “last-dollar program” means that students would draw upon any available public funding *before* being awarded College Promise funds. Both models administer funds to eligible students that cover the direct costs of being a student, such as tuition and fees.

In a “first-dollar program”, the amount of College Promise funding awarded to an eligible student does not take into account any additional funding or grants that the student is eligible for, like a federal Pell Grant. Therefore, a “first-dollar” College Promise program covers the direct costs of being a student, and has the potential to reduce the associated costs that come with being a student, such as transportation, childcare, school materials, and other costs.

In a “last-dollar program”, the amount of College Promise funding awarded to an eligible student takes into account any additional public funding or grants the student is eligible for, like a federal Pell Grant. The total amount of “last-dollar” College Promise funding a student receives to cover the direct costs of being a student varies depending on other public funding for which the student is eligible. Unlike “first-dollar programs,” “last-dollar programs” do not have the potential of reducing the associated costs that come with being a student, such as transportation, childcare, school materials, and other costs.

Is the College Promise separate from or related to the federal Pell Grant Program?

College Promise programs are entirely separate from the federal Pell Grant Program; however, as described above, different College Promise program designs can be impacted by Pell Grant support. So although Pell Grant Program funding can supplement or displace College Promise funding, the two programs were developed and are administered separately.

What is the timeline for the College Promise Campaign?

The Campaign is anticipated to run for 3 years. It officially starts on September 9, 2015, and ends on August 31, 2018, though it could run longer depending on the needs of communities and states.

How will progress be tracked and reported?

The Campaign will employ several methods for tracking progress, including:

“State of Free Community College in America” Report—The Campaign will produce a metrics-based report on the state of free community college across the country that analyzes the depth of support for the issue, intended outcomes, and progress toward the Campaign’s goals. This will include an analysis of the following:

- **Current landscape:** the number of students receiving the College Promise.
- **Analysis of stakeholder support:** elected officials, education leaders, business CEOs, etc.
- **Analysis of forward momentum:** communities and state legislatures taking action.
- **Best-practice College Promise models:** access and completion outcomes, evidence from independent researchers.

Campaign Activity Report—Every 6 months, the Campaign will track and measure the success of its ongoing activities, maintaining qualitative and quantitative reports on various metrics (e.g., engaged leaders, roundtables, engaged key constituency, press publications, social media metrics, etc.).

What can I do at the local, state, and federal levels to realize the College Promise for all citizens?

- Talk about the College Promise to everyone you are close to—share your passion and explain why the College Promise matters to students, families and the nation, and encourage them to do the same.
- Meet with, call, and send letters proclaiming your support of the College Promise Campaign to your federal, state, and local elected officials.
- Talk to business leaders and let them know that your community is full of untapped potential because of socioeconomic barriers, and that offering 2 years of college to everyone will flood the workforce with a greater supply of more diverse and better-qualified workers.
- Write letters to your local newspaper editors and news producers about the importance of the College Promise and how keeping it could transform your community by offering educational opportunity to those who otherwise may not be able to access it.

- Sign up at www.HeadsUpAmerica.us to participate in the Campaign's awareness and outreach effort.
- Visit www.CollegePromiseCampaign.org to learn more and stay engaged with the Campaign.
- Follow news and local developments about College Promise campaigns and share the information through social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Follow the Campaign at #Headsupamerica.

Who can I contact for more information?

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Visit www.CollegePromiseCampaign.org and www.HeadsUpAmerica.us to learn more about the College Promise Campaign and for contact information to join the movement!



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