



2022-2023 COLLEGE PROMISE ANNUAL REPORT



COLLEGE PROMISE ANNUAL REPORT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Dianne Van Hook Chancellor, Santa Clarita Community College District and College of the Canyons

College Promise expresses gratitude for our National Advisory Board members for their service to the College Promise movement. Their leadership has been invaluable in growing the number, quality, and inclusivity of promise programs. Through their commitment, the National Advisory Board is instrumental in shaping a brighter future for students across our nation.



We are grateful to these Philanthropies, the College Promise National Advisory Board, and our supporting Family Foundations, and Individuals. Thank you all for your generous investments in our work!

Ascendium Education Group
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College Promise National Advisory Board
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II: LETTER FROM THE CEO & NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to provide you with the eighth College Promise Annual Report to share our milestones, lessons learned from our 450 local and state Promise programs, and emerging priorities, all consonant with our 2022-2024 Strategic Plan. Since its inception in 2015, College Promise has remained steadfast in its commitment to making postsecondary education, including career-technical colleges and apprenticeships, accessible, tuition-free, fees, and wraparound supports, and readily available to all. Over the years, we have spearheaded our work on the expansion and sustainability of Promise programs and widened our scope to address the evolving challenges and opportunities related to student supports, workforce development, and readiness.

In 2023, College Promise celebrated 425 Promise programs located in all 50 states. This milestone measures significant growth since the initiative's inception, when 53 programs were initially identified. The local and state leaders driving these Promise programs have facilitated the provision of scholarships from both the public and private sectors to eliminate tuition and fee costs and have extended their efforts to provide vital support services, including advising, counseling, mentorships, transportation, basic needs, and career exploration. Research suggests these comprehensive measures enhance student access, retention, and success in education, career, and civic mobility.

In the wake of this year's Supreme Court decisions on affirmative action and student loan forgiveness, we find ourselves at a critical juncture in our pursuit of a truly inclusive and equitable society. College Promise is unwavering in our commitment to the ideals of equal opportunity and educational access for all Americans. We support and collaborate with students, Promise programs, local, state, and federal agencies (e.g., town and city councils, counties, state commissions, and federal agencies) to remove educational and financial barriers to student success, recognizing the potential of every American, regardless of their background to build our nation's talent pipeline. Our shared belief is that a nationwide Promise movement is vital to increasing college access and success by eradicating the inequities and barriers that students face.

To further support and facilitate this movement, we are thrilled to announce the appointment of three new College Promise National Advisory Board members: Ms. Kimberly Ternate Ding, Dr. Dianne Van Hook, and Dr. Michael Nettles. Our new and returning Advisory Board members, drawn from education, business, philanthropy, nonprofit, labor, student, and government leaders, are committed to realizing a universal, freely available, affordable postsecondary education for every American.



As we look to the future, our aspirations include further strengthening existing College Promise programs and support systems, catalyzing the creation of new Promise programs nationwide, identifying high-impact programs and strategies that effectively close achievement gaps and prepare students for sustainable, fulfilling careers and rewarding civic life.

We take immense pride in sharing this annual report with you and express our heartfelt appreciation for your unwavering support as we continue to drive this crucial mission forward.

Sincerely,



Robert C. Ballard
Chair, National Advisory Board



Martha J. Kanter
CEO

III: THE EVOLUTION OF PROMISE

Federal Policy Challenges

As a nonpartisan, national movement, College Promise is dedicated to collaborating with all communities and states, striving for progress despite conflicting priorities and varying political climates. The intricacies of our work often pose significant challenges. At the national level, rulings by the US Supreme Court on affirmative action and student loan forgiveness represent new understandings and policy changes for our nation's students, institutions, communities, and states. College Promise anticipates that these changes will spur new efforts to foster diversity and inclusion in education, work, and civic participation.

Our shared commitment lies in the belief that the key to achieving our nation's goals of college access and attainment while concurrently eliminating the deeply rooted inequities and achievement gaps is to catalyze a nationwide movement. The College Promise movement champions making college as universally accessible and affordable as high school has been for more than a century in the United States.

College Promise will build on lessons learned this year to deepen and expand our work with students, Promise programs, communities, and states to increase opportunities and eliminate barriers. To date, our Annual Report describes our accomplishments and work ahead in the following areas:

- **Connecting youth and adults to College Promise programs:** We have developed the interactive MyPromise tool, a gateway to programs that include and extend beyond scholarships to mitigate tuition, fees, and other college costs for our nation's students. Today, many Promise programs provide comprehensive wraparound supports, giving students the critical resources and guidance to thrive academically and personally in postsecondary institutions (e.g., community colleges, four-year colleges, universities, and career-technical schools, and apprenticeships).

Federal Policy Challenges



- **Enhancing Promise program quality and quantity:** We steadfastly expanded the awareness and availability of high-quality Promise programs by advocating for simple and inclusive eligibility requirements, promoting resources and examples to improve fiscal sustainability, and bolstering supports and services for all student populations. By showcasing diverse, evidence-based Promise pathways for all students, especially focusing on under-resourced communities with significant underrepresented populations (i.e., Black, Latinx and Hispanic, Indigenous, Asian American, Native American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, first-generation, veterans, foster-youth and adults, displaced workers, and those with little or no education beyond high school, and displaced workers), we foster economic, social, and civic mobility and reduce unemployment, ultimately creating a more inclusive society.
- **Promoting evidence-based approaches and research:** At College Promise, we actively seek out and champion high-quality evidence, design, and educational information to inform policies that promote tuition-free and student supports leading to achievable and equitable outcomes. We prioritize deep research on historically underrepresented student populations, recognizing the urgent need to address systemic inequities and promote inclusive practices across all educational institutions.
- **Advance local, county, statewide, and national Promise expansion:** College Promise expansion has taken place across the United States with bipartisan local and state support. We continue to provide technical assistance with the goal of achieving a federal/state partnership for College Promise that increases the educational and career outcomes for all learners.

The MyPromise Tool

In a milestone achievement, College Promise unveiled the [MyPromise Tool](#) in 2022. This groundbreaking platform, meticulously developed over several years, serves as the inaugural student-centric, comprehensive, and easily searchable database of nationwide Promise programs. Through its ambitious efforts this year, a dedicated team of data analysts and organizers now provides students, families, and stakeholders with a convenient hub to locate, research, and compare potential Promise programs. By placing this invaluable data directly in the hands of students, families, counselors, and community organizations involved in guiding learners, we are equipping all parties with unprecedented access to centralized Promise program information.

The MyPromise Tool



The MyPromise Tool comprises an interactive map, advanced search functionalities, and comprehensive program descriptions, allowing users to gain insights into the College Promise programs available to them. The MyPromise Tool includes funding levels, eligibility requirements, and supplementary support services available to program beneficiaries. Users can perform searches based on parameters such as state, program name, educational institution, or geographic location, allowing them to identify programs based on these parameters. Furthermore, a comparison tool enables students to evaluate multiple programs concurrently to identify the most suitable option for their individual needs.

The development of the MyPromise Tool has allowed College Promise and its research network to specify particular benefits for particular college-seekers. College Promise has identified ten populations of students who will benefit from the MyPromise Tool and its supports: traditional students, student veterans, students with disabilities, justice-impacted students, adult students, student parents, first-generation students, undocumented students, students needing academic support, and students in or aged-out of foster care.

The MyPromise Tool also benefits the colleges and Promise Programs that use the tool in their commitment to increasing sustainability and impact for prospective college-goers. Planning began in 2023 for College Promise to develop a MyPromise Tool feature that will allow program leaders to directly upload and update their information in the MyPromise Tool. By allowing Promise leaders to directly access and update program descriptions, the platform will continue to ensure that students receive the most accurate and insightful data to identify the program that will best support their educational journey. College Promise spent the last quarter of 2023 finalizing the plan to update the current database for easier use and comparisons and then cleaning the data to match this plan.

Another key aspect of College Promise's plan to improve the MyPromise tool is the development of the Value Impact Tool. Informed by feedback from Promise leaders, the tool will assess the current impact and effectiveness of individual Promise Programs, enable easier Program-to-Program comparisons, and encourage continuous improvement. College Promise will also develop guidance and tools that students and Promise Programs can use to evaluate the comprehensiveness of program offerings. We anticipate the launch of the new MyPromise Tool in the first quarter of 2024.

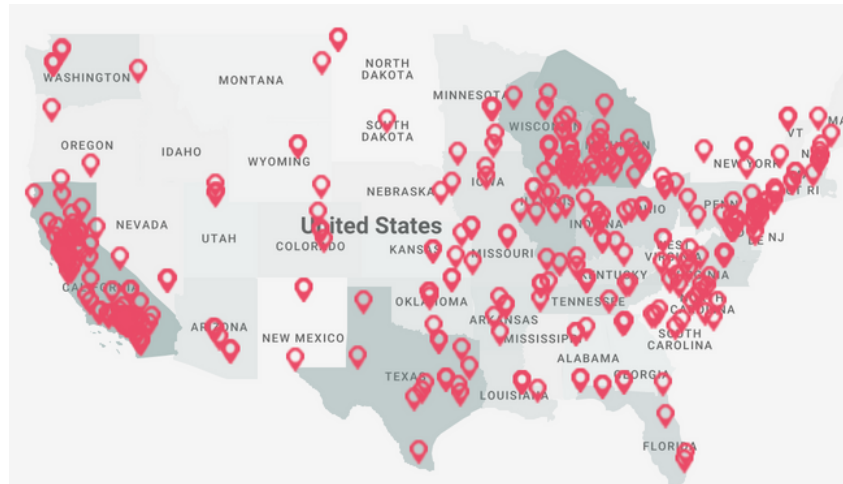
Growth of State Promise Programs



Growth of State Promise Programs

Following the launch of the MyPromise Tool, College Promise received a significant increase in interest from programs seeking inclusion in the tool. Additionally, numerous institutions and communities looking to create programs contacted College Promise.

In July, 2023, we announced 425 College Promise programs across all 50 states.



Thirty-three states have enacted legislation or implemented executive orders to establish comprehensive Promise programs. This diverse array of institutions provides students with information regarding options for pursuing and completing their post-secondary education, ultimately enhancing their economic, social, and civic mobility. For example, in Arkansas, high school students across the state will now have an opportunity to go to college even if their parents cannot support them financially. A new scholarship program called “A-State Promise Plus” will provide free tuition to Arkansas State University for most Arkansas families.

Significantly, leveraging the success of a \$140 million investment, Michigan has extended its impact by broadening access to free community college education for hundreds of thousands of students through the expansion of the Michigan Reconnect program.

In a parallel initiative, millions of Massachusetts residents now have access to tuition-free community college education. State residents aged 25 and older — and without a prior postsecondary degree — can work toward an associate's degree or certificate program, and the state will cover costs from tuition and fees to books and supplies.

CoPro 2.0

IV: Building a National College Promise Community

CoPro2.0

The Kresge Foundation's Education Program announced a suite of grants totaling more than \$2.5 million, dedicated to helping shape "free college" across the United States. The CoPro2.0 initiative, short for College Promise 2.0, funded 11 grantees focused on research, programming, and scaling the next generation of equitable, financially sustainable community College Promise programs, or "free college." Kresge Foundation selected College Promise to serve as the initiative's managing partner.

The CoPro2.0 grantee cohort met on May 22, 2023, at Foothill College in California for an annual convening. This event, organized by The Kresge Foundation, UBUNTU Research & Evaluation, and College Promise, brought together a diverse group of participants to shape the future of the College Promise movement.



In August 2023, College Promise released a [policy brief](#) reflecting on the event and highlighting how The Kresge Foundation grantees are working to advance equity, improve postsecondary outcomes, ameliorate capacity, and ensure long-term sustainability.

CP-CSA Peer Learning Community





Community and statewide college savings initiatives, frequently referred to as Children's Savings Accounts (CSAs), Child Development Accounts (CDAs), 529s, or Baby Bonds, offer families a clear entry point into the financial system by participating in savings accounts, matching family contributions with initial deposits and financial incentives from local and statewide savings programs. While many of these accounts start small, their existence can ignite essential family conversations about finances, savings, and incentive strategies to build aspirations for K-12 school achievement, college planning, and career goals, especially for families from low-income communities. College Promise convened a CP-CSA Peer Learning Community to support the Integration of this long-term savings strategy with Promise programs to maximize postsecondary resources for students in participating families.

Over the past two years, with the continued support of The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, College Promise has worked thoughtfully and collaboratively with its partners, Prosperity Now, the National League of Cities, and the Promise-CSA Peer Learning Community to build momentum and drive greater alignment and integration of CSAs with Promise programs. College Promise has also joined with CSA partners to craft policy proposals to inform legislators to design and promote federal legislation.

On August 17, 2023, College Promise hosted the webinar: "Integrating Statewide College Promise Programs and Children's Savings Accounts" to review Building Assets & Aspirations: A Playbook for Integrating Statewide College Promise (CP) Programs & Children's Savings Accounts (CSAs) and explore the benefits and strategies for aligning College Promise programs and CSAs in the pursuit of postsecondary education. The Playbook highlights pioneering work from Oakland Promise, KC Scholars, Lansing Promise, Illinois Heartland Alliance, Community Foundation of Wabash County, and Providence Promise and shares guidance for other communities and regions interested in this complementary approach.

College Promise Ecosystems



College Promise Ecosystems

All students exist within multiple ecosystems – financial, academic, health-related, social, and workforce-based – that affect how they move through the educational system and into a career. With that understanding, College Promise and Educational Testing Service (ETS) created the multi-year Ecosystems of Support Initiative to understand better the wraparound supports and services that different student populations need to thrive in college.

In 2016, Ecosystems Phase I began with the identification of the first five student populations: Traditional Students (who enter college within a few years of high school graduation); Adult Students (who are age 25 and older); Undocumented Students (who have resided in the U.S. since childhood but do not currently have legal status); Student Veterans (who transitioned out of the military and into their communities); and Justice-Impacted Students (who are either currently incarcerated or have been previously incarcerated). Experts such as local and state College Promise leaders, scholars, researchers, finance experts, and students were recruited and organized into five design teams to illuminate how Promise Programs could support each population more effectively. Several policy briefs (linked above) and a formal publication describe the findings from these collaborations.

This work continued during Ecosystems Phase II, which widened the focus to five additional student populations: First Generation Students (whose parents either do not have any postsecondary education experience or do not have a postsecondary degree; the definition varies by organization and institution); Students In or Aged Out of Foster Care (who are in the foster care system or reached an age in which they no longer receive foster care services); Students with Disabilities (who have physical, mental, or emotional disabilities); Student-Parents (who have dependent children); and Students Needing Academic Support (who are academically unprepared for college-level work).



In July 2023, accompanying the announcement of the 425 Promise Programs was the release of a Student Ecosystem report summarizing five years of partnership and research on College Promise student ecosystem populations. The 10 Populations of College Promise Students and the Ecosystems to Support Them details the needs of targeted support to learners based on their identified demographic.

National Advisory Board Members



National Advisory Board Members

Since its inception, College Promise has galvanized and supported local and state Promise programs to fund tuition and fees for eligible students and provide wraparound supports for their success. Promise programs have expanded from 53 in 2015 to 425 across all 50 states as of January 2023. To further support and facilitate this expansion, in September 2023, College Promise CEO Martha Kanter announced the appointment of three new National Advisory Board members: Ms. Kimberly Ternate Ding, Dr. Dianne Van Hook, and Dr. Michael Nettles.



Ms. Kimberly Ternate Ding



Dr. Dianne Van Hook



Dr. Michael Nettles

The Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement (CLDE) Coalition



In 2022, College Promise, one of five lead partners of the Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement (CLDE) Coalition, received a significant grant from The Endeavor Foundation for the Coalition to make college students' civic learning and democracy engagement inclusive, equitable, high-quality and expected.

College Promise is proud to be a founding and lead partner in the Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement Coalition. Our shared goal is to make it a policy and educator priority to include all postsecondary students in active civic learning for an engaged democracy.

From Fall 2022 to early 2023, the Coalition held a series of five Planning and Action Forums where policy leaders and educators worked together on civic learning for an engaged democracy. The forums included educator-policy dialogues on the role of state systems, community college systems, and accreditors in making college civic learning a policy priority. They also featured new evidence showing both the completion benefits of active civic learning and the deep disparities in who participates.

Third Annual College Promise Careers Institute



V: UNITING TO BUILD THE WORKFORCE OF TODAY AND TOMORROW

Third Annual College Promise Careers Institute



On November 16-17, 2022, with the generous support of our sponsors, College Promise hosted the third-annual College Promise Careers Institute. The 2022 Careers Institute, in person for the first time since the event's inception, focused on the importance of Promise programs in achieving economic mobility. Participants had the opportunity to engage with national leaders, CEOs, government officials, and policymakers committed to post-secondary and career equity and access for all. Attendees explored new ideas and innovations to drive success for their learners through various dynamic panels and candid keynotes.

Day 1 focused on the growth of the College Promise Movement, its advancements, and innovations. In addition to learning about the MyPromise Tool, Phi Theta Kappa's CCSmart Initiative; Lynchburg Beacon of Hope's Student Voices; Ecosystems of Student Support; 2 Generation Promise Program Strategy; and the Washington Student Achievement Council; attendees were fortunate to hear from First Lady of the United States, Dr. Jill Biden. In her remarks, Dr. Biden emphasized that investing in education, particularly in community colleges, is crucial for bolstering the middle class, ensuring the workforce possesses the skills businesses require, and preparing our economy for the future. The College Promise community is grateful for policymakers who understand that these institutions play a significant role in driving prosperity and should be a top priority for investment.

Third Annual College Promise Careers Institute



Day 2 featured diverse and transformational perspectives regarding strategic workforce initiatives, the future of college-to-career talent pipelines, and Promise programs. Attendees heard about North Texas Workforce Alignment and how Education and Economic Mobility can assist in addressing the skills gap in the next generation of workers. Our keynote speaker was Amy Diehl, Ph.D., who shared groundbreaking information from her upcoming book, *Glass Walls: Shattering the Six Gender Bias Barriers Still Holding Women Back at Work*.

Career Acceleration Programs

At the 2022 College Promise Careers Institute, we announced that Promise Pathways (with support from College Promise) would partner with Lynchburg Beacon of Hope (BoH) on a Career Acceleration initiative. Our goal is to align our program efforts to meet local labor market needs and to establish work-based learning opportunities for our target population of historically disadvantaged, low-income, and first-generation non-degreed Americans seeking sustainable careers and rewarding lives.

College Promise believes social inclusion and economic mobility are crucial for creating a fair and equitable society. The scholarships provided by BoH are not just financial scholarships; they are catalysts, propelling recipients into greater opportunity. By alleviating the stress of funding their postsecondary education, students can more fully take advantage of wrap-around support initiatives, such as career exploration, acceleration, and professional development. This dynamic combination will provide a national model to equip students with the targeted and consistent resources, guidance, and empowerment they need to navigate their professional paths effectively, resulting in a more skilled, prepared, and resilient workforce for the future.

The Career Acceleration project has been designed to support 800 learners representing three core demographics: (1) opportunity youth, (2) “pausers”(students who have paused in their career journeys towards upward mobility), and (3) 2-generation heads of household. Our approach centers around bringing comprehensive career pathway opportunities to underserved and underrepresented populations across America. The Lynchburg community, through BoH, serves as an incubator pilot site for this model. The Lynchburg Career Accelerator rests on three core pillars of success: Career Coaching, AI-supported Pathways, and Professional Development.



Career Acceleration Programs



The first pillar is Career Coaching. Our highly-trained, locally-based career coaches provide continuous, personalized guidance, mentorship, and support. By addressing individual needs, aspirations, and challenges, we empower participants to make informed decisions, set achievable goals, and navigate the pathway toward sustainable careers. An example is BoH's 80-hour paid experiential internship program, which served 90 high school students during the summer of 2023. Students participated in 25 hours of soft skills and job readiness training, spent three weeks onsite at a participating employer, and spent another 25 hours in reflection and skill development. Six of the 90 participants were offered long-term employment after completing the summer internship program.

The second pillar, AI-supported Pathways, uses cutting-edge technology to enhance and streamline the career development process. Our use of artificial intelligence and data analytics provides participants with tailored recommendations and insights based on their skills, interests, and local market demands. This technology-driven approach ensures that individuals are equipped with the most relevant information and enables us to identify emerging career trends and adapt our programs accordingly. By leveraging AI, we can optimize the alignment between participants' skills and available opportunities, increasing their chances of success in the job market.

The third pillar, Professional Development, focuses on equipping participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in their chosen careers. We work with partners to offer a range of professional development programs, including internships and apprenticeships, that provide hands-on experience and exposure to real-world work environments. One example of our collaboration is the Women in Machining program, which provided 80 hours of soft skills job training, hard skills experience in machine tooling, and connections to living wage positions for six women this summer.

GO Virginia – an initiative by Virginia's senior business leaders to foster private-sector growth and job creation through state incentives for regional collaboration by business, education, and government – has invested \$500,000 in this project.

In Conclusion

The 8th College Promise Annual Report emphasizes that College Promise is more than just a scholarship program; it represents a holistic approach to addressing equity issues in education and career development. It stresses the importance of expanding the reach of College Promise to benefit multiple generations and communities, not only in terms of post-secondary education but also in terms of successful careers and community well-being. To achieve this, the report advocates for increased investment in innovative tools and leadership to drive equitable outcomes in college, workforce, communities, and civic life.

Publications & Additional Information



PUBLICATIONS

- [MyPromise Tool: 425 Promise Programs Announcement](#)
- [Webinar: Integrating Statewide College Promise Programs and Children's Savings Accounts](#)
- [Building Assets & Aspirations: A Playbook for Integrating College Promise \(CP\) Programs & Children's Savings Accounts \(CSAs\)](#)
- [CoPro2.0 Convening Policy Brief](#)
- [10 Populations of College Promise Students and the Ecosystems to Support Them](#)
- [College Promise Announces New National Advisory Board Members](#)
- [December Forum Sessions on Mobilizing Policy Leadership to Make College Civic Learning a Shared Priority](#)
- [College Promise's Response to the Supreme Court's Rulings Impacting Students](#)

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