

Fact Sheet - America's College Promise Act of 2015

On July 8, 2015 Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA) introduced the America's College Promise Act of 2015. The introduction of this legislation builds upon President Obama's January announcement regarding his plan to provide tuition and fees for qualified community college students. Numerous state and local programs are currently devoted to providing tuition and fees for qualified community college students, including the Tennessee Promise program, the soon-to-be implemented Oregon Promise program.

- The America's College Promise Act creates a federal-state partnership grant awarded to states that agree to waive community college resident tuition and fees for eligible students.
- The program is a first-dollar program, meaning that low-income students would be able to apply Pell Grants and other income-based support to non-tuition expenses to support academic persistence and completion.
- The federal government would fund approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the national-average cost (approximately \$3,800) of community college. States would be responsible for the remaining amount and must also provide a narrative on plans to better align postsecondary education within the state; a description of innovative practices and reforms to be implemented at community colleges; and an explanation on how the state will promote the improved performance of public institutions of higher education through funding reform.
- The bill includes a maintenance of effort provision for state higher education funding, so that states would not be able to reduce current funding provided for higher education.
- Students eligible to receive tuition assistance under this bill must be first-time students enrolled at least half-time at a community college. Students must also maintain satisfactory academic progress as it aligns with requirements under the Pell Grant program.
- Students must be enrolled in an eligible program. Eligible programs are either academic programs with credits that can fully transfer via an articulation agreement toward a baccalaureate degree at any public institution of higher education in the state; or occupational skills training programs that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential in an in-demand industry or occupation.
- Students may receive benefits for up to three calendar years.
- A state with remaining grant funds may use those funds to support expanding the tuition and fees waiver to returning students, expanding the scope and capacity of high quality academic or career training programs at community colleges, or expanding dual enrollment programs.
- The portion of the bill supporting community college students is authorized at approximately \$80 billion over 10 years.
- The bill also establishes a new grant program to provide pathways to success at Minority Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities by helping them cover a significant portion of tuition and fees for the first two years of attendance for low-income students.