

# Tennessee Promise at Community Colleges

## Student Success for the Second Cohort of Promise Students

### SUMMARY

The first wave of Tennessee Promise students arrived in Fall 2015, when 13,287 Promise students enrolled at community colleges. By Fall 2017, after five semesters of eligibility, 21.5% of these students had graduated, compared to 13.8% of students from the pre-Promise 2014 cohort.

Since 2015, three additional cohorts of Promise students have continued to reshape community colleges and succeed at unprecedented rates. By fall 2017, more than 41,000 Promise students had enrolled at community colleges.

The second cohort of Tennessee Promise students enrolled at community colleges in fall 2016. After five semesters of Promise eligibility, more than half of these students had earned a postsecondary credential, transferred, or were still enrolled after five semesters of eligibility, for an overall success rate of 52%. The second cohort of Promise students maintained the high success rates of the first cohort, and 22.9% graduated within five semesters.

This summary explores key findings about the participation and success of Promise students who arrived at community colleges in fall 2016. The number of first-time, full-time students enrolling at community colleges rose significantly in the first year of Promise and has remained high ever since. However, much of the enrollment growth occurred among students with lower ACT scores. Still, Promise students at community colleges are succeeding at unprecedented rates. Additionally, Promise students at TCATs are succeeding at even higher rates.

### PROMISE STUDENTS AT TBR COLLEGES

In its second year, Tennessee Promise participation at TBR colleges grew steadily. In fall 2016, 13,793 new Tennessee Promise students enrolled at community colleges, representing 72% of first-time, full-time students.

**Promise Student Diversity:** In 2016, 50% of new Promise students at community colleges were low-income students, 21% were students from historically underrepresented minority groups, and 4% were from the state’s economically distressed counties. Additionally, among the 2016 new Promise students:

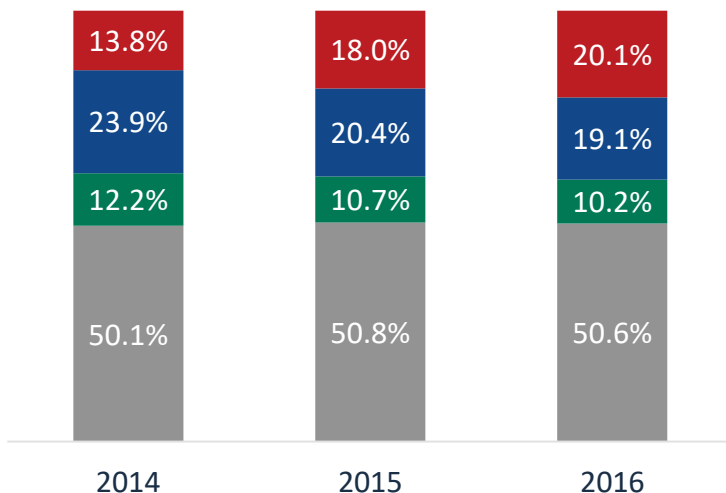
- **57%** were female;
- **77%** were white;
- **13%** were Black or African American;
- **5%** were Hispanic; and
- **39%** were first generation college students.

**Promise Awards:** In 2016, the average scholarship award for new Promise students at community colleges was \$579. However, 46% of Promise students (6,390 students) received \$0 from Promise in their first term. For this group, the Pell grant and other aid covered students’ tuition and fees. Additionally, 28% of Promise students (3,872 students) received small awards between \$500-700. For these students, tuition and fees were mostly by the HOPE scholarship.

**At TCATs:** Each year, more than 2,000 new Tennessee Promise students enroll at the Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs).

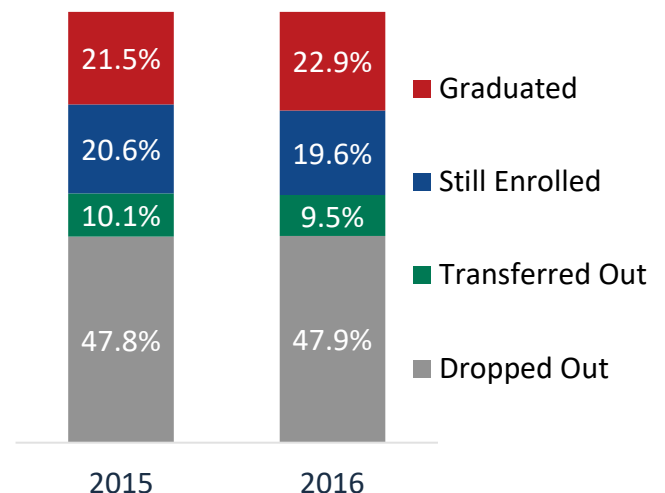
### First-Time Freshmen, Recent High School Grads

49.4% Success Rate for the 2016 cohort



### Tennessee Promise Students

52.1% Success Rate for the 2016 Promise cohort



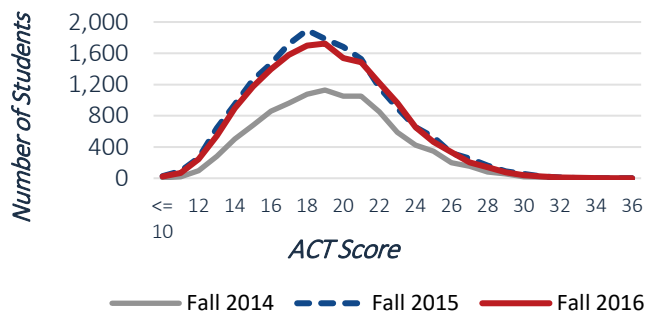
# TENNESSEE PROMISE AT TBR COLLEGES

## 1 Promise encouraged greater full-time and first-time enrollment.

From Fall 2014 to Fall 2015, the number of first-time, full-time student at community colleges grew 46%. In fall 2016 and fall 2017, the number of first-time, full-time students declined slightly but remained well above pre-Promise levels. In fall 2018, over 18,500 first-time, full-time freshmen enrolled at community colleges.

## 2 The highest enrollment growth occurred at the lower end of the ACT score distribution.

In the first year of Tennessee Promise, the average ACT score for recent high school graduates at community colleges changed slightly, from 19.2 in Fall 2014 to 19.0 in Fall 2015. However, the number of these students with ACT scores below 19 grew by 85%. The 2016 and 2017 cohorts saw similar enrollment patterns by students with ACT scores below 19.



## 3 The first two groups of community college Promise students achieved unprecedented success.

At community colleges, the overall success rate for Promise students in the second cohort was 52% after five semesters. This means more than half of the students from the 2016 Promise cohort had earned a degree or certificate, transferred, or remained enrolled after five semesters of Promise eligibility.<sup>1</sup>

In total, 22.9% of Promise students from the second cohort earned a degree or certificate, compared to 21.5% of the first Promise cohort and 13.8% of students from the 2014 pre-Promise cohort. For the second cohort of Promise students, 2,695 students who earned an Associate degree, 276 students who earned a technical certificate, and 186 students who earned both an Associate degree and a certificate.

## 4 The success rates are highest for students who received small Promise awards in their first term.

Three distinct groups of students emerged within the first two Promise cohorts, based on differences in the value of students' Promise awards in their first semester.<sup>2</sup>

### Student Success by Promise Group: 2016 Cohort

Group	Percent of Cohort	Average Promise Award	Average ACT Score	Overall Success Rate	Graduated
A	46%	\$0	18.7	46%	18%
B	28%	\$500 - \$700	21.1	67%	34%
C	16%	\$2,000-\$2,220	17.4	43%	15%

The first group includes students who received a Promise award of \$0 in fall 2016 (Group A). For most of these students, their tuition and fees were covered by other sources of aid, like the federal Pell grant. After five semesters, 18% of these students had graduated.

Success rates were highest for students who received small Promise awards in Fall 2016 (Group B). These students had the highest average ACT score, and most of these students received the state's merit-based HOPE scholarship. After five semesters, more than 34% of these students had earned a degree or certificate, and a total of 67% had graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled.

Success rates were lowest for students who received the largest Promise awards (Group C). Most of these students received neither a Pell grant nor the HOPE scholarship. After five semesters, 15% of these students had graduated, and fewer than half had graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled. Students in this group comprised 16% of the Promise cohort at community colleges but accounted for 59% of Promise dollars awarded to new community college students in fall 2016.

## 5 Promise students at TCATs are succeeding at even higher rates.

In the first three years, over 5,800 Promise students have enrolled in diploma or certificate programs at the 27 TCATs. By the end of fall 2018, more than 3,500 of these students had earned a diploma or certificate, and the graduation rates for the first two cohorts of TCAT Promise students were over 70%.

<sup>1</sup> Based on data from TBR, TSAC, THEC, and the National Student Clearinghouse.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to these three groups, an additional 1,291 Promise students received awards outside of these three groups.