

Research Report



THE COLLEGE PROMISE SERIES

Depicting the Ecosystems of Support and Financial Sustainability for Five College Promise Populations

Catherine Millett, Editor

A joint initiative of College Promise and ETS

ETS POLICY EVALUATION & RESEARCH CENTER



Cover revised on 25 September 2020 after first online publication: The College Promise organization was added.

This Policy Information Report was edited by **Catherine Millett** and written by:

Catherine M. Millett, Martha Kanter, Michael T. Nettles, Stephanie Saunders, Robyn Hiestand, Mary Rauner, Sara Lundquist, Louis Soares, Adam Bush, Hadass Sheffer, Patricia Steele, Nate Johnson, Reuben Ford, Jessica Gibson, Rachel E. Freeman, Robert T. Teranishi, Ryan Cornner, Jennifer Galvez, Efren Lopez, Beth E. Morgan, Rosye Cloud, Sandra Kurtinitis, Barbara Illowsky, Sarah Aldridge, Julie Ajinkya, Sheila Meiman, and Stephen Rose.

ETS Policy Evaluation & Research Center

Mail Stop 19-R

Educational Testing Service

Rosedale Road Princeton, NJ 08541-0001

PERC-WEB@ets.org

Copies can be downloaded from www.ets.org/research/perc

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RESEARCH REPORT

Depicting the Ecosystems of Support and Financial Sustainability for Five College Promise Populations

Catherine M. Millett

Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ

The college promise movement is aimed toward making the attendance and completion of college affordable for eligible Americans in hundreds of local communities and states throughout the United States. Many college promise programs are designed with the intent of enabling students to start and complete college degree and/or postsecondary certificate programs without taking on unmanageable college debt. Two significant issues were examined at the June 2019 symposium *Depicting the Ecosystem of Support and Financial Sustainability for Five College Promise Populations*, sponsored by Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the College Promise Campaign with the generous support of the ECMC Foundation and the Strada Education Network. First, how would college promise programs be enhanced if they were reconceived with a deeper understanding and intent to accommodate the diversity within the postsecondary student population (traditional-aged students, adults, undocumented students, veterans, and justice-involved students)? Second, how could extant and new funding models be aligned to leverage the financial support needed to develop and implement these subpopulation-targeted ecosystem designs? The symposium united the higher education community with scholars, policy makers, student representatives and other stakeholders to develop comprehensive ecosystems of support for these five subpopulations as they make their way to, through and beyond college. Additional aims were (a) to identify the cross-group connections for use and adaptation in local communities and states and (b) to explore the variety, and knitting together, of funding opportunities for program supports.

Keywords College promise programs; postsecondary education; traditional college students; nontraditional students; adult students; veteran's education; formerly incarcerated students; correctional education; undocumented students; college access; college persistence; college completion; financial aid; postsecondary funding; student services

doi:10.1002/ets2.12299

Corresponding author: C. M. Millett (Ed.), E-mail: cmillett@ets.org

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Preface

Catherine M. Millett¹, Martha Kanter², and Michael T. Nettles¹

¹Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ

²College Promise Campaign, Washington, DC

More than ever, the nation will need its people to attain the knowledge and skills that exist beyond a high school education to grow and sustain a prosperous economy for the 21st century. Today, 20 million students in the United States attend either a community college, a 4-year college, or a university, but more than 104 million Americans 18 years old and over have little or no postsecondary education. Furthermore, income and equity gaps are growing wider, college costs have been increasing, and 99% of new jobs since the 2008–2009 recession have required postsecondary credentials of value (Carnevale et al., 2016). The latter trend will only continue, as it was projected that by 2020, 65% of jobs will require more than a high school education; however, at the current rate of degree production, the United States will be 5 million postsecondary educated workers short by that time (Carnevale et al., 2013).

To tackle these challenges head on, college promise programs have been established in more than 300 cities and towns—from Los Angeles, California, to Boston, Massachusetts, and from Houston, Texas, to Kalamazoo, Michigan. Nationwide, governors and their legislatures in 29 states have enacted statewide college promise programs to complement local promise investments with institutional, state, and federal financial aid. They seek to increase postsecondary opportunities and pursue degree and certificate attainment goals that they believe will lead to a better educated citizenry that is well prepared for the workforce through scholarships, college preparatory classes, or other forms of assistance.

In 2016, the College Promise Campaign, together with Educational Testing Service (ETS), spearheaded *Designing Sustainable Funding for College Promise Initiatives*. Five design teams produced financial solutions for helping college promise leaders build robust programs for their regions or states. Today, in 2020, that work continues into its next phase. With the exponential growth of promise programs in the past few years, we wanted to better understand how the diverse needs of students could drive and optimize the varied designs of promise programs and sustain them for the future.

With five new design teams, promise experts from the research, practitioner and finance communities coauthored reports to under the theme, *Ecosystems of Support for Five College Promise Populations*, including (a) traditional-age students (18–24), (b) adult students (25 years and up), (c) undocumented students (DREAMers), (d) student veterans, and (e) justice-impacted students (incarcerated and released individuals). The teams, together with other prominent thought leaders from across the nation, reviewed the new reports to inform our current capacity to promote access to, through, and beyond postsecondary education for each population and to shape an “ecosystem of support” to support the financial resources and sustainability goals for greater student and community success in the 21st century.

The five design teams convened at ETS in Princeton, New Jersey, from June 4–6, 2019 (see Appendix A for the agenda and Appendix B for participants). In the first part of the meeting, the five design teams shared their emerging work with one another along with a group of ecosystem knowledge navigators, experts in their fields, who listened to the presentations and raised questions. Their participation aided in creating clarity for the designs and thinking about the consequences of design choices. Maria Evans, a sketchnote artist, captured the key points of the presentations and discussions, turning abstract concepts into tangible, accessible imagery. Her works are featured throughout the report. In the second part of the meeting, finance knowledge navigators joined the discussion with the design teams and some of the ecosystem knowledge navigators as we pivoted to discuss financial sustainability. Together, we considered the various options for funding and how to align them with the ecosystem models.

We are most grateful to the design team members, promise leaders, and experts who have been generous in giving their time, talent, and effort to collaborate with us on the ecosystem of support and financial sustainability opportunities and challenges ahead. The College Promise Campaign and ETS are committed to building on the outcomes of this work to make a substantial positive difference in the lives of students and in the health and prosperity of our institutions, communities, and states. We believe this work will be of great value in furthering the success of our students today, future generations, and the health and prosperity of the nation.

1. Introduction

Catherine M. Millett¹ and Martha Kanter²

¹Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ

²College Promise Campaign, Washington, DC

Many stakeholders—students and families, colleges and universities, businesses and elected officials—have two interconnected goals: (a) to enable students to attend, persist, and graduate from college and (b) to reduce the burden of their student loan debt. In 2009, to promote global competitiveness, President Barack Obama set the national degree attainment goal for 60% of 25- to 34-year-olds to earn associate or baccalaureate degrees by 2020 (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2009). Simultaneously, concerns about increasing student loan debt and the growing skills gap led private individuals and companies, colleges and universities, municipalities, and states to leverage their opportunities to promote affordable college education through the development of place-based college promise programs, frequently called the free college movement. Many efforts are underway to capture and promote the work to advance these goals (College Promise Campaign, 2018; Millett, 2017); however, researchers caution that the nation may be unlikely to achieve the degree attainment goals and note that widening achievement gaps by race, ethnicity, and income are among the factors presenting equity challenges in higher education (Cahalan et al., 2018; Nettles, 2017).

We are excited by the growth of the college promise movement and the innovative ideas that are emerging in communities and states to address the nation's college affordability, graduation, and workforce challenges and help increase college access for underrepresented populations. In the midst of our excitement, however, we want to pause to examine two important issues. First, considering the success of population segmented interventions (Barenblat, 2018), how would college promise programs be enhanced if their development was supported with deeper understanding of targeted segments of today's postsecondary student population? Second, what can be learned when the higher education community unites with scholars, policy makers, and other cross-sector stakeholders across education and finance to (a) develop a comprehensive ecosystem of support for targeted subpopulations and (b) identify the cross-group connections for use and adaptation in local communities and states?

The June 2019 symposium, *Depicting the Ecosystem of Support and Financial Sustainability for Five College Promise Populations*, featured potential college promise programs that each serve one or more of five specific populations of students, examined their capacity to promote access and success in higher education from an ecological perspective, proposed program adaptations and cooperative solutions that could promote access and success for these populations, and emerged with five tailored ecosystems of support to inform future college promise program development and practice.

The Grand Educational Challenge: All Students Getting to, Through, and Beyond College

Among the educational challenges on which college promise work is predicated is that student success is not measured in a single moment; the challenge is to equip students to have a series of successes, propelled by academic, social, and civic interventions and incentives that culminate in a productive life after they earn a postsecondary credential. We consider these milestones of success in three stages: (a) students getting to college, (b) students getting through college, and (c) students achieving success beyond college (see Figure 1.1).

At each of these stages, the achievements of current and prior cohorts of students provide warning signs of potential obstacles that students may need to surmount, such as having to take out student loans, needing to work while attending class, and needing to take remedial courses (see Figure 1.1). Whether students face said obstacles is often dependent on demographic factors. In the getting to college stage, for example, 67% of recent high school graduates in 2017 who completed high school enrolled in college in the same year (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018a). However, college enrollment rates vary by sex, race/ethnicity, and income level.

In getting through the college stage, only 35% of first-time postsecondary students starting at 2-year institutions during the 2003–2004 academic year (AY) earned a credential (certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's degree) by Spring 2009 (Snyder et al., 2018). Degree attainment rates vary based on sex, age, race/ethnicity, highest level of parent's education, dependency status when first enrolled, dependent student family income in 2002, timing of postsecondary enrollment, intensity of enrollment, remedial courses taken in 2003–2004, work-intensity in 2003–2004, control of first institution, and income quartile in 2003–2004.

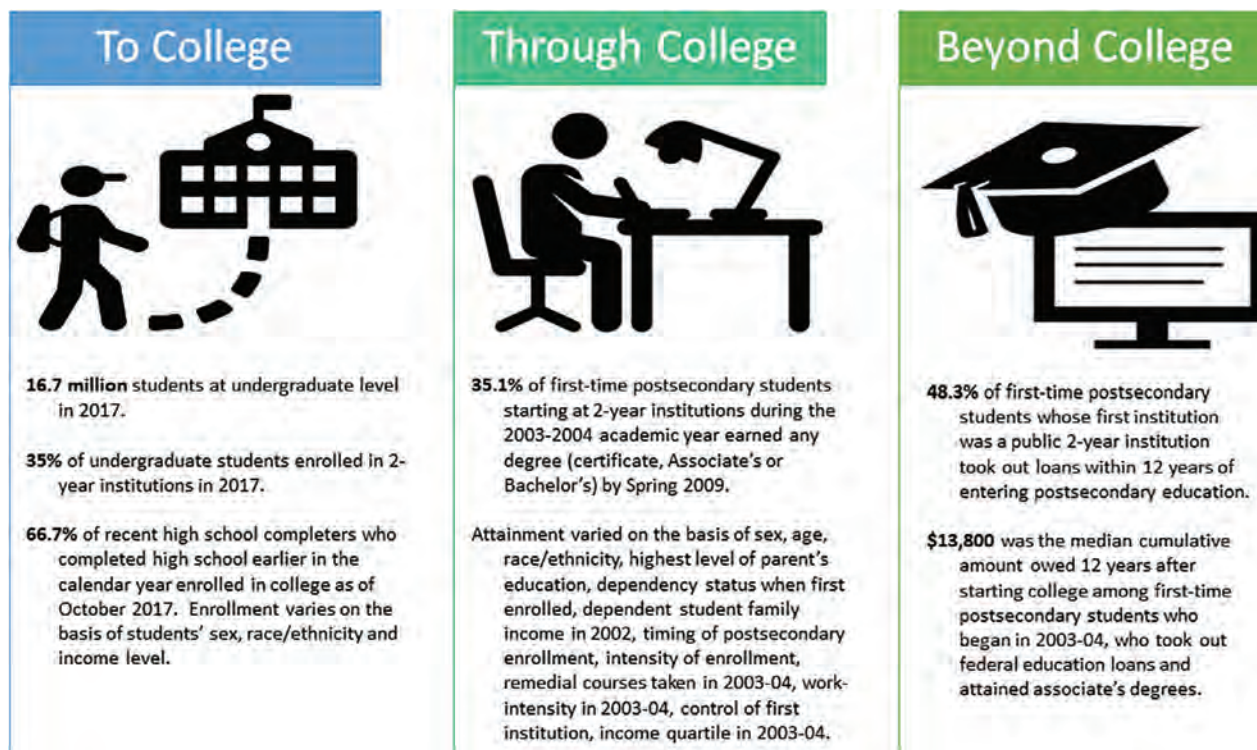


Figure 1.1 All students getting to, through, and beyond college.

In going beyond their college credential stage, 48% of first-time postsecondary students whose first institution was a public 2-year institution took out student loans within 12 years of entering postsecondary education (Woo et al., 2017). The median cumulative amount owed 12 years among first-time postsecondary students who began in 2003–2004 and took out federal education loans varied by level of educational attainment. Those who attained associate degrees owed \$13,800 on average, whereas those who attained a bachelor's degree or more owed \$11,700 on average. Students who borrowed for both their undergraduate and graduate education owed \$48,000 in total on average (Woo et al., 2017).

Developing Ecosystems of Support and Financial Sustainability

We start our work to develop ecosystems of support and financial sustainability on the proposition that one education model will not meet the needs of the 16.7 million students at undergraduate level in 2017 (NCES, 2018b). Only if we are equipped with multiple and tailored ecosystems of support and financial sustainability will we be positioned to enable students to progress to, through, and beyond college. From an ecological perspective, students operate within a network of different environmental and social conditions and fields. To make substantive improvements in educational outcomes, working across fields and through various conditions is a promising strategy (Kania & Kramer, 2011). In recent years, research has found a renewed investment in local, place-based, and cross-sector collaborations as a strategic approach for improving educational outcomes and advancing community development in cities across the United States (Henig et al., 2015). Organizations collaborate to provide services and support for some young people and their families, coordinating their work to align and improve every stage of a young person's life from "cradle to career" (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 36). Cradle-to-career models, like the Promise Neighborhood initiatives inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone, work across systems to coordinate efforts and leverage resources for change. Some of these models, such as Say Yes to Education, Oakland Promise, and Strive Together, include financial support for college as part of their larger system of impact (Osher et al., 2015). These program models serve as exemplars for their ecological approach in bringing communities together to ensure that their children have the opportunity and support that they need to attend college.

The challenges associated with postsecondary degree attainment inequities are complex; solutions focused on these issues must match this complexity. By thinking holistically, we can better understand how systems and their interactions

can be leveraged to support social progress in postsecondary attainment. The growing network of college promise initiatives could benefit from framing its work through an ecological perspective and strategizing across different environmental and social domains.

Key cross-sector domains include education, workforce, social services, health, and finance. Education has several domains, including (a) public and private organizations (i.e., early learning initiatives, the PK–12 school systems, postsecondary institutions, and nonprofit and for-profit education providers); (b) individual skills and experiences in academic and career preparation for acquiring 21st-century knowledge and skills; and (c) related supports, such as student services, administrative supports, and professional development. The workforce aspect includes employment, the job market, state and local workforce development systems, labor organizations, individual and community economic needs, and the business community. The social service aspect addresses the individual needs of residents and organizational needs clustered around food, housing, childcare, and social/emotional supports. The health aspect includes the health care system of public and private providers (e.g., hospitals, clinics, etc.), public health, and the role of education in long-term health. Finally, the finance aspect includes public and private financing mechanisms and stakeholders across businesses, education providers, philanthropies, agencies, and governments.

Our starting point was to identify five distinct populations:

- Traditional-aged students (18–24)
- Adult students (25 years and up)¹
- Undocumented students (DREAMers)
- Student veterans
- Justice-impacted students (incarcerated and released students)

As stated previously, the five ecosystem design teams developed customized ecosystem models of support to better understand the needs of and possible supportive services and approaches available to their respective populations. In their conversations and through collaborative deliberation, the teams considered the practice implications of the design, construction, and operation mechanisms of college promise programs. Each ecosystem team paid attention to population-specific education, workforce, social services, and health needs and services.

This report is a compilation of five ecosystem design papers, bringing together various college promise frameworks and providing ideas for tailored program features to enable success to, through, and beyond college for each of their respective populations of focus. It also introduces strategies for obtaining continuous funding and evaluating the frameworks. The tailored ecosystems are not specific to a geographical location but rather serve as a guide and framework for understanding the coordinated solutions that are possible in optimizing the support network for each of these subgroups.

The overarching aim for colleagues who build upon this work when they develop or refine a college promise program is to consider the student population, so that the college promise program students experience is one that makes them feel they belong and reap personal and professional benefits from their education. The aim is to create an environment where students are visible, valued, and supported for success.

A central design assumption taken by all five design teams is that college promise programs have the capacity, and perhaps obligation, to promote educational equity (Kanter, 2019; Perna, 2016a). Although college promise programs work to transform perceptions about the affordability of college, provide students the opportunity to earn postsecondary credentials without significant debt, and raise the rates of college enrollment and completion, equity must be central to the development of these programs for underserved students to achieve the full benefits of these initiatives (Lepe & Weissman, 2020; Millett et al., 2018; Rauner & Lundquist, 2019). As they applied an ecological lens, each design team made equity, as it is defined by the needs of their respective populations, central to the framework.

Suggested citation

Millett, C. M., & Kanter, M. (2020). Introduction. In C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-20-17, pp. 6–8). Educational Testing Service. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12299>

2. College Facts and Figures

Catherine M. Millett¹, Stephanie Saunders¹, and Robyn Hiestand²

¹Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ

²College Promise Campaign, Washington, DC

College Students Today

US College Students Today Are More Demographically Diverse Than in the Past and Have Varying Needs

According to popular belief, the typical college student is just out of high school, attends a 4-year institution full-time, resides on or near campus, has no children, and has extra money for recreation. The reality is vastly different. Many students are older (41% are over 25), live off campus (87% of first year students live off campus), have children (26% are parents), and/or live at or below the poverty line (42% of independent students; Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2018).

Not all High School Students Attend College Immediately after High School

Only 67% of graduates attend college immediately after high school² (McFarland et al., 2019).

Many Students Enter College Academically Unprepared

According to the ACT (2019) report *Condition of College and Career Readiness*, only 37% of the 2019 graduating high school students who took that ACT met college and career readiness (CCR) standards in three of four content areas (English, reading, mathematics, and science). Similarly, less than half (45%) of SAT[®] takers in the high school class of 2019 met both the mathematics and the reading and writing college readiness benchmarks (College Board, 2019). So, it is not surprising that more than two thirds of community college students and 40% of 4-year college students take at least one developmental course to strengthen their reading, writing, or math skills in preparation for college-level work (Ganga et al., 2018).

Of the Approximately 20 Million College Students Expected to Attend College, 6 Million Will Attend 2-Year Institutions and 7.8 Million Will Attend Part Time

In AY 2019–2020, 13.9 million students are attending 4-year institutions and 6 million are enrolled in 2-year institutions; 7.8 million of those 20 million students attend part-time, and 12.1 million attend full-time (NCES, 2019a, 2019b).

Most New Jobs Will Require People With Postsecondary Credentials

Ninety-nine percent of the 11.6 million jobs added since the end of the Great Recession in 2011 have been taken by people with some level of postsecondary education; however, only 59% of undergraduate students graduate from college currently (Carnevale et al., 2016; Jobs for the Future, 2018).

Student Supports

A Significant Portion of College Students Experience Challenges Meeting Basic Needs

Basic needs insecurity is greater for students attending 2-year colleges than for those attending 4-year colleges (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019). Sixty percent of students from 2-year colleges reported facing some level of housing insecurity, as opposed to 48% of students at 4-year colleges. Seven out of 10 students at 2-year colleges indicated that they faced food or housing insecurity sometime in the last 12 months, in contrast to six out of 10 students at 4-year colleges.

Many Postsecondary Students Need Additional Supports to Become Academically Prepared to be College and Career Ready

Many students leave high school with a diploma in hand but without a clear college or career path forward. Bromberg and Theokas (2016) found that almost half of American high school graduates (47%) complete neither a college- nor career-ready course of study.³

As a result, many students discover they will need remedial courses before beginning their postsecondary programs. Researchers have found that between 40% and 60% of first-year college students require remediation in English, math, or both (Jimenez et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). The problem is worse for students in low-income situations and students of color, whose rates of remedial education enrollment are higher than those of their White and higher income peers. Because such courses often do not count toward one's degree, the time needed for degree completion increases. This increase in time, in turn, consumes financial aid, increases student debt, and reduces the likelihood of degree completion altogether—assuming, of course, that the students attempt to take the remedial courses; the discouragement upon learning that they must take remedial courses has been found to result in students making the decision to drop out (Bailey, 2009).

Comprehensive Student Supports Can Improve Postsecondary Persistence and Completion

An integrated network of academic, nonacademic, career, personal, and financial supports contributes to improving postsecondary persistence and completion, especially for academically underprepared and nontraditional students (McDonnell et al., 2014). By integrating academic and nonacademic student support services, colleges can

- Better alert students to academic problems early and work to get them back on track,
- Facilitate students' ability to draw on peer support and other resources, and
- Remove the stigma associated with accessing support by making support something that is commonly received by all students (Dadgar et al., 2013).

Barr and Castleman (2017) found that students who received Bottom Line college advising⁴ were more likely to enroll in 4-year colleges and persist in those colleges than students who did not, especially Hispanic students and students with low GPAs. They were also more confident in their ability to pay for college. Such supports can be beneficial for students planning on participating in certificate programs or other types of postsecondary programs, as well.

Paying for College

The Average Total Cost of College Has Been Rising

The average cost of college (including tuition, fees, and room and board), as well as differences in cost among institutional types, has grown faster than the rate of inflation over the last 4 decades. In constant dollars, the cost of attending a 2-year public college is 2.5 times greater; a public 4-year college, 1.6 times higher; and a private 4-year college, 2.6 times higher in 2017–2018 than in 1974–1975 (see Figure 2.1).

The Average Total Cost of Attending Degree-Granting Institutions Varies by Institution Type and Student Living Situation

Private nonprofit colleges and for-profit colleges are more expensive than public colleges, regardless of institutional level. Across the board, students who live off campus with family can expect to save between \$6,000 and \$11,000 more a year than students who live on campus (see Figure 2.2). There is little difference in the actual cost for students who live off campus without family compared with students who live on campus. The 2017–2018 difference in total average cost between living on campus or living off campus without family was within \$100–\$200 for all institution types, other than a small number of public 2-year colleges, which offer on-campus housing for approximately \$2,600 less than it would cost for students to live off campus without family. Room and board both on and off campus has risen 82% in less than 30 years (McFarland et al., 2019; Sreenivasan & Wise, 2019). As a result, independent students may not be able to afford on-campus or off-campus housing and resources, putting them at risk of housing and food insecurity should they pursue higher education.

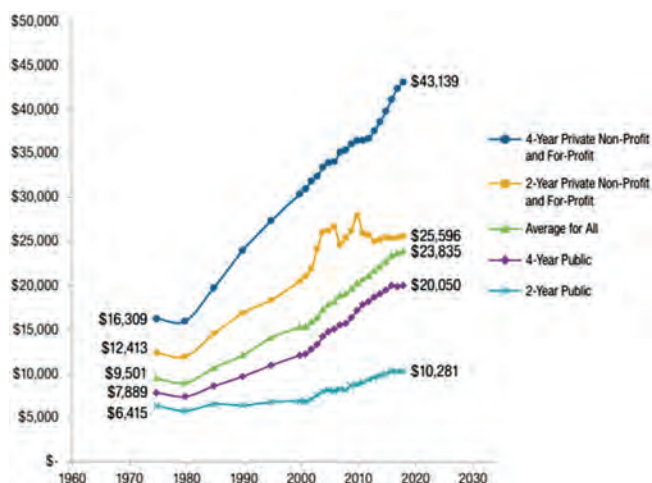


Figure 2.1 Average college costs for full-time undergraduate students (tuition, fees, and room and board) in degree-granting postsecondary institutions by institutional level and control: 1974–1975 to 2017–2018 (constant 2017–2018 dollars).

Adapted from *Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States: 2019 Historical Trend Report*, p. 82, by M. Cahalan, L. W. Perna, M. Yamashita, J. Wright-Kim, & N. Jiang, 2019, The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education (http://pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Indicators_of_Higher_Education_Equity_in_the_US_2019_Historical_Trend_Report.pdf). Copyright 2019 by The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education. Adapted with permission.

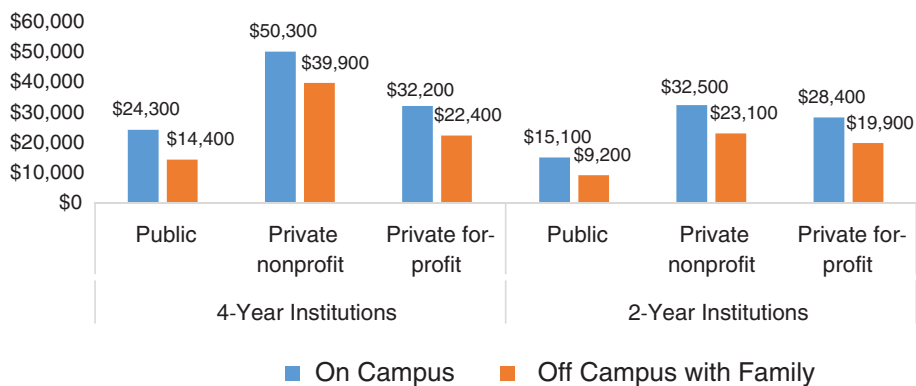


Figure 2.2 Average total cost of full-time attendance at postsecondary institutions by level, institutional control, and living arrangement (AY 2017–2018).

Adapted from *The Condition of Education 2019* (NCES 2019-144), p. 206, by J. McFarland, B. Hussar, J. Zhang, X. Wang, K. Wang, S. Hein, M. Diliberti, E. F. Cataldi, F. B. Mann, A. Barmer, T. Nachazel, M. Barnett, & S. Purcell, 2019, National Center for Education Studies (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019144.pdf>). In the public domain.

The Percentage of Average College Cost (Tuition, Fees, Room and Board) Covered by the Maximum Pell Grant Has Declined

Claiborne Pell (1918–2009), former US Senator for Rhode Island and the Pell Grant’s author and namesake, wanted every student, especially students in low-income situations, to graduate from the college of their choice (Burd & Kean, 2009; National Education Association, 2009; The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Education, 2019). However, the Pell Grant no longer provides as much postsecondary student federal aid relative to cost to families with low incomes. According to Arnold Mitchem 2012, president emeritus for the Council for Opportunity in Education, “Its [the Pell Grant’s] value remains half of what it was decades ago, compared to the rising cost of college. The average Pell Grant now covers just 21 percent of the cost of attendance at a postsecondary institution, and with recent changes that reduce student eligibility to 12 semesters from 18, tens of thousands of students will be left without enough financial support to complete their education” (2012, para. 3). As of 2018, that percentage has only increased slightly, to 25% (in constant 2017–2018 dollars; Cahalan et al., 2019; see Figure 2.3). The Pell Grant’s decreased cost coverage can be attributed its

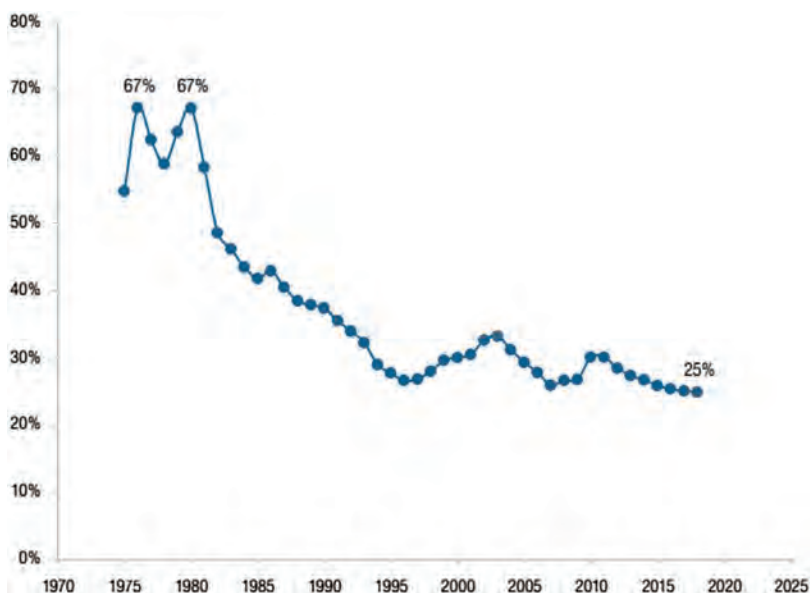


Figure 2.3 Percentage of average college costs covered by the maximum Pell Grant: 1974–1975 to 2017–2018 (constant 2017–2018 dollars).

Adapted from *Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States: 2019 Historical Trend Report*, p. 88, by M. Cahalan, L. W. Perna, M. Yamashita, J. Wright-Kim, & N. Jiang, 2019, The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education & Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy (http://pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Indicators_of_Higher_Education_Equity_in_the_US_2019_Historical_Trend_Report.pdf). Copyright 2019 by The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education. Adapted with permission.

eligibility expansion to middle-income families and to the decline of family incomes from 2008 to 2011, both of which increased the percentage of Pell Grant recipients with an income of \$50,000 or more (Dynarski & Scott-Clayton, 2013).

Individuals and Families Are Responsible for an Increased Proportion of Postsecondary Expenditures

The share of higher education expenditures paid by students and their families has risen from 33% in 1979 to 48% in 2017. While the federal portion of the expenditure has remained relatively flat during this period (10% in 2017), state and local expenditures have declined significantly from roughly 60% in the late 1970s to 42% in 2017 (Cahalan et al., 2019). State spending for higher education is \$8.6 billion dollars less now than it was in 2000, due to budget cuts during economic down times (Delaney, 2014).

The Cost Burden of College Is Not Borne by All Families Equally

The average net price of college as a percentage of family income has increased for all income quartiles. However, students in the lowest quartile of income have experienced the steepest increase in college cost burden. The average net price of college was 94% of family income for the first (lowest) income quartile in 2016, 37% for the second quartile, 24% for the third income quartile, and 14% for the fourth (highest) income quartile (Cahalan et al., 2019). This difference in cost burden makes it harder for students in low-income situations to attend and graduate from college, keeping them stuck in the cycle of poverty.

Suggested citation

Millett, C. M., Saunders, S., & Hiestand, R. (2020). College facts and figures. In C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-20-17, pp. 9–12). Educational Testing Service. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12299>

3. Voices Informing Ecosystem Design

Catherine M. Millett¹, Martha Kanter², and Stephanie Saunders¹

¹Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ

²College Promise Campaign, Washington, DC

The ecosystem design teams were developed to incorporate insights and impacts from multiple perspectives by including members from the research, practice, and finance communities. The symposium was similarly structured to help inform the work: College promise students, the design teams, and a group of knowledge navigators presented to ensure multiple perspectives were discussed.

Student Insights on College Promise: Inclusion, Engagement, and a Sense of Belonging

From the outset of their work, each of the design teams aimed to include student participants in their conceptualization of the ecosystem for their target population. At the June 2019 symposium, we asked a student from each of the teams to participate in the kickoff conversation to engage their colleagues in learning about their lived experiences. From the outset, we acknowledged that one student could not speak on behalf of the student population they represented; however, the five speakers narrated their educational journeys. Their opening remarks and the ensuing conversation among them elucidated the common experiences and concerns applied to all five student populations, as well as experiences that may be unique to their student population (see Figure 3.1). Together, they shined a light on what it takes to enable students to function fully as they make their way to, through, and beyond postsecondary education.

Klayre Guzman (Traditional-Aged Student)

Thanks to support from her parents, Klayre Guzman found San Jose City College and its promise program, which provided guidance and motivation. When Guzman learned she had to take remedial courses, she was shocked and devastated to learn that she was below college readiness level in math and English. However, thanks to peer mentoring and extra time spent with teachers, she passed. Klayre also had difficulty obtaining financial aid due to her family's immigration status and had to work to compensate for the lack of financial support and, in particular, to cover the high cost of textbooks and other supplies. Guzman later transferred to UC Davis, where she received full financial aid. She has since graduated and is now a graduate student earning her master's degree from San Jose State University, with the goal of becoming a college counselor for freshmen to help others achieve and succeed in their undergraduate programs of study as she has. Guzman stresses the importance of financial aid and mentoring as well as more supports for remedial courses and tutoring.

Kimberly Lowe-Sawyer (Adult Student)

Now a doctoral student, Kimberly Lowe-Sawyer was once a former corrections officer who returned to school after dealing with health issues. Yet, with only bus fare to her name upon her entry, she struggled to find housing. She also confronted bigotry from culturally insensitive staff, limited office/support services hours, and the negative reputation and narratives about adult students. (At the symposium, she asked: "Why aren't our stories of resilience considered strengths?") These obstacles made it harder for her to navigate college and made her doubt her abilities. Lowe-Sawyer was greatly helped by Graduate Philly!, a program that provided a boost of confidence, fee waivers, supportive college administrative staff, and other resources that helped her earn her master's degree. Lowe-Sawyer advocated for Saturday evening office hours, more personable professors, and viewing nontraditional students as valuable rather than a group that needs to receive assistance. Although there is still discussion on what constitutes a nontraditional student, the National Center for Education Statistics roughly defines a nontraditional student as one who (a) delayed enrollment into postsecondary education, (b) is a single parent, (c) works while enrolled, (d) is financially independent, (e) attends class part-time, and/or (f) received an equivalent of a high school diploma (Horn & Carroll, 1996). Her words, "Let us not worry about funding for caring," also serve as a reminder about the importance of actions that incur no cost, such as creating a learning environment that promotes inclusion, value, and respect.

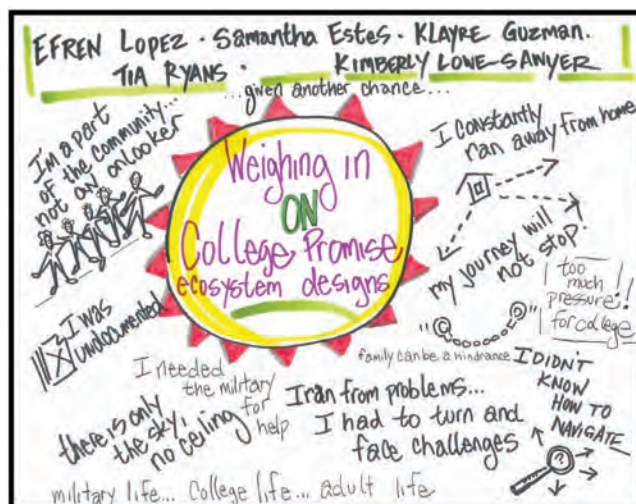


Figure 3.1 Capturing student input. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2019 by Educational Testing Service.

Efren Lopez (Undocumented Student)

Efren Lopez came to the United States from Mexico at age 3 and lived in a working class neighborhood in Los Angeles. Due to his undocumented status and a lack of readily available information, Lopez missed important milestones and educational requirements, such as preparing for college by taking the SAT. However, his mother inspired his political awareness, and he enrolled at Los Angeles Pierce College, his local community college. Once enrolled, he met many people, including counselors who gave him guidance and support as well as financial aid support for undocumented students through Californian legislation (AB 540). AB-540 is a California law that allows certain undocumented students to attend public California colleges and universities at in-state tuition rates (Chabot College, 2019). The funding and support enabled Lopez to attend the community college and transfer into the University of California system. At UC Santa Cruz, he created Beyond Dreams, a community building club. Lopez stated that institutions should encourage and support organizations/activities such as these to promote student success. However, Lopez encountered some insensitive institutional staff. About them, he remarked: “They do not relate to you and consider what you went through, so they cannot possibly think of helping you.” He stressed the need for better training of faculty and instructors in interacting with people of different backgrounds and identities. Lopez said that college faculty and staff often do not know what to say or what to ask, which can make them appear insensitive and unable to relate to students, thus preventing them from addressing student needs.

Samantha Estes (Student Veteran)

Samantha Estes dreamed of becoming a doctor as a child, but her family could not afford it. Thus, she enlisted in the US Army to get hands-on experience as a medic. When she began the process to access her GI Bill benefits, she received only 60% of the GI Bill financial award. It was only after she had switched from active duty to reserves upon becoming pregnant to retain custody of her child that she learned her decision would impact her educational benefits in the future. Undeterred, Estes tried to obtain a college loan and work in cosmetology to support her family. However, as the GI Bill took effect during her time in cosmetology school, it expired too early. Because she had to take three jobs to pay for her education, Estes was ultimately able to design and participate in the on-campus veterans’ program at Xavier University. She stressed the important role teachers, community volunteers, and accommodations played in helping her graduate: “I went to my teachers, introduced myself, and asked: ‘What can I do to negotiate the guidelines?’ Nine out of 10, the Xavier professors would work with me.” She also stated that institutions should review what individual students need, rather than using a “one size fits all” approach, as well as eliminate policies that take away resources and offer child care. As a successful graduate of Xavier, Estes maintains her childhood dream of becoming a doctor, currently works as an emergency medical technician, and plans to attend medical school in the near future.

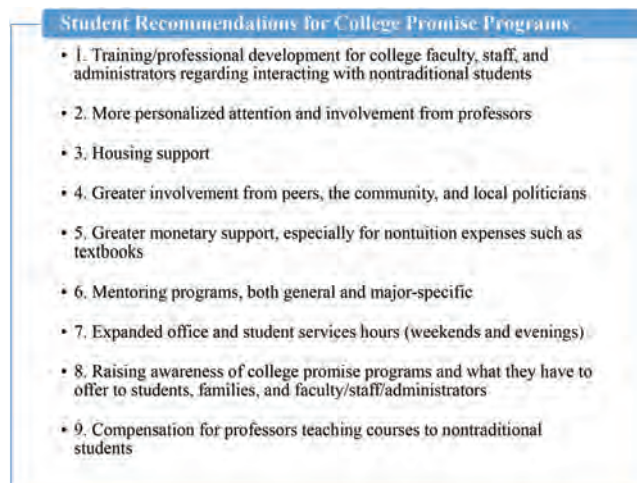


Figure 3.2 Student recommendations for college promise programs.

Tia Ryans (Formerly Incarcerated Student)

Tia Ryans was in and out of trouble at a young age, running away “rather than deal[ing] with problems head on.” However, she could not run when in jail, and it was there that Ryans began her academic career. Obstacles she faced while taking courses in prison included the security around the classrooms and the lack of compensation for the middlemen in the educational and justice systems and for the professors. After her reentry to society, she transferred into Rutgers University. One of the somber observations Ryans shared was that being incarcerated was like living in a world where time stood still. She had to confront her lack of knowledge about technology, housing, scholarships, and clubs while also dealing with emotional barriers and trauma around her teenage conviction as she adjusted to society. Ryans became the first formerly incarcerated student to intern with a member of Congress, Congressman Donald Payne, Jr. (NJ-10). Recently, she graduated from Rutgers and founded FORTE House, a nonprofit dedicated to housing. She stated that it was important for organizations to partner with local politicians to ensure accommodation for different populations. Ryans also brought up the issue of the felony conviction question on applications and how it can hinder formerly incarcerated students.

Takeaways From the Five Students

The student panel made nine primary recommendations for college promise programs (see Figure 3.2).

Students recommended that information about college promise programs be more widely available. There is a need to close knowledge gaps about what a college promise is and how one participates. This includes initiatives to spread knowledge about college promise through targeted messaging to close the knowledge gaps.

Students stressed that programs should avoid setting up college promise program structures that can be perceived as pitting one student population against another (e.g., adult students vs. traditional-aged students). An “us versus them” mentality is counterproductive to getting students to, through, and beyond college. Diversity and inclusion in higher education has a greater likelihood of being achieved if educators, administrators, policy makers, and funders see the individual student and set them up for academic, social, and financial success. Students urged us to create a college promise program environment that is inclusive, respectful, and caring.

When college promise programs are being developed, students noted the importance of modifying elements to best fit the intended student population. The ingredients for success should be articulated for each student population. Although commonalities for success may exist, it is important to learn about the unique ingredients for success. Examples were the unique legal needs that DREAMers may have or what an 18-year-old student with no children may need compared to a 35-year-old student with two children.

Training/professional development for college faculty, staff, and administrators should be emphasized in program design, staffing, and budgeting. Students shared their common experiences of working with college faculty and staff who did not know what to say or what to ask in order to be helpful. They shared that the results were that the faculty and staff



Figure 3.3 Depicting major spark talk points. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2019 by Educational Testing Service.

sometimes could not understand their issues, were sometimes insensitive, could not relate to students, and, in turn, were not helpful to address student needs or concerns.

Students reiterated that college promise programs should work to tear down the barriers, which come in many forms. One example is policies that “take away” resources from students. Another barrier is not addressing the cultural needs and differences that students have. This process may also require educating families, as well as college employees, in a culturally sensitive way.

Design Team Spark Talks

On the second day of the symposium, each design team gave a Spark Talk. These 10-minute presentations allowed teams to share the big ideas from their ecosystem design and, in some cases, new insights on the college promise ecosystem work (see Figure 3.3). Building a system of support includes addressing students’ needs, including food, housing, health care, employment, and transportation, in addition to more general academic and financial supports.

Traditional-Aged Students

Traditional-aged students are those who immediately come to mind when one imagines a college student—18 to 24 years of age who attend higher education shortly after graduation (see Figure 3.4). However, 75% of today’s traditional-aged students have at least one nontraditional characteristic (e.g., having dependents, possessing a high school equivalency but not a diploma, employed while attending classes, etc.). Traditional-aged students also confront a variety of issues: mental health challenges, housing and food insecurity, homelessness, insufficient financial support, and inadequate academic preparation prior to attending college. Such obstacles can result in students dropping out and, thus, not reaping the benefits of their education. One proposed solution is a college promise framework that spans early childhood through career(s) and includes financial assistance, behavioral incentives, messaging, and communication to guide and support students and families, academic and student services interventions, and public–private partnerships that aid in increasing program success and enhancing decision-making (see Figure 3.4).

Adult Students

Adult students are 25 and older and either (a) financially independent, (b) employed, (c) have dependents, and/or (d) are current or former military veterans. They make up 37% of U.S. college students and will need to earn over 70% of the 16.4 million credentials needed to reach Lumina Foundation’s 60% attainment goal by 2025. Although adult students

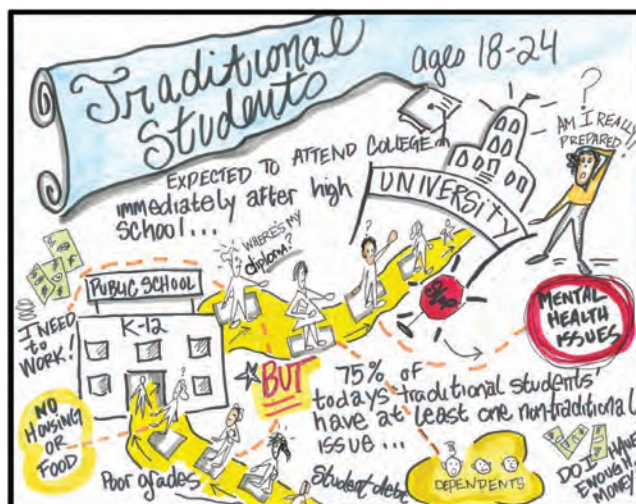


Figure 3.4 Depiction of traditional-aged students' demographic information. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2019 by Educational Testing Service.

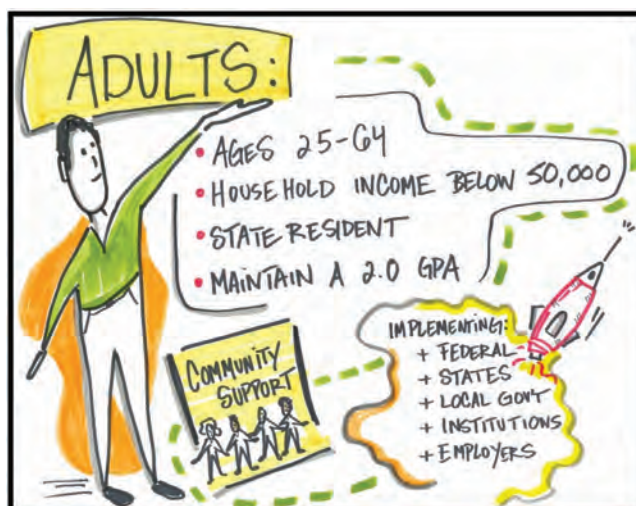


Figure 3.5 Depiction of adult students' demographic information. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2019 by Educational Testing Service.

share some of the same difficulties of traditional-aged students (e.g., food insecurity and student loan debt), those difficulties can be compounded by restrictive institutional policies (e.g., inflexible class schedules, lack of available office/student services hours, and lack of strategies to help students balance education with familial and occupational obligations). A federally financed adult promise program (APP) can ameliorate these issues. An APP would consist of tuition-free enrollment, program-neutral advising, holistic financial counseling, and holistic mentoring attuned to adult needs at its core while providing potential enhancements, such as low-cost food services and pantries, child care, and emergency aid (see Figure 3.5).

Undocumented Students

Undocumented students are those who have resided in the United States since childhood but do not currently have legal status. They come from a range of races and socioeconomic statuses, and each student has their own unique immigration history. Not all students in this population qualify for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)⁵ or the DREAMers program. Anxiety is high among the members of this population due to the threat of deportation and policy constraints

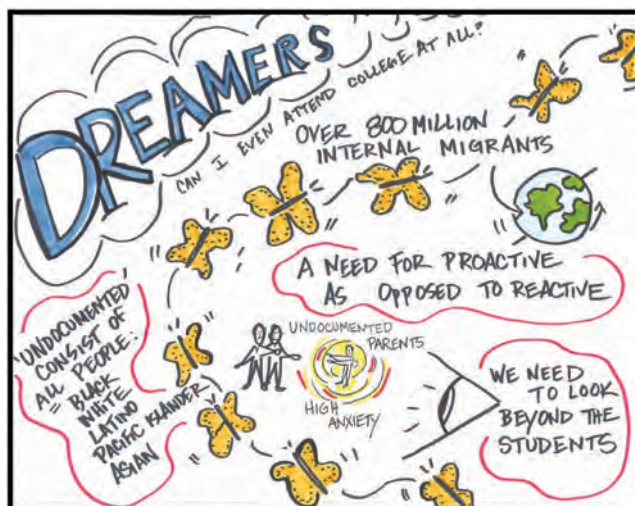


Figure 3.6 Depiction of undocumented students' demographic information and obstacles to postsecondary attainment. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2019 by Educational Testing Service.

and variations that affect their ability to attend and pay for college and seek employment or further education after graduation. Their situation is exacerbated by a lack of institutional support and lack of trained practitioners. Thus, the burden of helping this population has largely depended on student advocates and student-led organizations. As many undocumented students do not qualify for a college promise program in many states, solutions to help this population need to outreach, engage, and involve other parties, with educational institutions at the center to drive this work. Undocumented student resource centers (USRCs) on campus can provide undocumented students access to peer support, information, and sorely needed legal services. Staff professional development and specially tailored academic support can lead to greater solidarity with these students and help ease mental health issues they face. Collaboration with community organizations can also yield supportive social and economic networks, mentorships, internships, scholarships, jobs, mental health services, and other opportunities to help undocumented students succeed in college, career, and community life (see Figure 3.6).

Student Veterans

Like civilian adult students, student veterans are usually 25 years or older when they start college and may be the head of the household, married with dependents, and/or working full-time. They are also more likely to attend community college or a for-profit institution than a nonprofit, 4-year institution. Although they share similar obstacles as civilian adult students, student veterans have the added burden of transitioning back into civilian society, a task for which workshops and courses may not adequately prepare them. Another issue is access and affordability: not all veterans are eligible for GI benefits (due to their time served and/or discharge details) and thus must pay for their education themselves. Even those who are eligible can only utilize GI Bill and Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits 10 months out of the year. And once those benefits run out (after 36 months⁶), over half of these student veterans are unable to finish their degrees. Sadly, less than half of veterans take advantage of the GI Bill, recently reauthorized and extended to enable more time for veterans to complete a college degree or certificate.

Once inside an institution, student veterans may have difficulty finding counselors trained to align their educational plans with VA benefits requirements and career centers to translate military experience into resumes and job interview responses. In addition, student veterans must contend with physical and mental illnesses they acquired during active duty service. College promise programs can assist by making veterans eligible for their programs and including them in program design. Doing so would expand the number of veterans who could access higher education by providing financial aid to those ineligible for the GI Bill and allow those eligible for the GI Bill to utilize college promise funds beforehand, thus preventing their aid from running out before they can complete their program. However, the institution must step in to help as well. Institutions can establish veteran resource centers to serve as one-stop shops for veteran-related resources and form partnerships with VA and community-based health care providers and emergency services to provide more

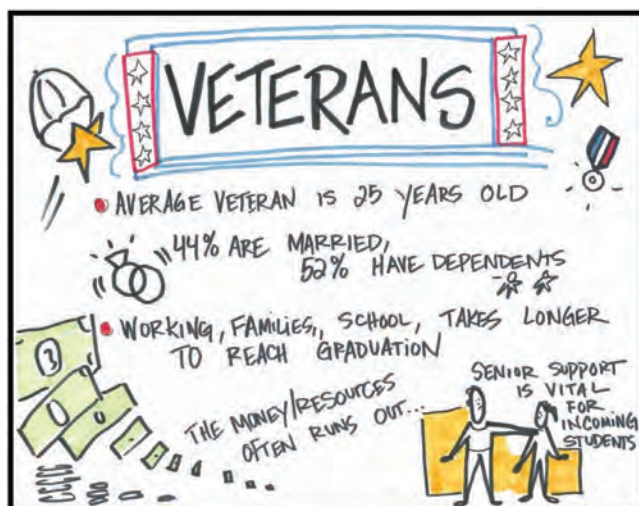


Figure 3.7 Depiction of student veterans' demographic information and obstacles to postsecondary attainment. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2019 by Educational Testing Service.

tailored services for this population. They can also provide support services for housing, child care, transportation, and health care, as well as establish peer support programs and mentorships (see Figure 3.7).

Justice-Impacted Students⁷

Justice-impacted students are those who are incarcerated or newly released.⁸ This population overwhelmingly consists of African American men due to drug policies developed in the 1980s (Thompson, 2010). Attempts by this population to obtain higher education credentials are stymied by Pell Grants and state aid ineligibility and the greater risk of Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) verification requests. Other issues incarcerated students face involve the location of their education: the prison. The understandable need to preserve security and safety results in logistical hurdles for student transfer and tracking, communication, and volunteer safety. Prisons' limited classroom space and work requirements restrict the number of students that can participate. Networking issues and computer technology barriers, along with incarcerated students' lack of digital literacy, make completing assignments difficult. In addition, the resources needed for prison education programs—administration, staffing, and instructor training and transportation—make such programs quite expensive. The first step to alleviating these obstacles is lifting the eligibility barriers to financial aid for incarcerated students. The second is adapting the college promise model to develop a supports ecosystem (personal, academic, financial, and career) tailored to the incarcerated and released student population. Lastly, Department of Corrections (DOC) investment and stakeholder involvement is needed (see Figure 3.8).

General Spark Discussion Ideas

Develop an Ecosystem Communications Framework for the Five Target Populations

As a movement, college promise programs working together should develop a communications framework to create the compelling narrative for the public about college promise programs in general and the benefits of educating each of the five profiled college promise populations. A communications framework can help stakeholders understand why college promise programs matter to them and how they can help achieve the goals. One example of the potential benefit of a well-framed communications framework would be to develop a set of clear, tested messages that resonate with audiences. One set of messages could be framed to counter the helplessness narratives that can be associated with some of the profiled student populations.

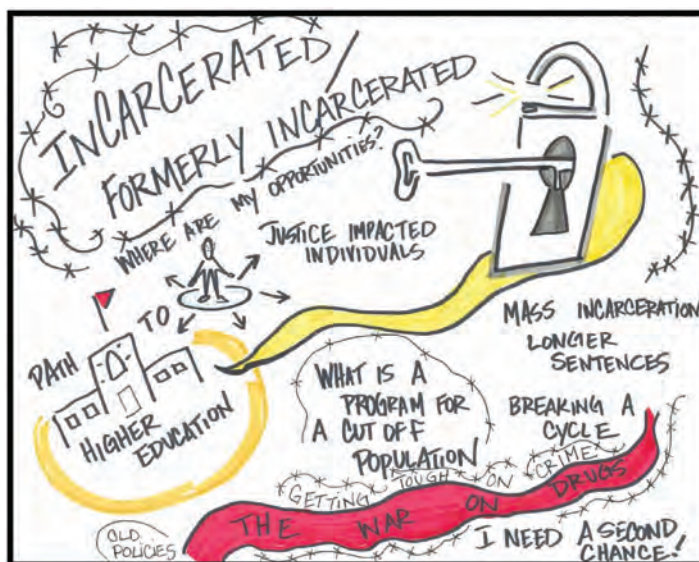


Figure 3.8 Depiction of incarcerated/formerly incarcerated students’ obstacles to postsecondary attainment. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2019 by Educational Testing Service.

Use Opt-Out Rather Than Opt-In for College Promise Program Participants

Under this approach, all target students would be included in a college promise program. It would be up to students and their families to opt out of the program. An advantage would be that if students exercised their option to opt out, advisors and mentors could initiate conversations about why this might not be in the best interest of the student.

Review Current and Proposed College Promise Programs Through the Lens of Policy Constraints

What local, state, and federal level policies constrain a student’s ability to go to, through, and beyond postsecondary education? Once identified, ask: What can be done to remove or mitigate the constraints? One example is undocumented students who do not qualify for assistance through DACA or through the proposed DREAM Act. Another example is that many undocumented students would not qualify for college promise programs if being a state resident is a program eligibility requirement.

Be on Guard for Predatory Organizations That Aim to Take Advantage of Student Populations

This concern was raised in the context of the privatization of student services and predatory student loan programs, particularly for the veteran and incarcerated student ecosystems.

Ecosystem Knowledge Navigators

In addition to the members of the five ecosystem design teams, we invited ecosystem knowledge navigators to participate in the June 4–5 event. This role requires reviewing the papers and models prior to the event. During the symposium, they listened to the presentations and raised questions. Their participation aided us in creating clarity for the ecosystem target population designs, thinking about the consequences of their design choices, and encouraging breakthrough thinking. Two recommendations of the knowledge navigators stood out.

First, political advocates at the local, state, and federal level can advocate for college promise programs and help get traction for the work. For example, on the federal level, one sentence in the Higher Education Act (HEA) could make an important difference in the priority and funding of college promise programs. How do we as a community work with the right people on the right committee to make a difference? Advocacy is important.

Second, colleges should not become full-service providers to meet all their students’ needs; however, colleges cannot negate their interests in making sure these needs are addressed. Identifying new ways of working together will be necessary



Figure 3.9 Summary and intersection of ecosystem knowledge navigators' insights. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2019 by Educational Testing Service.

so that the dots across and within college promise programs are connected. In the quest to provide holistic support for all students' needs, partnerships may be the optimal medium for meeting these needs (see Figure 3.9).

Here are some specific insights voiced by the invited knowledge navigators during the symposium. After interacting with each ecosystem team, five ecosystem navigators provided their insights and advice on the Insights from External Knowledge Navigators panel. Common themes that emerged were the importance of forming partnerships and the intersectionality of the populations.

David Croom, Assistant Director of Postsecondary Achievement and Motivation, Ascend at the Aspen Institute

David Croom stated that many student veterans are looking for alternative, affordable, and flexible pathways. They are overrepresented in for-profit institutions due to a lack of understanding of the differences in quality between types of higher institutions. Other barriers they face include a lack of time for education (or “time poverty”), a lack of resources, and noneducation costs.

Maureen Hoyler, President, Council for Opportunity in Education

Maureen Hoyler stated that organizations need to start from the political perspective (“What is possible?”) rather than the equity perspective (“How will you build the political will to scale and sustain the program?”). She added that there needs to be a larger focus on public resources, as organizations cannot depend on private funding in the long term. Thus, organizations need to engage stakeholders to get their buy-in and support.

Jenna Sablan, Assistant Research Professor, Georgetown University

Jenna Sablan stressed the importance of considering not only the unique issues, but also the intersections of these populations, as this will influence policy recommendations and services. She added it was important to design programs both with and without the federal context regarding funding and use support services more strategically. College promise, according to her, acts as an entry point into these conversations, as the ecosystem approach considers the whole student. It is important to see students as people and look beyond financial support to the other dimensions of college pathways.

Lindsey Reichlin Cruse, Study Director, Institute for Women's Policy Research

Lindsey Reichlin Cruse found that college promise is an opportunity to share the dialog on the ecosystem. She stated that holistic support is necessary to address all students' needs; partnerships are needed to achieve this, because colleges cannot provide all these services alone. Connections must be formed between communities, systems, services, and so on. Navigators can help move students into fields, as well. In addition, policies should be evaluated and studied to see how they create opportunities and obstacles for students.

Evan Weissman, Senior Operations Associate, MDRC

Evan Weissman wondered if there was a way to create one program that addressed all the variations among the five populations; indeed, he emphasized braiding funding and services. He added that this work makes a difference for college persistence and completion: Increasing financial aid and providing extra student supports can help students get to, through, and beyond college. However, to ensure that students receive these services, clear and consistent communication is required.

Collective Participant Insights and Questions Raised

Several universal themes related to communicating about college promise programs arose. The first was how to address the concern, "If college were free, would we need college promise programs?" A second point was whether higher education is a right or a privilege and what that means for the college promise movement. A third point was whether higher education is a public or a private good.

As mentioned earlier, a primary premise of the design teams is that equity be considered at the start of program design, development, and implementation. Forward planning is preferred to measuring outcomes at the end without putting goals in place from the start, especially since the implications of college promise eligibility restrictions may have unintended consequences, such as failing to benefit those most in need of support. In addition to recognizing that funding constraints are possible, how can promise programs retain or develop a focus on students who would not otherwise attend and persist? One example cited was the possible tension between implementing eligibility criteria that pitted students in low-income situations, who have the greatest amount of financial need, against students with strong academic merit and less financial need.

Symposium participants had the opportunity to share their insights about program features that all college promise programs should have. For scholarship provision, participants suggested providing first-dollar scholarships that act on a continuum of support, with funding based on zip code. Participants also suggested postgraduate support for at-risk populations. When combined with zip code-based, first-dollar support, these measures would be

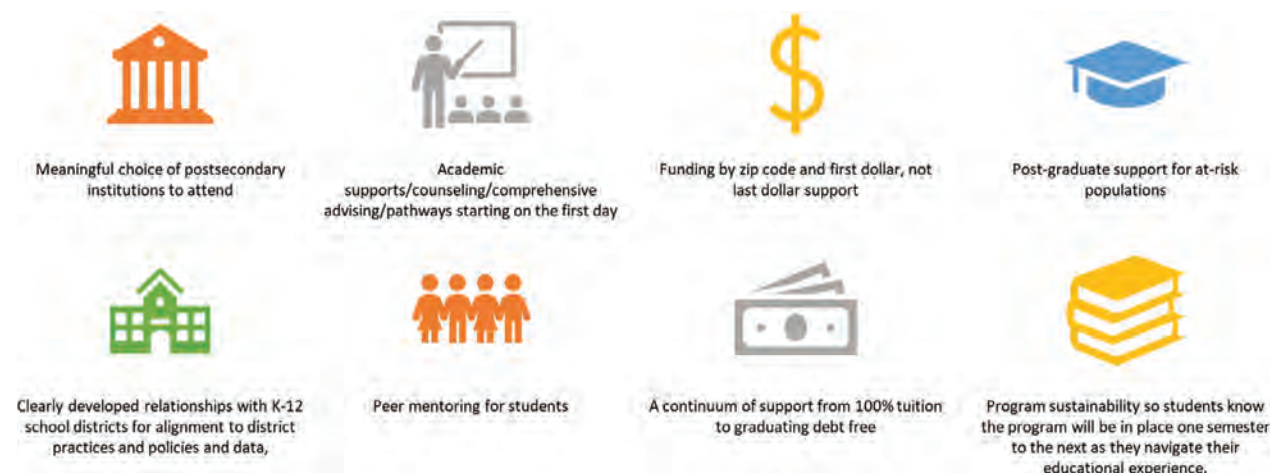


Figure 3.10 Symposium participants' suggestions about college promise program features.

able to best target students in low income situations. However, suggestions were not just for the end of students' educations: participants also stated the importance of providing academic supports, counseling and advising, and pathways from the beginning. In addition, participants stressed developing clear relationships with K–12 school districts to enable alignment with their practices, policies, and data. Participants also suggested peer mentoring and providing a meaningful choice of postsecondary institutions to attend. Lastly, they stressed program sustainability, so that students know that the program will still be in place for the entirety of their education (see Figure 3.10).

Suggested citation

Millett, C. M., Kanter, M., & Saunders, S. (2020). Voices informing ecosystem design. In C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-20-17, pp. 13–23). Educational Testing Service. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12299>

4. A Data Profile of the Five Student Populations

Catherine M. Millett¹, Stephanie Saunders¹, and Robyn Hiestand²

¹Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ

²College Promise Campaign, Washington, DC

Traditional-Aged Student (18–24) Population Facts

- Only 67% of the roughly 3 million high school graduates each year are entering 2- or 4-year colleges within a year of graduating from high school. This varies by race, with African American and Hispanic student populations having below average representation (McFarland et al., 2019).
- This generation of traditional-aged college students is more racially and ethnically diverse, coming from backgrounds that historically are less likely to attend college (Cahalan et al., 2018).
- The percentage of students in low-income situations enrolling in college immediately after high school has declined, dropping from 56% to 46% between 2008 and 2013 (Hartle, 2015).

Adult Population Facts

- Adult students represent a growing and significant proportion of the undergraduate student body, making up 37% of college enrollees (Lumina Foundation, 2019).
- The projected number of students over the age of 25 enrolled in college is expected to increase to over 10.1 million by 2021 (Snyder & Dillow, 2013).
- Adult learners who experience success in higher education often experience economic and personal benefits, which are likely to transfer social, political, and economic benefits for our broader society (Kim & Baker, 2015).

Undocumented Student Population Facts

- Approximately 98,000 undocumented students graduate from US high schools every year, 27,000 of whom are from Californian high schools (Zong & Batalova, 2019).
- Nearly one-fourth of the US immigrant population is undocumented (Radford & Noe-Bustamante, 2019).
- Barriers to entry into continued education and the legal workforce limits undocumented immigrants' future and social contributions (Hines, 2018).

Student Veteran Population Facts

- Over 5 million post-9/11 service members are expected to transition out of the military by 2020, many of whom need to further their education or career training upon return to civilian life (Molina, 2014).
- Veteran students are racially and ethnically diverse, tend to be older, and are more likely to work full-time while in college than traditional college students (Molina & Morse, 2015).
- Veterans often face a difficult transition to civilian life, ranging from readjustment issues to recovery from physical and mental injuries (Morin, 2011).

Justice-Impacted Student Population Facts

- There are over 2 million incarcerated individuals in the United States, and an additional 4.5 million are on parole or probation (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018).
- Compared to US households, the prison population is young; nearly half (48% vs. 35%) of incarcerated individuals are between the ages of 16–34 (Rampey et al., 2016). Over 80% of the prison population is male (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018).
- People of color are significantly overrepresented in prison. African American and Hispanic individuals represent 12% and 14% of US households, respectively. However, the prison population is 37% African American and 22% Hispanic (Rampey et al., 2016).

- There are significant education equity gaps for prisoners, when compared to the US general population. Approximately 6% of the prison population has an associate degree or higher, compared to 37% of US households. Moreover, 30% of the prison population has less than a high school degree, compared to 14% of US households (Lumina Foundation, 2016; Rampey et al., 2016).

Suggested citation

Millett, C. M., Saunders, S., & Hiestand, R. (2020). A data profile of the five student populations. In C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-20-17, pp. 24–25). Educational Testing Service. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12299>

5. Traditional-Aged College Students (18–24 Years): How College Promise Programs Can Support College Access, Persistence, and Completion

Mary Rauner¹ and Sara Lundquist^{1,2}

¹WestEd, San Francisco, CA

²Lumina Foundation, Indianapolis, IN

The US economy has shifted from the post–WWII era, when workers with a high school education could find solid middle-class jobs, to 2020, when 65% of all jobs will require at least some postsecondary education or training beyond a high school degree (Carnevale et al., 2013; Carnevale & Rose, 2015). Preparing students for the current labor market requires greater access to higher education, but several barriers exist. First, the cost of higher education has increased over the last 10 years by an average of 45%, while income has declined by 7% (Lumina Foundation, 2015). As a result, higher education seems out of reach for many students, especially first-generation students and those from families with low incomes (Poutré et al., 2017). Second, a greater share of college students attends 2-year degree-granting institutions—from 27% in 1970 to 33% in 2015 (Snyder et al., 2019).

With the overwhelming majority of community colleges offering open-access admissions, the wide range of participating students and lower levels of funding have generally produced student persistence and completion rates that fall far behind those of 4-year public and private institutions (Bailey, 2016; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2018). Finally, the persistent economic and racial inequities in the US education system lead to inequitable outcomes (Cahalan et al., 2017). Students who attend the nation’s least-resourced schools in terms of teacher quality and longevity, facilities, and learning supports are less likely to enter college. Those who do enroll are less likely to be academically prepared and more likely to require remedial education, which increases time to graduation and is associated with a lower likelihood of degree completion (Jimenez et al., 2016).

College promise programs have the potential to provide students with the support they need to access and complete their education and prepare for the demands of the changing workforce. Although there is no single definition of college promise, most scholars and practitioners agree that college promise programs provide financial support to eligible students who live or attend school in a particular place (Miller-Adams, 2015; Perna & Leigh, 2018). Increasingly, promise programs collaborate with partners from both within and beyond institutions of higher education to provide the academic support, student support, and basic services that students need to prepare for, gain access to, and successfully complete an education that prepares them for a living-wage career (Iriti et al., 2017; Miller-Adams, 2015; Rauner, 2018; Rauner et al., 2019). Further, because many college promise programs are either based in community colleges or provide support for students who attend them, they often serve student populations that are predominately students of color, students in low-income situations, and first-generation students.

In this report, we focus on college students who are between 18 and 24 years of age—the traditional-aged college students. Traditional-aged college students have declined as a proportion of total college enrollees (from 69% in 1970 to 58% in 2016), yet their overall number has increased from 5.9 million students in 1970 to 11.6 million in 2015 (Snyder et al., 2019). We describe the characteristics of today’s traditional-aged college student,⁹ outline a college promise framework that can support this subgroup of students, explore how programs can be strengthened through internal and external partnerships, identify strategies for maintaining financial sustainability over time, and suggest a process for incorporating promise program research and evaluation.

Traditional-Aged College Students

College students today are notably different from the student of the past, who enrolled in college the fall after high school graduation, attended a 4-year institution, took a full load of classes, lived on campus, and completed a baccalaureate degree in 4 years (Chung et al., 2014). Today, nearly 75% of college students embody at least one of seven characteristics that were once considered nontraditional:

- Being independent for financial aid purposes,
- Having one or more dependents,
- Being an unmarried caregiver,
- Not having a traditional high school diploma,

- Delaying postsecondary enrollment after high school graduation,
- Attending school part-time, and/or
- Being employed full-time (Walton Radford et al., 2015).

These differences are not fully explained by the increase in the number of students who begin or return to college as adults; they are also characteristic of traditional-aged students—of today and tomorrow who are 18–24 years old.

While many traditional-aged college students attend college directly after high school, others' paths to college are not direct, placing them in the upper end of the 18- to 24-year age range. In 2017, 1.9 million (67%) of high school completers enrolled in college by the following October; 33% did not (McFarland et al., 2019).¹⁰ Students may delay college enrollment or stop-out due to financial, family, and/or health issues. Others may suspend their studies because they question their intended field of study but decide to reengage with a new field later. College promise programs that target traditional-aged students will want to consider these students in their program design.

Demographics of Traditional-Aged College Students

Understanding the demographics of this segment of the college student population helps teams design comprehensive college promise programs that can enable students to access higher education, to thrive once they are enrolled, and to successfully complete their education goals.

The data needed to gain this understanding extend beyond typical student demographics such as age and race to include measures of family background, employment, and basic needs. Selected national-level demographic data for traditional-aged students are highlighted here. While these data provide national-level context for traditional-aged students, we recommend that college promise programs use data from the student populations they are serving to design a program that meets their needs.

- *Type of higher education institution:* In 2017, almost one fourth (23%) of students ages 18–24 attended a 2-year higher education institution (Snyder et al., 2019).
- *Enrollment status:* In 2014, 38% of all 2- and 4-year college students enrolled on a part-time basis (Snyder et al., 2016). Data in this study were not disaggregated by age.
- *Racial and ethnic diversity:* Today's traditional-aged students are racially and ethnically diverse (Espinosa et al., 2019). In 1976, only 16% of students enrolled in postsecondary institutions were people of color. By 2015, the percentage of students of color increased by more than 25 points to 42%¹¹ and is expected to make up the majority of college students by 2023 (Snyder et al., 2016).
- *First-generation students:* In AY 2011–2012, over a quarter (27%) of students at 2- and 4-year institutions between 19 and 23 years old were the first in their families to attend college (Skomsvold, 2014), a known barrier to college access and persistence (Redford & Hoyer, 2017). The percentage of first-generation students was much lower (18%) among first-time, full-time freshmen at 4-year colleges and universities in 2017 (Stolzenberg et al., 2019).
- *Employment status:* During the 2011–2012 AY, 9% of college students who were 18 years old or younger reported working full-time (35 hours or more per week) and 36% worked part-time (less than 35 hours per week; Walton Radford et al., 2015). A higher percentage of students between the ages of 19 and 23 years were employed while taking courses—16% reported working full-time and 45.1% reported working part-time that same year (Walton Radford et al., 2015).
- *Student–Parents:* During the 2011–2012 AY, 10% of students younger than 24 at 2- and 4-year institutions had dependent children. Two percent of all students that year were parents who were 18 years of age or younger¹² (Walton Radford et al., 2015).
- *Basic Needs:* In their national survey of 167,000 college students, Baker-Smith et al. (2020) found that 32% of 2-year students and 20% of 4-year students were both food and housing insecure in the past year and that individuals from marginalized and/or vulnerable backgrounds (people of color, LGBTQ students, former foster kids, disabled students, formerly incarcerated students, and Pell Grant recipients) were at greater risk of basic needs insecurity than their nonmarginalized/vulnerable counterparts. Understanding whether the basic needs of food, shelter, and health care are being met for traditional-aged college students is important to consider when designing a college promise program that meets students' needs.

Food and Shelter

Among students of all ages who attended 2- or 4-year institutions in the 2011–2012 AY, the majority (79%) lived off campus (Blagg & Rosenbloom, 2017). On-campus housing is most common for freshmen at 4-year institutions—77% in 2013 reported living in a college resident hall. For all students, the cost of room and board is outpacing inflation, further contributing to the increasing cost of a college education (Eagan et al., 2013).

A 2018 study of the basic needs of 86,000 students attending 2- and 4-year institutions across the United States provides a more complete understanding of the context of traditional-aged students' lives (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). The data presented here combines two age groups from the study (18–20 and 21–25) to reflect the reality of the traditional-aged college students addressed in this report.

- *Housing insecurity*: 38% of traditional-aged college students at 2-year institutions and 34% at 4-year institutions experienced housing insecurity.
- *Homelessness*: 13% of traditional-aged college students at 2-year institutions and 9% at 4-year institutions reported being homeless, as measured by a positive response to any one of the following survey responses: not knowing where you were going to sleep (even for one night), being thrown out of home, staying in an abandoned building or other place not meant for housing, and being evicted from home or staying in a shelter.
- *Food insecurity*: 39% of traditional-aged college students at 2-year institutions and 33% at 4-year institutions experienced food insecurity.

Data from all age groups show that students from certain demographic, economic, and life experiences are disproportionately represented in each of the basic needs categories (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). At least 50% of the students in the following subgroups experienced food insecurity, housing insecurity, and/or homelessness: students of color; Pell-eligible students; former military; student-parents; students with a psychological disability; transgender students and nonbinary students; and students who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or neither heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). In particular, former foster youth and students who have been convicted of a crime fare worse than all other student subgroups. Of former foster youth, 66% reported food insecurity, 77% reported housing insecurity, and 38% reported homelessness. Of students who were previously convicted of a crime, 64% reported food insecurity, 81% reported housing insecurity, and 40% reported homelessness (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018).

Mental Health Needs

Studies show that there are adverse academic consequences for students experiencing social and emotional difficulties (Douce & Keeling, 2014), a significant issue for traditional-aged college students. Ninety-five percent of college counseling center directors surveyed said the number of students with significant psychological problems was a growing concern (Mistler et al., 2012). Students also report high rates of mental-health issues, despite being in good to excellent health overall (American College Health Association, 2018). Twenty-six percent of students reported that anxiety affected their individual academic performance, and 17% reported that depression had an adverse impact on their ability to succeed in college (American College Health Association, 2018). In that same survey, 53% of students reported feelings of hopelessness, 86% reported feeling overwhelmed, and 63% reported feeling very lonely over the previous 12 months. Another analysis found that one in four freshmen at 4-year colleges or universities used student psychological services in 2018 (Higher Education Research Institute, 2018).

College Promise Framework for Supporting Traditional-Aged College Students

Because college promise programs are as unique as the school districts, regions, or states they belong to and the students they serve, a single college promise model does not exist for traditional-aged students. Instead, we provide a framework that incorporates features that address the needs of traditional-aged college students. For each feature, we summarize the research on the potential impact on student outcomes, describe its salient characteristics, and highlight ways that partners can participate in their implementation. College promise program teams can use this framework to design or augment a design that can provide students with a robust set of supports.

The goals of each college promise program will inform its design and implementation. Administrators can expect tensions and tradeoffs with each design decision. For instance, if a program subsidizes tuition costs for all high school

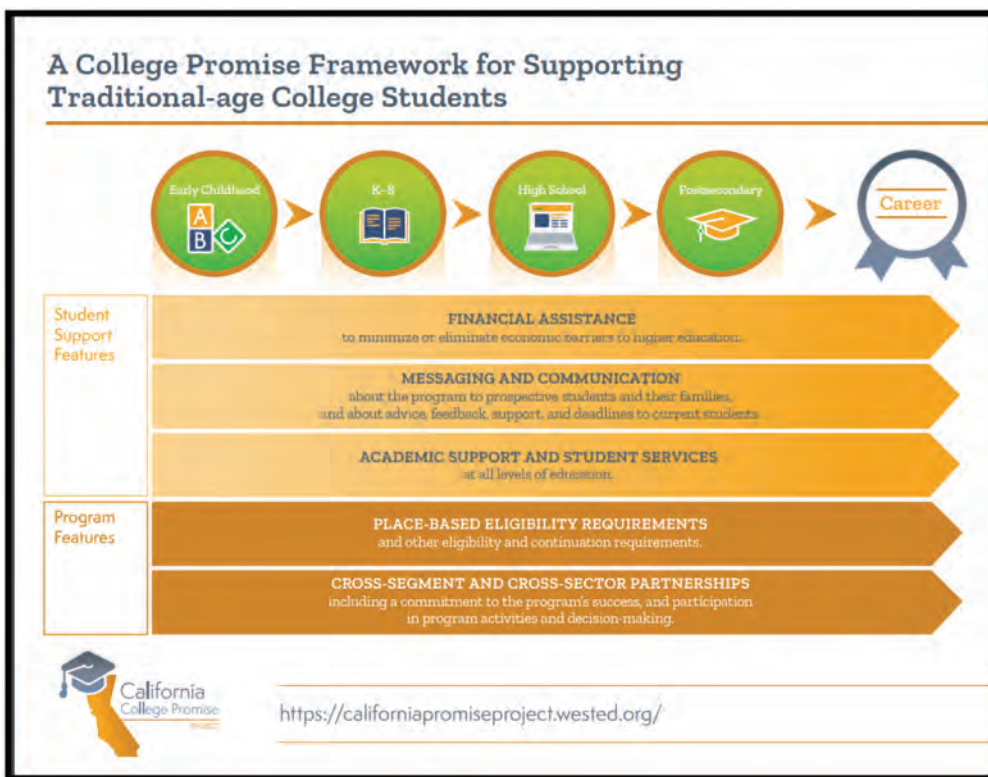


Figure 5.1 A college promise framework for supporting traditional-aged college students.

graduates regardless of financial need with the goal of developing a college-going culture, it will be easy to communicate about the program and fund more students but may result in less funding for additional support for at-risk students (for example, students in low-income situations, students with lower English proficiency, etc.). In contrast, a program with the primary goal of closing equity gaps may narrow the eligibility requirements to a high-need population of students (for example, students in low-income situations, students of color, etc.) to provide more robust support, but that would come at the expense of the number of students reached.

Framework Features

The college promise framework for supporting traditional-aged college students includes three student support features (financial assistance, messaging and communication, and academic support and student services) and two program features (place-based eligibility requirements and cross-segment and cross-sector partnerships; see Figure 5.1).

The two program features are found at the bottom of the graphic—place-based eligibility requirements and cross-segment and cross-sector partnerships. Place-based eligibility requirements are one of the defining features of college promise programs and should be tightly aligned with the goals of the program to ensure that the program is serving the intended student populations. The designation of place can vary, but it is generally based on school attendance, place of residence, or both. Other common types of eligibility and continuation requirements include merit, need, age, timing of enrollment, credits enrolled, FAFSA completion, and participation in specific student support activities. A program’s requirements determine the number of eligible students, their demographic profile, and thus the support systems they need to succeed. The specific parameters of each requirement have equity implications as well, as described in detail in *The College Promise Guidebook: For California and Beyond* (Rauner et al., 2019). The second program feature is cross-segment and cross-sector partnerships. Descriptions of typical college promise partnerships and the roles that partners can play are incorporated in the descriptions of each of the three student support features.

The three student support features highlighted at the top of the graphic are the financial assistance provided to students; the messaging and communication strategies to increase awareness of the program to all stakeholder groups and to provide

reminders, advice and support to college promise students once they join a program; and the academic and support services linked to the program. The following sections describe each student support feature in more detail, including the literature that shows its importance in student success and the ways that cross-segment and cross-sector partners can collaborate to strengthen the feature.

Financial Assistance

Financial support is a central feature of college promise programs, most often providing coverage for tuition (Perna & Leigh, 2018). However, the cost of tuition is a fraction of the total cost of attending college—only 20% for community college students, according to the Institute for College Access & Success (2016). Other costs include required student fees, housing, books and materials, transportation, and other living expenses. Findings suggest that when community college students in low-income situations received multiple public benefits (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP], Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF], or TANF-funded child care), they enrolled in more academic terms, completed more credits overall, and were more likely to earn a college credential than students who received only one benefit (Duke-Benfield & Saunders, 2016). A 2016 study found that when students were provided with financial support beyond tuition and fees, they were more likely to enroll full-time and work fewer hours (Broton et al., 2016).

The level of financial support provided to students and the disbursement model adopted are key decisions for college promise program designers. First-dollar programs, which provide a fixed amount of funding to students regardless of other awards they receive, are most beneficial to students in low-income situations because they can use other financial aid to cover additional expenses that might otherwise have to be funded by increased work hours or expanding debt through loans. On the other hand, last-dollar programs, which cover the remaining portion of promised costs after federal, state, and other aid is applied, are at risk of disproportionately benefitting students who have the least financial need. Regardless of the disbursement model selected, there are strategies that allow programs to ensure equitable support. One is to provide a higher level of financial support to a smaller segment of students by limiting eligibility to, for example, first-generation students in low-income situations. Another is to provide different benefits for different students, such as providing tuition coverage for all students, as well as book vouchers, transportation costs, and free childcare on campus to students in low-income situations.

College promise programs can leverage support from partners to provide students with the financial assistance they need. In addition to foundations and individual donors, who can provide funding for student financial support, transportation agencies can provide subsidized or discounted passes for public transportation, local government agencies and nonprofits can help coordinate housing and food subsidies, and financial services companies can provide financial education and planning. To improve online access, Internet service providers and cellular phone companies can provide services to students unable to afford basic connectivity, especially those in rural areas with high service rates and less robust technology infrastructure.

Messaging and Communication

To Students, Families, and the Community

Research shows that the right messaging at the right time can influence students' decision-making related to college attendance. Pluhta and Penny (2013) found that pairing messaging about promised financial support with intensive outreach to local high school students helped quadruple the number of graduates who matriculated into college in one low-income, urban community. In the Kalamazoo Promise program, coordinated messaging from the community helped shape perceptions of the program, and recipients of the scholarship were found to have "significant extrinsic motivation" to excel academically (Collier & Parnter, 2018, p. 8). But getting the message right is not easy, nor does it guarantee that the target audiences will fully understand the critical details. Even when the content is clear and consistent over time, some students and families may lack access to accurate information (Perna & Steele, 2011). The Kalamazoo Promise program, for example, has remained stable in structure and message since it began in 2005. Despite overall positive perceptions about the program, some students lacked confidence in or did not understand the program requirements and benefits, especially African American students and students in low-income situations as well as students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Miron et al., 2012).

Crafting and broadcasting a simple and understandable core message that describes a college promise program can capture the attention of the target audiences and shape the public perception of the program. Although the core message will remain consistent across all program communications, different audiences require slightly different messages based on their specific interests and concerns and the actions they need to take as a result of that message. Ideal outcomes, for example, are for students to take steps to join the program, for parents to encourage their children to attend college, and for potential donors to be inspired to contribute.

College promise programs can employ a broad range of communication modalities. Messages to students and their families can be shared through K–12 classroom presentations, commitment contracts, home page web messages, school banners, and back-to-school-night programs. Messages can also be integrated into education planning, campus visits, and FAFSA/California Dream Act completion workshops. Messaging to community groups, local government officials, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and potential funders can be transmitted through email and social media campaigns, as well as through local newspapers, magazines, community newsletters and blogs, and existing community events.

To College Promise Students

Communication to college promise students once they arrive on campus builds on, but is qualitatively different from, previous messages that they received as potential students and during the summer between high school and college. Because students are on campus, the messages can be delivered at required in-person orientation sessions and meetings, during required college promise courses, on posters around campus, and through on-campus partners, such as counselors who may meet with college promise students during required sessions. A variety of communication technologies can complement the in-person modalities and be used to track student participation in required support activities, reach out to students congratulating them on progress and course success, provide just-in-time reminders about deadlines and support opportunities, and signal the need for action when an early alert report is submitted by a professor. Higher education institutions in Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee reported increases in retention and graduation rates after implementing big data approaches to monitoring student success (Snelling, 2017). Another study showed gains in achievement and persistence for academically at-risk students when they were exposed to an early and frequent learning analytics feedback system (Espinoza & Genna, 2018).

Early alert systems provide college administrators with timely data on students whose academic performance and other campus-related behaviors indicate they may be at risk of course failure or dropping out (Tampke, 2013). Direct text messaging to students to encourage completion of specified continuation milestones, such as renewing the FAFSA, showed an increase in reenrolling for sophomore year (Castleman & Page, 2016).

Academic Support and Student Services

College promise leaders cannot rely exclusively on financial assistance to ensure student access and success, particularly for students in low-income situations and students of color (Perna & Kurban, 2013). Students from low-income communities are less likely to have the information and support needed to gain access to college, to be prepared to navigate the complexities of college life, and to be prepared academically to succeed (De La Rosa, 2006; Harris et al., 2018; Roderick et al., 2009). College promise programs can provide the additional support needed through academic support and student services.

There is evidence that combining financial support with academic support and student services can increase college persistence and other student outcomes (Deming & Dynarski, 2009). The Detroit Promise program provided incentivized coaching meetings to a sample of their students and found a positive effect on persistence, full-time enrollment, and overall credit accumulation (Ratledge et al., 2019). Positive effects were also found on measures of enrollment and retention in a randomized controlled trial of the Opening Doors program, which combined financial support with learning communities, counseling, and mentoring for community college students in low-income situations (Scrivener et al., 2008; Scrivener & Pih, 2007). In another study, students who participated in a program that combined financial support with advising, a first-year seminar, career services, and tutoring at three City University of New York community colleges had higher enrollment, credit completion and accumulation, and degree completion than students who did not participate in the program (Scrivener et al., 2015).

College promise programs across the country, notably in California, are beginning to address multiple barriers to college enrollment and completion by including academic and student support services into their programs (Rauner, 2018).

Academic Support and Student Services for Traditional-Age College Promise Students

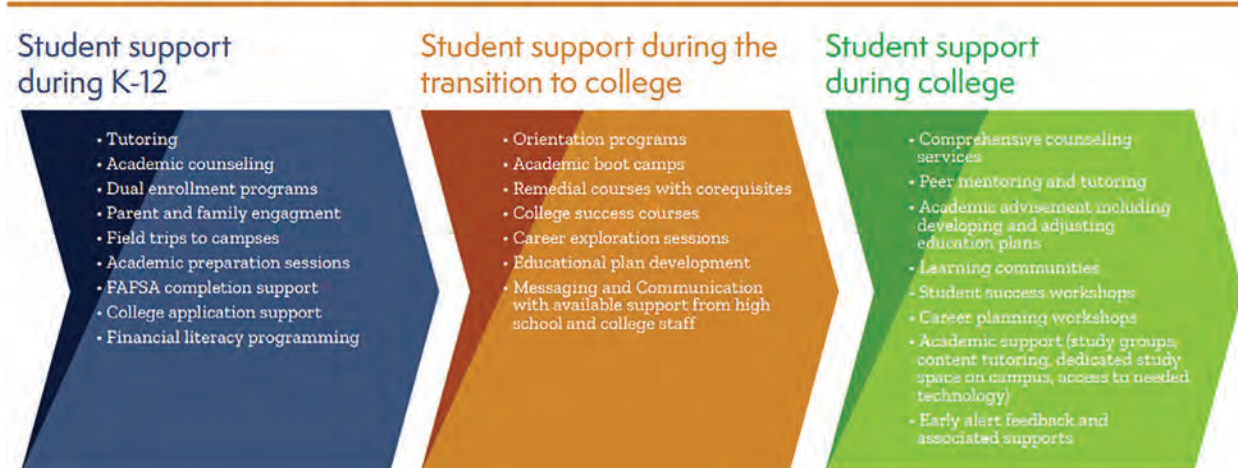


Figure 5.2 Academic support and student services for traditional-aged college promise students.

Support services encompass a wide range of programs and activities to help traditional-aged college students prepare for college, enroll in college, and persist to completion. These supports can be particularly valuable to students of color, students in low-income situations, and first-generation students. Figure 5.2 represents three critical intervals for delivering those supports, and the sections that follow include a summary of the literature and common student support strategies.

Student Support During K–12

Research shows that when students and their parents understand that college is an option and receive information and guidance about college costs and application processes, including completing the FAFSA, they are more likely to have a smooth transition to college (Bartik et al., 2017; Bettinger et al., 2012; Cornwell et al., 2006; Dynarski, 2000; Harris et al., 2018; Hoxby & Turner, 2013; Maynard et al., 2014; Radunzel, 2014; Roderick et al., 2009). College promise programs, along with their K–12 system partners and local media, can collaborate to provide targeted messages and specific supports to students and their families as early as kindergarten and throughout their high school years.

In addition to sharing program information, college promise programs can provide students with academic counseling, tutoring, and mentoring, as well as the opportunity to start college early through dual enrollment programs. To make the concept of college more tangible and to ease the future transition to college, faculty, staff, and enrolled college promise students can give presentations to potential students, parents, and guardians that might include field trips to college campuses for information sessions, campus tours, class visits, and academic “jump start” sessions. High schools, after-school programs, and colleges can also help students complete high-stakes tasks, such as the FAFSA and supplementary college promise applications. An example of a collaboration to increase FAFSA completion is taking place at the federal level between the Departments of Education and Housing and Urban Development. The project is sending messaging about FAFSA completion to a sample of students with housing vouchers who are identified by matching data across departments. The pilot will test, through a randomized controlled trial, the most effective messaging and modality (PD&R Edge, 2016).

Student Support During the Transition to College

“Summer melt,” when recent high school graduates with plans to attend college do not enroll in the fall, is most common for first-generation students, students in low-income situations, and students of color (Castleman & Page, 2014). Interventions intended to combat this phenomenon have been shown to increase college enrollment among students who have less access to high-quality counseling support (Castleman & Page, 2015) and to have a lasting effect on persistence over several college semesters (Castleman et al., 2014). Given the number of students entering postsecondary education

who are deemed not academically college ready, many colleges offer summer bridge programs to aid in the transition (Sablan, 2014). Most summer bridge programs target participants who have been identified as needing additional transition support, such as underrepresented students and those in need of academic remediation. Other college promise programs see universal benefits and require participation in these activities for every entering student (Kallison Jr. & Stader, 2012).

In addition to summer bridge programs, college promise programs can provide a variety of other summer support services designed to minimize the effects of summer melt and to strengthen entering students for the rigors of college life ahead. These can include activities that build academic skills, foster a sense of belonging on campus, and ensure that students are able to navigate campus resources. Examples of such programs and services include orientation programs, remedial courses with co-requisites, academic boot camps, college success courses, career exploration, and educational plan development. Increasingly, college promise programs remain connected to students through personalized text messages that invite them to activities on campus, remind them to complete application and enrollment steps and introduce them to resources on campus. Some programs also offer two-way messaging to enable students to receive answers to their questions in time to take meaningful action. College promise partners that are integral to the success of summer interventions include high school staff, college faculty, counselors, and parents.

Student Support During College

Providing comprehensive support to college promise students after they enroll requires strong partnerships across the college. Internal collaboration will enable the program to leverage existing funding and student support structures, such as first year experience, federal TRIO programs, student athlete support programs, and peer mentoring programs. Programs that prepare students for higher education and other initiatives with eligibility requirements similar to those of college promise (such as equal opportunity programs, math-science initiatives, and career academies) are also potential partners. Advising and counseling services and academic support services in college promise programs are described in more detail in the following sections.

Advising and Counseling Services

When starting college, students commonly find it challenging to adjust to the higher expectations surrounding academic performance (Lee et al., 2013). First-year college students may frequently experience social and emotional challenges, such as low self-esteem and difficulty establishing key relationships with college personnel and fellow students, all of which may contribute to how they perform academically (Barr, 2007). In response to these realities, counseling services are becoming more comprehensive in scope, encompassing not just traditional academic planning, but also a range of social-emotional support services as well. An examination of the relationship between counseling experiences and college students' academic performance and retention in a sample of 10,009 college freshmen and transfer students found that students receiving counseling services were more likely to stay enrolled in school (Lee et al., 2013).

The types of advising and counseling services and modes of delivery vary across college promise programs but often include developing educational plans that map students' courses from entry to completion. Programs sometimes encourage or require students to join a learning community (with integrated advisement and other student support services), meet with academic advisors a specified number of times per term, participate in a mentoring program, and attend student success/career planning workshops. Required counseling sessions can also be activated in response to an early alert submitted by a faculty or staff member.

Academic Support Services

For some students, classroom instruction is not enough to facilitate learning without the assistance of academic supports outside normal course contact hours. More than three decades ago, Abrams and Jernigan (1984) showed that high-risk students exposed to tutoring, small classes, and a reading and study skills program improved their college GPA and their reading skills. Angrist et al. (2009) evaluated a combined financial aid and academic support intervention that included providing students with access to a peer-advising service, a supplemental instruction service, and study habit sessions. Peer advisors offered academic advice and suggestions for coping with the first year of school.

The study found that students who received both financial and academic interventions earned more credits and had a significantly lower rate of academic probation at the end of the academic year. Additional research has shown that student retention is positively impacted when students who enrolled in the same developmental writing and English courses also participated in course-specific learning communities with their peers (Barnes & Piland, 2010). A synthesis of six randomized control trials of learning communities in community colleges found small, positive effects on students attempting and earning credits in the designated subject area and on their overall academic progress (Weiss et al., 2012).

Academic support features in college promise programs include, but are not limited to, content tutoring, study groups, early alert feedback on academic progress while a course is active, a dedicated study space on campus, and access to needed technology. These support systems enable students to more deeply absorb course material, make meaning of the content with fellow students, prepare for tests, and refine skills to prepare academic deliverables, such as reports, research papers, and presentations. Most colleges offer optional academic support services, but college promise programs can require students to participate, especially in cases when faculty identify students who need extra support. When college promise programs are not implemented in a single college setting, the colleges where students attend are critical partners in ensuring that students get the support they need.

Program Costs and Strategies for Financial Sustainability

College promise programs must be financially sustainable to successfully create a college-going culture in the community and for students and families to have confidence in the program. Depending on the program design, costs will likely include direct financial subsidies to students, facilities for program offices and study centers, and costs associated with staff who coordinate the program, deliver advice and academic support to students, and guide students to resources within and beyond the institution. Other program costs include expenses associated with communications, fundraising, and evaluation efforts. The expenses associated with program partners are wide-ranging and can include staff time to coordinate and implement the program, transportation passes, food and housing subsidies, mentoring services, technology services, and complementary advertising space in newspapers and magazines.

A diverse group of funding sources also helps to underscore the value of the program to different stakeholders and, when braided together, can enable a program to offer unique and comprehensive benefits to students. Potential sources of funding include, but are not limited to, federal and state grant programs, existing public funding, direct municipal allocations, and tax revenues. Private funding sources can include corporate underwriting, philanthropic gifts, awards from private foundations and community-wide fund-raising events and campaigns.

The establishment of a college promise program endowment ensures that the program will be funded over time. Endowments can be built by investing funds from direct capital campaigns, committed high-net-worth individuals, small donors within a community, and corporate partners. Other sources of endowment funding can include lottery revenue and interest income. Community foundations often play a leading role in bringing promise investors together.

Research and Evaluation

When program goals are developed collaboratively with college promise program partners, they are likely to align closely with those of the education institution, labor market, local government, and the broader community. These goals guide the evaluation and research design that allows the program to track progress, identify areas for program improvement, and communicate program successes and needs to constituents, while contributing to the broader college promise knowledge base.

A first step in the evaluation and research process is to identify the student, program, and community outcomes that are associated with each goal and the data required to measure the outcomes. Some of the identified measures may already be systematically gathered by each partner, which can minimize data collection costs and be used as baseline data. For instance, K–12 partners will have education, contact, and background data on their students; social service agencies will have data on eligibility for federal assistance; nonprofit agencies may have data relevant to students who need extra support; and local governments and business organizations will have measures of community economic development. College promise student-level data will likely include the number of units enrolled and passed each session, English and math course enrollment and passing rates, grade point average (GPA) by session, semester to semester persistence, student

eligibility to transfer and successful transfer to a 4-year program (for community college students), and certificate or degree completion rates. All data should be disaggregated by race, income, gender, and other characteristics to understand variation in program experiences and track equity goals. Programs based in a single higher education institution or district can collaborate with the institutional research department to track college promise students and potentially compare their outcomes to that of a matched sample of non-college promise students. Programs with students who attend many different institutions can collect data from each institution, with permission from the student directly or as an embedded permission included in the college promise program application. For all programs, additional data will likely be needed, such as student participation in student support activities.

The process of sharing data is simplified in states with a cross-sector longitudinal data system. In all cases, it is likely that the team will need to develop a program-level data set. They can simultaneously support the development of a regional- or state-level system but should not expect it to be developed quickly, given the potential political hurdles and high cost. After signing a memorandum of understanding and data sharing agreements, leadership at each partner institution should identify staff with dedicated time to provide the data in a timely manner. One partner, likely the college promise lead institution, will also identify staff who are responsible for compiling the data in a secured system in a format for easy tracking and analysis.

Conclusion

The features of the college promise framework that are presented in this report can provide traditional-aged students with the support they need to prepare for, enroll in, and successfully complete their higher education goals. Traditional-aged students who are underrepresented in higher education—including students of color, students in low-income situations, and first-generation students—are likely to have the greatest need and receive the greatest benefit from these support structures. The framework presented here may also be a useful starting point for designing the college promise support systems for the other student populations in this project—adult students, DREAMers, student veterans, and incarcerated/formerly incarcerated students. In all cases, the support systems aligned with college promise programs are strongest when key stakeholders collaborate to design a program that aligns with the articulated goals, partners exist across segments and sectors, systems are implemented with long-term sustainability in mind, and data are used to inform continuous program improvements.

Acknowledgments

Sara Lundquist is a strategic consultant for WestEd. The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of the Traditional-Aged College Student Team, of which they are cochairs. This report emerged from discussions with an advisory group comprised of the following team members: William Elliott, III, James Ellis, and Briana Starks. The report also benefited from the review of Farhad Asghar, Klayre Guzman Ortega, Jessie Stewart, Stefani Thachik, and Maxine Roberts.

Suggested citation

Rauner, M., & Lundquist, S. (2020). Traditional-aged college students (18–24 years): How college promise programs can support college access, persistence, and completion. In C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-20-17, pp. 26–35). Educational Testing Service. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12299>

6. Adult Promise Programs

Louis Soares¹, Adam Bush², Hadass Sheffer³, Patricia Steele⁴, Nate Johnson⁵, Reuben Ford⁶, and Jessica Gibson⁷

¹American Council on Education, Washington, DC

²College Unbound, Providence, RI

³Graduate Network, Philadelphia, PA

⁴Higher Ed Insight, Washington, DC

⁵Postsecondary Analytics, Tallahassee, FL

⁶Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, Ottawa, Canada

⁷Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Nashville, TN

Postsecondary credentials are the key to individual opportunity, national competitiveness, and social mobility in today's economy. As technological advances and global trade integration have transformed the skill requirements of work in America, employer demand for postsecondary education and credentials has risen dramatically. Where in 1973 just 28% of jobs required individuals to possess some postsecondary education, that figure stood at 59% in 2010 and was expected to rise to 65% by 2020 (Carnevale et al., 2013).

Crucially, the country will not meet this demand for postsecondary skills through traditional-age students alone. The Lumina Foundation expects that adults 25 and older will have to earn over 70% of the 16.4 million additional credentials the country needs to reach Lumina's goal of 60% postsecondary attainment by 2025 (Lumina Foundation, 2017).¹³ Already, adults 25 and older comprise 37% of today's postsecondary students, and their enrollment share is expected to continue rising through 2026 (Hussar & Bailey, 2018; Lumina Foundation, 2019).

Unfortunately, our present system of postsecondary education is ill-equipped to enroll and graduate the 60% of American adults 25 and older who do not possess a postsecondary degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Designed with traditional-aged students in mind, our postsecondary systems too often fail to meet adult students' needs or overlook altogether the unique array of challenges they confront. Beyond the burdensome and uncertain expense of tuition and fees, adult students struggle with the auxiliary costs of books, supplies, transportation, and housing; bureaucratic and administrative systems that discount their prior learning or throw up hurdles between them and the resources they need to complete a credential; and a constant, pressing lack of time to set aside professional and family responsibilities and complete coursework.

To meet the country's attainment goals and make opportunities for economic advancement feasible and predictable for adults in low-income situations, our nation needs, we believe, a national program that supports localized networks that can create sustainable ecosystems of financial, advising, and social supports to help adult students complete credentials that yield employment at a family-sustaining wage.

This applied report proposes the important elements of a statewide APP for those considering implementing such a program. The first section describes the critical components of an APP. The second section presents an array of adult learner support mechanisms that could enhance the outcomes of an APP. The third section identifies three scenarios in which an APP could be implemented, as well as the expected level of funding from federal, state, community, and institutional entities. And finally, section four presents different approaches to the implementation of an APP.

The model promise program our design team proposes (see Figure 6.1) begins with a core promise upon which additional supports could be added. The applied approach used to develop this model is grounded in the idea that promise programs will likely emerge through piecing together existing efforts and available resources. Last-dollar models for college promise initiatives are a common foundation to which supports and enhancements can be added. This model promise program would pay and provide supports for adults in low-income situations to complete a wide variety of quality postsecondary programs—including degree programs, recognized apprenticeships, certification and licensure programs, and industry-recognized career pathway programs—at little to no cost to themselves. These models were developed under the assumption of financial constraints and prioritized a pragmatic starting point, which was a last-dollar promise program with universal eligibility that could be expanded upon. After initial implementation and securing sustainable funding, communities could consider moving to a more equitable first-dollar model.

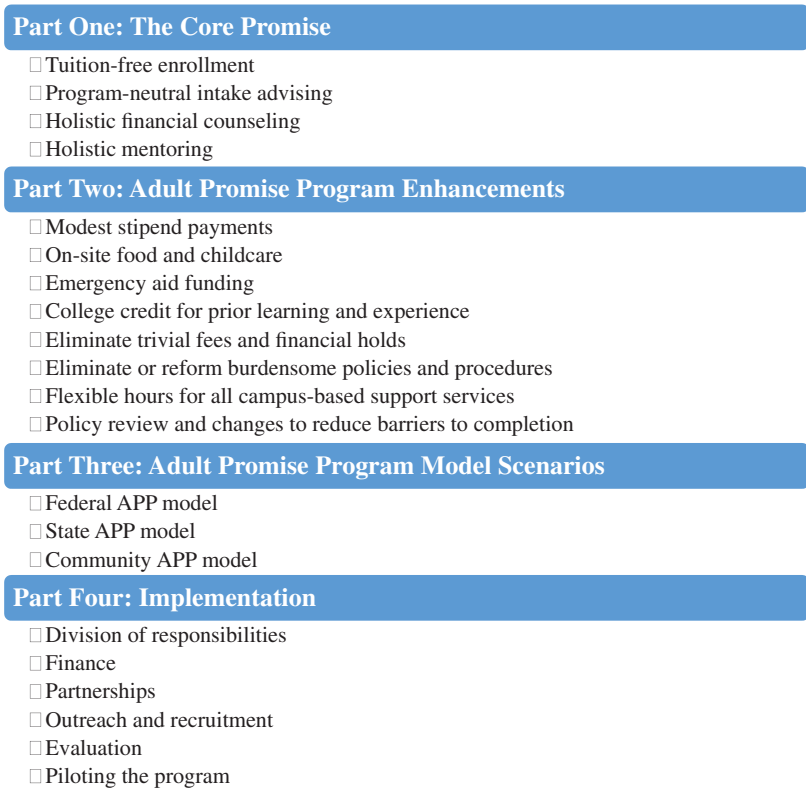


Figure 6.1 Components and models of a potential adult promise program (APP).

Table 6.1 Population Ages 25–64 With No College Degree and Household Income Under \$50,000

Level of education	No. of adults (ages 25–64)
Less than high school	9,633,878
High school diploma or GED	16,834,134
Some college	11,132,755
Total	37,600,767

Data are from “American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates,” by the U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 (<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/table-and-geography-changes/2017/1-year.html>). In the public domain.

Part 1: The Core Promise

Tuition-Free Enrollment

To provide adults a guarantee that their postsecondary education will be affordable, the program should commit to tuition-free access for all eligible students. To fulfill this promise, the program will provide a last-dollar APP grant to cover the entirety of adults’ tuition and/or fees.

Student/Individual Eligibility Criteria

Our promise program is targeted to working-age Americans without a college degree who are not making a middle-class income. There are currently about 37 million adults ages 25–64 who do not have degrees and have household incomes of \$50,000 or less. Only about 3% of these adults are currently enrolled in postsecondary education (see Table 6.1).

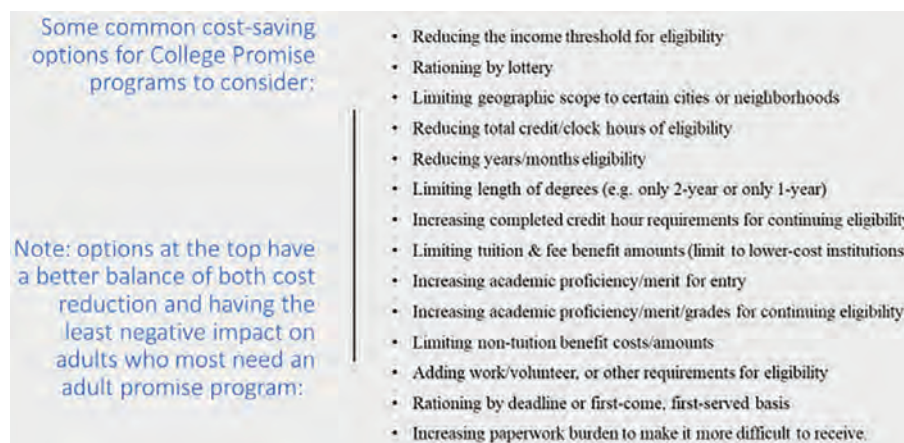


Figure 6.2 Common program cost-saving options.

Initial Eligibility

To enter the APP, adults must be financially independent¹⁴ state residents under age 65 who do not possess a postsecondary degree and who have a household income below \$50,000 in the year in which they first apply.¹⁵ Those adults who have barriers to enrollment, such as financial holds or defaulted loans, can receive support from program-neutral financial and intake advisors on how to resolve these issues.

Continuing Eligibility

Adult students remain eligible for the APP so long as they (a) are enrolled in but have not completed their first Title IV-eligible¹⁶ certificate, licensure, or undergraduate degree program; (b) file a FAFSA as an independent individual with no financial assistance from their family; and (c) maintain a 2.0 “promise GPA.”¹⁷ Students who have lost eligibility due to unsatisfactory academic progress may reenter the program once their promise GPA satisfies a program’s academic standards.¹⁸

Adults enrolled in Department of Labor-registered apprenticeship programs or industry-recognized career pathways programs must make satisfactory progress as judged by their program sponsor or employer.

These eligibility criteria are intended to (a) prioritize students with the highest need while instituting an income threshold that captures a population typically eligible for federal Pell Grant funding; (b) be simple, so that adults can know immediately whether they are eligible; and (c) be predictable, so that eligible adults can count on receiving the program’s benefits in the future and plan accordingly. Persistence criteria are intended to maximize the program’s return on investment and enable the program to sustain its generous aid and student supports. Because our team anticipates that most adults will work at least part-time while enrolled, we do not impose any minimum enrollment-intensity requirements.

In practice, eligibility conditions are likely to vary with budget constraints. To maximize the public return on investments, budget-constrained college promise programs may wish to modify program policies and eligibility requirements to reduce costs. Programs could select from a range of common cost-saving options, with some options having a better balance of both cost reduction and having the least negative impact on adults who most need an APP (see Figure 6.2).

Institution/Program Eligibility

To maximize adult students’ range of program choice, offer relevant curricula that embed students deeper within their professional relationships, and honor adults’ time constraints and prior commitments to work and family, our APP permits eligible adults to pursue short-term occupational credentials as well as traditional college degrees.¹⁹ It also encourages adults with existing postsecondary education experience (college credit, etc.) to return and complete a credential with some additional supports that were not offered previously. For those adults interested in attaining a college degree, the APP is designed primarily for associate degree attainment but includes a level of flexibility that supports bachelor’s degree completion. Specifically, students may enroll in three types of participating instructional programs:

- 1 Title IV eligible certificate, licensure, or degree programs
- 2 US Department of Labor registered apprenticeships
- 3 Industry-recognized career pathway programs demonstrated to lead to employment at family-sustaining wages.

Advising and Mentorship

While the program's aid award is designed to relieve the financial strains of postsecondary attendance, adult students confront a much broader array of challenges on the road to postsecondary credentials. At the heart of the APP is a host of critical support services designed specifically to meet adult learners' educational, financial, and advising needs, from recruitment and enrollment to credential completion.

All participating programs should be registered with the state to enable program oversight and well-informed intake advising. In the case of registered apprenticeships, program sponsors should be on the state's list of eligible training providers.²⁰

Intake and Navigation Advising

Students' first point of contact will be with promise program navigators. These APP personnel are sited at local colleges or outreach centers to help enroll interested adults in the promise program and set them on a course for success.

- Navigators will contact applicants via text or email within 24 hours of their application to (a) offer their services and (b) direct applicants to an online portal or APP enrollment center that prepares them for intake and financial advising processes.
- In person or online, navigators will verify adults' APP eligibility and help adults complete the APP enrollment process.
- Once adults are enrolled in the APP, navigators will consult with them regarding their career and credential goals and offer them individualized, institution-neutral, and program-neutral advising to help adults select and enroll in a program of instruction that suits their needs and goals. To maintain their roles as neutral student advocates, advisors should not be employed by, accountable to, or in any way serve as a representative of a postsecondary institution.
- Finally, navigators will present adults with a comprehensive map of the APP resources available to them. If needed, navigators will call upon the support of financial advisors in the event APP enrollees require assistance with financial holds, loan defaults, or other financial hurdles that would otherwise halt the enrollment process.

Financial Advising

Before and as part of the APP enrollment process, adult students will also consult with designated APP financial advisors who are employed by the college of their choice and will assist with financial issues, including those that are not specific to their chosen postsecondary program.

- Financial advisors will help adults assess their financial needs and aid eligibility, apply for relevant federal postsecondary aid (e.g., the FAFSA), navigate and enroll in public programs for which they are eligible (e.g., SNAP, housing subsidies, childcare subsidies, WIC programs, TANF, Medicaid and CHIP, unemployment benefits, etc.), and sign up for additional APP support services.²¹
- As part of this process, financial advisors will also (a) help adult students bring any prior student loans into good standing to reinstate their Title IV eligibility and (b) assist students in resolving any financial holds on students' accounts with prior institutions²² to ensure that students can access their transcripts and receive credit for prior learning. In some cases, this may entail converting students' prior liabilities into a loan with the APP that includes income-based repayment terms.²³
- Financial advisors will help adult students enroll in locally available benefits or services external to the postsecondary education provider. As part of this effort, financial advisors might work with students and their employers to enroll students in available employer-based, pretax benefits (e.g., transportation benefits) that the student might find useful. These advisors will also need to possess broad knowledge on pertinent services and programs offered by local institutions, government agencies, employers, and philanthropic organizations.

- Finally, financial advisors will check in with students at the request of mentors to reassess students' eligibility for aid and benefits as students' financial circumstances change over time.

Holistic Mentorship

Once adults have enrolled in an academic or occupational program, they will receive regular, mandatory, personalized, and holistic counseling from mentors affiliated with their chosen postsecondary program.²⁴ Mentors will serve as their primary point of contact for academic, financial, career, and other needs. Our hope is that mentors' comprehensive view of students' academic, financial, and career circumstances will allow them to help adult students to make the best possible decisions in full knowledge of their consequences for students' welfare (e.g., the consequences of course-taking decisions on their aid eligibility). Accordingly, mentors must be knowledgeable of a wide array of institutional policies, administrative practices, and aid-eligibility requirements.

- Mentors will provide students clear maps of their pathways through their selected program and into the workforce.
- Mentors will guide adult learners through responses to prior learning assessments and work to ensure students receive credit for prior learning as appropriate.
- Mentors will meet regularly with adults to monitor their progress, help them navigate their curricular and career path, identify and discuss problems students encounter, offer advice, and proactively put appropriate support personnel in contact with students to help resolve problems students encounter and needs that arise as students' circumstances change.
- Beyond their regular meetings, mentors will make themselves generally available to respond to students' requests for assistance and help them navigate providers' and APP support services.

All navigators, financial advisors, and mentors will be trained using a standardized training program that ensures that professionals at each level of the enrollment process understand what occurs at each phase of an adult student's APP enrollment and progression through their program of study. Periodic professional development will also be critical to ensure they remain trained as conditions at the federal, state, and local levels change.

Tracking System

With many agents serving APP eligible adults and enrollees, a system will be needed to track decisions, supports, progress, and outcomes. There will need to be a dedicated information system that tracks adults through their intake, persistence, completion, and (ideally) labor-market outcomes. Such a system will support and streamline APP delivery and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Part Two: APP Enhancements

An adult college promise program should take seriously the systemic hurdles that adult students must overcome to succeed in higher education and recognize that those hurdles often manifest on the scale of daily needs like food and childcare. To alleviate these everyday burdens, the program should offer the following:

- A modest, prorated APP Stipend of \$20 per credit hour or equivalent to help defray the costs of books, supplies and transportation.²⁵ Because existing public programs can cover these expenses for at least some students, the APP stipend could be applied on a last-dollar basis.
- On-site childcare during class hours and/or childcare vouchers and a list of local providers.
- On-site meals to help adults better fit postsecondary coursework into their busy schedules.
- Emergency aid to assist and retain students who encounter acute but surmountable financial crises. To conserve funds, such aid should be dispensed as needed and at the discretion of program administrators, with a per-incident limit of \$2,000 and a per-student lifetime limit of \$6,000.

Finally, for the APP to be maximally effective, participating postsecondary providers should carefully consider the revision of institutional policies and practices that could serve as barriers to attainment for adult students in low-income situations. After and pursuant to state-led reviews of participating providers' operating practices, postsecondary providers (to include all state colleges and universities) can do the following supportive practices:

- Relax or eliminate undue restrictions on postsecondary credit transfer. Permit reverse transfer and award of degrees for reverse transfer.
- Offer assessment of prior learning and credits at no cost to students and provide staff to help students navigate the process of obtaining transcripts for credits.
- Eliminate outdated course requirements and prerequisites.
- Offer blocked/consolidated course schedules for working students.
- Eliminate billing and finance practices that generate financial holds (and interest charges) for trivial liabilities (e.g., small tuition shortfalls, late fees, transfer fees, library fines, parking tickets, etc.) and eliminate policies that withhold transcripts until such trivial financial holds are resolved.
- Eliminate overage charges for supplemental credits.
- Provide extended hours for all campus-based support services, including at least some concurrent hours to minimize the trips to campus adults must make to complete administrative errands.
- Review and eliminate early registration deadlines that require students to make curricular decisions before learning their aid awards.

Part Three: APP Model Scenarios

There are many scenarios that can impact what an APP could look like in the nation, states, and local communities. Here, we present three scenarios under which an APP could be developed and the services each would offer. Each scenario has two funding formulas, simplified and detailed, which show the share of funding required from each partner entity (see Figure 6.3).

Scenario 1 occurs when the federal government oversees a nationwide APP and delegates program delivery to states, communities (county/municipal/local support organizations), and institutions. Scenario 2 occurs when a state develops an APP without significant support from the federal government (outside of Pell Grant dollars) and partners with communities and institutions. Scenario 3 occurs when an individual community develops an APP without support from the federal or state government (outside of federal Pell Grant dollars and state financial aid and social support programs), partnering with local institutions who are expected to carry a modest funding burden.

Part Four: Implementation

Division of Responsibilities

Our design team thinks the APP is best implemented at the state level, even if most of the funding comes from the federal government. We think statewide implementation strikes a reasonable balance between (a) offering adults meaningful choice among providers and (b) facilitating buy-in from local stakeholders, while (c) giving states necessary discretion to design programs' high-touch support elements to match local needs, providers' capacities, and extant state-policy supports. Crucially, state-level administration may also prove efficient, given the close coordination we expect between APP personnel and state agencies that administer social benefits.

Specifically, our team thinks the best implementation design is one with the following division of financial and administrative responsibilities.

State Governments

Although community colleges will be the primary sites for APP counseling and support services, state governments will be primarily responsible for planning, implementing, and reviewing the APP. In this capacity, state governments should

- Set criteria for the design of eligible programs and support services;
- Recruit and certify eligible providers;
- Periodically review participating programs and help bring providers into compliance with APP requirements;
- Work with participating postsecondary institutions to review and reform institutional practices as described above;
- Work in concert with participating employers and colleges to align apprenticeship programs with requirements for federal student aid eligibility;

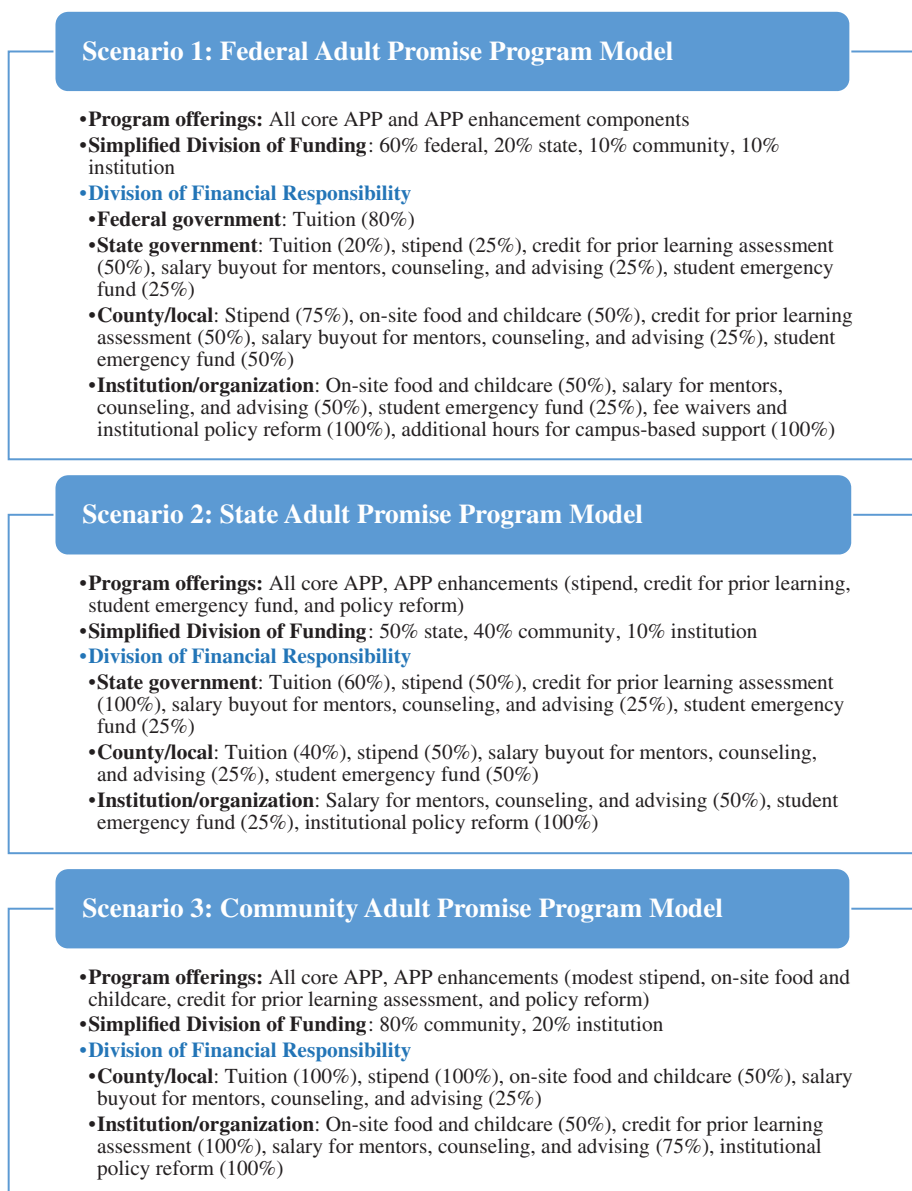


Figure 6.3 Three different institutional models for a proposed adult promise program (APP).

- Maintain up-to-date information on all participating providers for use in APP intake advising;
- Develop mobile friendly state APP websites and web portals to prepare applicants for APP enrollment and, perhaps, help them complete the intake advising process online;
- Provide a budget for advertising and marketing materials for distribution across the state;
- Recruit, train and designate APP professionals—including intake navigators and financial advisors—to provide the services described above; ensure that all participating postsecondary providers have adequately trained and designated an adequate number of program mentors; make sure that navigators, financial advisors, and mentors cross-train regularly (and get to know each other in each locale) to ensure consistency and continuity of information;
- Administer, in conjunction with participating providers, a last-dollar APP grant and a per-credit-hour APP stipend;
- Prepare state agencies responsible for administering social benefits to coordinate with APP financial advisors to enroll eligible students in public benefits such as SNAP and housing subsidies;
- Appropriate dedicated APP funds to finance program-specific costs (including APP grants and stipends) and match contributions from local governments, businesses and philanthropies; and

- Encourage states to pursue reciprocity agreements with their neighbors to maximize students' range of choice of providers.

Federal Government

Our team envisions the federal government's role as primarily financial. Specifically, the federal government should match state contributions to APPs at a rate of 1:1 or more. We anticipate that requesting matching funds would prompt the federal government to request permission to create criteria for the design of eligible programs. Our team hopes that national uniformity in certain aspects of program design can benefit the program by clarifying and communicating its promise to the public; however, we recommend that the federal government reserve generous discretion over program design and implementation to participating states and institutions.

Local Governments

Local governments should contribute financially as they are able while working with local institutions, businesses, and philanthropies to attract funding. Strategies to consider for soliciting support across local governments, institutions, and employers include holding stakeholder meetings to discuss program planning and implementation, individually contacting prospective partners to be part of these discussions, sharing student outcomes from other college promise programs, and inviting leaders from those programs to contribute to the discussions (College Promise Campaign, 2018; Rauner et al., 2019). Furthermore, to ensure a diverse group of local stakeholders, more than one representative from each institution or stakeholder group should be part of the local college promise partnership to mitigate the effects of turnover and increase the likelihood the partnership will be sustained over time (Rauner et al., 2019).

Participating Institutions

Participating institutions should administer and/or host program and support services in compliance with state APP guidance. They should also partner with local businesses, philanthropies, and so on to fund the program, deliver support services, and partner with employers to grant credit and certificates to apprentices.

Participating Employers

Employer-provided educational assistance programs are becoming increasingly popular, such as those offered by national employers, including Starbucks, Amazon, McDonalds, and Walmart. The momentum behind these efforts can be leveraged to serve the larger APP movement. Where possible, participating employers should partner with local colleges to award credit and certifications for apprenticeships and career pathway programs and align them with requirements of federal student aid eligibility.

Finance

Implementing the model APP requires fulfilling at least eight financial commitments:

- 1 Cover students' tuition and fees via the last-dollar APP grant.
- 2 Fund the APP stipend.
- 3 Hire/designate, train, and pay navigators, financial advisors, and mentors.
- 4 Hire/designate, train, and pay state APP personnel, who will conduct statewide outreach campaigns and manage, administer, review, and evaluate the APP at the state level.
- 5 Cover costs of on-campus childcare or childcare vouchers for APP students.
- 6 Cover costs of any APP on-campus meal services.
- 7 Finance emergency aid funds.
- 8 Provide funds to resolve financial holds on students' transcripts and/or reinstate their aid eligibility.

Funding for an APP should be designed with the following criteria in mind:

- Adequacy to support the promised benefits,

- Progressivity of the underlying revenue source, and
- Ability to survive or even grow during economic recessions.

A federally funded program supported by a progressive income tax would meet all these criteria, because the federal government has the capacity to increase spending during recessions, when eligibility and demand would likely increase, and has the appropriate tax mechanisms already in place.

State, local, or privately funded programs might need to be more creative in their approaches to finance or might have to balance these criteria without meeting all of them entirely. Many state and local revenue sources—sales taxes and lotteries, especially—are regressive, so that the potential benefits of the programs to lower-income populations would be partially offset by the higher tax burdens. States are also limited in their ability to raise revenue during recessions, because they are required to maintain balanced budgets. Private investments, too, tend to decrease in value during economic downturns, limiting potential payouts from endowments or similar funds.

Appropriate state and local sources of funding for an APP could include

- Progressive business payroll taxes;
- State/local income tax credits, up to 100% if needed, for contributions to designated promise scholarship programs; and
- Corporate taxes.

These funding sources are also aligned with the 2017 federal tax legislation, which limited many individual taxpayers' ability to deduct state and local taxes, so said sources would cost taxpayers less on an after-tax basis than raising the same amount of money through sales or property taxes.

To be able to meet high demand during recessions, state, local, or private programs should be designed either with high levels of reserve funds or with an insurance component that is triggered by certain economic events, such as extraordinarily high unemployment. Any investments that public or private partners rely on to fund the benefits should be counter-cyclical, such as high-grade bonds, rather than equities that could lose much of their value just when the funding is most needed.

Depending on the source of the funding, taxpayers could also be given incentives to contribute substantively to the APP as well. A program funded with corporate or business payroll taxes, for example, could include credits for businesses that have track records of providing economic mobility through apprenticeships or on-the-job training. Corporate taxpayers could also be given a say in program governance in exchange for their financial contributions, as they have been recently in the State of Washington's recent expansion of financial aid benefits (O'Sullivan, 2019).

To sustainably finance these commitments, the APP will draw upon both existing public programs as well as dedicated (i.e., new) APP funds. Broadly speaking, existing public programs can help reduce the tuition gap covered by the APP grant, reduce participating employers' training costs and fees, and help cover the APP stipend (if it is administered as a last-dollar commitment). By contrast, our design team anticipates that a large majority of dedicated APP funds will finance states' and providers' APP personnel costs and APP support services. In the following subsections, we outline each type of funding in greater detail.

Revenues From Existing Public Programs

We expect that the suite of federal Title IV grant-aid programs (Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity grants, etc.) is likely to cover most of the tuition and fees for most adults in low-income situations enrolled in Title IV-eligible certificate and degree programs. State, local, and institutional grant aid (as well as any veterans' aid or private scholarships) will further reduce the tuition and fee gap covered by the last-dollar APP grant. Even so, a distinctive challenge for APPs is that this gap may be large for part-time and returning adult students who are likely to exhaust their Title IV eligibility (Carlson et al., 2016).

In the case of employer-based apprenticeship and career pathway programs ineligible for Title IV aid,²⁶ APP financial advisors can help eligible adults sign up for individual training accounts (ITAs), which can cover job-related instruction costs for eligible dislocated workers and workers determined to need training (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

For certain students, trade adjustment assistance (TAA)²⁷ may be able to help cover several of the APP's funding commitments. For instance, both ITAs and TAA may cover eligible apprentices' supplies, and therefore might reduce the cost of funding the APP stipend if it is administered on a last-dollar basis. TAA can also flow directly to participating employers

to offset training costs. Because the federal workforce system—including TAA—can also cover recruiting and employment services, it may be able to offset some of the payroll costs of APP navigators and mentors who fulfill these functions (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.-b; U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

Likewise, state APP agencies can help participating employers apply for customized training contracts²⁸ to offset instructional costs and on-the-job-training contracts²⁹ to reduce the costs of apprentices' wages and partner with state SNAP agencies to receive SNAP funds as part of the state's SNAP education and training plan (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

Finally, public childcare subsidies (including tax credits) that flow to individuals may help participating postsecondary providers offer students affordable childcare options. Students receiving benefits under the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act may be able to receive childcare services through their local workforce development board (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.-b).

Dedicated APP Funding

To cover all remaining costs, the APP will require a dedicated, sustainable stream of public funding. In this respect, a state APP confronts two major financial challenges. First, state (and local) governments operate under tight fiscal constraints that make them ill-equipped to adequately finance postsecondary education in general and adult students' counter-cyclical patterns of enrollment in particular.³⁰ Second, given the fact that many promise programs rely on multiple revenue streams to remain sustainable, it creates a scenario where certain funding sources may be continuously tempted to reduce their contributions based upon the notion that other sources will ultimately fill the funding gap they leave behind (case in point, states who understand they can reduce their annual share of postsecondary funding because federal funding or student contributions will make up the difference).

Our team hopes to address both problems by instituting an integrated system of matching formulae under which states and postsecondary providers, respectively, make and solicit primary financial contributions while the federal government shoulders the lion's share of financial costs through matching funds.³¹ Specifically, state governments should (a) make primary contributions to the APP and (b) match at a modest rate (e.g., 1:4) any general or provider-specific contributions that local governments, employers, or philanthropies make to the APP. The modest state match is intended to give participating postsecondary providers strong incentives to solicit contributions from local funders—many of whom will likely want their APP contributions invested locally—without overburdening states' limited fiscal capacities. The federal government should in turn match both portions of states' APP spending at a more generous rate (e.g., 2:1).³²

In sum, this financial arrangement is intended to maximize available resources by leveraging (a) state governments' abilities to plan financially for the APPs they implement and oversee, (b) postsecondary providers' abilities to raise funds from locally oriented businesses, philanthropies, and municipal governments, and (c) the federal government's unique capacity to borrow in order to adequately finance adult students' counter-cyclical patterns of postsecondary enrollment at scale.

There may be some instances where federal funds may not be available to support certain aspects of an APP, leaving policy makers to find alternative sources of revenue to fund the gap. It is this committee's recommendation that entities who are unable to fund all aspects of an APP first look to eliminate those program enhancements (as noted in second part of this report) that may have the least impact on their participants' success. Alternatively, entities may find success in pursuing alternative sources not regularly used for postsecondary education funding. Some states have funded APPs or other grant aid using local endowments, cost sharing with local/county governments, state or local workforce investment funds, individual development accounts, commercial real estate tax revenue,³³ lottery revenue,³⁴ corporate partnership,³⁵ and/or tax credit auctions.³⁶

Partnerships

Partnership with external entities will be critical to the success of APPs around the nation. Employers and state and local agencies, as well as philanthropic organizations, can all benefit from the increased educational attainment of adult workers, and asking them to support that work will serve to enrich the quality of existing APP efforts.

Employers sponsoring registered apprenticeships might partner with local Title IV–eligible institutions so their student-apprentices can enroll in an eligible curriculum and receive federal student aid. Institutions or APP agencies can also work with employers to develop tuition assistance programs that can benefit both employees and employers.³⁷

State agencies administering SNAP should reach out to employers sponsoring registered apprenticeships to include the latter in the state’s SNAP employment and training plan. State agencies administering SNAP can receive up to \$10 million in federal SNAP funding (plus 50% reimbursements for participant expenses) for employment and training programs that help SNAP recipients and are included in the state’s SNAP employment and training plan (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

All education providers participating in an APP should be strongly encouraged to partner with local food pantries, including improving access to existing food pantries and opening subsidiary food pantries on campus.

Outreach and Recruitment

Recruiting and enrolling students presents a distinctive challenge for APPs (Carlson et al., 2016). In order to recruit a broad population of adults and gain the participation of state employers, the APP should take up a multifaceted outreach and recruitment strategy.

First, the state government and its agencies should contact state employees and state social-benefit recipients to notify them of the program and their possible eligibility. States might also leverage local career service centers and information from state tax returns to help notify residents of their potential eligibility. Second, participating colleges, including all state colleges, should employ their administrative data systems to identify and contact stopped-out students, who withdraw from college temporarily, since these students are likely to be eligible for the program. Marketing campaigns can also be implemented for those systems with financial and personnel capacity. Regardless of capacity, holding local informational sessions can provide an opportunity for local adults to learn more about the program and even meet face to face with intake and financial advisors about their enrollment options. Third, the state’s apprenticeship agency (or the state’s US Department of Labor Apprenticeship office) should contact American job centers and the program sponsors for all registered apprenticeships and encourage them to (a) encourage eligible employees (if any) to enroll in the promise program, (b) apply to be on the state’s ETP list and (c) begin a process of concentration with participating Title IV–eligible institutions to align apprenticeship programs with requirements of federal student aid where possible to maximize apprentices’ access to federal student aid. Fourth, state governments, local governments, and participating postsecondary providers should share outreach and recruitment materials with volunteer agencies, employers, K–12 schools, publicly funded media, and religious organizations.

Finally, a state-administered public outreach campaign should clearly package and communicate the program’s financial guarantee and straightforward eligibility criteria. For instance, TV, radio, billboard, and movie-theater advertisements should call for adults to take a single, specific action—like “apply,” “visit,” or “call”—to begin the enrollment process. Likewise, billboards and advertisements could feature specific jobs and occupations connected to specific adult-focused programs offered locally. A public campaign should also include digital outreach to direct interested adults to a web portal (or to interact on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) that offers information and enrollment services in parallel with in-person intake advising elaborated above.

Prepare for Future Evaluation

The implementation of an APP involves considerable financial and human capital. It is therefore critical to evaluate the degree to which an APP supports adults through a/an apprenticeship, certificate, degree, or career pathway program. This evaluation requires a dedicated information system that tracks adults through their intake, persistence, completion, and labor-market outcomes.

Piloting the Program

To determine the APP’s impact and return on investment, it is essential that states carefully plan, pilot, and evaluate the program before implementing it at scale. Evidence from the pilots can help to inform program improvements covering outreach, recruitment, support, delivery, and other key design features.

Market Research

After reviewing the experiences of similar programs implemented elsewhere, states can begin preparing for APP implementation by estimating their eligible population using Census and National Student Clearinghouse data. NCES data on adult students or, preferably, data on adult students from state colleges and universities and labor market information aggregators can help states assess the likely financial need—and Title IV eligibility—of eligible state residents and begin to estimate the cost of providing the APP grant. States can likewise employ federal data and work with state agencies that administer social benefits to assess APP students' likely need and eligibility for various social services, including child-care. Finally, states should review integrated postsecondary education data systems, consult community college leaders, and work with state apprenticeship agencies (or the states' US Department of Labor Apprenticeship offices) to assess to the capacities of potential postsecondary providers in the state.

Pilot

Next, the APP should be piloted within self-contained communities before being implemented at scale. Given the close coordination anticipated between participating employers and nearby community colleges, it may make sense to pilot the APP among both colleges and employers within localities where the full ecosystem of support can be generated on a small scale, with minimal gaps, rather than selecting a random statewide sample of interested postsecondary providers (which would likely mean gaps in program provisions across evaluation locations). Furthermore, early rounds of the APP pilot might focus first on implementing core program elements, such as the aid award and advising services, and phase in services such as on-campus childcare in later rounds of the pilot. Staggering or escalating the implementation of support services over time can create an opportunity for rigorous evaluation of the incremental impact of each phase of enhancement.

Implementation and Impact Evaluation

Initial cohorts of participants should be asked to participate in a third-party APP evaluation by responding to occasional surveys and agreeing to the sharing of educational and labor market participation data. As pilot rounds progress, the APP tracking system (see the Services and Supports section) will collect key data on each element of program implementation, students' use of support services, and the progress of participating and nonparticipating adults. These can be costed using information from the participating providers and funders. It will be important to gauge eligible adults' labor-market outcomes. State APP agencies can then use the evaluation findings to assess the costs and benefits of various program elements, with special attention to participating adults' enrollment intensity, credit accumulation, retention, upward transfer, and completion rates.

It will be valuable for long-term program sustainability and expansion to demonstrate the impact of an APP on motivating eligible adults to pursue a credential they would not otherwise have sought. Impact evaluation, however, requires a counterfactual, that is, a measure of what normally happens to eligible adults in the absence of the APP. Without comparison to a counterfactual, the APP is vulnerable to criticisms that its programming merely supports adult education transitions that would have happened anyway. There are several options to gather counterfactual evidence. Inevitably, most require additional evaluation funds because data must be gathered from potentially eligible individuals not receiving the APP similarly to the way data is gathered from participants. With the phased roll out design suggested previously, pre-scale up, one of the most convincing evaluation designs, would track educational outcomes of adults in nonparticipating communities and compare these to adults in APP communities. Alternative designs include regression discontinuity designs that rely on comparing those just above and below the income threshold for inclusion and randomized trials, where eligible individuals are randomly assigned to program and control groups. This last design is often considered the gold standard in program evaluation, but it cannot be implemented satisfactorily in contexts where access to APP is already unlimited. However, if resources to support the full APP are insufficient for every eligible adult in its initial years, a lottery or randomized waitlist could be used to allocate the scarce resources, creating a de facto control group. Yet, other opportunities for counterfactual designs may arise in the context of different states' start up plans.

The optimal evaluation design, given operational and political realities, can be finalized later. Nonetheless, evaluation must be considered an integral part of the design of initial roll out as agencies and partners are engaged, not something imposed later or developed as an afterthought.

Revision

Finally, as the evaluation provides a clearer understanding of program take-up, adult students' needs, providers' capacities, and overall costs, state APP agencies may consider adjusting the APP's eligibility criteria and revising the program's promised aid award and support services. For instance, APP agencies should carefully consider whether adults participating in employer-based training have adequate access to support services sited at community colleges.

Conclusion

Currently, our postsecondary systems inadvertently shut out adults from furthering or resuming their education, either by disregarding previous academic accomplishments, providing inflexible course schedules, or not considering the costs of non-tuition-related necessities, which tend to expand along with the familial obligations of older student populations. Implementing college promise programs that target the adult student population specifically can assuage these issues. Such programs must be flexible, allowing adults to pursue various types of academic programs (degrees, certificates, apprenticeships, etc.) that work with their occupational and familial commitments. They must also provide a support system in form of mentors, navigators, and financial advisors to guide adult students through their postsecondary education in an affordable and timely manner. However, APPs cannot work in isolation to achieve these outcomes. Postsecondary institutions must change their policies and practices to better accommodate this population; stakeholders, such as businesses and philanthropies, will be needed to help fund APPs; and state and local governments must plan, implement, and evaluate these programs well. By working together, the nation can help adult students attain postsecondary success.

Suggested citation

Soares, L., Bush, A., Sheffer, H., Steele, P., Johnson, N., Ford, R., & Gibson, J. (2020). Adult promise programs. In C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-20-17, pp. 36–48). Educational Testing Service. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12299>

7. Promoting College Access and Success for Undocumented Students: Context Matters in the Ecosystem of Support Services

Rachel E. Freeman¹, Robert T. Teranishi¹, Ryan Cornner², Jennifer Galvez², and Efren Lopez³

¹University of California, Los Angeles, CA

²Los Angeles Community College District, Los Angeles, CA

³University of California, Santa Cruz, CA

Building education equity for undocumented students in higher education is a pressing civil rights issue. Undocumented immigrants are foreign-born individuals who entered the United States without inspection or stayed beyond the expiration of a visa, do not hold permanent resident visas, or are not protected under other policies that allow for long-term residency or work permits (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). To work best with this student population, it is important to understand the federal, state, institutional, and community contexts that shape education equity for undocumented students. This report discusses factors at these multiple levels and provides a menu of recommendations to promote access and success for undocumented students in higher education. These recommendations comprise a holistic view of support for undocumented students (e.g., financial aid, mental health, academic, and legal services) and offer guidance for the college promise programs underway across the United States.

Undocumented students have often led the development of programs and policies in higher education (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018; Valenzuela et al., 2015). Colleges are now tasked to support these students' efforts and shift these responsibilities onto the institutions, while working in partnership and collaboration with undocumented students. This report begins by providing an overview of the demography of the undocumented student population nationwide and then discusses the policy landscape at the national, state, and local levels and how colleges can work to build best practices within this policy landscape, especially in regard to the growing college promise movement in more than 300 communities in 47 states and for 29 statewide promise programs.

The Demography of Undocumented Students

Researchers estimate that approximately 11.4 million undocumented immigrants are currently living in the United States, which has a profound impact on higher education (Migration Policy Institute, n.d.). Undocumented students are graduating high school and attending college in ever increasing numbers: approximately 125,000 undocumented students reach high school graduation age, and 98,000 undocumented students graduate from high school every year (Zong & Batalova, 2019). The undocumented college student population is remarkably heterogeneous, consisting of Black, Latina/o, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and White individuals and representing positions along the full spectrum of socioeconomic status. They also have a range of immigration histories—originating from more than 55 different countries of origin—and speak a wide variety of languages and dialects (Teranishi et al., 2015).

The diverse immigration histories of undocumented students are similar to those for undocumented immigrants generally, where just over half (53%) of all undocumented immigrants were born in Mexico, while 16% were born in Asia, 14% in Central America, 6% in South America, 3% in the Caribbean, and 3% in Africa (Migration Policy Institute, n.d.). The distribution of undocumented residents in different states is also notable and has implications for higher education. The states with the largest undocumented populations include California, Texas, Florida, Illinois, New York, and New Jersey.

Undocumented students attend every type of postsecondary institution: 2-year and four-year colleges, public and private colleges, and colleges that range in selectivity. Research has found that the majority (62%) of undocumented students enroll in a community college as their first entry into higher education (Teranishi et al., 2011). Community colleges' affordability, convenient location to home, and open admission policies often appeal to undocumented students (Muñoz, 2018; Teranishi et al., 2011).

The demographic portrait of undocumented students tells us two things: First, no college or university should assume that these issues are not relevant to their campus community. Second, the higher education community needs to look beyond stereotypes and false assumptions that often drive their understanding and treatment of this population. This report details the policy landscape at both the federal and state levels next.

Plyler vs. Doe

The 1982 Supreme Court decision that ruled that states cannot deny students free public education due to their immigration status (American Immigration Council, 2016).

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

A federal law designed to keep student records private by mandating that schools receive written permission from parents or students over 18 to release any educational information, with certain exceptions (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

An immigration policy created in 2012 that allows people who came to the United States as children to request “deferred action,” allowing the individual to remain and work in the U.S. for two years. While such individuals can renew their deferred status, they are not allowed citizenship. On September 5, 2017, the Trump administration rescinded DACA, but a series of lawsuits filed against the administration has prompted U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to resume accepting DACA renewal requests. However, no new DACA applications are currently being accepted (National Immigration Law Center, 2019; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2018).

Affordable Care Act (ACA)

Currently, undocumented immigrants cannot purchase private health insurance and are ineligible for Medicare, nonemergency Medicaid, and CHIP. However, their children may be eligible for private or public health insurance if they are “citizens or lawfully present” (National Immigration Law Center, 2014).

Figure 7.1 Current federal policies affecting undocumented students.

Adapted from *Overview of Undocumented Students*, by Immigrants Rising, 2018 (https://immigrantsrising.org/wp-content/uploads/Immigrants-Rising_Overview-of-Undocumented-Students.pdf). Copyright 2018 by Immigrants Rising.

The Impact of Federal Policy on Undocumented Students in Higher Education

The federal context for undocumented students has changed through the years. In 1982, the landmark *Plyler v. Doe* Supreme Court case ensured access to free K–12 education for undocumented children (Immigrants Rising, 2018). However, federal policies have blocked undocumented students’ access to federal financial aid for college, including grants (i.e., Pell) and federal loans. Additionally, undocumented students are not eligible to participate in federally funded programs that promote college access, including McNair and Upward Bound (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; Gonzales, 2010). Beyond the restriction of federal loans and federally funded programs, the federal government has allowed private colleges and universities to determine their own policies and state governments to determine access to public education and state-level financial aid. The state level landscape will be further discussed in the next section.

In 2012, the Obama administration announced DACA, which grants temporary relief from deportation and allows access to work authorization and driver licenses for some undocumented young adults. Even though DACA does not directly address access to higher education, it has resulted in expansion of access to higher education (see Figure 7.1 for more information about these and other federal policies).

The recent attempts to dismantle DACA, increased enforcement at the border, and expanded deportation efforts have created an increasingly hostile environment for undocumented immigrants and mixed status families. This hostility has resulted in changes felt throughout higher education, including a significant decline in undocumented student enrollment in higher education. For example, the Los Angeles Community College District saw about a 10% decrease in undocumented student enrollment immediately following the 2017 presidential inauguration (Los Angeles Community College District, n.d.). Furthermore, practitioners are faced with the challenge of supporting undocumented students in an environment that is antagonistic to these students’ presence in the United States and their pursuits of higher education and social mobility.

Students and parents have a legitimate fear of action related to their documented status that needs to be addressed. Unlike nonprofit, religious, or other public interest groups, colleges are often viewed as a government entity, especially in states where colleges are under direct authority of state structures. The organizational responsibility of the college must be explained, the regulations related to the protection of student records highlighted, and the distinction between federal immigration entities and the colleges made. While highlighting records protection offered through Family Educational

Rights and Privacy Act is important to assure that even federal regulations protect students, there is much more that should be done to provide students a reasonable sense of safety.

State-Level Policy Variations

Exclusionary policies at the federal level make state-level policies extremely important for undocumented students. In the development of an effective ecosystem, each institution must situate their support efforts within the context of state and local policies. While 16 states (as of 2019) have legislation that afford undocumented students in-state tuition, six states have legislation that bars undocumented students from using public services for college. Other states fall in between these extremes. The variance in state policies can be difficult for students to navigate.

The creation of DACA has led to changes in the way states approach in-state tuition policies. DACA, as a legal status, has led to the development of more flexible state policies (Torres-Valverde, 2014).

The development of college promise programs for undocumented students will require a detailed understanding of state requirements and a means of simplifying requirements for students (see Figure 7.2). Promise programs in states that bar in-state tuition will need a different funding model. Whereas some states have developed state support for college promise programs,³⁸ states that bar the use of public funds for undocumented students will need to be funded completely through philanthropic and other private sector investments.

While college promise programs have grown throughout the nation, there are only five states that allow undocumented students to participate (Taylor & Del Pilar, 2018). These states—California, Oregon, Washington, Delaware, and Rhode Island—have varying qualifications, but all of them require potential students to have graduated from an in-state high school.

<p>States offering in-state tuition through legislation</p> <p>*In-state tuition approved by Board of Regents instead of state legislature</p>	<p>California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Texas, Utah and Washington</p> <p>*Hawaii, Michigan, Oklahoma and Rhode Island</p>
<p>States offering state financial aid</p> <p>** Established through state legislation but privately funded</p> <p>*** Legislation passed but not currently in effect</p>	<p>California, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, and Washington</p> <p>** Illinois</p> <p>*** Connecticut (will implement in 2020)</p>
<p>States prohibiting in-state tuition for undocumented immigrants</p>	<p>Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, Missouri, and North Carolina</p>
<p>States banning admission of undocumented students at some or all public colleges</p>	<p>Alabama, Georgia (university system only) and South Carolina</p>
<p>States without explicit legislation on tuition or state financial aid</p>	<p>Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming</p>

Figure 7.2 State policies affecting undocumented students in higher education. Adapted from *Overview of Undocumented Students*, by Immigrants Rising, 2018 (https://immigrantsrising.org/wp-content/uploads/Immigrants-Rising_Overview-of-Undocumented-Students.pdf). Copyright 2018 by Immigrants Rising.

Table 7.1 Academic Persistence of Los Angeles College Promise Program Alumni, by Immigration Status

Persistence	Total <i>N</i>	Undocumented students		Citizens & documented residents	
		<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Total cohort ^a	4,066	309	8	3,757	92
Fall to Spring semester	3,718	277	90	3,351	89
Fall to Spring semester (full time in Spring)	2,972	235	76	2,661	71
Fall to Fall semester	3,149	237	77	2,835	75
Fall to Fall semester (full time in second Fall)	2,071	154	50	1,867	50

^aData source: Los Angeles Community College District, 2019.

With many programs being new, it is difficult to find concrete data on access and completion for students. Data on subpopulations, such as undocumented students, is even more difficult to attain. However, Oregon reports that approximately 75% of college promise participants enrolled in six or more units for three consecutive semesters and completed the first-year program in Cohorts 1 and 2 (Cox et al., 2018). California has had separate implementations of college promise programs throughout its 72 districts, and Los Angeles began implementation of its program 1 year prior to the state implementation. As a result, leading indicators of success are available.

The Los Angeles Community College District launched the LA College Promise in 2017 with support from and lead by the Los Angeles Mayor's Office. The program is open to all graduating seniors from the Los Angeles Unified School District, regardless of immigration status. The program requires full-time enrollment, enrollment in required math and English courses, and completion of federal or, in the case of undocumented students, state financial aid applications. The inclusion of undocumented students was built on state law, allowing undocumented high school graduates to attend college with in-state tuition and state financial aid. The program was developed to include success coaches who assist students throughout the year and offer specialized counseling and effective referrals. While all colleges have supports for undocumented students, the LA College Promise program does not include specific interventions for undocumented students.

Despite this, the program has excelled in both access and success for undocumented students. In a time when enrollment of undocumented students has been declining, the LA College Promise program has shown strong enrollment, with 7.6% of the entering cohort holding undocumented status. This is higher than the general population and the trends in previous entering populations. Fall to Fall persistence was over 76% (see Table 7.1), and half of the cohort maintained full time enrollment in the second year, providing an opportunity to complete on time and within 2 years. These data are at parity with the general LA College Promise population.

These data make clear that a college promise program can increase access to and completion of higher education. However, there is further opportunity for increasing student success. The current LA College Promise program is oriented toward traditional educational services. Providing intentional interventions for barriers unique to undocumented students could lead to enhanced completion and more equitable outcomes for LA and nationally.

Community Partnerships and Local Advocacy

Outside of state policy, there are local contexts that drive the development of an ecosystem. Throughout the nation, local municipalities, cities, and counties have developed independent efforts to support undocumented communities, including the establishment of sanctuary cities.³⁹ These local efforts serve as major starting points for institutional engagement with undocumented communities. The local context can either be built upon if supportive or must be counteracted if less supportive. In the recommendations section of this report, we detail best practices that institutions can build. All of these recommendations would work well in local contexts that are supportive or less supportive. In state and local contexts that are less supportive where there may not be as many resources, the development of college task forces, trainings of staff, and relationships with community partners will be especially useful in building resources.

The presence of local advocacy groups can also affect the establishment of an effective college promise ecosystem and provide partnerships. Local advocacy groups can reach out to communities, creating a consistent message of support for undocumented students. They can also help build community supports within and outside institutions, including legal aid,

financial support, and other needed supports. Such multiorganizational interactions can lead to the creation of alliances that allow for further exchange of information, resources, and supports and create access to services for undocumented students that institutions may lack.

Undocumented status transcends the individual student. Family immigration status is a real concern in working with students. Whether students are citizens or undocumented, there is a concern about the impact of attending college on family members. Working with local community groups demonstrates an understanding of the needs of immigrant students and the requirement that the whole family be considered. Bringing in interest groups and community partners will ensure that institutions are working with the whole family and not just the student. Furthermore, this type of partnership can help bring resources to the table that are beyond institutional capacity. This includes legal assistance, housing assistance, job and career planning, and other components in which immigration status impacts the overall ability for students to integrate into higher education.

Establishing and Tailoring a College Promise Program for Undocumented Students

College promise programs are developing across the nation to increase regional college going rates and college completion outcomes. The College Promise Campaign indicates that a college promise program is a commitment to fund a college education for every eligible student who is advancing on the path to earn a degree, a certificate, and/or credits that transfer to a 4-year university, starting in America's community colleges (College Promise Campaign, n.d.-a). The initial challenge in developing an undocumented student college promise ecosystem is the establishment of the criteria for undocumented student participation. The development of a promise program requires a stipulation of the population served. In most cases, this involves requirements related to where students reside, their high school, or other local stipulations. Promise programs must determine the inclusion of undocumented students. As indicated above, this determination is a complex evaluation of the state's limitations on in-state tuition, regulations on the use of public funding for undocumented persons, and local reciprocity to philanthropic support.

The second task is to determine the possible sources of funding to support the promise of a free college education. Based on the current state of regulations for undocumented students, it is unlikely that promise programs will include undocumented students in most states. The use of last-dollar policies, combined with federal financial aid restrictions, further limit the ability for undocumented students to participate in promise programs. To begin or expand a college promise program for undocumented students, institutions must first align their starting point with effective strategies, as indicated below (see Figure 7.3).

Based on the context of the state, each institution should begin advocacy or planning to move forward with the inclusion of undocumented students. In some cases, this may require policy changes, and in others, there may be a need for significant commitment from philanthropic groups and individuals.

The establishment of a free tuition scholarship allows institutions to begin the establishment of a college promise, but it only serves as a starting point for the development of a program that fully supports students' needs from their transition to college and to the completion of their educational goals. College promise programs can build in requirements for students based on activities that promote college success. These requirements can and should align with the areas of undocumented student supports noted in the preceding sections, including financial aid, legal and housing assistance, and job and career planning.

Based on national models, all college promise programs should have required elements (Millett et al., 2018). Figure 7.4 notes these requirements and adjustments for serving undocumented populations.

Colleges and universities should also implement multiple best practices on their campuses. Since every campus and local context is unique, the best practices for one campus may not be the same across campuses. Given the importance of institutional and local context, the following are some recommendations we particularly highlight.

Recommendations for Practice and Programs

Depending on the institutional, state, and local contexts, several recommended best practices for programs at higher education institutions include the development of USRCs; training for faculty, administrators, and staff; legal services; mental and physical health services; the development of task forces; and academic support programs.

State Policy	Strategy	Funding
States offering in-state tuition (15 states)	<p>Review criteria for in-state tuition for undocumented students.</p> <p>Align promise inclusion criteria to in-state tuition criteria.</p> <p>Assure that promise program is first dollar.</p>	<p>Philanthropy: Create a fundraising plan to support the in-state tuition of undocumented promise students.</p> <p>Policy: Advocate for the inclusion of undocumented students in state aid programs and use state aid as first dollar.</p>
States offering state financial aid (8 states)	<p>Review criteria for state financial aid for undocumented students.</p> <p>Align promise inclusion criteria to state financial aid criteria.</p> <p>Determine whether the program will be first or last dollar.</p>	<p>Philanthropy: If the promise program is first dollar, create a fundraising plan to support the in-state tuition of undocumented promise students.</p> <p>Policy: If the promise program is last dollar, continue alignment with state financial aid.</p>
Prohibits in-state tuition for undocumented immigrants (6 states)	<p>Review potential for state policy change.</p> <p>Determine if philanthropy will support nonresident students.</p> <p>Align promise program criteria to the best possible model for the state context.</p>	<p>Philanthropy: Create a fundraising plan to support the nonresident tuition of undocumented promise students.</p> <p>Policy: Advocate for undocumented students' eligibility for in-state tuition.</p>
Bans admission of undocumented students at some or all public colleges (2 states and Georgia University System)	<p>Review potential for state policy change.</p>	<p>Policy: Advocate for undocumented students' eligibility for admission and in-state tuition.</p>
States without explicit legislation on tuition or state financial aid (19 states)	<p>Review potential for state policy change.</p> <p>Align promise program criteria to the best possible model for the state context.</p>	<p>Philanthropy: Create a fundraising plan to support the nonresident tuition of undocumented promise students.</p> <p>Policy: Advocate for undocumented students' eligibility for in-state tuition.</p>

Figure 7.3 Strategies for advocating for undocumented students in higher education.

Resource Centers for Undocumented Students

College campuses can highlight their commitment to undocumented students by establishing USRCs, which are centralized hubs of information that engage administrators, faculty, staff, and students. They are safe, one-stop spaces for students, where staff serve as liaisons to both on and off-campus resources. These centers also attempt to build a sense of community for students and educate the campus on establishing best practices to serve their undocumented student population. Even though the development of USRCs is critical, it is important that colleges do not shift the responsibility to serve undocumented students only to those in the USRC. As some of the USRC staff have personal experience with immigration, it is important to support our colleagues as they help students navigate very personal experiences that might bring up memories of their own experiences. Additionally, to adequately serve students, these spaces need access to computers, supplies, printing, and working space. USRCs provide services to students who are residents and citizen students who are part of mixed status families, as well. It is important to note that the discussions on immigration and rumored changes to immigration policies have heightened concerns across immigrant communities, making students cautious of the resources and services they access as to not negatively impact or expose a family member.

Element	Modification
Full-time enrollment	No modification
Maintaining academic standards	No modification
Applying for financial aid	If states do not offer in-state tuition to undocumented students, remove the requirement to fill out financial aid forms. Consider the barrier related to the possible release of sensitive information.
Participation in activities	Consider aligning with the needs for undocumented students.

Figure 7.4 Adjusted requirements for a college promise program.

Training for Faculty, Staff, Practitioners, and Allies

Working with and for undocumented students requires an understanding of local, state, and national policies that impact these students' daily lives. Providing undocumented students with inadequate or wrong information can limit the students' access to services and financial assistance. The complexity of policies that impact undocumented students makes training and educational campaigns integral parts of building support. Training can be divided into two categories: ally and staff. Ally training focuses on developing support for undocumented students across the campus. The training covers how to review policies, practices, and updates about immigration. The goal of ally training is to build a collective of individuals who are committed to serving students, including challenging current practices that are barriers in the students' academic careers. Allies are asked to be proactive and committed to keep themselves up-to-date on immigration policies and advocate for undocumented students in the many spaces the faculty or staff members participate.

The traditional staff training also reviews policies, but the focus of this training is coordinating institutional practices to process paperwork and/or serve undocumented students. In these spaces, the discussions are specific to the office and how policies require them to adjust their services, such as admission, financial aid, and counseling. As more policies are implemented, these offices must adjust forms, paperwork requirements, and data tracking. Practitioner-focused training reviews the institution's practices, policies, and legislation impacting undocumented students and develops implementation plans. This training allows USRC staff to serve as true liaisons by having individuals in key offices that can answer students' questions.

Legal Services

Like many marginalized communities, undocumented students are vulnerable to predatory practices. The constant change in policies causes a lot of confusion in the community. Colleges can establish partnerships with legal organizations that are vetted and can provide free services to the college community. The USRCs can partner with these legal services by hosting immigration clinics, workshops, and trainings on campuses. The services can range from free review of students' immigration cases to covering costs for DACA application renewals. Beyond the one-on-one services, legal organizations aid the campus community by facilitating Know Your Rights training and family preparedness workshops, which aid families in preparing for possible family separation through deportation. These services not only help undocumented students, but also resident students who are part of mixed status families.

Mental and Physical Health

Access to mental and physical health services is a growing concern. Rising anti-immigrant rhetoric and actions over the years have directly affected the mental health of undocumented students. Fear of deportation, lack of educational and occupational options after graduation, stigma, and the resulting isolation and loneliness have led to substance abuse, suicidality, self-harm, and depression for this population (Gonzales et al., 2013). Fears and stress intensified when policies promised during Trump's campaign, such as the termination of DACA and the Temporary Protected Status, began to be

implemented (Andrade, 2019; Muñoz, 2018). The rising costs in housing and limited access to employment pile onto the barriers undocumented students must navigate as they try to provide for themselves and their families. Limited mental and physical health services push students to delay receiving adequate services, which can lead to further complications (Gonzales et al., 2013). Depending on the state, a student's status will keep them away from accessing mental and health resources. As a result, some states have expanded health care rights to include specific undocumented populations. Colleges have also responded to mental and health needs by partnering with local organizations to facilitate and establish safe spaces for students to discuss some of the issues impacting them. Such safe spaces include workshops with mental health professionals, informal "talking circles," and streamlined referral services.

Task Forces

Beyond training, the establishment of advisory/task force committees that convene campuswide allies is an important strategy to develop campuswide equity for undocumented students. Even at campuses with an USRC, task forces are an important opportunity to expand the responsibility of supporting undocumented students beyond the USRC and onto the greater campus community. The same advisory/task force committee should also be developed at the districtwide level. For example, the campus-specific, in collaboration with districtwide, work has allowed individuals to identify the institutional gaps and barriers, such as language on forms and general practices, in the Los Angeles Community College District. These collaborative efforts allow the colleges to embed support in their services. In addition, we need student advocates who are doing the individual, one-on-one work with undocumented students, those in administration who can secure funding and resources for the one-on-one work, and district administrators and leadership who advocate for policy change. Together, the college staff, faculty, and administration can work toward creating safe spaces for undocumented students and showing visible support toward them.

Academic Support Programs

Academic support is a critical factor in supporting undocumented students' success in college. It is important to embed resources and support for undocumented students in first year programs, orientations, and academic courses. Colleges can also develop programs specifically catered to undocumented students, such as summer bridge programs and first-year seminars. Moreover, cohort-based models create safe spaces for students to seek peer support and can train individuals on how to walk students through the process of enrolling and successfully completing their degree.

Faculty Support

Faculty can demonstrate their support to undocumented students by including safe space language, such as adding a UndocuSupporter logo (i.e., the "Migration is beautiful" butterfly). By faculty identifying themselves, they are serving as connections to on-campus resources, such as the USRC.

Online Access to Resources and Information

Online presence is vital for education programs. Having a college website that serves as a hub of information, including types of financial aid available to undocumented students and sources of legal support, can be very beneficial for undocumented students, especially students who may fear exposing themselves by seeking information in person.

Relationships With Local High Schools

Although immigration affects students throughout their lives, many students begin encountering academic restrictions because of their status once they start applying to college. Like many services pertaining to first-generation students, the earlier students know about the resources available to them, the better. Thus, early education campaigns that highlight resources and provide information on how to access these resources can be extremely beneficial to undocumented students.

Policy Recommendations

Increased Access to Financial Support (i.e., Scholarships, Stipends, Internships)

Finances are one of the primary concerns for undocumented students. Depending on the status of a student (DACA, visa, etc.), they may not have access to employment. Due to limited access to income and financial assistance, colleges can assist students by opening scholarships to all students regardless of status, not asking for a social security number on applications, and establishing on-campus internships that are stipend specific.

Development of Clear Protocols and Forms

Colleges should update their forms to include language that is friendly to undocumented students. For example, in California, staff and faculty should include FAFSA and California Dream Act information when discussing financial assistance. Colleges should have a clear enrollment process for undocumented students and advertise it on their websites, as well.

Relevant Curriculum

Immigration is a global phenomenon that affects us all. Creating discussion among various groups about immigration factors and impact can normalize the migration experience. The UCLA Labor Center created “Empowering Your Immigrant Student: A Teacher’s High School Curriculum to Understanding the Immigrant Experience,” a K–12 curriculum with modules that fit California Common Core learning standards. The Los Angeles Community College District introduced this curriculum to sociology and Chicana/o studies faculty, who integrated some of the modules into their courses and opened general classroom discussion regarding services and support for undocumented students on campus. The class dialog introduces undocumented students to resources without exposing them and can help their peers reflect on the additional barriers undocumented students face. In addition, all students review and discuss some of the economic, social, or political push-and-pull factors that cause the migration of people.

Development of Regulations for Responding to Immigration and Customs Enforcement Requests

It is recommended that either state or local regulations be developed to assert how personnel should respond to federal immigration requests. Certain conditions must be satisfied if executed by a federal judicial court. For example, staff and students must be informed of the difference between federally issued and signed judicial documents versus administrative warrants—which do not grant the same authority—and how to protect students’ rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and respond effectively to each (American Civil Liberties Union, 2019). Doing so can help provide a supportive environment for students and assure the undocumented population that the institution will fully protect students’ rights to the extent that the law allows and prevent unlawful access to students or students’ information.

Institutions must also develop processes for responding to the presence of immigration authorities on site and the planned response should be widely disseminated to students. This will demonstrate that the institution is focused on student protections and ensuring that students are able to learn without fear of immigration action on campus. California has created this requirement through legislation, and model procedures have been developed by the attorney general (Access to Higher Education for Every Student, 2018; Becerra, 2018;).

Conclusion

Now is an important time for colleges and universities to act to build more equitable policies and practices for undocumented students. Colleges should develop a detailed understanding of the federal, state, institutional, and local contexts that impact education equity for undocumented students. Colleges should also assess their current policy and programmatic landscape for undocumented students. Upon investigating college-specific needs, we hope this report, with its overview of the federal, state, and local context and our menu of recommendations, will be useful to colleges as they address support for undocumented students in their specific and unique contexts.

Acknowledgments

Resources from Immigrants Rising were revised November 2018. Founded in 2006, Immigrants Rising transforms individuals and fuels broader changes. With resources and support, undocumented young people are able to get an education, pursue careers, and build a brighter future for themselves and their community. Immigrants Rising is a fiscally sponsored project of community initiatives. For more information, visit www.immigrantsrising.org. The views expressed in this report represent the personal perspectives of the authors and should not be taken to represent any organizations with which they are affiliated.

Suggested citation

Freeman, R. E., Teranishi, R. T., Cornner, R., Galvez, J., & Lopez, E. (2020). Promoting college access and success for undocumented students: Context matters in the ecosystem of support services. In C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-20-17, pp. 49–58). Educational Testing Service. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12299>

8. Enhancing College Access and Success for Student Veterans: Providing Economic Opportunity and Supports Beyond the GI Bill Through College Promise

Beth E. Morgan¹, Rosye Cloud², Sandra Kurtinitis³, Barbara Illowsky⁴, and Sarah Aldridge²

¹Columbia University Center for Veteran Transition and Integration, New York, NY

²College Promise Campaign, Washington, DC

³Community College of Baltimore County, Baltimore, MD

⁴De Anza College, Cupertino, CA

In the 21st century in United States, a postsecondary degree or certificate has become increasingly necessary for career and social mobility. Since the Great Recession, 99% of new jobs have gone to workers with at least some college education, while 73% have gone to workers with a bachelor's degree or higher (Carnevale et al., 2016). By 2020, 65% of jobs will require education beyond high school; yet at current degree production rates, the United States will lack 5 million workers with postsecondary education by then (Carnevale et al., 2013). As the nature of the workforce is changing and adjusting for the future, it is increasingly necessary for students and adults to consider pursuing a degree for the first time or reskilling to keep up with the needs of a changing economy. Postsecondary completion rates for student veterans are approximately equal to those of their nonveteran classmates, yet veterans participate in the economy at a rate 16% lower than nonveterans (Marcus, 2017; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2015). Despite high levels of funding for student veteran education benefits, over \$11 billion in 2018, student veterans still require critical supports in higher education to graduate and move into meaningful employment (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018a).

Each year, approximately 200,000 service members transition out of the military and into their communities, a majority opting to take advantage of the VA education benefits and to attend college (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018d). In 2018, there were 893,725 students receiving VA education benefits—a decrease of 17% from 2014 (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018a). Student veterans are older than their traditional-aged classmates, are more likely to be heads of households, and work at high rates while in college, exhibiting characteristics similar to nonveteran adult students (Molina & Morse, 2015). To improve graduation rates and workforce participation for veterans, it is increasingly clear that funding for tuition and fees is not enough to maximize veteran outcomes and mobility. Student veterans face unique challenges and barriers related to their military service that impact both access and success in higher education that colleges and universities are uniquely situated to address. Additionally, they face most of the traditional barriers of adult students. However, many 2- and 4-year colleges do not currently have a robust offering of services or resources in place to address the needs of student veterans or adult students.

This report examines the current academic and social needs of student veterans in higher education and makes recommendations of reforms that colleges and universities can implement to build an ecosystem of support for student veterans on campus. The focus of this report is particularly on widening access to higher education for student veterans through financial supports, student services, and increased resources to ensure student success in college and the future. This ecosystem of support is emphasized within the framework of the college promise movement, which aims to make higher education as affordable and accessible as possible for all students (veteran or not) through paid-for tuition, fees, and additional student supports.

Rationale for Creating an Ecosystem of Support for Student Veterans

As student veterans transition to civilian and academic life, they face many unique institutional and external challenges that pose significant barriers to higher education. Despite efforts to provide benefits and supports to lessen the increasingly high cost of tuition and fees for student veterans, inconsistencies in access to these benefits makes a greater ecosystem of financial support important for student veteran success. The unrecognized costs of attending college, such as housing, transportation, course materials, and childcare, further exacerbate the burden of college access student veterans must overcome. Once on campus, student veterans face struggles similar to those of nontraditional students in general, including a lack of understanding from nonveteran peers and faculty/staff. They also face complications with understanding and accessing the benefits and resources needed for pathways to graduation and a career, exhibit gaps in foundational academic and study skills, and may not be aware of best academic practices. In addition, student veterans need additional mental health and health care supports. By building programs that lessen the financial strain of college attendance, streamlining and developing support services for student veterans, and taking steps to make college more welcoming and

easily navigable for student veterans, practitioners at 2- and 4-year colleges and universities can overcome the barriers student veterans face when returning to civilian life and school after years of service.

Background Information

Student Veteran Population Demographics and Statistics

In 2018, 893,725 veterans received education benefits, including the GI Bill, making up 4% of the postsecondary student population across the country (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018a). However, this number does not include student veterans in the postsecondary education system who were ineligible for or did not utilize VA education benefits. The average veteran is 25 years old when starting a degree and is likely to be a head of household (44% of student veterans are married, 52% have dependents), and 42% of student veterans work full time while in school (Molina & Morse, 2015). Student veterans are enrolled in diverse programs and institutions across the country: 54% are in associate degree or certificate programs, and 44% are in bachelor's degree programs. A majority of student veterans are enrolled in community colleges (38%) and for-profit institutions (23%), with only 19% attending public 4-year colleges and 10% in private 4-year institutions. To balance schoolwork with work and family responsibilities, over 60% of student veterans take classes online, at night or on weekends, with 90% taking alternative coursework online (Molina & Morse, 2015). Of student veterans utilizing the GI Bill benefits between 2002 and 2013, 48% completed their degree, similar to the completion rate of their traditional-aged peers in higher education (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2015).

Benefits and Tuition Supports for Student Veterans

Since the passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, the GI Bill has helped millions of veterans access higher education. The most recent authorization of the GI Bill is the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act, known as the "Forever GI Bill," passed in 2017 (Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act, 2017). Through the Forever GI Bill, qualifying veterans receive up to 36 months of tuition and fees, covering up to the full cost of public in-state tuition and fees. Benefits can be extended by up to 9 months for students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs, and a new 5-year pilot program for technology career development has been launched through the Forever GI Bill, VET TEC, which seeks to connect veterans with high tech employment by providing technology education courses (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018c). The GI Bill also provides housing allowances for qualifying students enrolled more than half-time and money for books and supplies for eligible veterans (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.-a).

As a supplement to the GI Bill, the Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program allows colleges and universities to partner with the VA to "fund tuition expenses that exceed either the annual maximum cap for private institutions or the resident tuition and fees for a public institution" (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2019c, para. 3). Student veterans with a service-connected disability may also be eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment benefits to help service members to find and keep a job (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.-b). In addition to funding for education through VA benefits, student veterans are also eligible for federal student aid, including nonrepayable grants such as the Pell Grant, subsidized and unsubsidized loans, and federal work-study, among other types of financial aid (MilitaryBenefits.info, n.d.-a). Moreover, at least 13 states across the country offer free tuition to qualifying veterans (MilitaryBenefits.info, n.d.-b).

Challenges Facing Student Veterans in Higher Education

Student veterans across the country face numerous barriers and challenges in accessing and succeeding in higher education. Many of these barriers and challenges are similar to the barriers faced by many of today's college students, despite, and in some cases because of, the benefits student veterans are provided to assist with access to higher education. While many of these barriers are a result of the lack of institutional support for student veterans within colleges and universities themselves, many are also related to the unique challenges the student veteran population faces in society when balancing a return to civilian life with academic and personal responsibilities. This report covers four key categories of challenges facing student veterans: (a) access and affordability, (b) transition, (c) academic advising and career counseling, and (d) unmet health care needs.

Access and Affordability

Despite funding available to student veterans in the form of the GI Bill, benefits may be insufficient to support the unique needs of nontraditional student veterans. Through the GI Bill, student veterans receive only 36 school months of active schooling, unless eligible for a STEM extension or a vocational rehab, which often fall short for a general 4-year degree. This challenge is exacerbated for student veterans who are pursuing degrees with stringent coursework requirements, who need refresher courses, or who need to work full- or part-time to support their families. The National Student Clearinghouse found that a strong majority of all students take more than 2 or 4 years to complete their degrees: the average time enrolled for an associate degree is 3.3 years, and 5.1 years is the average for a bachelor's degree (Shapiro et al., 2016). Non-traditional student veterans utilizing the Post-9/11 GI Bill took 1.8 more years to complete an associate degree and 2 more years to complete a bachelor's degree than their traditional, nonveteran peers (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2015). Many student veterans who enter community colleges at the beginning of their education and utilize their GI Bill benefits may exhaust their benefits before they are able to transfer to a university or complete a 4-year education (Fairweather et al., 2018). Students who are ineligible for full GI Bill benefits, or whose benefits expire before they can complete their degree, are then forced to contend with the exponentially high cost of college tuition. Over the past three decades, tuition at public 4-year colleges has more than doubled, even after adjusting for inflation, and the average amount of student loan debt for a graduate with a bachelor's degree has more than doubled (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Despite government investments in benefits to make college more accessible for service members, student veterans are impacted by the increasing cost of college along with their peers on campus.

The GI Bill and VA benefits are also not consistent from month to month, and even if students attend Fall, Spring, and Summer terms, they only receive benefits for 10 months per year due to the breaks between terms, requiring financial planning and saving for the months where benefits are lower or not paid (Montgomery et al., 2019). This inconsistency in the amount and timing of payments also applies to housing allowances provided through the GI Bill, making secure, affordable housing an increasingly key issue facing student veterans. General student housing is often seen as inappropriate for student veterans, who may be significantly older and have families, and the fact that students do not receive their housing benefits until school actually begins makes it more difficult to secure limited housing. Lastly, if school officials file GI Bill paperwork late or improperly, or if there are delays in payment from the Department of Veterans Affairs, student veterans could face late tuition/rental payments and potential debt and eviction (Fairweather et al., 2018).

Transition

After making the decision to attend or return to college after their military service, veterans often face a difficult transition back to civilian life or into higher education, and workshops and courses face critique for their lack of preparation of student veterans for the nuances and realities of the transition. Most transition coursework is limited to a handful of hours and in mass group environments that do not allow for individualized advising. A lack of vetting and calibration across transition services and the siloed services throughout government agencies can create chaos and confusion, as services, and the agencies providing those services, are often uncoordinated and logistically isolated. Separation from the military into civilian life and a transition to higher education tends to impact veterans' sense of identity, culture, authority, and interpersonal relationships, particularly related to moving from a hierarchical, structured environment into an educational system with less clear organizational structure and individualistic, unregimented responsibility (Fairweather et al., 2018; Jones, 2017). Student veterans often encounter a classroom setting where their peers and teachers may lack sensitivity to the disabilities of some student veterans, understanding of triggers student veterans may face in the classroom, and knowledge of how to work with student veterans (Montgomery et al., 2019). Furthermore, many student veterans transitioning into higher education have to contend with significant differences between themselves and their classmates in terms of age and life experience, which often becomes obvious in interactions in the classroom with professors and peers (Jones, 2017). This cultural disconnect can cause a sense of "otherness" for student veterans, which further exacerbates the complications, uncertainty, and discomfort associated with the transition out of military service and into higher education (Fairweather et al., 2018, p. 8).

Academic Advising and Career Counseling

In addition to the typical academic challenges a student faces while participating in higher education, student veterans may also face unique challenges when transitioning from a military culture to an academic culture. Those challenges may include a lack of foundational academic skills and limited understanding of best academic practices for success in college. They also encounter complicated pathways for accessing inconsistent and variable postmilitary benefits while making the difficult transition back to civilian life—and often find a lack of available or qualified counselors to help them navigate their education plans so they remain compliant with the VA benefits system. Student veterans are often reluctant to visit general counseling services on campus out of concern that their education plan may not be completed accurately or within compliance of VA benefit requirements (Montgomery et al., 2019). If military credits are not properly applied to students' transcripts, students could be forced to take classes they do not need and lose time and money from their GI Bill. Many student veterans also feel that the career resource centers on campus do not understand how to translate military experience into resumes or job interviews, and a lack of support around tailored career services leads student veterans to feel unprepared for employment beyond graduation (Fairweather et al., 2018). Lastly, government programs designed to support career and education planning for student veterans are often unable to make them aware of their programs, not due to a lack of funding, but due to a lack of innovation and utilization. Chapter 36, a program designed to support GI Bill students with career and education planning and advising, serves less than 2% of the annual 9/11 GI Bill population. In 2017, approximately 25% of the congressionally mandated funds for Chapter 36 were used, making it clear that a greater emphasis on quality counseling and advising for student veterans is necessary to achieve a meaningful increase in academic and career outcomes (American Legion, 2019).

Unmet Health Care Needs

A study of services for student veterans at community colleges in California revealed that 70% of student veterans reported sustaining illnesses or injuries during their military service, many of which may require additional health care resources or supports on or near campus (Montgomery et al., 2019). While it can be argued that the amount of overall mental health services required by student veteran populations is comparable to that of the general student population, their needs are often quite specific. Anxiety, depression, PTSD, and financial stress are prevalent among the student veteran population, and most mental health services accessed by veterans are provided through community partners, as only half of veterans resource centers (VRCs) on campuses have a mental health counselor on staff to specifically serve student veterans, and most counselors worked 15 hours or less per week (Montgomery et al., 2019). Without adequate on-campus health care, mental health services, and disability services, accessing health care services through VA or community providers often causes an additional and unnecessary financial and emotional burden for student veterans (Montgomery et al., 2019).

While the expansion of government funded services for veterans continues to grow (including services for those with less than honorable discharges), the VA finds itself struggling to consistently connect with all eligible veterans and provide them with timely, quality care.

Program Design

To overcome the numerous challenges facing student veterans, 2- and 4-year institutions are uniquely situated to make college more accessible and affordable for student veterans, to assist with resources for the additional costs associated with attendance, to support veterans through the transition to civilian life and higher education, and to help students succeed academically throughout their academic careers. The following recommendations would remove significant financial, social, and academic barriers to higher education and provide a robust, meaningful ecosystem of support for an improved quality of education for student veterans.

Recommendation: Include Veterans in College Promise Program Design

At its core, a college promise program would commit to funding, at a minimum, the first 2 years of community college for eligible students at a single institution, in a local community, or even throughout an entire state. Each promise program is able to tailor its particular features and funding strategies to the needs of its student population and the available resources of the area. By implementing a college promise program and removing the financial barrier to higher education

for veterans who may not qualify for the GI Bill or those who are unable to complete their degree within the timeline of their GI Bill benefits, student veterans would gain greater access to higher education. To ensure that a college promise program is available to student veterans as well, institutional leaders need to pay close attention to eligibility requirements. As student veterans are often older than their peers at school and are highly likely to be married, have children, or work full- or part-time to support their households, communities, and schools should ensure that promise scholarships are made available to students regardless of their age, graduation year or the number of credits they are able to enroll in per semester.

Many college promise programs go above and beyond to provide support for students, not just through financial assistance, but also through programs and resources to prepare promise students for academic and social success (Kanter et al., 2016). With special consideration given to the eligibility requirements, funding models, and additional student supports provided through the promise program, college promise programs have the opportunity to expand access to higher education for student veterans. Some institutions, such as Ventura College in California, have made college promise even more meaningful for student veterans by setting up a separate promise program, the William and Helen Scarpino Veterans Promise Program, to ensure that eligibility requirements do not exclude student veterans. This program, covering tuition and fees for the first year of student veterans' education at Ventura College, works to improve the college-going rate among veterans and active-duty military in the community and allows student veterans to reserve their GI Bill benefits for further education (Ventura College Foundation, n.d.).

Recommendation: Provide Support Services to Lessen Additional Costs of College Attendance

Student veterans benefit from targeted assistance when it comes to providing housing, childcare, transportation, and health care. As nontraditional students who are more likely to seek housing that can fit a family, student veterans often feel that a traditional dormitory environment does not fit their needs (American Council on Education, 2016). However, campus-provided housing (with certain accommodations) could be more beneficial for student veterans. Institutions can work with student veterans to apply GI Bill housing benefits and provide a community-based living situation to support student veterans and their families through their transition and academic career. Some institutions, such as New Mexico State University and the University of Southern California, are able to offer designated university housing for student veterans that are close to campus, inclusive of families, service-animal friendly, and build a community of peer support for student veterans (New Mexico State University, n.d.; Mackovich, 2018). Other 2- and 4-year institutions have taken on the challenge of housing for student veterans by providing additional resources through their VRCs to assist students with locating affordable housing options with other veterans, such as the Student Veteran Housing Program at George Mason University (Sweeney, 2013). For schools that are unable to directly provide on- or off-campus housing for student veterans, they should work as much as possible to build partnerships in the community to help meet the housing needs of student veterans, rather than leaving students to fend for themselves.

To further decrease the financial burden associated with college attendance that student veterans are disproportionately likely to face, such as for transportation, childcare, or food insecurity, Veterans Services at the Community College of Baltimore County implemented a Veteran and Military Connected Emergency Assistance Fund. Military-connected students who have need can be awarded up to \$500 per semester to cover one-time emergency expenses such as utilities, transportation, childcare, clothing, or food (Community College of Baltimore County, n.d.). According to Scholarship America (n.d.), 95% of students who receive emergency aid finish the semester they are in, and 88% enroll in the following semester.

Recommendation: Build Partnerships to Streamline Mental Health and Health Care Services on Campus for Student Veterans

Institutional steps toward reshaping on-campus health care and mental health care are an important student service to better serve student veterans. Overall, 2- and 4-year colleges should seek opportunities to formalize partnerships between the campus, the VA, and community-based health care providers and emergency services to ensure that student veterans have easily accessible health care and mental health services. An on-campus health care presence helps to lower the barriers that many student veterans cite as a challenge to utilizing VA health care, including wait times, difficulty scheduling appointments around their classes, and geographic distance to the VA (Fairweather et al., 2018).

Programs like the Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) initiative work to provide a more seamless transition to higher education through aligning VA, campus, and community health care and mental health services to student veterans at partner institutions. Many VITAL sites offer a range of mental health and counseling services on campus and provide a more direct link and integrated system to help students access VA health care services (National Center for PTSD & U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs VITAL, n.d.). Other local programs, such as the Student Veteran Health Program, launched in 2010 between the San Francisco VA Health Care System and four local community colleges, provide on-campus emotional support and psychological counseling and assistance with enrolling into VA health care and scheduling appointments to make the VA as accessible and responsible as possible. More than 3,000 student veterans in San Francisco community colleges have utilized VA services since the Student Veteran Health Program's inception, and more than 1,200 student veterans have enrolled in San Francisco VA Health Care Services (Eng, 2018). There are also community-based organizations, including national nonprofits such as the Cohen Veterans Network, working to provide high-quality mental health services to veterans and their families. By building partnerships with mental health organizations such as these, colleges and universities could help to make in-person and telehealth services more accessible to student veterans and their families and remove barriers to low- and no-cost services within their communities (Cohen Veterans Network, 2019).

Having on-site mental health services is essential to ensure that student veterans have the resources necessary to be successful academically and socially. These services could be provided through a partnership with the VA, such as VITAL or other community organizations, or could simply be training for campus mental health providers on how to work with veterans, including veterans in crisis, in a culturally competent manner. Institutions could work to designate a veteran-oriented mental health counselor in the campus counseling center (Davis, 2016). For example, Columbia University's Counseling and Psychological Services have taken steps to identify therapists who are especially good matches for student veterans as they face the transition from military service to civilian life in higher education (Columbia Health, n.d.).

Lastly, disability services at higher education institutions must be prepared to navigate difficulties around disclosure, documentation, and accommodation for student veterans with disabilities. To ensure that disability services are readily available and easily navigable for student veterans, steps should be taken to ensure that available health benefits and the process for receiving accommodations are made clear to both students and providers in a user-friendly and culturally competent format. Training faculty and staff is another important step to make sure all faculty are aware of the needs of student veterans with disabilities and of institutional responsibilities to provide accommodations (Shackelford, 2009).

Recommendation: Establish a Campus Veteran Resource Center

The establishment of a VRC provides a one-stop-shop for resources to help student veterans excel in all areas of higher education and to find support to overcome barriers impacting student veterans in financial aid, registration, admissions, advising, counseling, family support, housing, and jobs. As much as possible, VRCs should be physical spaces located on campus to provide student veterans with a space to congregate with students who share similar experiences and faculty/staff who understand their backgrounds. VRCs are essential for providing student veterans with spaces and dedicated faculty to assist them with transition and academic issues, including obtaining benefits and financial aid, receiving advice and guidance on academic and career paths, and accessing mental health services or other community resources for student veterans (Montgomery et al., 2019). Moreover, they are important for engaging student veterans in a community and contributing to their sense of well-being, involvement, and acceptance and participation in college life. VRCs serve as a meeting ground for student veteran organizations and allow veterans to find peers with whom they can connect and seek mentorship (Davis, 2016).

One of the key benefits of a VRC on campus is the consolidation of resources around student veteran benefits and academic/transition needs among knowledgeable and dedicated staff and faculty. VRCs can provide student veterans with strategies for success in college and help them explore the myriad ways the skills they have can be leveraged to enhance academic performance and improve learning outcomes in college. Without a VRC or well-trained, veteran-specific staff, student veterans are left to reach out to staff and faculty with limited knowledge and ability to assist when it comes to education plans, benefit paperwork, or health care access. In addition to serving as a resource to navigating higher education for student veterans, exceptional VRC staff help to promote campus and community engagement and support the academic and professional goals of student veterans (Montgomery et al., 2019).

Recommendation: Provide Peer Support Programs for Student Veterans

In addition to providing a specific space on campus for student veterans to congregate, meet with advisors, and gain access to resources throughout the institution and community, the implementation of peer support programs can provide a network of other student veterans who can assist with the transition to higher education. By connecting student veterans to a community of other veterans who have navigated similar experiences at the institution, student veteran peer programs “harness strengths inherent to the military ethos, including camaraderie, the buddy system, structure, and a sense of belonging” (Kees et al., 2017, p. 31). One such example is Peer Advisors for Veteran Education (PAVE), a nationwide peer support program in partnership with Student Veterans of America, which uses trained student veterans on campus to provide outreach, support, and resources for incoming student veterans through one-on-one mentorship and advising. PAVE has been implemented on 37 campuses across the country and works to provide a welcoming community and access to information and resources to assist student veterans through the transition to academic life (Kees et al., 2017). Colleges and universities seeking to establish student veteran support organizations, in addition to PAVE, might also leverage Student Veterans of America resources in that regard (Student Veterans of America, n.d.).

Recommendation: Increase Capacity to Support Academic and Career Advising for Student Veterans

As mentioned above, student veterans benefit when they have specifically dedicated staff and faculty to assist with accessing available resources on campus or in the local community. This is particularly significant when student veterans are seeking academic advising to complete their education plans and navigate the VA benefits system. Academic and career counselors need to understand how to translate military experience to college courses and credits (when an option) and how to help organize coursework to help student veterans efficiently use their benefits within the 36-month window for the GI Bill. While institutions may be unable to hire additional academic advisors specifically dedicated for student veterans, steps can be taken at an institutional level to train existing college staff to understand the nuances of education plans for student veterans and their benefits, so steps can be taken to ensure each student is utilizing their benefits as efficiently as possible. Special attention should be given to the dissemination of information on how military credits for training and skills transfer to academic credits in higher education and how to consider these credits and skills for career preparation and employability. Lastly, taking specific steps to build networks and connections with veteran-friendly employers and alumni networks within the career resource center is important to providing specific career advising and preparation for student veterans to enter the civilian workforce (Fairweather et al., 2018).

At the same time, there needs to be increased guidance for veterans as they begin their transition out of the military and make that primary decision to go, or return, to college. Current programs do not always provide veterans with a full view of all the educational options available and all of the resources and benefits to which they are now entitled. The decision to transition out of the military and into civilian life or higher education, moving into an unknown situation, can cause stress or nervousness, especially when the veteran does not have a full understanding of their options, benefits, or a career/educational plan (McKinney, 2017). The VA should work to ensure Chapter 36 education counseling, provided to service members nearing their transition out of the military, can help veterans determine high-quality educational options and help to devise a clear plan for their higher education and career. Improving guidance for decision-making when veterans begin their transition would require not only reforms of initial transition programs, but would also require institutional reforms to improve communication and awareness of options with student veterans.

Institutions could also work to better encourage student veterans at their school to utilize VA advising services, such as Chapter 36 and VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC). Through the VA, student veterans are eligible for counseling and support services to help an individual choose a career goal and/or determine the course needed to achieve the chosen goal. Chapter 36 provides professional, educational, vocational, and career counseling to student veterans utilizing VA educational benefits and helps student veterans develop a plan of action regarding their career choices, their coursework, and their success in their academic career and transition to the workforce (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014). VSOC provides coordinated delivery of on-campus benefits assistance and counseling through a VA vocational rehabilitation counselor to 104 schools across the country. These VSOC counselors are easily accessible on campus to help students navigate the support and assistance needed, and resources to provide that support, to help students pursue their educational and employment goals (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2019b).

Recommendation: Train Administrators and Staff to Mitigate Integration Gaps between Government Services for Student Veterans

In addition to training faculty, staff and adjunct professors to assist student veterans with the navigation of resources on campus and their transition to academia, special attention must be given to ensuring that administrators and staff are able to help students facilitate navigating their government benefits. For example, the Department of Defense is responsible for the Transition Assistance Program GI Bill training, while the VA manages eligibility, Chapter 36 counseling, and use of the GI Bill, and the Department of Labor manages credentialing, apprenticeships, certificates, and career training (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.-a; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018b). Furthermore, tuition assistance programs are managed by the individual service branches, and there is often little coordination of the transfer of credits between institutions that use tuition assistance and those that use the GI Bill. This division of responsibility for programs assisting service members and veterans is also considerably complicated for campus faculty and staff when it comes to academic advising and the coordination of a student's educational plan. Military coursework is coordinated through the Department of Defense, and transfer eligibility is dependent on the institutions' policies, yet special care must be given to the transfer of credits to a student veteran's educational plan due to the limited benefit of the GI Bill. To ensure that students are able to navigate these different government agencies and their benefits at each level, it is important to train faculty and staff on the nuances and differences between programs and benefits across the board. In this way, the institution is also able to prepare for and help mitigate gaps between these services.

Key Considerations for Implementation and Maintenance of Programs

When it comes to the implementation and continued maintenance of programs and services to support student veterans' academic success, it is important to: (a) establish administrative leadership and support for student veterans on campus, (b) audit campus and community services and student needs, (c) build partnerships among federal benefit providers, campus resources and community organizations to streamline services for student veterans, and (d) develop metrics to track utilization and results to improve services continuously.

Establish Administrative Leadership and Support for Student Veterans

As with many campus-based reforms in higher education, visible support for student veteran programs from the institution's president is an incredibly valuable first step to implementing and sustaining programs and services for student veterans. To establish a point of contact and champion for student veterans, it is highly beneficial to designate a senior administrator as the director/manager/coordinator of veterans support services (Davis, 2016). Having an on-campus, full-time point of contact and champion for student veterans is beneficial to increase administrative knowledge and oversight of available services, programs, and resources to assist student veterans (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 2012). In addition, it is helpful to create an advisory committee/council of faculty, staff, and administrators who can advise the development of student veteran services from diverse perspectives of various departments on campus, with unique understandings of the available resources and the prevalent needs among veterans (Davis, 2016). This is also important when it comes to student services that are not specific to student veterans, such as enrollment management, admissions, financial aid, student life, and so on, to ensure that they are culturally competent in addressing the needs and strengths of student veterans and other diverse student groups. A key to building the capacity and competency required to support student veterans in colleges and universities is engaging higher education professionals, both faculty and staff, to obtain, improve, and retain the needed skills, knowledge, and resources.

Audit Campus and Community Services and Student Needs

Through surveys, focus groups, and internal reviews of existing resources and policies, institutions of higher education may take steps toward identifying the pressing issues facing student veterans in their communities and their opinions of existing resources. Student engagement through surveys and focus groups also provides an opportunity to involve student veterans in the planning, design, and assessment of services (Montgomery et al., 2019).

Build Partnerships to Streamline Services for Student Veterans

To mitigate the amount of staff and funding necessary to provide all resources on campus to student veterans, it is highly beneficial to develop partnerships and external connections with other veteran organizations, local crisis resource providers and partners in the campus community who are able to step in where a VRC is not able to single-handedly provide a service. Opportunities to engage with external community organizations should be encouraged to provide a network of support to continue to uplift veterans after they complete their degree (Davis, 2016). Furthermore, the development of partnerships between external service providers and the campus community are essential to streamline resources for student veterans and increase ease of access, as the VITAL program does in providing health care and mental health services through the VA to students on campus.

Develop Metrics and Track Data to Measure Utilization and Improve Services

To ensure the success, sustainability, and future funding for programs serving student veterans, it is essential to identify key metrics and capture data to demonstrate evidence of success in supporting student veterans to and through graduation (Davis, 2016). Metrics could include enrollment, retention, graduation, GPA, and units taken per semester, among other options. Currently, few colleges and universities track and report disaggregated retention and completion data for student veterans, making it difficult to assess the needs of the population and success of provided supports. These data points are particularly helpful when it comes to proving success and increasing investment in services for student veterans (Sponsler et al., 2013).

Financial Implications

As student veterans enroll in higher education at ever greater numbers, and the cost of college attendance continues to rise, increasing access to higher education relies on either (a) lowering the cost of higher education or (b) providing more supports and services to assist student veterans with the high cost of attendance, including, but not limited to, tuition and fees, housing, textbooks and course materials, food, childcare, and transportation. However, the costs associated with providing additional services for student veterans on campus are not insignificant, from finding a space to house a VRC and keeping the lights on to hiring staff to manage these programs and coordinate services. While the combination of college promise with intentional steps to provide resources and an ecosystem of support for student veterans would widely increase access to and success through higher education, funding the first 2 years of community college as well as housing supports, qualified staff, a VRC, and coordinated academic and health care services could be an unmanageable expense.

Where Does the Money Come from?

Partnerships

To relieve the burden of finding funding for services on campus in the schools' budget, colleges and institutions should seek partnerships with philanthropic organizations, nonprofits, employers and the private sector, and government agencies to coordinate programs and services for veterans. In 2011, Americans donated more than \$1.6 billion to organizations serving veterans; and between 2001 and 2013, more than \$800 million was granted to veteran-related organizations by private foundations (George W. Bush Institute, 2014). There are more than 7,000 nonprofit organizations that expressly serve veterans and military families in issue areas related to "reintegration," such as employment, wellness, family, housing, and education (George W. Bush Institute & Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families Research, 2015, p. 7). Private companies and philanthropies can invest in services for veterans that are more personal, innovative, and efficient than government-funded benefits and can make targeted investments to alleviate the challenges facing student veterans in their transition when it comes to housing, health care and mental health, job training, and other academic needs (Meyer, 2017). Creating partnerships and collaboration between the campus community and national or local nonprofit organizations would provide useful tools and support for student veterans that campuses may not be best equipped to provide. In addition to nonprofit organizations, in 2019, the VA budget equaled \$202.1 billion, and other government agencies, including the Departments of Defense, Labor, and Health and Human Services, also spend billions each year to

provide benefits, disability, and support to veterans (Meyer, 2017; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2019a). College and universities can take advantage of the billions of dollars invested in student veterans through streamlining services to maximize utilization of VA benefits and programs, such as VITAL or Chapter 36, on their campuses. VRCs would be uniquely situated to help student veterans access the resources and services already available to them within their communities and help coordinate partnerships and programs with local and national partners to provide additional services to student veterans.

Funding for College Promise Programs

Funding for college promise programs come from a wide range of varied sources, including, but not limited to, public state or local appropriations, private funding from corporations or foundations, and philanthropic donations (College Promise Campaign, 2018). Continued investments in higher education at a state or federal level to lower the overall cost of attendance would make higher education more accessible for student veterans and thus make promise scholarship dollars go further.

Funding Implications for College Promise Programs to Serve Student Veterans

Many factors affect the amount of financial support the program needs to provide to student veterans on a state/institutional basis. The funding model and design of each college promise program is largely dependent on the amount of funding available, the number of students the program intends to serve, and the number of semesters covered. The vast majority of promise programs award funding after a student has exhausted available financial aid from the federal government, the state, or the college/university—a last-dollar funding model. The ideal form of promise funding, particularly for student veterans, would be a first-dollar model, which awards students the full amount of tuition and fees, without consideration of other funds or grants that the student is eligible to receive. In this way, student veterans would still be able to apply for and utilize Pell Grants or other forms of federal student aid to assist with the additional costs associated with college attendance, including housing, childcare, textbooks, or food. At the same time, this would allow student veterans to delay using their GI Bill funding until they transfer to a 4-year college or university, making it possible for many student veterans to afford to continue their education or to save these benefits for their dependents. If funding is not available to provide promise scholarships on a first-dollar basis, a last-dollar plus model would still award scholarships to eligible students after any financial aid they receive from the federal, state, or institutional level, but would offer additional financial assistance, such as a stipend for course materials or transportation. In this way, institutions could assist student veterans with the ever-increasing costs of college attendance and make college more attainable without the unmanageable financial burden.

Conclusion

As they reintegrate into civilian life and enter institutions of higher education, student veterans face numerous barriers and challenges to their academic success, while also bringing significant assets, characteristics, and traits that can bolster their potential academic success and contribute a critical voice to the academic community. Colleges and universities must understand where to apply institutional resources to enhance and accelerate student veterans' potential for academic, social, and career success.

However, additional research is needed to address the difficulties veterans face in making the decision to transition out of the military and into higher education, particularly when it comes to the navigation of benefits, educational options, and finding a right-fit, high-quality institution. Additionally, deeper research could be done to improve career advising and training in higher education to support student veterans in pursuing meaningful and gainful careers after they graduate. Institutions of higher education must take a step back to think about the entire ecosystem of support necessary to support student veterans as they move from the military, make the decision to pursue a quality higher education, and eventually enter the workforce.

Although many colleges and universities may lack the support networks and services necessary to help student veterans overcome barriers, they are well-suited to create such services through community partnerships, endowments, a focus on well-trained and knowledgeable veteran support faculty on campuses, and intentional attempts to lower the financial

burden of college attendance. The College Promise Campaign aims to achieve some of the aforementioned goals by lowering or eliminating tuition and fees at institutions of higher education and advocating for systems of support that raise the potential for academic and personal success. College promise is a 21st century solution for amending a 17th century system of higher education that is not well suited toward the needs of many of today's Americans and especially its veterans. Our country's veterans deserve the opportunity to pursue the American dream without taking on immense financial debt and personal hardship, and we believe college promise is the way forward.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions and input provided through discussions with Ariel De Jesus, American Legion; Christina Duncan, Community College of Baltimore County; Caitlin Thompson, Cohen Veterans Network; James Schmeling, Student Veterans of America; Jasmine Motupalli, Major, U.S. Army; Kayla Williams, Center for a New American Security; Marc Cole, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau; Mike Wooten, U.S. Department of Education; Richard Lilley, Community College of Baltimore County; and Samantha Estes, Xavier University. The views expressed in this report represent the personal perspectives of the authors and should not be taken to represent any organizations with which they are affiliated.

Suggested citation

Morgan, B. E., Cloud, R., Kurtinitis, S., Illowsky, B., & Aldridge, S. (2020). Enhancing college access and success for student veterans: Providing economic opportunity and supports beyond the GI Bill through college promise. In C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-20-17, pp. 59–69). Educational Testing Service. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12299>

9. Supporting Incarcerated Student Success

Julie Ajinkya¹, Sheila Meiman², and Stephen Rose³

¹Institute for Higher Education Policy, Washington, DC

²Raritan Valley Community College, Branchburg Township, NJ

³Urban Institute, Washington, DC

Higher education is a critical pathway to social and economic mobility. Research readily shows tangible economic and social benefits for college graduates: They earn more, pay more in taxes, are healthier, and are more civically engaged (Ma et al., 2016). However, data also show that postsecondary attainment is not equitable for many of our nation's students who need it most: low-income and working students, students of color, returning adults, individuals with dependents, and other underserved populations, who, together, redefine the typical 21st century student in higher education today. Of the students who do make it to higher education, 35 million adults across the nation have finished some college coursework before stopping out without a degree; these students also disproportionately hail from similar underserved populations. Given that 65% of jobs in 2020 are going to need some form of postsecondary training, the college promise movement has emerged to address the nation's higher education affordability and workforce challenges and to potentially help increase college access and success for underrepresented populations. In practice, promise (often also called free college) programs make some form of public university or college tuition-free for students who meet certain criteria, such as graduating from one of the state's high schools or meeting low-income requirements.

But which populations qualify for these programs in each state? As mentioned in the introduction of this report, to determine how college promise programs can intentionally serve certain segments of today's postsecondary student population, ETS and the College Promise Campaign partnered to bring the higher education community together with other stakeholders across education, workforce, social services, and the health and finance sectors to see if they could together design a comprehensive ecosystem of supports for five target populations. This team was assigned the task of addressing the needs of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students.⁴⁰ Given that there is, to our knowledge, no promise program designed specifically for making incarcerated students eligible for benefits, we will focus our attention on lifting eligibility barriers for this population and outlining the ecosystem of supports needed to enable incarcerated students to succeed. To examine the capacity of promise programs to promote postsecondary access and success for incarcerated students from an ecological perspective, we will review the history of both federal and state-level financial aid for incarcerated students and situate it in the current HEA reauthorization conversations in the 116th Congress, and state-level free college policy conversations. Then, to propose program adaptations and cooperative solutions that could promote access and success for incarcerated students, this report proposes a supports ecosystem that must be developed at the state level for higher education programs in prison to serve their students well and lead to transformative outcomes for their students and broader society. All of the analysis offered in this report may also apply to formerly incarcerated and justice-impacted students, with their other contextually relevant supports built by a diverse ecosystem of stakeholders to ensure they succeed in campus-based programs, as well. However, because the focus is on incarcerated students, formerly incarcerated and justice-impacted students' specific needs will only be addressed minimally in this report.

Brief History of Financial Aid for Incarcerated Students

Federal Aid: Pell Grants

The 1994 Violent Crime and Law Enforcement Act, often referred to as the Violent Crimes Bill, significantly constrained incarcerated students' postsecondary access by banning their Pell Grant eligibility, the cornerstone of federal student financial aid. In fiscal year 1994, less than 1% of all Pell expenditures went to justice-impacted students, with no impact upon the availability of Pell funds for nonimpacted students (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1994). Yet, arguments were made that painted "Pell for prisoners" as a wasteful program that rewarded incarcerated citizens with a college education while nonincarcerated Americans had to pay for higher education. Despite well-documented evidence that higher education in prison (HEP) is associated with positive outcomes for students, correctional facilities, and students' families and communities upon release, Pell eligibility was taken away from incarcerated students and hundreds of programs across the country shut down almost overnight.

As a quasi-entitlement program, the Pell Grant program projects the number of students who may receive grants in the coming year and Congress appropriates the requisite amount. In 2016, there were about 463,000 incarcerated students potentially eligible for Pell, compared to the 7.2 million nonincarcerated students who received it (Oakford et al., 2019). In the highly unlikely scenario that every Pell-eligible incarcerated student received Pell funding in 1 year, the increase in expenditure is unlikely to yield an unsustainable spending trajectory.

In 2015, the Obama administration introduced the Second Chance Pell (SCP) pilot program, using the US Department of Education Experimental Sites Initiative authority to allow eligible higher education institutions to enroll incarcerated students using Pell funds. According to the most recent federal student aid (FSA) data, there are currently 10,048 incarcerated students receiving federal Pell Grant funds from 64 institutions of higher education (ED Staff, 2019). Unfortunately, the program did not allocate additional resources for evaluation or assessment; this lack of additional resources has made assessing the impact of the experiment difficult. However, initial findings suggest the need for more administrative support and technical assistance for financial aid administration issues, such as helping students move out of loan default, remedying missing selective service registration for male students, and appealing applications that are flagged for verification at disproportionately high rates.

State Aid: State Financial Aid and Free College

In the aftermath of the federal ban on Pell eligibility, some states followed suit and enacted legislation prohibiting state aid from being spent on postsecondary programs in correctional facilities. Recent research documents that 37% of active state-funded grant programs for students across 26 states explicitly deny aid eligibility to incarcerated students or individuals with criminal convictions (Custer, 2019). In Washington state, for instance, a 1995 state law banned state funding from being used for college courses in prison. When a 2017 law lifted the funding ban for 2-year degrees only, the state's DOC was able to "dramatically expand educational offerings" (The Seattle Times Editorial Board, 2017). The state's financial aid programs, however, remain restricted for this population, and postsecondary opportunities that are not offered with the explicit intention of working toward a workforce-based credential do not qualify. Restrictions that specifically exclude incarcerated students from state aid eligibility undermine one of the promise model's central objectives: to increase the postsecondary educational attainment of the state's residents by removing some affordability barriers to education.

These programs are meant in nature to close access gaps and make higher education a reality for more state residents, yet certain program design components beyond student eligibility also impact whether they are likely to close significant access and achievement gaps (Billings, 2018). For instance, programs that commit to a last-dollar model benefit middle and high-income students more than the students in low-income situations who need it most by providing the last dollars needed to cover tuition and fees at universities, but only *after* a Pell Grant has already been applied toward these costs. Affluent students who do not qualify for need-based aid because they have more resources to pay for college end up benefiting more under the last-dollar strategy. Students in low-income situations, on the other hand, must find other ways to cover living expenses and often go into formidable debt doing so.

By contrast, first-dollar programs, under which states cover tuition at public colleges up front, allow students to use Pell funds as supplemental income to cover living expenses and associated costs (Poutré & Voight, 2018). This equity-minded model goes further to level the playing field for many of our nation's underserved students. Washington state recently introduced legislation to replace the State Need Grant (SNG) with the Washington College Promise grant to better provide need-based financial aid to income-eligible students. The new promise grant will retain the same eligibility criteria of SNGs, but given that the program was traditionally chronically underfunded, with only three out of four applicants receiving the grant, the new grant will be fully funded by the state, guaranteeing a source of funds for otherwise eligible students (Washington Office of the Governor, 2019). Students currently eligible for the SNG have a household income less than 70% of the median state household income.

Even if a model operates as a first-dollar strategy, as is the case with this modified Washington program, there remains the question of student eligibility, bringing us back to incarcerated students and how they are currently restricted from benefiting from state free college proposals. Some states have introduced legislation to remove these eligibility barriers—New Jersey, Tennessee, and Michigan, most notably—but no state has successfully removed the barrier for incarcerated students as yet, making current iterations of the promise models an ineffective way to expand postsecondary access for this population.

Making the Case for Postsecondary Opportunities in Prison

In both advanced and developing economies, democratic governments are meant to provide various services to maximize people's chances to lead a productive, happy lives. Relatedly, educational attainment is a critical rung on the ladder to economic prosperity and some level of postsecondary attainment has become a requirement for the majority of the US workforce. These requirements for income mobility and economic security should not be denied to the nation's incarcerated population, which disproportionately hails from the populations that have been historically marginalized by systems overseeing education, employment, housing, food and other services. Specifically, African American citizens are incarcerated at rates almost seven times higher than that of White citizens and a little over two times higher than that of Latinx citizens (Sakala, 2014).

The incarcerated population is relatively young, and at least 95% of individuals incarcerated in state prisons will be released at some point. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that postsecondary opportunities in prison increase the likelihood of successful reentry upon release. Recent estimates project that if 50% of the eligible prison population participated in postsecondary programs, employment rates among individuals upon release would increase by 10% (Oakford et al., 2019). Greater access to postsecondary programs in prison is also expected to reduce state prison spending by increasing the likelihood that individuals will be able to stay out of prison upon release. It must be noted however, that thousands of collateral consequences—the legal and regulatory restrictions that limit people from accessing employment, occupational licensing, housing, and voting, in addition to continued educational enrollment—continue to significantly impact successful reentry outcomes. Yet, what we do know about higher education in prison (HEP) thus far suggests that it enables incarcerated students to acquire the education and training that is necessary for tomorrow's jobs better than the absence of such programs, which has led higher education equity advocates and criminal justice reform advocates to unite in effort to remove financial aid eligibility barriers that prevent the expansion of these opportunities.

Current Efforts to Remove Financial Aid Eligibility Barriers for Incarcerated Students

Federal Barriers: Restoring Pell Eligibility in HEA Reauthorization

The 64 colleges and universities currently participating in the Department of Education's SCP program offer credit-bearing postsecondary programs for a range of credentials that include career and technical certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees. The Vera Institute of Justice (2018) noted that by the conclusion of Fall 2017, student enrollment had increased 236% since the beginning of the experiment, and the number of courses offered had increased 124%. In terms of completion metrics, 954 postsecondary credentials have been awarded since the start of the experiment: 701 certificates, 230 associate degrees, and 23 bachelor's degrees. These data indicate that not only did more students enroll as the program progressed, but institutional capacity increased to accommodate more available courses and, most importantly, incarcerated students were succeeding (Corbett & Ajinkya, 2018).

Given that these experimental sites represent only 33% of all higher education programs in correctional facilities, and there is no guarantee for whether the pilot program will extend beyond its current 4-year commitment, there is growing bipartisan momentum at the federal level to permanently restore Pell eligibility for incarcerated learners by repealing the 1994 ban. Research examining AY 2009–2010 indicated that select correctional facilities in 43 states undertook some form of postsecondary education. However, recent research reports that the number of programs has grown to more than 250 credit-bearing postsecondary programs in corrections facilities around the country, with each state reporting at least one facility offering a higher education program (Castro, 2018). The reinstatement of Pell Grants for incarcerated learners could be a significant tactic to expand access to such programs and effectively address educational attainment equity gaps among today's students.

In 2015, Representative Donna Edwards (D) introduced the Restoring Education and Learning (REAL) Act (2015), a bill that would restore Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated students by repealing the 1994 ban. In the following congress, Senator Brian Schatz (D) introduced a companion bill in the Senate and was joined by 14 fellow Democrats. In today's 116th Congress, the REAL Act (2019) received bipartisan support for a bicameral introduction, demonstrating the growing momentum to expand postsecondary access for incarcerated learners (The Office of Brian Schatz, 2018).

Accordingly, HEA reauthorization negotiations have begun in committee, and Pell restoration is a serious part of the conversation. As policy makers consider whether to lift the ban on Pell eligibility for incarcerated learners, there is a broad coalition of groups with diverse ideological positions pushing to make Pell restoration a top priority (Kreighbaum, 2019).

These groups include, but are not limited to, education policy advocates, criminal justice reformers, justice-impacted advocates, faith-based organizations, conservative organizations, and correctional stakeholders. Advocates argue that the SCP pilot could be an asset to legislative efforts if it is able to demonstrate the impact that HEP programs have on students and broader society. Yet, as of March 2019, the Department of Education had “not [yet] established how it intended to evaluate SCP or measure the pilot’s performance against its objectives” (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2019).

In some ways, the SCP pilot program has done exactly what it was established to test—it allowed the FSA office to determine whether changing eligibility restrictions would impact the postsecondary enrollment rate of incarcerated students. However, it also allowed researchers and advocates to examine the potential issues of implementing a large-scale policy change. One of the pilot’s core findings thus far has been that HEP programs have little capacity to administer financial aid properly, let alone manage all of the administrative functions that a comprehensive postsecondary program must have. The Goucher Prison Education Partnership, for instance, has a corps of roughly 100 volunteers to provide 130 students at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women and the Maryland Correctional Institution–Jessup with a quality Goucher College education. However, the administrative responsibilities do not only fall on the postsecondary institution’s shoulders; correctional staff are tasked with screening all materials that enter the facility and providing custody staffing to accommodate the movement of students to classroom settings, which can be a prohibitive increase in workflow. It becomes evident that lifting the federal Pell eligibility barrier will not on its own ensure an increase in postsecondary access and success for confined learners.

State Barriers: Applying an Equity Lens to Include Justice-Involved Populations in Promise Programs

As federal funds for higher education have stagnated over the last decade, states have had to find alternative ways to drive their postsecondary attainment. Yet, as states have developed various financial aid programs, incarcerated students continue to be disqualified from taking advantage of such aid. New Jersey is an example of a state that has begun breaking barriers between incarcerated students and higher education.

Of the 23 statewide college promise programs, New Jersey is the state that has seen the most movement on legislation to remove the eligibility barriers in place for incarcerated students. In the spring of 2019, the state piloted its first tuition-free college program, the New Jersey Community College Opportunity Grant, at 13 community colleges. To reach its goal to have 65% of residents hold a postsecondary degree or high-quality credential by 2025, New Jersey’s administration understands that it must address equity gaps in college enrollment, improve overall completion rates, and engage adults who either have some or no postsecondary experience (Thachik, 2019). To qualify, students must have an adjusted gross income between \$0 and \$65,000 and enroll in at least 6 credits at a pilot community college (Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, 2019). Community College Opportunity Grant awards for qualified students will include the costs of tuition and approved education fees not already covered by other grant funds, classifying it as a last-dollar program.

Legislation to include incarcerated learners in the state’s promise program is also under consideration. In February 2018, New Jersey state Senators Sandra Cunningham (D) and Teresa Ruiz (D) introduced an amendment to N.J.S.18A:71B2⁴¹ to lift the eligibility barrier. The following month, New Jersey Assemblywomen Shavonda Sumter (D), Mila Jasey (D), and Patricia Jones (D) introduced the amendment’s companion bill in the New Jersey General Assembly. The Senate version passed with bipartisan support. If it also passes the full assembly and is signed by the governor, the new law⁴² would permit students who are incarcerated to access state financial aid. In New Jersey, state financial aid uses the FAFSA as the initial application tool. In the absence of the passage of the federal REAL Act or equivalent legislation, only students enrolled in SCP institutions appear to be able to participate.

The New Jersey policy makers who sponsored the legislation argue that expanding postsecondary opportunities in prison has the potential to help incarcerated individuals gain the skills necessary for post-release employment and long-term career opportunities and stability. Proponents have also discussed the important cost-savings that greater access to postsecondary education in prison implies for New Jersey. Senator Cunningham has further noted that, although New Jersey has made significant progress in decreasing its prison population through the provision of higher education opportunities, the state will likely lose the ability to continue operating programs such as the New Jersey Scholarship and Transformative Education in Prison without additional state funding, leading to an eventual increase in the state’s incarcerated population and state expenditures (O’Dea, 2018). Senator Chris Brown (R), who voted in favor of the bill in April 2018, emphasized that the measure is not an increase “in any way, shape or form to our taxpayers. It is simply opening up an opportunity to perhaps those that need it the most” (Symons, 2018, para 7).

Table 9.1 NJ Tuition Aid Grant (TAG) Dilution Analysis if Incarcerated Students Are Eligible

Institution type	Number of students receiving TAG awards 2017–2018	Amount awarded 2017–2018	Average award per student
All senior public institutions	38,950	\$257,549,000	\$6,612
All community colleges (FT TAG)	14,011	\$32,209,000	\$2,299
All community colleges (PT TAG)	7,172	\$8,627,342	\$1,203
Subtotal: All public institutions	60,133	\$298,385,342	\$4,962
All independent and proprietary institutions	14,198	\$136,969,000	\$9,647
Total annual TAG	74,331	\$435,354,342	\$5,857
Average TAG per student:			\$5,857
Assumptions			
Enough NJ students qualify for TAG that the entire allocated budget is consumed.			
TAG budget will not be altered to accommodate incarcerated students.			
Pell will be applied before NJ TAG.			
An average per credit cost of \$300, a higher number than likely for a community college student in NJ.			
Average number of incarcerated NJ students annually			600
Average number of credits per semester per incarcerated student			7
Average number of credits per academic year			14
Max amount of annual Pell (17/18) for student taking 7 credits per semester			\$2,960
Max annual TAG at 7 credits (part-time TAG) per semester for any student, per the 2017–2018 HESAA table			\$1,366
Average number of incarcerated students that are Pell-eligible (predicts max TAG eligibility)			60%
Max bill for a student taking 14 annual credits			\$4,200
Remaining bill after Pell application			\$1,240
Max annual draw on TAG budget per student			\$1,240
Dilution potential for TAG pool			
Total TAG drawn from budget by incarcerated students in 60% qualify			\$446,400
TAG Budget remaining if 60% of incarcerated students are awarded TAG			\$434,907,942
New average annual TAG per nonincarcerated student if 60% of incarcerated students got 7 credit TAG			\$5,851
Annual difference per nonincarcerated student			\$6.01
Total TAG drawn from budget by incarcerated students if 100% qualify			\$744,000
TAG Budget remaining if 100% of incarcerated students are awarded TAG			\$434,610,342
New average TAG per nonincarcerated student if 100% of incarcerated students got 7 credit TAG			\$5,847
Annual difference per nonincarcerated student			\$10.01
Conclusion: If NJ students who are incarcerated are eligible for TAG, the introduction of these students could dilute the TAG budget by a maximum of \$6 to \$10 per nonincarcerated student, per academic year.			

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add directly to total. TAG numbers are from Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, *2018 Annual Report: Empowering Student Success. Making Postsecondary Education More Affordable and Accessible for a Stronger and Fairer New Jersey*, 2018, <https://www.hesaa.org/Documents/Financial/AnnualReports/annualreport2018.pdf>. HESAA = Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, FT = full-time, PT = part-time.

While there is broad bipartisan acknowledgment of the benefits of postsecondary programming in prisons for individuals and communities, arguments against providing incarcerated students with financial aid persist and mainly focus on finite state funds and the zero-sum paradigm that conflicts with expanding eligibility criteria for more student populations. Analysis from Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) demonstrates, however, that providing education to incarcerated individuals would not significantly increase the costs related to state financial aid.⁴³ According to the RVCC's estimates, allowing all incarcerated higher education students in New Jersey access to state financial aid, with no increase to the award budget, would reduce the award to each existing student by a maximum of between \$6 and \$10 annually (see Table 9.1). It is likely that reductions are even less than that, as not all students will qualify. Other estimates indicate it would simply be the equivalent of one additional student from every high school in New Jersey attending community college after graduation. See the end of this chapter for more information about the HEP program at RVCC.

Ensuring Incarcerated Student Success

While removing eligibility barriers to federal and state aid is certainly an important factor in making funding available to confined learners to pursue higher education, the debates over eligibility do not sufficiently address the challenge of affordability for institutions to administer their programs. The section below discusses the adjustments that need to be made to the promise program model to ensure equitable postsecondary access for incarcerated students.

Institutional Eligibility Requirements

Even if Pell eligibility was restored for incarcerated learners, the disbursement of federal financial aid does not distribute resources to the HEP to administer the programming. Instead, Pell dollars are used for enrollment costs—primarily tuition, fees, and regular administrative overhead. But, as the SCP pilot program has thus far demonstrated, HEP programs have had a difficult time navigating administering financial aid in correctional facilities, given the logistical access challenges, the disproportionate rate with which incarcerated learners are historically flagged for verification, the number of students who have not registered for selective service, the lack of family participation or cooperation for students who are under 24 years old, and the high rate of loan default among those in prison. Thus, we could logically expect HEP administration to warrant additional resources and technical assistance to deliver quality programming to students. We will further describe a proposed supports ecosystem for the correctional context below.

But it is also important to identify policy levers that would ensure some baseline protections for student interests, given that incarcerated students will ultimately have less choice in selecting quality postsecondary programming. It becomes ever more important, then, that institutional eligibility requirements inform which types of institutions will be able to offer programming in facilities in the first place. This is critical because taxpayers should have some assurance that the funds are not being spent on bad programs; but more importantly, a students-first perspective means that we cannot allow students to exhaust their Pell and state aid eligibility pursuing a credential that does not, in fact, offer them real learning and increase their chances of successful reentry upon release.

The higher education system is plagued by predatory behavior and poor outcomes, particularly for the same student populations that have been historically excluded from postsecondary opportunities and disproportionately constitute the carceral state—students in low-income situations and students of color (Seamster & Charron-Chénier, 2017; Smeeding et al., 2011). For instance, among students in the bottom socioeconomic quartile, only 15% had earned a bachelor's degree within 8 years of their expected high school graduation, compared with 60% in the top quartile. Additionally, while White students are overrepresented as bachelor's degree recipients relative to their representation in the general population, African American and Hispanic students are underrepresented among bachelor's degree recipients relative to their representation in the general population (Cahalan et al., 2017). Recent research also demonstrates that larger shares of African American students enroll in for-profit institutions for postsecondary credentials than their peers, and at every degree level and within almost every racial and ethnic group, those who received degrees from for-profit institutions borrowed loans at higher rates and accumulated larger debt than degree recipients who enrolled in other sectors (Espinosa et al., 2019).

The incarcerated population's educational attainment, plagued by lower resourced communities that continue to suspend, expel and arrest young adults before completing high school at disproportionately high rates, is also much lower than the average US household. According to the Department of Education, 30% of US inmates do not possess a secondary—high school—credential, compared to 14% of the general population (Rampey et al., 2016).

At a minimum, institutions that qualify to enroll incarcerated learners using Pell funds should maintain good standing with their accreditors, as well as state or federal enforcement entities, and should not raise any Title IV compliance concerns with the Department of Education. These requirements will establish an important precedent for this programming, in that it will be monitored and accredited to demonstrate its equity with campus-based programming.

Data transparency and reporting on student outcomes should also be required, in order to evaluate whether postsecondary opportunities are leading to positive student outcomes. In addition to educational outcomes familiar to higher education, certain post-release outcomes unique to the correctional context (such as infractions in the facility and recidivism post-release) lend insight into how students can leverage their postsecondary experience in changing the culture of a facility and successful reentry into society upon release. Though it is beyond the scope of this report, measuring reentry

outcomes must be done carefully, given the thousands of collateral consequences that affect a student's ability to return to society successfully (National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction, 2019).

Additionally, to ensure that predatory institutions do not see dollar signs in incarcerated learners' stead, cost of attendance calculations should be capped at grant aid amounts, and the program should ensure that neither the students nor their families owe a balance to the institution. In addition, efforts should be made to maintain information about transfer rates between facilities and postrelease into continued postsecondary education, employment and earnings outcomes, licensure rates, civic engagement, student survey results, and recidivism.

As states begin to restore financial aid access to incarcerated students, the administrative complexity will rise. State application and verifications requirements often augment the federal requirements, creating an additional burden on the student and the educational institution. States should also consider what types of institutional eligibility requirements would ensure quality programming is offered inside correctional facilities. States will also be better equipped than federal actors to help develop various supports across sectors—education, philanthropy, the workforce, and community-based organizations—that should work together to ensure quality HEP programs.

The Supports Ecosystem

Strong support systems are necessary to help students complete their postsecondary programs, and these supports must come from both inside and outside the classroom. Traditional campus-based programming that aims to promote student success requires a robust ecosystem made up of various institutional offices, community-based stakeholders, and the workforce, among others. Higher education in prison is no different, though its ecosystem requires adjustments and additional resources to provide postsecondary opportunities that are equitable and on par with campus-based programs.

Research has demonstrated that the college promise model can be an effective college access strategy if it is also intentionally designed to add “proven student support services onto the existing scholarship” (MDRC, n.d., para 3). These supports include success coaching and advising, as well as other monthly financial supports to offset the costs of attendance. Similarly, research from the Institute for Higher Education Policy has classified impact-driven student supports into four categories: personal/social, academic, financial, and career (Coffey & Ajinkya, 2016). Even if programs or initiatives like free college lead to an increase in initial enrollment, community partnerships between various sectors must build strong support systems inside and outside the classroom to help students complete their postsecondary programs.

The ecosystem of supports needed for incarcerated students to truly gain from a college access strategy like the promise is not drastically different from the supports needed on campuses. These include:

- **Personal supports**, often understood as learning communities and comprehensive first-year experiences in campus-based programs, could build a sense of community among students inside a facility, who are disproportionately first-generation students, and could even encourage other individuals to consider college a possibility.
- **Academic supports**, such as advising and tutoring, can help incarcerated students remediate needs and ensure that they will succeed in subsequent coursework instead of stopping out of their program.
- **Financial supports** could include financial aid counseling to prepare for release and supports to offset the sacrifices that many incarcerated students must make in terms of choosing between even meager wages from prison employment and attending postsecondary courses.
- **Career supports**, such as career counseling, mentoring, and work experience, can help articulate how coursework translates into meaningful employment upon release. Such advising should also caution students against exhausting financial aid eligibility pursuing coursework that would lead to an industry with occupational licensing restrictions against individuals with criminal records.

Even though the categories of support are similar for campus students and incarcerated students, the specific tasks and the intensity of support varies between the two populations (see Figure 9.1). The remainder of this report focuses primarily on the support ecosystem necessary to enable incarcerated students to succeed, with a particular focus on the extra academic supports needed, given the many logistical adjustments that need to be made to support students inside correctional facilities. It should be noted that an area for further research would be building out a similar ecosystem for supporting all justice-impacted (e.g., formerly incarcerated) students who attend campus-based programming.



Figure 9.1 Ecosystem supports for incarcerated students.

Personal Supports

Students require personal supports both while in prison and while reentering society, though the level and intensity of support may be higher postrelease. Students require personal supports at all phases of their educational career. Incarcerated students rely on family and home-community connections, if available, and have access to correctional social workers for everything from personal issues to reentry preparation. Some students also have access to personal counselors attached to the higher education program they participate in. In addition, in some programs, students who are serving sentences without possibility of parole play an influential role in shaping the culture of the facility and whether the HEP program can thrive; these students often serve as mentors to peers in their classes who are eligible for eventual release themselves.

Personal supports play an even more essential function during and after reentry. In addition to family and community supports, reentry teams or navigators are often the most influential and critical supports for these students. The transition from inside to outside is a fragile time for a student, and they can receive tailored support and guidance from professionals

who have training and expertise in navigating systems and benefits that would aid the returning student. Maintaining a commitment to educational attainment competes with a variety of other priorities, and a reentry specialist is one of the most important contributions to successful navigation.

Academic Supports

The variety, quantity, and complexity of academic supports are higher for students while they are incarcerated. While educational costs for programs implemented in correctional settings have many components in common with those delivered in campus settings, there are also unique instructional and administrative needs for these programs. Most programs will not include *all* of the items below; however, every higher education program for incarcerated students will encounter some combination of a number of these factors.

From an instructional perspective, the faculty salary costs should be comparable between campus-based and correctional setting programs. Assuming academic learning outcomes and faculty quality are both consistent with their counterparts on the college campus, straight salary and fringe benefit should be equal. This does not account, however, for the significant extra time required of faculty teaching in a HEP program. Travel to the facility, time waiting to clear in, time waiting for arrival of students to the classroom, time required to clear out, and time for makeup sessions for those inevitable class cancellations due to facility codes all equate to double or more time expected of participating teaching faculty. Most institutions do not account for this when producing program cost profiles and assume they are part of the volunteerism that faculty are motivated to contribute. While many faculty members are generous with their time, it still is a cost that should be understood. As programs grow from boutique offerings to broad-based, fully deployed offerings, it is likely more involved faculties, as well as their union representation, will want to calculate and investigate compensation for the actual time worked. Programs should not incentivize circumstances where only faculty with the fiscal means to volunteer this extra time can be involved, as that would negatively impact the diversity of teaching faculty in several ways.

To consider the extra administration costs of HEP programs, it is simpler to view them in two categories: academic administration and program administration. From an academic administration perspective, there are several supports that can be required that are over and above the norm. This often begins with staff recruiting. Many institutions rely on adjunct faculty for a significant percentage of their teaching work, whereas a HEP program could feasibly draw from all sources: current full-time faculty, current part-time faculty, and newly recruited part-time faculty. Prisons are often located a significant distance from primary campus facilities, and current staff may not be able to travel. Recruiting new faculty must be done intentionally because they must be of at least the same quality as faculty on campus; they need to have a level of experience often greater than on campus, given the independence they will be expected to display working on a remote campus; and programs must screen out applicants interested in the work for inappropriate reasons (such as obtaining research or publication subjects, sensationalistic conversation topics, the desire to obtain teaching practice, or simply willingness to work in a carceral environment because they do not have other employment opportunities).

The faculty must be carefully trained in three dimensions: First, they need to understand the course content, learning outcomes, appropriate assessments, and both prerequisite and subsequent course requirements. Experienced college faculty from the home institution should not find this to be difficult, but adjusting their experience to the correctional context will require developing a familiarity with specialized course materials acceptable to the DOC, lack of available teaching technology, and creative methods to accomplish research. Second, logistical training is necessary. There is often additional paperwork required when teaching inside correctional facilities. The DOC may need its own attendance and incident paperwork completed and submitted. The faculty member will also be the voice of the college for logistical information, such as withdrawal deadlines, grade distribution policies, material distribution, and academic advising. Third, the faculty member will need environmental training. To work successfully in this environment, knowledge of a variety of inside customs and rules must be displayed. These include custody practices and policies, proper attire and mannerisms, security rules for items that can go in and out of a facility, rules regarding familiarity with students, expected reactions to incidents, flexibility with either students or teachers leaving the classroom, and so forth. Finally, academic administration training should address the college's policies and practices regarding academic appeals from students.

Academic advising is another role that each program must determine a process and goal for. Students have less access to program and course information in general and need to clearly understand how course choices will impact their degree progress. In addition, guidance on choice of electives in the context of future educational or career choices is important

to provide. Advising for returning students is also important. In an ideal program, students will have a clear pathway to continue their education on campus if released before degree completion.

Increasingly, *accrediting bodies* are also realizing that they could play an important role in signaling the quality of a HEP program. Instead of assuming an otherwise accredited institution will necessarily offer a rigorous, high-quality program in a correctional facility, accreditors should develop correctional-specific standards to measure programs against. HEP academic administration could include preparing applications for the regional accrediting body to ensure proper program implementation and evaluation. Efforts must be made to ensure compliance with requirements from that body.

Finally, it is important that feedback be collected and measured in a manner consistent with campus processes. That feedback should include defining, getting DOC approval for and implementing formal student feedback mechanisms. In addition, there should be faculty observations with the same rubric and schedule as done on campus.

The program administration list of responsibilities varies greatly, depending on the constructs of both the higher education institution's and correctional institution's policies. This discussion does not purport to include every possible task that a program requires, but instead attempts to give a flavor of the work that many require. Semester planning, for instance, looks different than it does on campus. A program is usually given a set of rooms and the times those rooms are available by the DOC, which can determine how many classes are even available per semester. Choosing the courses can be simple for small programs that manage via a cohort model, with the expectation that students will be traveling down their degree path together. However, in larger programs that have a fluid population in any given prison facility, it becomes more challenging. Trying to define a set of courses that will allow all (new students, midrange students, and students nearing degree completion) to enroll in courses is challenging. The program must balance the degree needs of students, the availability of faculty, the probability of interfacility and midsemester student movements between facilities, the prerequisite requirements, the blend of courses so that multiple disciplines are represented, and, of course, the personal interests of students. In addition, many incarcerated students have previous college coursework that requires transcripts to be gathered and articulated so that completion needs are more fully understood. All logistical differences that go into HEP semester planning must be examined carefully to assure that the appropriate number of contact hours are scheduled for each credit taught.

Admission to the college will certainly vary based on whether it is selective or open, though both models can and have flourished. While most campus-based programs typically use web-enabled forms to connect with potential students for applications, course registration, course withdrawal, address changes, transcript requests, and other transactions, HEP programs must usually collect forms on paper and manually enter them in the college's online system. In order to complete these responsibilities manually, college representatives must request to see certain students and receive approval to do so from the DOC, travel to the prison, clear in through security, work with each student to have them manually complete a form designed to emulate the campus-based online form, take that form back to the college and enter it into the college's system, manually produce confirmation information to go back to the student, and deliver it in person to them.

Another admissions-related function is placement testing. Again, this is usually a computer-based effort on campus that has to be done completely manually on the inside. Maintaining test integrity requires thoughtful environmental planning, careful choices of tools to ensure equity with campus-based determinations, and often extensive manual scoring and placement efforts.

Enrollment is also a manual process, requiring a mechanism or person to relay course choices, collect enrollment requests, manually process them, and produce student schedules. The processing of withdrawal requests or late add requests can be even more complicated. The college must set up a process to both allow students to communicate their intent and implement that request. In addition, colleges need to have processes and policies in place to address the students that may be unable to relay their enrollment change request (due to segregation or facility movement, for instance).

As mentioned above, institutions participating in the SCP pilot program have reported the extensive amount of work required to administer this federal financial aid program. While the financial aid provides much-needed access to HEP programs, institutions still find its administration to be a resource-intensive activity. As stated above, many programs must implement financial aid manually, carrying forms to students and working with them in person to complete them. The earlier years of the experiment saw a majority (if not nearly all) of the students selected for multiple verifications. And the investigative effort to identify identity mismatches and to collect information unknown to the student has been extensive. This is particularly true for colleges serving significant

populations of students that are young enough to still require parental input to the financial aid determination process.

Grade reporting also necessitates greater manual effort in a correctional facility than it does on campus, including the designing, populating, printing, and distributing of report cards. In general, books and materials can be an exhausting effort for any program administrator. For some programs, the DOC may request review and approval rights for any information entering the prison, which requires extensive up-front planning from both the administration and the faculty. Last minute additions to the materials are often not possible, and some programs cannot even take any materials inside, relying on scanned information that is printed within the walls. Other programs maintain libraries of texts that are issued in a lending fashion. And some programs obtain funding to provide texts that become the student's property. Both the scan and print option and the delivery and pickup process can require extensive amounts of manual labor and expense. Material availability for student use (e.g. paper, writing implements, calculators) is also a consideration that is often overlooked on campuses, though the resource-needs of students in low-income situations outside of correctional facilities has recently garnered more attention in higher education reform writ large.

Data management is often an unseen effort with higher education programs in prisons. Many colleges require that the data for these programs be kept and reported separately. This includes everything from finances, to student demographics, to enrollment reporting. The intent of that separation can be because the college does not want to mislead with its reporting, which could otherwise imply enhanced registration statistics or diversity profiles. It also is often kept separate to understand the program expenses and revenues more fully. In addition, Pell experimental sites need to report a variety of metrics to the FSA office at the Department of Education and must be able to separate incarcerated students. Whatever the reason, maintaining a separate set of data for these students is often beyond the standard capability of the college system and requires custom system design or separate data system management.

Advocacy and partnerships are a significant role of the administrative team for many programs. To create and maintain advantageous policy direction requires the voice of all involved in this work, and program administrators are often given the opportunity at the federal, state, or local levels to contribute to the conversation. Negotiation and relationship management with the DOC, governmental agencies, and other involved institutions are also often part of the duty of program administrators.

Finally, technology and Internet access—two mainstays of contemporary higher education—are extremely limited and make connecting with faculty outside of class time nearly impossible. At best, college-in-prison programs will provide students with access to computer labs that are usually lacking in terms of updated equipment and software. Iowa Central Community College, for instance, gives students access to email and a computer lab, with the ability for their instructors to use video conferencing platforms like Zoom. Access to the computers is limited by the prison and is directly related to whether the facility has sufficient staff, as well as the will to assign them to nonessential posts. Even when students have access to computers, they may not be able to access directly things they print out and often have to depend on correctional staff to retrieve their documents from printers. Whereas campus-based students make use of online databases to find up-to-date academic resources for their papers, incarcerated students are forced to rely on printed materials, much of which is limited in scope and not considered current. Many programs rely on volunteer staff to serve as proxy researchers for incarcerated students, printing out relevant materials in response to student queries and delivering them in person to students in facilities.

Financial Supports

Financial issues are very different for an incarcerated student and a campus student. While inside, financial aid is managed by the participating higher education institution. Students are normally prohibited from incurring debt, are not responsible for Pell funding returns due to withdrawals and other actions, and are typically not issued any remainder billing for costs not covered by Pell. In addition, basic living costs, such as housing and basic food, are not considered responsibilities born by the students.

However, financial stressors still exist for this population. If institutions are not participating in the SCP pilot program, or if they decide not to cover the tuition costs associated with the programs they offer inside, students are expected to pay for their own education. Even if tuition and fees are covered by the postsecondary institution, depending on the correctional institution, people who are incarcerated are expected to hold jobs inside and to use the earned monies to supplement their personal supplies and food. In some instances, students must choose between taking more classes and

Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC)
A public community college in North Branch, New Jersey

RVCC began teaching inside New Jersey state correctional facilities in 2009. From the beginning, all students were enrolled in credit-bearing classes and course selection aimed at an associate degree in liberal arts. Early funding came from a variety of generous philanthropic sources that supported program initiation and enabled RVCC to increase the scale of the program. As philanthropic resources shifted to establish new HEP programs, RVCC was fortunately named a SCP experimental site, which enabled the programming to continue inside of NJ's correctional facilities.

At the start of the program, RVCC taught inside a single facility: the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women (EMCF), the only women's correctional facility in the state of New Jersey, currently housing approximately 600 women at all security levels. During the program's early years, RVCC taught 10 courses per semester and averaged an enrollment of 60 students. Today, the institution offers programs in seven correctional facilities: EMCF for the women, all three youth facilities (youth being defined as men from 18-30 years old), and three large adult men's facilities. The program does not teach in the fully minimum units, or in facilities that are devoted to full-time treatment. All told, RVCC now enrolls approximately 500 students, teaching between 60 and 70 courses a semester.

During the history of the program, RVCC has worked in partnership with other institutions under several flagship consortium names. Currently, the institution participates in the NJ-STEP consortium (referenced above) acting as the matriculating institution for the associate degree. NJ-STEP is defined by an agreement between the NJ DOC and Rutgers University-Newark. RVCC continues to work with many other institutions, referred to as instructional partners, to successfully implement postsecondary programs in the state's correctional facilities, covering the entire state of NJ. This coverage impacts the ability of home faculty to travel all across the state in order to teach classes; in some circumstances, commutes can take up to 3 hours each way. Accordingly, RVCC recruits and maintains core faculty that are commutable distances from each facility. Many of these faculty members are directly recruited by RVCC, but they are also able to draw upon an extensive network of community colleges and universities in the state that offer access to their qualified personnel. RVCC still maintains the responsibility to train that faculty on the details of course offerings as well as the program requirements for working inside. RVCC also carries the financial responsibility to compensate this borrowed faculty force. The courses taught are all from the RVCC catalog, and their established learning outcomes drive the syllabi since RVCC is the enrolling institution. This networked arrangement allows qualified faculty from across the region to participate meaningfully in this work, without their institution carrying the fiscal responsibility. One of the most significant partnerships that RVCC has cultivated is with the Princeton University Prison Teaching Initiative, a group of volunteer teachers with over a decade of commitment to higher education in prisons.

Financially, RVCC's program has no external funding other than Pell Grants administered as part of the federal SCP experiment. An average of approximately 60% of the students qualify for some level of Pell award. Defaults, identity and citizenship issues, and lack of parental participation for those students under age 24 are some of the primary reasons that other incarcerated students are unable to receive those awards. Currently, RVCC has been assuming the responsibility for the gap in Pell awards and tuition for the students in this program. In effect, RVCC has "scholarshipped" those students from its operating income and does not issue any balance-billing. RVCC no longer receives any philanthropic support, nor does it receive any direct state funding for this program.

RVCC teaches the full spectrum of a liberal arts education. English composition, literature, the social sciences, communications, art appreciation, global and cultural awareness courses, fitness, language, mathematics, and a full suite of science courses compose a well-rounded degree program. The college is particularly proud of efforts, accomplished in partnership with Princeton University, to use modified materials and methods to introduce robust STEM course inside of the state's correctional facilities. In addition, RVCC carefully selects free elective courses based on student interest.

RVCC students who are incarcerated achieve academic excellence. Over 70% of our students maintain cumulative GPAs over 3.0, using the same learning outcomes and assessments as do our campus students. Nearly 50% of those students have GPAs over 3.5.

Figure 9.2 Higher education in prison (HEP) program spotlight: Raritan Valley Community College.

giving up their inside job and its meager wages or taking fewer classes to work, which can delay program completion. In some states, advocates are working toward achieving stipends for incarcerated individuals who are active college students to replace their lost wages.

For a formerly incarcerated student enrolled in a campus program, financial support needs multiply. College payments become the responsibility of the student, as do all living costs. Family support may or may not be available, creating a need for financial reentry guidance. College student services are available but may not be able to provide a sufficient level of support. Again, both educational and social service reentry navigators become essential elements of educational success for formerly incarcerated students.

Career Supports

Just as education, community, and regional employer stakeholders can collaborate to outline education-to-career pathways for campus-based students, ecosystem actors can similarly collaborate to ensure that incarcerated students receive the same career-oriented supports. While common components, such as flexible pathways, aligning training and skills with employer needs, and offering work-based learning experiences, are also critical in the correctional context, it is important for administrators and academic counselors to be aware of the existing internship and occupational licensing barriers.

For instance, licensing boards in New York assess for “good moral character,” which can appear in practice as either blanket bans or as insurmountable barriers--depending on how informed the applicant is. For applicants who are less informed or less inclined to fight denials, they may not know that others have been able to surmount such challenges. The difference seems to be the level of resiliency of the student/applicant, the amount of resources that can be expended (e.g. hiring an attorney), and the level of advocacy waged in support of the applicant. To cultivate relationships with potential employers for internship placements and employment opportunities that are welcoming to students and graduates with conviction histories, employers should be provided with some guidance informed by best practices so that they are not further stigmatizing interns and employees despite good intentions.

Mentoring can also play a significant role in offering career supports by connecting formerly incarcerated students or graduates to formerly incarcerated professionals who have made the leap from attaining credentials to successfully building careers in fields of their choice. Just as peer mentors have been shown to significantly improve campus-based student outcomes, peer mentors can help justice-impacted students navigate their own postsecondary journeys.

Conclusion

Postsecondary education in the United States has an affordability problem, driving both access and completion crises that are felt acutely by underserved populations. To help advance postsecondary equity, the promise model has emerged nationwide as a potential financial aid strategy to help more students get to college. Yet, by barring eligibility for some of the nation’s most systemically disenfranchised populations such as incarcerated individuals, these financial aid programs further exacerbate postsecondary inequity between incarcerated populations and their peers. While lifting barriers to federal and state financial aid for this population is necessary to close significant postsecondary equity gaps, it is critical that these policy changes are pursued in tandem with building an ecosystem of supports that enables quality HEP programs and incarcerated student success (Figure 9.2).

Acknowledgments

The views expressed in this report represent the personal perspectives of the authors and should not be taken to represent any organizations with which they are affiliated.

Suggested citation

Ajinkya, J., Meiman, S., & Rose, S. (2020). Supporting incarcerated student success. In C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-20-17, pp. 70–82). Educational Testing Service. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12299>

10. Financing College Promise Ecosystems

Catherine M. Millett¹, Martha Kanter², and Michael T. Nettles¹

¹Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ

²College Promise Campaign, Washington, DC

Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines a promise as a “reason to expect something.” When college promise programs are designed, one of the most daunting parts of the process can be estimating how much the program will cost, how will the funds be generated, and how long they are projected to last. One of the worst nightmares a college promise program staff could have is to tell students that their college promise program will have to be reduced in services or, worse yet, will be ending due to a lack of sustainable funding.

The *Designing Sustainable Funding for College Promise Initiatives* (Millett, 2017) report presents the work of the 2016 college promise design teams. Their work focused on financing models, such as (a) children’s savings account models, (b) state-funded models, (c) privately funded models, (d) federal financial aid redesign models, and (e) outcomes-based financing models.

At the 2019 financial sustainability discussion, ecosystem design team members along with finance knowledge navigators focused on financial sustainability from a different perspective. They considered the various options for funding and how to align them with the ecosystem models, with a view to disseminate the models and funding options for consideration by local communities, as well as by state- and federal-elected officials and policy makers. The discussion focused on six topics:

- 1 “Free College” means “Paid for College”
- 2 Decide what to finance by focusing on program intent and who is being served
- 3 Develop finance structures for ecosystem models
- 4 The politics of funding college promise programs
- 5 Anticipate the winds of change in policies, the economy, and public support
- 6 To keep the promise, we need to maintain and sustain the college promise movement.

“Free College” Means “Paid for College”

An opening point of discussion was that we need to collectively unpack the term “free college.” While the direct cost of tuition and/or fees for a student may be zero, the cost for them to enroll in college is being paid to the postsecondary institution. In these contexts, there are multiple approaches for paying for students’ education—individuals, corporations, and states are three examples of possible funder of the “free college tuition to students” (Millett, 2017).

A second point regarding free college is the ambiguity in the interpretation of what it means to be free, especially since free college likely will not end up being free to the student in terms of overall cost of attendance. College promise programs do not provide a full ride—the entire cost of college includes tuition and fees, room and board, textbooks, school materials, living costs—for most students; so, to call these initiatives free college is too narrow of an interpretation of what these programs typically entail. A majority of promise programs are last dollar, which provide support for the remainder of tuition and fees after other financial aid has been applied (e.g., federal Pell Grants). These programs provide important support but are not inclusive of the total student experience that needs to be paid for. We need to broaden the financial conversation beyond tuition and fees and start looking closely at other expenses students accrue, including textbooks, rent, food, childcare, and transportation. This led to a more granular discussion of what needs to be funded for different student populations.

Decide What to Finance by Focusing on Program Intent and Who Is Being Served

The five design teams focused our attention on the many expenses beyond tuition and fees that are part of the cost of attendance for today’s college students (see Table 10.1). These include the costs of living, childcare, transportation, and text books. Additionally, some majors have much higher costs associated with lab fees and necessary supplies. We are profiling the overarching needs of students and acknowledge that no one promise has to cover these needs but we acknowledge these monetary needs may be present for some.

Table 10.1 Synthesis of Ecosystem Design Team Papers: The Student Expenses That Need to Be Considered in Financing Models at the Student, Institution, and Government Levels

	Traditional age	Adult	Undocumented students	Incarcerated & formerly incarcerated	Veterans
Possible direct education expenses					
Tuition	Yes	Yes	Yes	Both	Yes
Fees					
Textbooks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Both	Yes
Technology (e.g., computer, phone, or Internet)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Formerly	Yes
Supplies and major specific fees (major related supplies, e.g., uniforms or equipment; major related fees, e.g., lab fees, background checks or test fees for licensure; educational opportunities, e.g., internships or study at another campus)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Formerly	Yes
Pre-attendance costs (e.g., admissions tests, required immunizations, and medical history forms)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Formerly	Yes
Possible ecosystem complimentary expenses					
Food	Yes	Yes	Yes	Formerly	Yes
Housing (rent or dorm fee; electricity; gas and water)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Formerly	Yes
Transportation (public transportation; car purchase or loan payment; car insurance; car maintenance and repairs; gasoline; parking)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Formerly	Yes
Health care	Yes	Yes	Yes	Formerly	Yes
Child care	Yes	Yes	Yes	Formerly	Yes
Legal services			Yes	Both	

Note. Categories of expenses are in bold, with examples of those expenses placed below.

When considering financing options, communities, states, and the corresponding college promise programs must first reflect on the political intent behind their promise initiatives, which will inform the approaches needed to broaden the financial and social supports offered to students and provide insights into the political will for such changes. When estimating costs and supports to be leveraged, program developers should base their decisions on who is being served and their potential needs.

The group recognizes that student expenses and the level of support needed may vary across populations and across communities. The provision of additional financial supports would need to be customized using these considerations, including knowledge of individual needs and other available resources that could be leveraged to support students.

The ecosystem design team members and finance knowledge navigators next considered a second category of college promise program budget expenses: the programmatic and operational expenses. These are often not the focal point of college promise cost discussions. The group identified several potential expense areas: (a) professional development, (b) student support services, (c) collaboration development, and (d) monitoring and evaluation (see Figure 10.1).

The third discussion point for this topic was the work programs are doing to help students knit together resources both within their institution and across organizations in the community. Thinking of student financial needs and supports holistically (see Figure 10.2) informs how services are created by localities. For example, how students and postsecondary institutions can make linkages with various health and human service organizations, transportation systems, and faith communities to access their available resources. Collectively, these programs can ensure better resources and supports for their students. The work of resource pooling is one way to demonstrate the importance of investments.

Part of these discussions will include prioritizing what is funded and assessing the political will, both internally at the institution/program level and externally at the funding level. Part of these financing discussions need to be about which supports are essential and which are “nice to have.” The answers will be dependent on the program, the populations served and the program scale.

Promise programs are relatively new overall and the question remains: What role does program scale (single institution, a local community, or entire state) play in financing a college promise program? Does intent get diluted when you

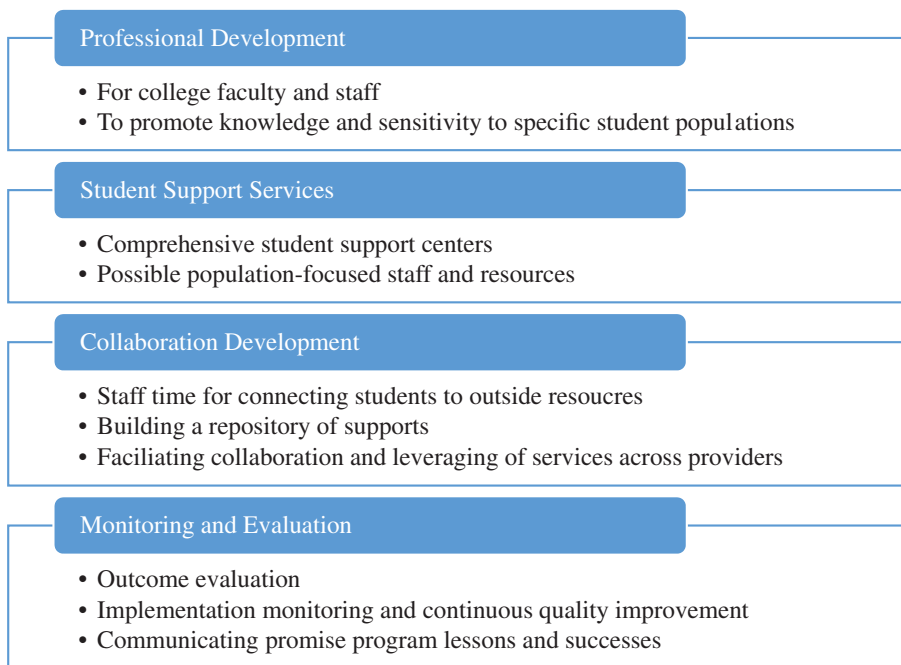


Figure 10.1 Program and institutional infrastructure investment.

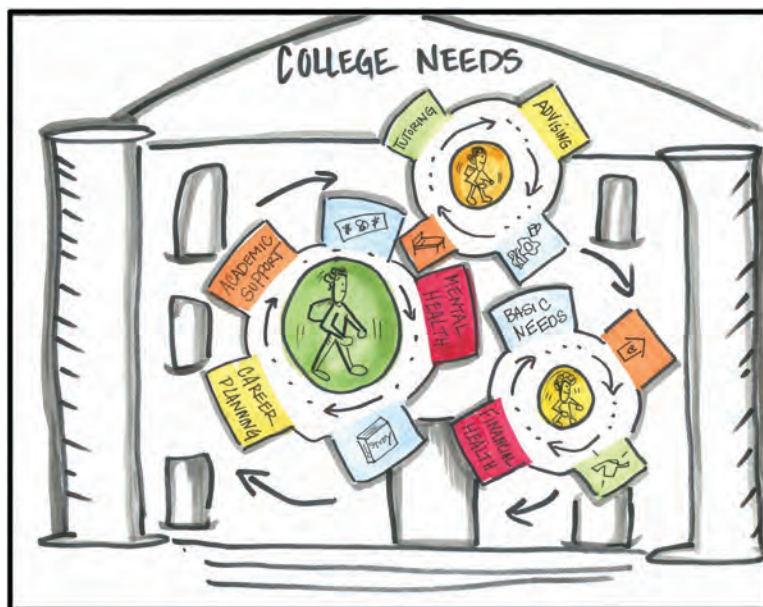


Figure 10.2 College support needs. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans, 2019. Copyright 2019 Educational Testing Service.

go to scale? Are their losses connected to the lack of local customization that occur when programs are expanded and implemented regionally or at the state level?

Develop Finance Structures for Ecosystem Models

As discussed by Rauner and Lundquist earlier in this report, the funding variation across college programs also demonstrates the value of these initiatives across stakeholders. There are several ways promise programs and communities find and develop potential funding sources. These include the following:



Figure 10.3 College promise funding possibilities. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans, 2019. Copyright 2019 Educational Testing Service.

- Federal and state grants
- Municipal allocations
- Tax revenues
- Philanthropic gifts
- Private foundations
- Fundraising events and campaigns

When starting to build out the financing models, it is likely that the resources will be collected from multiple funding sources, with some supports funded indirectly through collaboration with other organizations and leveraging outside resources (see Figure 10.3).

More research and inquiry are needed before we can assert what the cross-sector funding models are to make these ecosystems of college promise support possible. The solution likely varies by the location and populations being served. One approach is to review creative promise financing models that have been adopted throughout the country. For example, Texas A&M is welcoming a cohort of incoming juniors who just finished high school and earned an associate degree

simultaneously because district leadership determined that the cost of expanding dual enrollment by supporting student attendance at a community college was less than the cost of building a new high school facility.

The Politics of Funding College Promise Programs

One key point participants brought up is that when discussing finances, we are really grappling with politics. The process becomes politically strategic, as states, communities, and organizations wrestle with questions such as the following:

- What is the proper role of government versus the philanthropic community?
- Does this vary depending on the population we are serving, or the geographic and demographic contexts?
- What are the benefits and limitations of approaching funding top down (government) versus bottom up (local)?
- Is state-level programming more optimal to form linkages?
- Is it easier to create models at the state level rather than community or federal level?
- What about regional coalitions, as sister cities in different states are often closely connected?

Symposium participants discussed the role of taxes in financing postsecondary education and promise programs. Two points were made:

- Property tax tends to be more stable through recessions.
- Individual income tax-based incentives, including tax credit and tax deductions, are not helpful to students in low-income situations.

Alternative funding sources and unintended policy driven financial impacts were discussed. For example, one participant discussed the use of job training funds as a possibility for college promise programs. Job training funds are a small fraction of the money set aside by the federal and state unemployment insurance programs. There are political and policy benefits of reimagining those funds for promise programs. Promise program support could be one of a portfolio of options for a human capital strategy. Thus, the job training funds could serve as a platform for a sustainable endowment-like strategy. Another participant commented that we need to acknowledge cross-subsidies and shifting costs based on investments made by others. For example, local communities with promise programs are indirectly subsidizing the states, as community colleges are receiving students who would have otherwise gone to 4-year colleges because of a promise, just as dual enrollment programs in high schools may result in a reduced number of courses in which students enroll later.

Anticipate the Winds of Change in Policies, the Economy, and Public Support

Political, economic, and societal changes in conditions are a reality for social programs, in general, and for higher education programs in particular. Promise programs need the ability to show their benefit across stakeholders. Program developers and leaders may benefit from the capacity to frame arguments for their programs and the knowledge to build the reporting infrastructure to do it.

One strategy discussed was that it is important to not tie a promise predominantly to one person, given the likelihood of change in administration, priorities, and funding. Often, changes in government administration, such as the election of a new governor or mayor, will lead to investments in new approaches. It serves promise programs to be championed by many, not just one or two prominent individuals. It is important to work to sustain political will over time by designing something that others will champion on a campus, in a community, and at a state and federal level.

Additionally, it is important to consider how programs can be designed to withstand a recession. State-level postsecondary funding is still not where it was before the Great Recession (Mitchell et al., 2017). Program developers should ask, “How do we think about promise sustainability? How do we weather the economic downturns?” Working to develop a finance structure that includes ongoing funding that is not annually appropriated might be a good strategy to make promise funding a reoccurring budget item that is hardwired into a budget, rather than an annual appropriations request.

To Keep the Promise: Maintain and Sustain College Promise Movement

While college promise programs have expanded in number and design, the financial sustainability of these initiatives is uncertain. Some programs are unsure of their funding from year to year, while others project to be financially solvent for

the long term, and some have funding for the short-term security, where their program may not be projected to go in perpetuity but are expected to remain sufficiently funded for the next several years. The groups collectively asked, “How do we sustain and expand the funding and support solutions for college access and success?” Participants expressed a desire to see that promises are kept by these programs, in that they are solvent from year to year and that they do not have to discontinue providing scholarships or begin to limit their awards and student eligibility standards. We are only beginning to understand this challenge.

The College Promise Campaign (2020) presented the preliminary results of their sustainability survey of a representative sample of all promise programs, published in their report, *College Promises to Keep: A Playbook for Achieving College Promise Financial Sustainability*. Highlights of their findings include the following:

- Sixty-one percent of respondents indicated that their program had enough funding to meet community needs now; however, 39% of programs reported there was not enough funding to meet the promise needs, and many anticipated that their resources would run out within a few years.
- Half of program respondents said they had financial sustainability concerns, and another 27% reported not being sure.
- Only one in four college promise program leaders reported not having any financial concerns.
- Already, over one-third of programs (37%) have made programmatic adjustments based on financial constraints, most of which were reported to affect student benefits or supports.
- Programs reported that the largest sustainability challenge facing their program was increasing demand for their program (51%), followed by limited control over their yearly budget allocation (37%), and setting and meeting annual funding raising targets (36%).

Picking up from our previous report, this book tackled financial sustainability from the funding angle, providing funding options and models for communities, political officials, and policy makers to choose from. One of the major discussion points that emerged from the June 2019 symposium was the importance of focusing on program intent and the population being served. Other points included developing finance structures for ecosystem models and knowing the politics behind funding a college promise program. In the latter’s regard, organizations and individuals involved in creating a promise must anticipate political, economic, and public support changes and avoid the term “free college,” opting instead to define exactly what expenses their programs will cover. Lastly, those involved in developing and implementing college promise programs must commit to keeping the promise movement alive.

Suggested citation

Millett, C. M., Kanter, M., & Nettles, M. T. (2020). Financing college promise ecosystems. In C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-20-17, pp. 83–88). Educational Testing Service. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12299>

11. Bringing the Ecosystems Together

Catherine M. Millett¹, Martha Kanter², & Michael T. Nettles¹

¹Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ

²College Promise Campaign, Washington, DC

With approximately 330 local and state promise programs, there is now a critical mass of initiatives that strengthens the opportunities produced by bringing these programs and colleagues together to leverage program design and development strategies and to highlight and spread best practices. Participants discussed three notable examples. First, the annual conference of college promise programs, PromiseNet, aims to provide an interactive, collaborative environment for promise community stakeholders to come together and share best practices for designing, implementing, and sustaining place-based scholarship programs (Cities of Promise, 2016). Second, the College Promise Campaign, MDRC (a nonprofit, nonpartisan education and social policy research organization), and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association launched the College Promise Success Initiative in 2018 to help promise programs use research-based best practices to improve students' academic outcomes (MDRC, 2018). Third, the College Promise Campaign has created a research initiative that brings researchers and evaluators together in an effort to "support and disseminate a rich body of research for local communities and states to use as they consider the best evidence-based models for creating and implementing sustainable and effective college promise programs.

"Our research efforts bring together and encourage key partners to examine the diverse range of college promise program characteristics, outcomes, and collective impact for their communities and our nation" (College Promise Campaign, n.d.-b, Research and Development section, para 1). With this ecosystem convening, the College Promise Campaign, in partnership with ETS, advanced this national collaborative effort by bringing researchers, practitioners, promise students, and finance experts together to consider how to support and potentially finance promise programs for specific postsecondary populations. This convening contributed to the larger promise conversation in multiple ways, including (a) discussing what needs to be financed and by whom, (b) bringing to light the varying needs of different postsecondary populations, and (c) proposing ecologic models of promise support for these specific groups.

Note that the designs put forth in this report are ecological and therefore will morph, grow, and evolve over time. This effort brought researchers together with other sectors, who offered multiple voices, to take ideas, strategies, and findings from theory and evaluation into practice. There were areas of significant thematic overlap between the five ecosystem designs, making it clear that designs aimed at meeting the needs of diverse groups of postsecondary students should be mindful of the possible financial needs and the social, academic, institutional, and community-based supports necessary for student success and advancement in college and career(s).

Future promise research includes expanding our understanding of what needs to be financed (see Table 10.1, Synthesis of Ecosystem Design Team Papers) and further discussions of cross-sector partnerships that can help make this possible. We are also interested to know of other colleagues are doing this now, either in the United States or abroad. What can international models of college financing and student support teach us?

We also plan to build out this work to include other subpopulations of postsecondary students. Here are the next five student populations we will focus on:

- First generation students,
- Youth in or aged-out of foster care,
- Students with disabilities,
- Students who are parents, and
- Students with developmental learning needs.

Suggested citation

Millett, C. M., Kanter, M., & Nettles, M. T. (2020). Bringing the ecosystems together. In C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-20-17, p. 89). Educational Testing Service. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12299>

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank several people for their contributions and input to this report, including Stephanie Saunders and Lisa Ankrah of ETS and Robyn Hiestand of College Promise Campaign. The visual contributions made by Maria Evans through her sketch note art helped capture the essence of the *Depicting the Ecosystems of Support and Financial Sustainability for Five College Promise Populations* symposium.

Notes

- 1 Adult students are those who are 25 or older because 25 is 6 years beyond high school and 1 year past the age that traditional-aged students tend to be upon graduation.
- 2 Note that McFarland et al. (2019) included students who completed a GED or other type of high school equivalency program among those who completed high school, as long as those GED/high school equivalency students finished their programs and attended postsecondary education the same year as the regular high school students.
- 3 College readiness is defined as having completed the standard 15-course sequence required for entry at many public colleges, and career readiness is defined as having three or more credits in a broad career field such as health science or business (Bromberg & Theokas, 2016).
- 4 The Bottom Line (BL) college advising program has counselors provide one-on-one advising to rising high school seniors to help them find appropriate colleges to apply to and submit college applications. BL emphasizes financial aid application support and evaluation of postsecondary options by analyzing students' financial aid packages and colleges' cost of attendance. The program's goal is to help students attend schools that offer "an optimal combination of quality and affordability," then continue providing support during students' college years (Barr & Castleman, 2017, p. 3).
- 5 Initiated by executive order by President Barak Obama in 2012, DACA protects eligible immigrant youth who came to the United States when they were children from deportation. DACA provides young undocumented immigrants with protection from deportation and a work permit.
- 6 Depending on the situation, a student veteran may be able to extend their benefits by 9 months.
- 7 Although incarcerated students were the primary focus of the college promise ecosystem design teams work, they agreed that the term "justice-impacted" takes the focus away from imprisonment and was also inclusive of those on probation or parole.
- 8 Most justice-impacted individuals are those who are on parole or probation.
- 9 Other papers in this series focus on students who are 25 years and older (adult students), undocumented students (DREAMers) who arrived in the United States as children, student veterans, and incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students.
- 10 High school completers are individuals aged 16–24 years who graduated from high school or completed a high school equivalency credential prior to October of the calendar year (McFarland et al., 2019).
- 11 Fourteen point one percent of the population was Black, 17.3% Hispanic, 6.8% Asian, and 4.3% were Other, including American-Indian/Alaska Native and individuals of more than one race.
- 12 Approximately 22% of all undergraduates are parents, most of whom are women. In 2011–2012, the Institute for Women's Policy Research and Ascend reported that the majority (70%) of the 3.8 million student–parents were women, and that for student–parents, nontuition expenses such as child care, housing, and transportation can disproportionately impact their ability to engage in education (Reichlin Cruse et al., 2019).
- 13 Specifically, Lumina's goal is for 60% of working-age Americans to hold degrees, certificates, or high-quality postsecondary credentials by 2025. Lumina estimates that current rates of degree and certificate production will leave the country 16.4 million credentials short of its goal. To reach 60% postsecondary attainment by 2025, Lumina expects that 11.6 million "additional degrees" need to go to adults 25 and older: 6.1 million to returning adult students and 5.5 million to adults with no postsecondary experience (Lumina Foundation, 2017). For a state-by-state analysis of progress toward this goal, see Pingel et al., 2016.
- 14 Financially independent adults are those that declare themselves as an independent on their federal tax return and FAFSA.
- 15 We recognize that a sharp, income-based means test may create unfairness, perverse incentives, or distorted behavior among those near the eligibility cutoff. This is an intrinsic drawback of straightforward means tests: those that are easy to understand are also easy to game. Here, we weigh these costs against the access benefits of eligibility criteria that are clear, simple, and easy to communicate (see Dynarski, 2000, 2004; Perna & Steele, 2011).
- 16 A Title IV-eligible program is one whose institution has been verified by the Department of Education as legally allowed to operate within a state and its accreditation status (Hegji, 2018).
- 17 "Promise GPA" is calculated using only the courses taken during their enrollment in the APP and not their cumulative GPA (intended for students with prior college credit).
- 18 These stipulations are modeled on elements of the Kalamazoo Promise program, which permits students to reenroll after meeting satisfactory academic progress (SAP) for one semester (Perna, 2016b).

- 19 Short-term certificates represent the fastest growing postsecondary credential, increasing from 6% of postsecondary awards in 1980 to 22% in 2012 (Carnevale et al., 2012).
- 20 Under federal regulations, the sponsors of registered apprenticeship programs are not required to be on their state's list of Eligible Training Providers (ETP). Providers on state ETP lists are subject to higher reporting standards. From 2015, they are also automatically eligible to receive federal workforce funding under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Apprenticeship USA, 2016; U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).
- 21 Advisors should ensure that adults understand that many public social benefits carry lifetime limits.
- 22 The support that some financial advisors can offer may be limited based upon their ability to access student data housed at other institutions.
- 23 Students might repay 10% of the portion of personal income above 150% of the federal poverty line for up to 20 years.
- 24 This program element is modeled in part on the highly successful City University of New York's ASAP program (Scrivener et al., 2015).
- 25 Participating programs that do not already operate on a credit-hour basis should consult with state APP administrators to calibrate stipend awards.
- 26 To be eligible to receive federal student aid, student-apprentices must be enrolled in an eligible (credit-bearing) certificate or degree program at a participating postsecondary institution (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).
- 27 TAA applies to individuals whose employment was affected or threatened by trade-related circumstances (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.-b).
- 28 CTCs between Workforce Investment Boards/American Job Centers and employers can pay for apprenticeship instructional costs (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).
- 29 On-the-job-training contracts can reimburse employers for up to 50% (more, in certain regions) of wages for up to 6 months.
- 30 Fundamentally, the higher (potential) interjurisdictional mobility of economic activity across state/local (relative to national) borders increases the economic costs of taxation, narrows the (efficient) tax base, reduces government debt-service capacity, and increases government borrowing costs at the state/local level relative to the national level (see Blöching & Pinero-Campos, 2011). These constraints and their consequences have in turn motivated (and been institutionalized in) balanced-budget measures in 49 states that (a) make states a poor vehicle for financing long-term investments in general and (b) make state spending—postsecondary spending in particular—strongly procyclical (Delaney & Doyle, 2011; Hovey, 1999). Even more important are tax-and-expenditure limitations (in 28 states) that constrain states' fiscal capacities even further (Archibald & Feldman, 2006; Reuben & Randall, 2017) and federal mandates and matching formulae—particularly in Medicaid—unfavorable to higher education spending (Kane et al., 2005). See Johnson (2018) for a discussion of the challenge posed by adults' counter-cyclical enrollment patterns.
- 31 In economics jargon, postsecondary investments are a public good that place potential funders in an ongoing Prisoner's Dilemma. Matching formulae simply institutionalize the optimal "tit-for-tat" solution to the game.
- 32 To prevent states from abusing the generous federal match (e.g., claiming all state/local community college appropriations as APP expenditures in order to secure undue federal funds), state APP contributions should be earmarked for program-specific expenditures—states can then use federal matching funds to help providers cover the costs of expanding their general (i.e., not necessarily program-specific) capacities (e.g., capital expenditures) as needed.
- 33 Free City program, San Francisco
- 34 Tennessee Promise program
- 35 Gateway Promise, Kenosha County, Wisconsin
- 36 Oregon Opportunity Grant
- 37 Higher Ed Insight (2019).
- 38 Because these state-level policies are continually changing, please refer to ULeadnet.org for up-to date and more detailed information about state-level policies.
- 39 A sanctuary city is defined as "a city (or a county, or a state) that limits its cooperation with federal immigration enforcement agents in order to protect low-priority immigrants from deportation, while still turning over those who have committed serious crimes" (America's Voice, 2019, para. 2).
- 40 Throughout the paper, the authors will use the following terms: incarcerated students, incarcerated population, formerly incarcerated students, and justice-impacted students. The last group consists of students who have been incarcerated or affected by the justice system in some way or have family members who have been incarcerated or affected by the justice system in some way. Formerly incarcerated students, on the other hand, is a term that applies exclusively to students who themselves were once incarcerated.
- 41 N.J.S.18A: 71B2 prohibits incarcerated students from accessing state financial aid for college coursework.

- 42 On January 9, 2020, Governor Phil Murphy signed the bill into law that expands student eligibility for state financial aid assistance to incarcerated residents of New Jersey.
- 43 RVCC and Rutgers University-Newark are the two New Jersey institutions participating in the SCP experiment. Both of these schools are members of the NJ-STEP Consortium and have a memorandum of understanding with the NJ DOC to offer degree programs inside NJ state prisons. The consortium partners with other New Jersey colleges and universities as instructional partners, including Princeton University and Drew University. RVCC confers an associate degree in liberal arts, and Rutgers-Newark confers a bachelor's degree in justice studies. Each matriculating institution independently provides the administrative support for their program and Rutgers-Newark, using a combination of philanthropic and operating funds, supports on-site counseling, liaison, and reentry functions.

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Appendix A Agenda

June 4 and 5—Five College Promise Ecosystem Designs

Day 1—Tuesday, June 4, 2019

2 p.m.	Welcome Michael Nettles, ETS
2:15 p.m.	Participant Introductions Please tell us your name, organization and College Promise Ecosystem connection.
3:30 p.m.	Conference Overview Catherine Millett, ETS Martha Kanter, College Promise Campaign
4 p.m.	Break
4:15 p.m.	Students at the Center: Weighing in on College Promise Ecosystem Designs Chair: Catherine Millett, ETS Panelists and their College Promise Program Association: Klayre Guzman-Ortega, San Jose Promise Kimberly Lowe Sawyer, Graduate! Philadelphia Efren Lopez, Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) Samantha Estes, Xavier University Student Veterans Peer Mentor Program Tia Ryans, NJ-STEP Q&A with colleagues
6 p.m.	Getting to Know You: Reception and Dinner Brodsky Gallery and Solomon Our hope is that you will meet many of your colleagues by the end of the evening. Please look at your name tag. It has two numbers (R = #, D = #). These are your tables for the evening. The reception is in the Brodsky Gallery (R = #) and dinner in Solomon (D = #).

Day 2 — Wednesday, June 5, 2019

9 a.m.	Overview of the Day Catherine Millett, ETS
9:15 a.m.	SPARK Talks on the Five College Promise Ecosystems Each ecosystem team will give a SPARK Talk Traditional-Age Students (18–24) Adult Students (25 years and up) DREAMers Student Veterans Incarcerated/Formerly Incarcerated Students Q&A with colleagues
10:45 a.m.	Break
11 a.m.	Holistic Examination of the Five College Promise Ecosystems (Group Work) Each team will have a meeting area (Stony Brook or Mallard). Knowledge Navigators can choose which team conversation to join. The goal of this session is to discuss the ecosystem design and consider how to refine/expand the designs.
1 p.m.	Working Lunch Representative(s) of each design team conversation shares three takeaways from the 11 a.m. session
2 p.m.	Insights from External Knowledge Navigators Knowledge Navigators will discuss the designs and reflect on what they have learned David Croom, Ascend at the Aspen Institute Maureen Hoyler, Council for Opportunity in Education Lindsey Reichlin Cruse, Institute for Women’s Policy Research Jenna Sablan, Georgetown University Evan Weissman, MDRC Q&A with colleagues
3:15 p.m.	Reflections and Next Steps Catherine Millett, ETS Martha Kanter, College Promise Campaign We will reflect on what we learned, discuss how we will incorporate the new thinking and feedback from the ecosystem team members and knowledge navigators
4 p.m.	Meeting Adjournment

June 5 and 6—College Promise Financial Sustainability Focus

Day 1 — Wednesday, June 5, 2019

5 p.m.	Welcome and Conference Overview Catherine Millett, ETS Martha Kanter, College Promise Campaign
5:15 p.m.	Participant Introductions Please tell us your name, organization and College Promise Ecosystem connection. <i>(for those who stayed, one take away from previous part of the conference)</i>
5:45 pm	Panel with Members of the Five College Promise Ecosystem Design Teams Chair: Michael Nettles, ETS Panelists: Traditional-Age Students (18–24) - Catherine Millett, ETS Adult Students (25 years and up) - Adam Bush, College Unbound DREAMers - Ryan Cornner Los Angeles Community College District Student Veterans – Barbara Illowsky, De Anza College Incarcerated/Formerly Incarcerated Students – Stephen Rose, George Washington University Q&A with colleagues
7 p.m.	Dinner in Solomon Please join us in Solomon for dinner

Day 2—Thursday, June 6, 2019

7–9 a.m.	Breakfast in Solomon
9 a.m.	Overview of the Day Catherine Millett, ETS
9:15 a.m.	Bringing the Promise of Affordable College to Five College Promise Populations (Group Work) We will designate a meeting area to discuss affordable college for each of the five student populations (Stony Brook or Mallard). A member of the ecosystem design will facilitate a conversation about financing the College Promise
10:30 a.m.	Break
11 a.m.	Reporting on Group Work Representative of each design team conversation shares three takeaways from the morning session
11:45 a.m.	Break for Lunch Please pick-up a lunch and return at 12:15 p.m.
12:15 p.m.	The College Promise Financial Sustainability Survey Martha Kanter, College Promise Campaign Robyn Hiestand, College Promise Campaign Martha Kanter and Robyn Hiestand will present the findings from the <i>College Promise Financial Sustainability Survey</i> . Group discussion will follow Q&A with colleagues
2 p.m.	Next Steps: How Do We Work Together to Advance College Promise? Martha Kanter, College Promise Campaign Catherine Millett, ETS Michael Nettles, ETS Research and data are essential—how can the College Promise Research Network (CPRN) build out an agenda for the next 5 years so that we capitalize on, promote and create research
3 p.m.	Meeting Adjournment

Appendix B

Design Teams, Ecosystem Knowledge Navigators, and Finance Knowledge Investigators Design Teams

Traditional Aged-Students

Klayre Guzman-Ortega, San Jose Promise (student panelist)
 Sara Lundquist, WestEd & Lumina Foundation
 Mary Rauner, WestEd
 Jessie Stewart, Richmond Promise

Adult Students

Adam Bush, College Unbound
 Reuben Ford, Social Research and Demonstration Corporation
 Jessica Gibson, Tennessee Higher Education Commission
 Nate Johnson, Postsecondary Analytics
 Kimberly Lowe Sawyer, Graduate! Philadelphia (student panelist)
 Hadass Sheffer, THE GRADUATE! NETWORK, INC.
 Louis Soares, American Council on Education
 Patricia Steele, Higher Ed Insight

Undocumented Students

Ryan Cornner, Los Angeles Community College District
 Rachel Freeman, University of California, Los Angeles
 Jennifer Galvez, Los Angeles Community College District
 Efren Lopez, Los Angeles Community College District (student panelist)
 Robert Teranishi, University of California, Los Angeles

Student Veterans

Sarah Aldridge, College Promise Campaign
 Rosye Cloud, College Promise Campaign
 Samantha Estes, Xavier University Students Veterans Center (student panelist)
 Barbara Illowsky, De Anza College
 Sandra Kurtinitis, Community College of Baltimore County
 Richard Lilley, Community College of Baltimore County
 Beth Morgan, Columbia University Center for Veteran Transition and Integration

Incarcerated Students

Julie Ajinkya, Institute for Higher Education Policy
 Sheila Meiman, Raritan Valley Community College
 Stephen Rose, George Washington University
 Tia Ryans, NJ-STEP (student panelist)

Ecosystem Knowledge Navigators

Note: ** indicated Ecosystem Knowledge Navigators who participated in both the ecosystem and finance sections of the meeting.

Victoria Ballerini, Research for Action
 David Croom, Ascend at the Aspen Institute

Miriam Feldblum, Presidents Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration
 Rachel Goldberg, Passaic Public Schools
 Robyn Hiestand, College Promise Campaign**
 Maureen Hoyler, Council for Opportunity in Education
 Martha Kanter, College Promise Campaign**
 Stephen Katsinas, University of Alabama**
 Linda Lam, New Jersey Council of County Colleges**
 Jee Hang Lee, Association of Community College Trustees**
 Kimberly Lee, Albany Technical College**
 Kalwis Lo, Scholarship America**
 Catherine Millett, ETS**
 Michael Nettles, ETS**
 Lisa O'Donnell, BlackRock**
 Russell Porter, Texas A&M University, Central Texas**
 Norie Pride-Womack, Tarrant County Promise/Tarrant To & Through**
 George Pruitt, Thomas Edison State University**
 Lindsey Reichlin Cruse, Institute for Women's Policy Research
 Richard Rivera, Educational Consultant
 Maxine Roberts, Education Commission of the States**
 Jenna Sablan, Georgetown University
 Stephanie Saunders, ETS**
 Stefani Thachik, State of New Jersey, Office of the Secretary of Higher Education
 John Thurber, Thomas Edison State University**
 Saul Valdez, ECMC Foundation
 Carrie Warick, National College Access Network**
 Evan Weissman, MDRC

Finance Knowledge Navigators

Aaron Fichtner, New Jersey Council of County Colleges
 Robert Kelchen, Seton Hall University
 Richard Lilley, Community College of Baltimore County
 Robert Nathenson, CPRE, University of Pennsylvania
 Jim Runcie, The Education Finance Institute

Suggested citation:

Millett, C. M. (Ed.). (2020). *Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-20-17). Educational Testing Service. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12299>

Action Editor: Don Powers

Reviewers: David Klieger, George Pruitt, and Maxine Roberts

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