

AB 19 (Santiago)

The California Community College Promise

Bill Summary

AB 19 creates the California Community College (CCC) Promise Program to provide tuition-free education at a CCC for one academic year for all first-time, full-time (12 units or more) students.

Existing Law

The CCC Board of Governor's Fee Waiver (BOGFW) waives enrollment fees (\$46/unit) for students who (1) meet residency criteria; (2) maintain minimum academic and progress standards; and (3) demonstrate financial need via various methods (Education Code § 76300).

Background

In 2015, former President Obama proposed two years of tuition-free community college for eligible students. Modeled off the Tennessee Promise (which provides two years tuition-free at a community or technical college in Tennessee to certain state residents) and California's own Long Beach Promise (which provides one year tuition-free to eligible students), Obama's proposal has prompted extensive debate across the nation on college access and affordability.

Realizing the benefits of such programs, many community college districts throughout California—and across the U.S.—have implemented local Promise Programs.¹ These Promise Programs have been demonstrated to:

- Expand access to financial aid;
- Promote equity;
- Increase enrollment;
- Improve academic performance; and
- Boost college completion rates.

¹ <http://bit.ly/2IA3EQV>

Need for AB 19

In 2025, California faces an estimated shortage of one million college degree and certificate holders needed to sustain the state's workforce.

To help meet this demand, AB 19 enacts a CCC Promise Program to provide a year of tuition-free education to all first-time, full-time, CCC students.

By creating a college-going culture throughout California, this measure will expand access to financial aid, promote equity, increase enrollment, help improve academic performance, and boost completion rates.

Support

Los Angeles Community College District (sponsor)
Los Rios Community College District (sponsor)
Peralta Community College District (sponsor)
San Diego Community College District (sponsor)
San Francisco Community College District (sponsor)
AFSCME
Faculty Association of CA Community Colleges
San Bernardino Community College District
Santa Monica College

Opposition

None on file

For More Information

Brandon Gaytán
Assemblymember Miguel Santiago
916.319.2053 | brandon.gaytan@asm.ca.gov

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Appendix: Evidence Supporting AB 19 and similar Promise Programs

AB 19 creates the California Community College Promise Program to provide tuition-free education at a CCC for one academic year for all first-time, full-time (12 units or more) students. By creating a college-going culture throughout the California, AB 19 will expand access to financial aid, promote equity, increase enrollment, help improve academic performance, and boost completion rates.

1. AB 19 can expand access to financial aid and decrease student debt:

- a. The measure provides tuition relief for first-time full-time students.
- b. Promoting full-time attendance can help CCC students access and identify state (BOG waiver, Cal Grant) and federal (Pell Grant) financial aid that many may not know they are eligible to receive.
 - i. For example, Tennessee Promise students are required to file a federal financial aid application (FAFSA). Over 70% of high school seniors in Tennessee completed the FAFSA in 2015-16², the highest rate in the country. AB 19 can help motivate students, once at a CCC, to similarly apply for federal aid.
 - ii. As another example, at Ventura College, the percentage of first-time students receiving BOG waivers steadily increased from 2006-14, and the college attributed this to its own Ventura College Promise.³ AB 19 can similarly help identify additional students eligible for a BOG waiver.

2. AB 19 can promote equity:

- a. The measure can help reach students who may not have otherwise entered college.
 - i. 60% of Tennessee Promise recipients are first in their family to go to college and 70% are from low-income families.⁴
 - ii. A survey of Oregon Promise students found first-generation recipients were much more likely to report the Promise influenced them to attend college than non-first-generation recipients.⁵
 - iii. After a period of nine years, nearly half of all Ventura Promise students reported that they would not have attended college without the program.⁶
- b. The Long Beach Promise has seen increases in the number and percentage of students across all ethnic groups who have successfully completed coursework needed to transfer to a 4-year program.⁷
- c. Ventura College found that Latino students in the Promise cohort were awarded more degrees or certificates (21%) than Latino students in the non-Promise cohort (11%).⁸

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3. AB 19 can increase enrollment:

- a. Since the implementation of the Tennessee Promise in 2014, first-time freshman enrollment in public higher education has increased by 13 percent.⁹ In addition, the college-going rate in Tennessee rose by 4.6% in the inaugural year of the Promise, a larger percent than in the last 7 years combined.¹⁰
- b. CSU Long Beach experienced a 43% increase in enrollment by Long Beach Unified students from 2008-12.¹¹
- c. In the first year of the Oregon Promise, there was a 25% increase in high school students enrolled at the state's community colleges.¹² As a specific example, enrollment at Chemeketa Community College in Salem jumped 22%.¹³
- d. At Ventura College, a survey found 82% of Promise students were enrolled full time compared to 46% of the general student population.¹⁴
- e. In Kalamazoo, Michigan, the Promise program increased the chances of starting college within six months of graduating high school by 14% for any college and 34% for baccalaureate programs.¹⁵

4. AB 19 can improve academic performance:

- a. Long Beach Promise students who successfully completed transfer-level math and transfer-level English increased by 200% and 500%, respectively.¹⁶
- b. In 2012, Long Beach CCD saw increases in intent to transfer by 275%.¹⁷
- c. Upon transferring to CSU Long Beach, Long Beach Community College and Long Beach Unified Promise graduates are more likely to remain enrolled than other students.¹⁸

5. AB 19 can boost completion rates:

- a. At Ventura College, from 2009-12, Promise students were awarded 58% more degrees and certificates than their non-Promise counterparts.¹⁹
- b. At Ventura College, from 2009-12, persistence rates (Fall to Spring and Fall to Fall) of Promise students significantly exceeded those of non-Promise students.²⁰ In Tennessee, about 63 percent of the first Promise cohort re-enrolled in college for a second year.²¹ There are similar findings in the Pittsburg Promise (PA).²²

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- c. AB 19 encourages full-time enrollment, which has been shown to facilitate degree completion and speed of completion.
 - i. In a study of the 1.9 million students who began postsecondary study in 2006, of the students who attended exclusively full time, 76% completed a degree and 80% either completed or were still enrolled by 2012. Of those attending exclusively part time, 21% completed a degree and 32% either completed or were still enrolled six years later. The completion rate for those attending a mixture of full time and part time was in between, with 41% completing a degree and 68% either completing a degree or still enrolled.²³
 - ii. At Ventura College, from 2009-12, the number of units taken by Promise students was higher than non-Promise students,²⁴ and in Kalamazoo (Michigan) the Promise program increased the cumulative number of college credits attempted by 15%.²⁵ Increasing units can facilitate college completion, as data on college completions suggests that inadequately supported low-income students are not completing sufficient credit hours per term to finish degrees in two or four or even six years.²⁶

6. AB 19 can positively impact the community:

- a. This bill can produce a college-going culture throughout the community.
- b. Promise programs can impact enrollment in K-12 schools. Between 2005-2014, enrollment in the Kalamazoo (Michigan) Public Schools grew 24%, while enrollment in private schools decreased.²⁷
- c. Promise programs can impact completion at other local 4-year schools. Six-year graduation rates at CSU Long Beach have risen from 45% to 60%.²⁸
- d. Promise programs can bring more attention to jobs that require an associate degree or technical certificate.
- e. Promise programs may increase economic productivity within the Promise region by keeping current residents in place and luring new residents to the area.
 - i. The announcement of a Promise Program resulted in a 6-12% (\$14,000-\$20,500) increase in housing prices.²⁹
 - ii. Three years after the announcement of a Promise Program, overall population growth in Promise zones relative to surrounding cities was 2.7%, while population growth among families with children under 18 was 6.0%.³⁰
 - iii. Promise programs lead to a 1.7% increase in overall population of the local labor market.³¹

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References

- ² Tennessee Office of the Governor. <https://www.tn.gov/governor/news/44895>
- ³ Ventura College Institutional Effectiveness Reports. <http://bit.ly/2mubb7P>, pg 22 and <http://bit.ly/2muklBr>, pg 22.
- ⁴ College Promise Campaign, 2015-2016 Annual Report. <http://bit.ly/2eP8Joo>, pg 6.
- ⁵ Education Northwest, Early Findings on Oregon’s New College Grant Program. <http://bit.ly/2m9rXrO>, pg 8.
- ⁶ Jameson-Meedy (2016). What are Community College ‘Promise’ Programs and do they provide any long-term impact on student completion? <http://www.citruscollege.edu/ifc/Documents/RB/01.2016RB.pdf>, pg 3.
- ⁷ Long Beach College Promise, 2015 Annual Report. <http://bit.ly/23TznO8>
- ⁸ See reference #6, pg 3.
- ⁹ Tennessee Office of the Governor. <https://www.tn.gov/thec/news/48418>
- ¹⁰ See reference #4, pg 6.
- ¹¹ Long Beach College Promise, 5 year report (2008-13). <http://bit.ly/2mFPfn3>, pg 2.
- ¹² Campaign for Free College Tuition. Benefits of a Promise Program for Your Community. <http://bit.ly/2m9wmLz>, pg 2.
- ¹³ Statesman Journal. Free community college spreads from Tennessee to Oregon. <http://stjr.nl/2kyk5wy>
- ¹⁴ See reference #6, pg 3.
- ¹⁵ See reference #12, pg 2.
- ¹⁶ See reference #7, pg 3.
- ¹⁷ CSU Academic Affairs, Long Beach Promise Presentation. <http://bit.ly/2ldvJRO>, pg 25.
- ¹⁸ See reference #17, pg 32.
- ¹⁹ WestEd. The College Promise in California: A Collection of Program Profiles. <http://bit.ly/2lsfcVe>, pg 74.
- ²⁰ See reference #19, pg 74.
- ²¹ See reference #9.
- ²² Iriti *et al* (2012). Realizing “The Promise:” Scholar Retention and Persistence in Post-Secondary Education. <http://bit.ly/2IUG8Av>, pg 9.
- ²³ Carlson & Zaback, Moving the Needle: How Financial Aid Policies Can Help States Meet Student Completion Goals. <http://bit.ly/2muhUhw>, pg 9.
- ²⁴ See reference #19, pg 74.
- ²⁵ See reference #12, pg 2.
- ²⁶ See reference #23, pg 9
- ²⁷ See reference #12, pg 2.
- ²⁸ See reference #7.
- ²⁹ LeGower & Walsh (2014). Promise Scholarship Programs as Place-Making Policy: Evidence from School Enrollment and Housing Prices. <http://bit.ly/2mFStqF>
- ³⁰ Bartik & Sotherland (2015). Migration and housing price effects of place-based college scholarships. http://research.upjohn.org/up_workingpapers/245/
- ³¹ See reference #30.