



# CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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## CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

### PRESS RELEASE

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## California Community Colleges Announce the Most Expansive “College Promise” Program in the Nation

*Santa Ana, Calif.* – Today the Board of Governors heard an overview of the planned changes to the California Community Colleges’ longstanding “free tuition” program, introducing the California College Promise Grant aimed at increasing college participation for recent high school graduates and continuing the state’s role as the national leader in providing free tuition to students with financial need.

The California College Promise Grant, formerly known as the Board of Governors Fee Waiver program, provides approximately 1 million students – nearly half of the 2.1 million students enrolled at California community college campuses – with free tuition. Branding and marketing of the grant is expected to broaden the reach of the program to encourage more Californians who could benefit to get the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the state’s economy.

“California has long been a leader in college opportunity,” said Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley. “By rebranding our fee waiver program as the College Promise, we are aligning our historical commitment to affordability with the successful Promise partnership model to send the message that college is within reach to young Californians who otherwise may not see higher education as an option.”

Unlike most other states’ programs, California’s College Promise is a *first dollar* plan, meaning the state covers the tuition costs first, and any other financial aid awarded to the student can be used to offset the cost of textbooks, transportation and other non-tuition expenses. In a *last dollar* plan, the state only covers the portion of tuition costs that are not paid by other aid, meaning that the lowest income students receive the smallest financial benefit, if any.

“California’s commitment to affordability focuses our resources on those students with the most financial need,” said Board of Governors President Cecilia V. Estolano. “This progressive approach to financial aid ensures that all California students, not just those from higher-income families, have the opportunity to attend and succeed in community college.”

California’s College Promise leads other states’ proposals in a variety of other important ways. For example, in order to limit costs, other states set strict eligibility requirements that eliminate older and returning students,

set merit-based requirements that often eliminate students with basic skills needs, establish time limits or require full-time attendance, require students to study in specific fields, or require students to remain in the state upon graduation.

“An important aspect of the California Community Colleges program is that it doesn’t set arbitrary eligibility limitations based on students’ age, academic merit, or attendance status,” said Debbie Cochrane, Vice President of The Institute for College Access & Success. “These types of program limitations often mean the very students Promise Programs are designed to assist are left out.”

In addition to efforts to expand college opportunity through new College Promise grant efforts, the Board also recommended additional investments in financial aid and the College Promise critical to meeting the full financial needs of students to ensure that student finances are not a roadblock to college success. In approving the 2018-19 Budget and Legislative Request, the Board urged the Governor to increase funding for the Cal Grant program, which provides tuition coverage for students who transfer to a university as well as an “access grant” for low-income students, and \$25 million in ongoing funding to support community colleges in establishing stronger regional College Promise partnerships.

These actions are consistent with advancing the goals of the California Community Colleges new Vision for Success, which will guide the system over the next 10 years. The vision plan calls for increased financial aid commitments, which will support more students attending college full-time and completing at higher rates.

Here’s how the California Community Colleges’ *College Promise* stacks up against other states’ programs:

State	Need Based	First-Dollar or Last-Dollar	Limited to Recent High School Graduates	Time-Limited	Requires Specific Courses or Field of Study	Full-Time Tuition for Non-Promise Recipients
California	Yes	First-Dollar	No	No	No	\$1,104
Tennessee	No	Last-Dollar	Yes	Yes	No	\$3,240
New York	Yes	Last-Dollar	No	Yes	Yes	\$3,838
South Carolina	Yes	Last-Dollar	No	Yes	Yes	\$3,958
Kentucky	Yes	Last-Dollar	No	Yes	Yes	\$3,360
Oregon	No	Last-Dollar	Yes	Yes	Yes	\$3,494
Georgia	No	Last-Dollar	No	Yes	Yes	\$1,962

*The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation composed of 72 districts and 114 colleges serving 2.1 million students per year. Community colleges supply workforce training, basic skills education in English and math, and prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions. The Chancellor’s Office provides leadership, advocacy and support under the direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. For more information about the community colleges, please visit <http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/>, <https://www.facebook.com/CACommColleges>, or <https://twitter.com/CalCommColleges>.*