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Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy

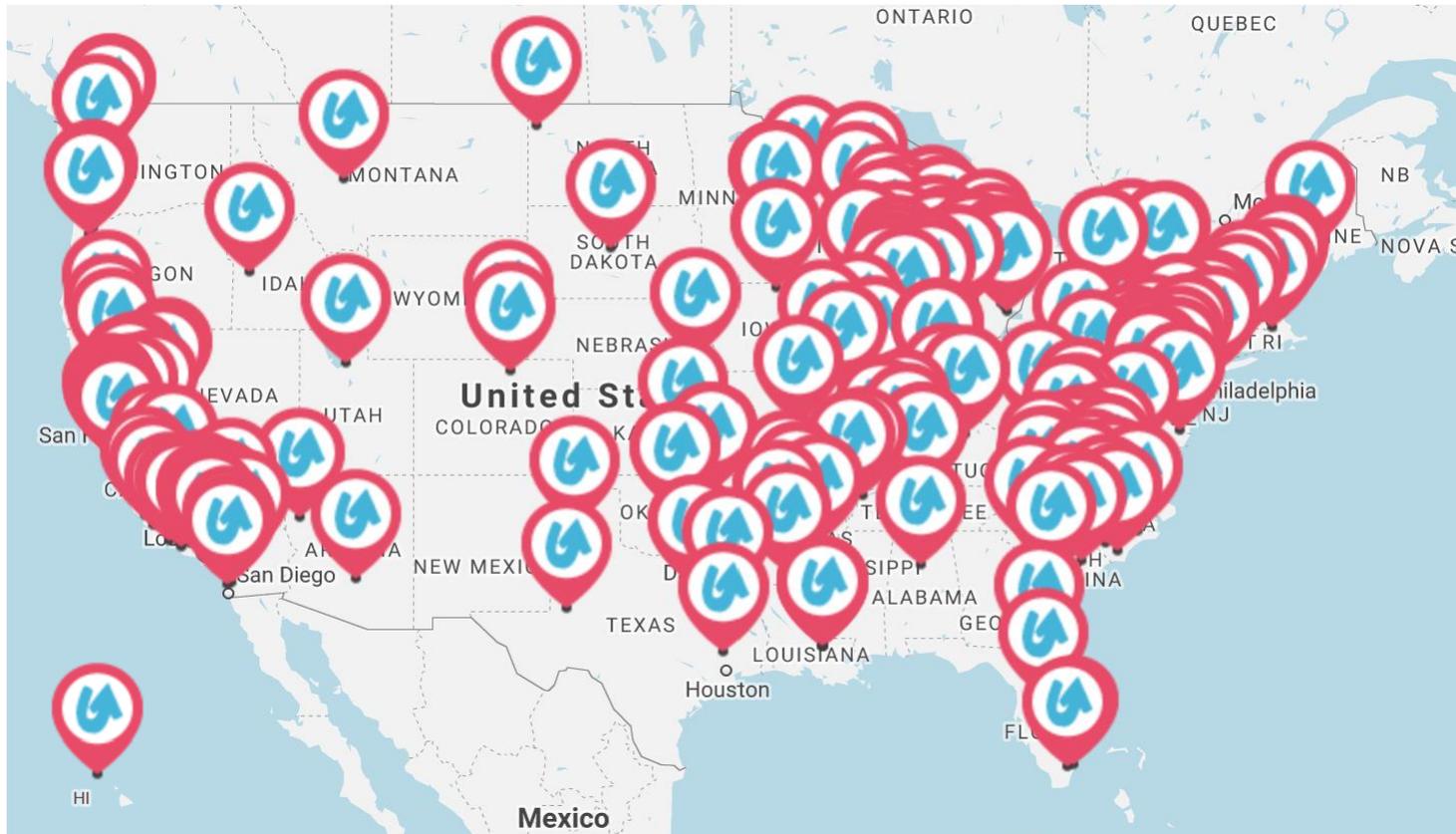
Understanding the “Free College” Movement

COLLEGE PROMISE PROGRAMS
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF PHILADELPHIA
PHILADELPHIA, PA
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ahead-penn.org

Promise Programs Are Being Created in Different Cities Across U.S.



Nearly Half of States Have Some Type of “Free College” Program



Recent Promise Legislation

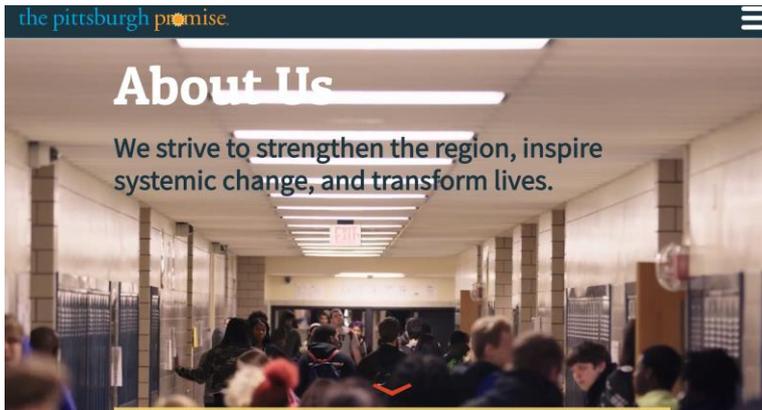
New Promise:
AZ, CT, DC, FL, IA, IL, MA, MS, ND, NM, PA,
SC, TX, UT, VT

Expansion:
CA, HI, IN, MD, NJ, NY, OR, RI, WA, WY

What are “Free College” / “College Promise” Programs?



About Students Parents Volunteers Contact



Definition of A College Promise Program

1. Central goal: Increase higher education attainment
2. Offers financial award beyond existing federal and state aid
3. “Place-based” student eligibility requirement in addition to, OR in lieu of, academic or need-based criteria
 - Targeting students by where they live or by schools they attend



Source: Perna, L.W., & Leigh, E. (2018). Understanding the promise: A typology of state and local college promise programs. *Educational Researcher*, 47, 155-180.

Efforts to Understand these Initiatives

Searchable Databases of Promise Programs

<http://www.ahead-penn.org/creating-knowledge/college-promise>



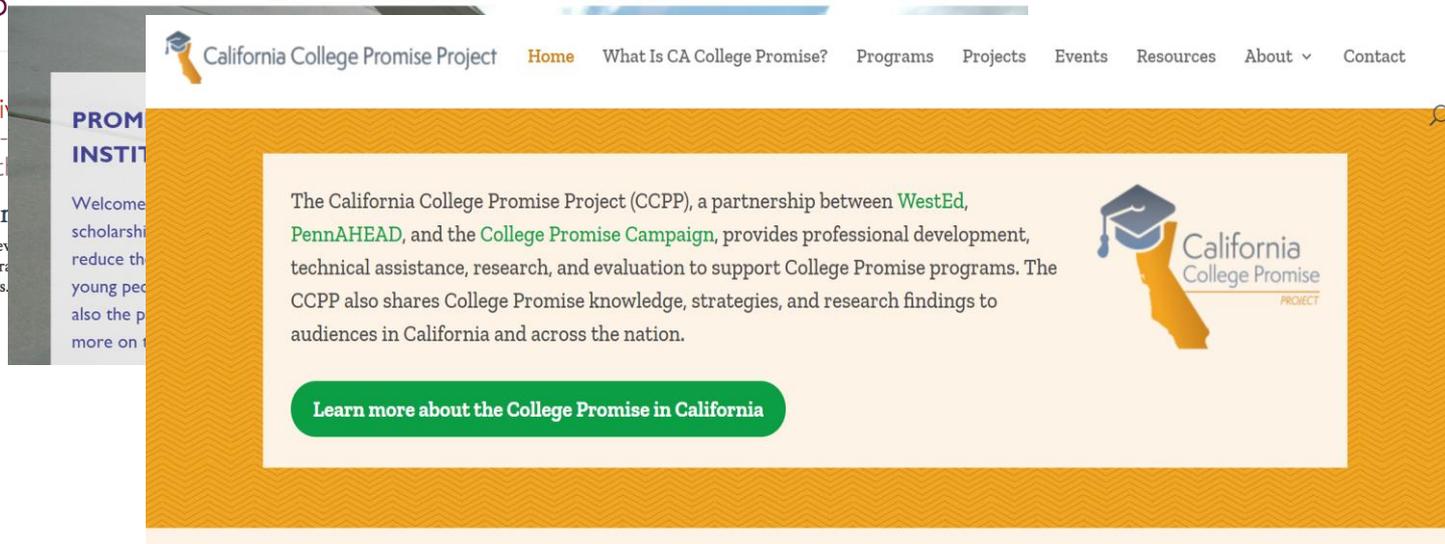
The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the PennGSE website. On the left is the PennGSE logo with the text "Graduate School of Education". To the right are menu items: "Creating KNOWLEDGE", "Improving PRACTICE", "Engaging GLOBALLY", "Leading the CONVERSATION", "About AHEAD", and "What's AHEAD". Below the navigation bar is a large banner for "College Promise Programs" with the text "A comprehensive catalog of College Promise Programs in the United States". On the right side of the banner are three buttons: "PROMISE DATABASE", "PROMISE RESEARCH", and "CONTACT US".

College Promise Programs

With financial support from City of Philadelphia, the program is designed to advance research-based practices and support College Promise programs in the city.

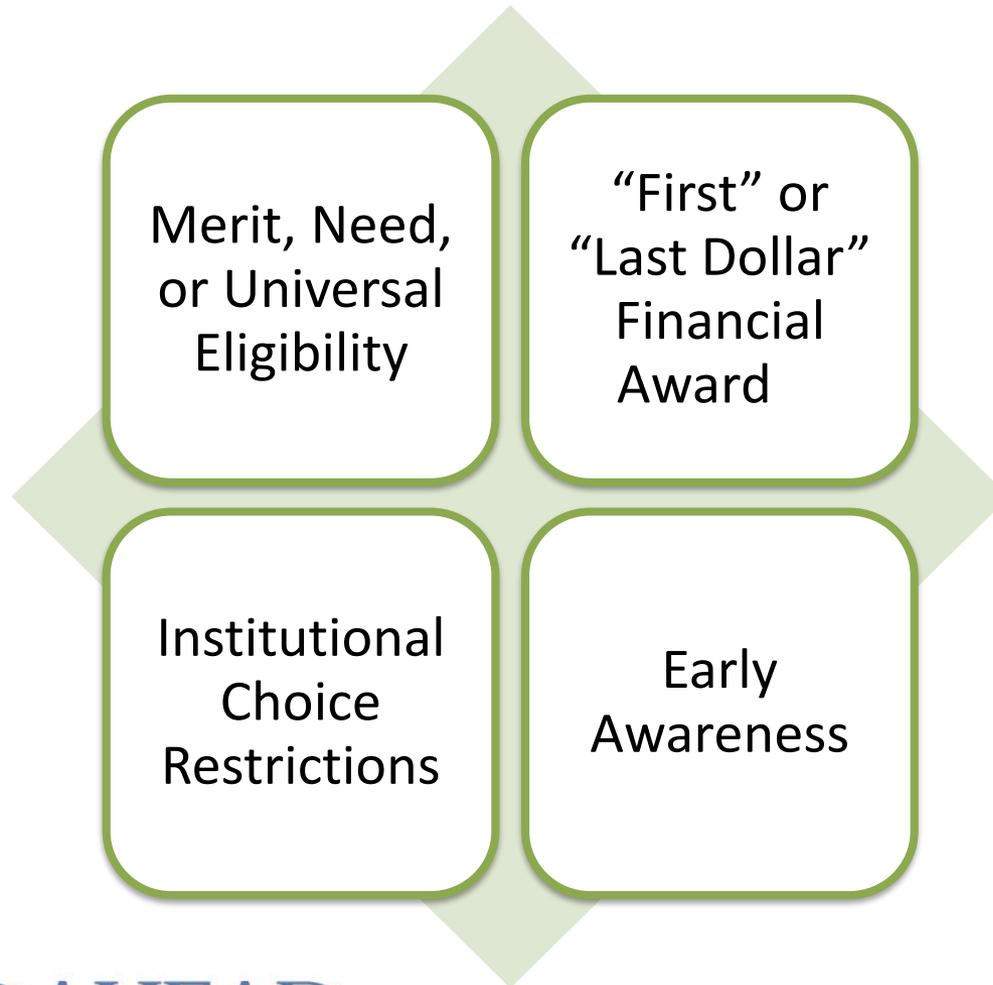
What is a College Promise program?

Over the last decade—but especially in the past few years—college Promise programs have been advanced at local, state, and federal levels to increase college attainment in particular places.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the California College Promise Project (CCPP). The navigation bar includes "California College Promise Project", "Home", "What Is CA College Promise?", "Programs", "Projects", "Events", "Resources", "About", and "Contact". The main content area has a green header with the text "The California College Promise Project (CCPP), a partnership between WestEd, PennAHEAD, and the College Promise Campaign, provides professional development, technical assistance, research, and evaluation to support College Promise programs. The CCPP also shares College Promise knowledge, strategies, and research findings to audiences in California and across the nation." To the right is the CCPP logo, which features a graduation cap and the text "California College Promise PROJECT". Below the text is a green button that says "Learn more about the College Promise in California".

Programs Vary on a Number of Characteristics



Programs Vary on Eligibility Requirements

Merit-based

- Program considers academic criteria for award eligibility e.g. GPA, test score

Need-based

- Program considers income/financial need for award eligibility

Universal

- All students are eligible in particular place regardless of merit or need-based criteria

Programs Vary on How Financial Awards are Determined

First Dollar

- Award provided first before considering other types of aid
- Can potentially be used for other associated costs of college (e.g., transportation, books)

Last Dollar

- Award calculated after considering other types of aid
- Total amount can vary and likely will not cover expenses after tuition (and/or fees)

Programs Vary on Where Students Can Use Funds

Community college only

- Program limits use at (usually) one community college in particular area

Four-year only

- Program limits use at (usually) one four-year college in particular area

Both 2-or 4-year

- Program allows use at most 2- or 4-year colleges (in a state)

No restrictions

- Program may not have restrictions on where students can attend

Programs Vary on When Program Benefits Begin

Early Awareness

- Program provides college-going messaging and/or supports before high school graduation i.e. elementary, middle school

High School Graduate

- Program benefits and services are for graduating high school students enrolling directly into college

Post High-School

- Program targeted or open to students not directly graduating from high school i.e. adult promise programs

Do College Promise Programs Work?

State of Research on College Promise Programs

- Building evidence at K-12, postsecondary, community levels
- Most research conducted on more comprehensive, place-based scholarships
 - Kalamazoo Promise (MI)
 - Pittsburgh Promise (PA)
 - New Haven Promise (CT)
 - El Dorado Promise (AR)
 - Say Yes to Education (NY, NC, OH)
 - Knox Achieves (TN)
- Less work on “single-institution” programs
 - 2-year programs – most common model
 - 4-year programs (e.g., Rutgers-Camden Bridging the Gap)

K-12 Outcomes

	Kalamazoo Promise	El Dorado Promise	New Haven Promise	Knox Achieves
High School GPA		n/a	n/a	n/a
HS Credits Earned		n/a	n/a	n/a
Literacy Scores	n/a		elem/mid. 10 th grade	n/a
Math Scores	n/a		elem/mid. 10 th grade	n/a
HS Graduation	n/a		<i>Decreased drop-out rate</i>	

Postsecondary Outcomes

	Kalamazoo Promise	Pittsburgh Promise	New Haven Promise	Knox Achieves
Application Rate	+	n/a	n/a	n/a
Enrollment	+	+	+	+
Credits Attempted/Earned	+	n/a	n/a	+
Persistence	n/a	+	+	n/a
Completion	+	n/a	n/a	n/a



Sources: Swanson, E., Watson, A., & Ritter, G. (forthcoming). In L.W. Perna & E. Smith (Eds.), *Improving research-based knowledge of college promise programs*. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association; Page, L., Iriti, J.E., Lowry, D.J., & Anthony, A.M. (2017). The promise of place-based investment in college access and success: Investigating the impact of the Pittsburgh Promise. Working Paper, Social Science Research Network.

Economic and Community Development Outcomes

	Kalamazoo Promise	Say Yes to Education – Syracuse	Say Yes to Education - Buffalo	Multiple programs (Bartik & Sotherland, 2015)	Multiple programs (LeGower & Walsh, 2017)
Population growth: public school enrollments	+	+	+	n/a	+
Population growth: mobility patterns	n/a	n/a	n/a	+	n/a
Housing values	-	+	-	+	+



Source: Swanson, E., Watson, A., & Ritter, G. (forthcoming). In L.W. Perna & E. Smith (Eds.), *Improving research-based knowledge of college promise programs*. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

Critical Questions: Will College Promise Programs Achieve Their Promise?

Access

- How do students and families learn about the program?
- What do students have to do to be eligible for the program?
- Which students will most likely be the recipients of the program?

Affordability

- What does the financial award cover? What would not be covered?

Completion

- Where can students use their awards?
- What other supports does the program offer?

Sustainability

- How politically and financially sustainable is the program in order to keep the “promise”?



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