Breaking Down Barriers to Access in Higher Education:
Perspectives for Regional and State College Promise Stakeholders and Policy Makers – Data Brief

Jeff DeFranco, Lake Tahoe Community College
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Note: This resource is used in supplement to DeFranco, J. (2019). Breaking Down Barriers to Access in Higher Education: Perspectives for Regional and State College Promise Stakeholders and Policy Makers. 44th Association for Education Finance and Policy Conference. Kansas, MO: March 21-23.
STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS FROM STUDENT ACCESS TOWARD COMPLETION

SUMMARY

Opportunities and disparities in education continue to run deep across varied dimensions of the learning journey for students from access to high quality completion. As College Promise programs continue to scale throughout states and across the country, ongoing understandings and contributions are glaringly more imperative to capture innovative contextualized program design, wrap-around service deployment efficacies and efficiencies, and impact assessments to yield evidence-based practices and research. In light of workforce needs amidst the fourth industrial revolution, partnership frameworks across industry sectors, policy-makers and academic ecosystems must also continue to be involved in the conversation.¹

KEY ASPECTS AND CONCEPTS OF THE COLLEGE PROMISE MOVEMENT

Emerging tools and best practice experiences are rapidly shaping national conversations on student engagement, education reform and education policy.²,³

Local, state and national-based policy forums increasingly highlighting its innovation and importance to fuel students access toward completion across academic communities around the country.⁴,⁵,⁶,⁷

College Promise continues to thrive⁸,⁹ state-wide and scale throughout the country-increasing need for more sophisticated understanding of design, implementation and impact toward an organizational framework.¹⁰

A holistic approach is needed for addressing dimensions of student access concerns¹¹ toward quality completion, including considerations for economic, social, education, and workforce future-ready needs.¹²,¹³ Thus, capturing high quality data is essential to gain deep contextualization of deployments across organizations and College Promise typologies to recognize complexity of national and local challenges.¹⁵,¹⁶

Table 1: Emerging College Promise Typology. Source Perna & Leigh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM TYPE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place-Based</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last-dollar Community College</td>
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<tr>
<td>First-dollar Community College</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>State Need-Based Aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>416*</td>
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</table>

A holistic approach is needed for addressing dimensions of student access concerns¹¹ toward quality completion, including considerations for economic, social, education, and workforce future-ready needs.¹²,¹³

As educators, institutions, policy makers and other supporters are coming together, the real change sparked by College Promise is that of spread, scale, and equity to bring about real systems change. According to Sprout Fund, for instance, “no one institution has the mandate or resources to take on massive, systemic issues like transforming education”¹⁷ and thus a coordinated effort¹⁴ is needed to spread the innovations happening statewide around the country.

*The value used for total College Promise Programs is curated and cross-referenced from various sources (College Promise; Perna & Leigh; Kelchen, 2017). Based on these sources, there are approximately 414 College Promise Programs as of March 2019 (College Promise). However, findings also suggest a total of 2 possible additional programs are classified with College Promise Typology (Perna & Leigh), which brings a possible total to 416.
Figure 1: 416* College Promise Programs in the United States

*The value used for total College Promise Programs is curated and cross-referenced from various sources (College Promise; Perna & Leigh; Kelchen, 2017). Based on these sources, there are approximately 414 College Promise Programs as of March 2019 (College Promise). However, findings also suggest a total of 2 possible additional programs are classified with College Promise Typology (Perna & Leigh), which brings a possible total to 416.

Figure 2: Last-dollar First-dollar Community Colleges

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3. League for Innovations in Community College. (January, 2019). Insights into ideas that are transforming the community college world.
Jeff DeFranco, Superintendent/President of Lake Tahoe Community College (LTCC), began serving as the CEO of the organization in January 2017. Prior to his current role, he served as the Vice President of Administrative Services at LTCC. As a lifelong educator committed to supporting quality instructional programs and student success, he has worked in multiple educational settings including K-12, community college, and at four-year institutions. Jeff has taught leadership courses for four-year universities and has presented at numerous conferences on the topics ranging from change leadership to strategic planning. Jeff received his BA from CSU Chico and his Masters from University of Oregon. He is completing a Ph.D. in Global Leadership and Change from Pepperdine University.

In Fall 2018, LTCC launched the Lake Tahoe College Promise (ltcc.edu/promise). The program provides first-time, full-time students to attend college tuition-free. The Promise is for all California residents, and for any Nevada resident of the Tahoe Basin living along the lake. In addition to a free year of tuition, LTCC’s Promise students also receive access to the textbook lending library, unlimited bus rides on the South Shore with the Tahoe Transportation District, free tutoring and academic counseling, and priority consideration for LTCC Foundation’s emergency book fund. The program is poised for expansion in 2019. LTCC recently received the Promise Scholars Program Replication grant to expand wrap around services for LTCC promise students in an effort to increase 3-year completion rates. 

Recently, in an effort to draw national attention to the recently implemented Lake Tahoe College Promise, Jeff wrote persuasively about a unique situation and made the case for more colleges thinking in terms of service their communities as they actually exist, regardless of borders. His piece was shared in the Forbes Education blog. The program has been expanded to include both sides of the California-Nevada border. With this expansion, LTCC becomes the only college in the country to offer a bi-state College Promise program.

Geographically isolated from the rest of the State of California by the Sierra Nevada mountains, LTCC has served South Lake Tahoe and the surrounding community since 1975. One of California’s 115 community colleges, the institution is a single college district serving nearly 2,000 full-time equivalent students each year. Approximately 35% of attendees are first generation students. Recently, the Lisa Maloff University Center was opened, a 7,000 square foot space designed as the hub for access to advanced degrees. As a standalone facility at LTCC, student can access competitively priced degree options that can be earned on the college’s South Shore campus. This inaugural milestone enables community members to earn advanced degrees, BA, Masters, teaching credential, doctoral, without having to relocate. For additional information visit: www.ltcc.edu.