

Montclair sets aside \$110K to help send students to college



By [Grace Wong](#)

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MONTCLAIR >> The city's Online to College program has expanded to Montclair High freshmen.

The program grants two-year scholarships to attend Chaffey College to Montclair High School graduates and the city sets aside \$110,000 to make it happen. In the past, the program was limited to select students who enrolled in fifth grade.

"It's the high school and the city's commitment to serve our citizens," said Ginger Eaton, founder of the Online to College program. "Most of our students are low income and their parents can't afford college. ... The high school graduation rate is higher than it's been in years and it's because of this commitment and this preparation that we've done."

The Online to College program started in 1998 with students enrolled in fifth grade at Lehigh, Monte Vista, or Kingsley Elementary Schools. To receive the scholarship to Chaffey College, which includes tuition, textbooks, student fees and parking, students are required to complete their education through high school.

However, with the expanded program, students can now participate at the high school level and the city hopes to send more students from Montclair High School to college after they graduate, given that they complete four years of high school, maintain a 2.0 GPA, do five hours of community service and re-enroll every year so officials know that they are still committed.

"For me, it's rewarding to know that every freshman, regardless of what grade school they started at, is eligible," said Marcia Richter, human services director who has been with the program since the beginning. "It's such a great opportunity to have two years of free college."

The percent of individuals 25 years or older with a bachelor's degree in Montclair is only 12 percent, according to the Census Bureau. This is 1 percent lower than Ontario, which has 13 percent, and 45 percent lower than Claremont, which has 57 percent.

More than 100 freshmen have registered so far.

The city has committed to the program so that students can stay committed to their education, prepare themselves in the job market and prove the quality of education received by students in the high school, said City Manager Ed Starr. In three years, the city will need \$400,000 annually

to sustain the graduating class of 2018, \$290,000 more than they have previously. The city has established the Montclair Community Foundation to help raise funding that will go to Chaffey College to pay for the scholarship.

“Students believe that college is in their future and they look forward to it,” Starr said. “We’ve seen nothing but greater improvement now that this has been made available. We think that the statistics are going to be nothing but far better than what we’ve seen.”

For Mat Holton, superintendent of the Chaffey Joint Union High School District, the program makes a difference not only in the students’ lives, but in the lives of the community.

“The city is banking on the belief that a college educated citizenry will be more successful in our changing global economy and better able to provide for their families as contributing members of our society,” Holton wrote in an email. “To the best of our knowledge, this program is ground breaking in that we are not aware of any other city entity that has established such a program.”