



# California Community Colleges

AB 19 (Santiago) - California College Promise Chapter 735, Statutes of 2017

## Questions and Answers

*Updated: June 28, 2018*

AB 19 establishes the California College Promise, administered by the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO). Upon appropriation by the Legislature, the Chancellor will distribute funding to community college districts that satisfy program participation requirements. Colleges are directed to use funding to advance the outlined program goals. The full text of the law can be found [here](#).

### AB 19 – General Questions

**Question:** What is the intent of AB 19?

**Answer:** AB 19 supports the California Community Colleges (CCCs) in accomplishing all of the following goals:

- Increasing the number and percentage of high school students who are prepared for and attend college directly from high school and increasing the percentage of high school graduates who are placed directly into transfer-level mathematics and English courses at a community college.
- Increasing the percentage of students who earn associate degrees or career technical education certificates that prepare them for in-demand jobs and increasing the percentage of students who report being employed in their field of study.
- Increasing the percentage of students who successfully transfer from a community college to the California State University or the University of California and increasing the percentage of students who graduate from college with a baccalaureate degree.
- Reducing and eliminating regional achievement gaps and achievement gaps for students from groups that are underrepresented at the California Community Colleges, including, but not limited to, underrepresented students, low-income students, students who are current or former foster youth, students with disabilities, formerly incarcerated students, undocumented and AB 540 students, and students who are veterans.

**Question:** How does AB 19 assist colleges in accomplishing these goals?

**Answer:** AB 19 establishes a framework for the California College Promise and incentivizes colleges to adopt best practices in support of student enrollment and completion through providing an avenue for the college to receive additional funding. The 2018-19 Budget Act provided funding to support this program. In order for a college to be eligible to receive program funding, a college must meet various program participation requirements.



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**Question:** AB 19 has been framed as “free college” for first time CC students. Is this label accurate?

**Answer:** Not entirely. AB 19 allows districts to choose whether they want to waive fees for first time, full-time students or make use of program funding in other ways that meet the goals of the legislation. Districts are not required to use California College Promise funds to provide fee waivers, and should use funds to advance the goals of the legislation. Legislative intent provides that funding be used to advance the goals outlined in the program. These goals focus on improving college readiness, increasing completion rates and closing achievement gaps. A district might determine that local factors, such as an existing locally funded tuition waiver program or high levels of unmet financial need among low-income students may best accomplish program goals. For example, a district could provide low-income students with additional grants to offset the costs of textbooks and/or transportation. A district might determine that providing low-income students who are also parents with access to campus-based childcare centers will best help achieve the goals of the program. A district with underserved high school students could determine that outreach, dual enrollment and data sharing agreements will best accomplish the goals of the program.

**Question:** Does AB 19 replace the California College Promise Grant or CCPG, (the new name for the BOG fee waiver)?

**Answer:** The California College Promise Grant (CCPG), formerly known as the Board of Governors Fee Waiver, provides approximately 1 million students – nearly half of the 2.1 million students enrolled at California community college campuses – with free tuition. AB 19 does not alter the existing requirements of this program, and funds provided under AB 19 can be used to better support existing CCPG recipients.

### Program and Participation

**Question:** Is a district required to participate in the California College Promise?

**Answer:** Participation in the California College Promise is voluntary. A district is not required to establish a College Promise program nor is a district with an existing College Promise program required to change that program. However, if a district seeks to access any funding provided by the State to support the California College Promise, the district would need to comply with the requirements outlined in the bill.

**Question:** When will this bill take effect?

**Answer:** The statutory structure took effect on January 1, 2018. Reimbursement for fee waivers will begin with summer 2018. Districts who have not been participating in the federal loan program have until January 1, 2019 to re-enter the program.

**Question:** What are districts required to do to receive funding?



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**Answer:** The Chancellor's Office will be responsible for certifying that districts do all of the following, in order to qualify for appropriated funding:

- (1) Partner with one or more LEA to establish an Early Commitment to College Program;
- (2) Partner with LEAs to improve college readiness and reduce remediation;
- (3) Use evidence-based multiple measures for assessment and placement;
- (4) Participate in the CCC Guided Pathways program;
- (5) Ensure students complete the FAFSA and Cal Grant/Dream application
- (6) Participate in the Federal Direct Student Loan Program. Districts with colleges not currently in the loan program will have until January 1, 2019 to ensure that colleges re-enter the program.

**Question:** What should a district do if it already has a locally funded College Promise that includes a tuition waiver that is duplicative of the tuition waiver allowed in this program?

**Answer:** A district is not required to expend any future monies received from this program on providing a tuition waiver to students. Pursuant to Legislative intent, a district should use funding to advance the goals outlined in the program. These goals focus on improving college readiness, increasing completion rates and closing achievement gaps.

### Tuition Waiver Authority

**Question:** Does this bill require districts to use funding to provide free tuition?

**Answer:** No. It is at a district's discretion about how best to use available funds to support the goals outlined in the bill. However, if a district chooses to use funding to provide a tuition waiver, a number of limitations on the uses of those funds apply. Questions regarding those limitations are further outlined below. It is important to note that the restrictions and allowances outlined below only apply to the funding provided pursuant to AB 19. Colleges may have locally funded Promise programs with different allowances and eligibility requirements, those locally funded programs are not bound by the requirements outlined below.

**Question:** How is an "academic year" defined for purposes of providing a student with a tuition waiver?

**Answer:** Section 76396(c)(2) defines one academic year as:

"One academic year" means the total of the summer term that immediately precedes the first semester or quarter of the fall term, and the two consecutive semesters or three quarters that immediately follow that summer term. Each semester or quarter is approximately the same length.



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This definition is intended to allow for fee waivers for students participating in summer programs prior to the start of their first fall term. For example, allowing summer payment as a leader to the 2018-19 year could encourage graduating high school students to participate in “Summer Bridge” and other programs that support seamless transition from high school to college without paying any fees for their first year. As locally determined, colleges may use AB 19 funds to waive *up to* one academic year.

**Question:** What does first-time college student mean? Will it include dual enrollment? Will it include older students who are first time or only include students coming right out of HS?

**Answer:** For purposes of allocating AB 19 funds used to waive fees, districts should use the same definition used for IPEDS reporting:

“A student who has no prior postsecondary experience (except as noted below) attending any institution for the first time at the undergraduate level. This includes students enrolled in academic or occupational programs. It also includes students enrolled in the fall term who attended college for the first time in the prior summer term, and students who entered with advanced standing (college credits or postsecondary formal award earned before graduation from high school).”

**Question:** Is there an age limit?

**Answer:** No. AB 19 does not contain an age limit. A district may choose to provide a student with a fee waiver at any age, provided the student meets the other requirements outlined in the language.

**Question:** Can AB 19 funds be used to provide a fee waiver to a student who enters their first year at the mid-year point and allow them to receive 3 semesters of free tuition (spring, summer, fall)?

**Answer:** No, AB 19 funds can only be used to provide the student fee waivers for the duration of the first academic year.

**Question:** If a student completely withdraws or drops down to less than full-time attendance, do they need to repay the fee waiver?

**Answer:** This would be a local decision.

**Question:** How is full-time status defined?

**Answer:** The law, as written, tells us that students must be in 12 units to be considered full-time for purposes of using AB 19 funds to waive fees.

### **Education Code §76396.**

(c) For purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) “Full time” means 12 or more semester units or the equivalent.



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### Program Funding

**Question:** Will allocations be made to individual colleges and not by district?

**Answer:** Funds will be allocated by district.

**Question:** Is this one-time funding?

**Answer:** No. The changes in law create an **ongoing program**.

**Question:** How much funding will each district receive?

**Answer:** The Chancellor's Office has established a funding formula. Allocations will be distributed to participating districts. The formula is based on factors such as number of units taken in the past by first-time, full-time students, FTES and number of Pell recipients.

**Question:** How was the per-district allocation figure derived?

**Answer:** The Chancellor's Office used data from the 2016-17 year. **Sufficient funding for districts to pay the fees of first-time, full-time students will be provided. An additional amount, beyond the calculated allocation, will be included with each allocation.**

**Question:** If a district chooses to provide fee waivers with the AB 19 funds and the initial allocation falls short, will we be able to request more funding?

**Answer:** There is no additional funding to provide districts with additional funds.

### Loan Program participation

Participation in the California College Promise (AB 19) requires that community colleges participate in the Federal Direct Student Loan Program.

**Question:** Nothing in the language of the bill states that colleges not currently in the loan program must do so by January 1, 2019. Can we start after the Jan. 2019 date?

**Answer:** Colleges should begin the process of re-entering the loan program immediately. The bill states that colleges will be compliant on or before January 1, 2019. Since colleges out of the loan program were given provisional eligibility for one calendar year, this means that colleges must be back in the loan program by Jan. 1, 2019.

### **Section 76396.2 (e)**

"On or before January 1, 2018, a community college that does not participate in the federal loan program shall be provisionally eligible to participate in the California College Promise for one



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calendar year. The community college shall comply with the federal loan participation requirements in order to participate in the California College Promise on or after January 1, 2019.”

### Use of the FAFSA or Dream Act Application

**Question:** Must colleges require the completion of the FAFSA or Dream Act Application (CADAA) for all of its students?

**Answer:** As a condition of participation in the California Promise, colleges are required to maximize access to need-based financial aid for all students, and ensure students complete the FAFSA or a California Dream Act Application. Colleges should work to provide all students access to successfully complete applications and receive need-based financial aid. Best practices in this arena will be particularly important as need is a factor in the new Student Centered Funding Formula. Colleges are explicitly required to ensure that any student provided a fee waiver under AB 19 has completed a FAFSA or CADAA. Section 76396.3(b) of the California Education code states that:

“The community college may use funding appropriated pursuant to this article to waive some or all of the fees for first-time community college students who are enrolled at the college full-time, and complete and submit either a Free Application for Federal Student Aid or a California Dream Act application.”