

TO: Financial Aid Officers
Chief Executive Officers
Chief Student Services Officers

FROM: Marty Alvarado, Executive Vice Chancellor, Educational Services & Support
Lizette Navarette, Vice Chancellor, College Finance and Facilities Planning

RE: California College Promise

This guidance memo provides additional clarification on the California College Promise program (“the Promise Program”) and its allowable use of funds. Since its inception, the Promise Program has allowed community colleges flexibility in how they decide to distribute their funding, which has allowed them to support all students, full-time and part-time. Colleges are encouraged to exercise local control and revisit their existing policies to ensure that they are meeting their students’ needs.

I. Background

[Assembly Bill 19 \(2017\)](#) and [Assembly Bill 2 \(2019\)](#) established the Promise Program and set forth detailed guidelines for the program. The Promise Program aims to support the California Community Colleges in accomplishing the following goals:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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 students, students meeting the requirements of Assembly Bill 540 of the 2001–2002 Regular Session of the Legislature, and students who are veterans.

(Cal. Ed. Code Sec 76396.1)

II. The California College Promise Fee Waiver Option

The Promise Program permits, but does not require, a community college to use its appropriated funds to waive some or all of the fees for first-time resident community college students who are enrolled at the college full-time, and who complete and submit either a Free Application for Federal Student Aid or a California Dream Act Application (Cal. Ed. Code Sec 76396.3).

If a community college chooses to use its funds to provide these fee waivers, it shall create policies that are aligned with the first-time, full-time eligibility requirements described above. However, colleges may create flexibility within their policies to accommodate all enrolled students. For example, if a student fails to enroll in or complete 12 units in one term, the student could still be eligible for a fee waiver in the subsequent term as long as they enroll in 12 or more units in the subsequent term, with or without a formal appeal process.

Additionally, fee waivers may only be for two academic years, and may only be for the summer term and each semester or quarter of the year in which the student maintains full-time status (Cal. Ed. Code Sec 76396.3(b)(1)).

These requirements apply only to the fee waiver option of the Promise Program. They are unrelated to and are not the requirements for the California College Promise Grant (formally the BOG Fee Waiver). Please see Section IV for more details.

III. Allowable Use of Funds

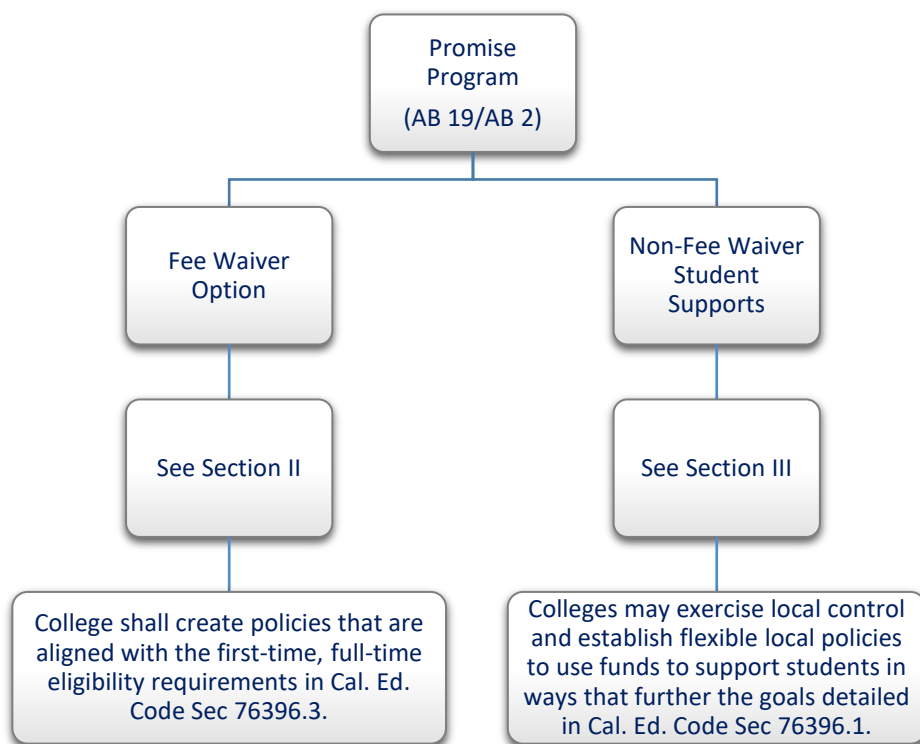
Although a community college may pursue the fee waiver option, it is not a requirement (Cal. Ed. Code Sec 76296.3(b)). Colleges may exercise local control and establish flexible local policies to use the funds to support students in ways that further the goals detailed in Section I.

Specifically, colleges are encouraged to assess the needs of their student populations (full-time and part-time), explore ways to leverage the funds to ensure adequate and equitable support for all students, and establish their local Promise Program policies accordingly. In addition to providing fee waivers, subject to the requirements described in Section II, colleges may explore options including:

1. Direct aid (grants) to students to help students meet the cost of attendance and reduce unmet need
2. Tuition reimbursement

3. Grants to assist students to address their basic needs
4. Support for local education agencies (LEA) to promote college preparedness and attendance
5. Staffing and academic/student support services to provide interventions and encourage outcomes
6. Other uses that support the goals of the legislation

Please note that the first-time, full-time requirements described in Section II do not apply to non-fee waiver options.



IV. Distinction from the California College Promise Grant (formally the BOG Fee Waiver)

The Promise Program is different from the California College Promise Grant ("CCPG") (formally the BOG Fee Waiver). More details on these differences is reflected in the table below.

| | The Promise Program | CCPG |
|--|--|--|
| Legal Authority | Cal. Ed. Code Sec 76396.1 | Cal. Ed. Code Sec 76300 |
| Program Summary | Funding to improve college readiness, increase completion rates and close achievement gaps. | Waives enrollment fees for qualified students. Students may receive a waiver for any number of units, with no minimum. |
| Fee Waiver as the only option | No. Colleges have the flexibility to design programs locally in ways that support defined program goals. | Yes. |
| General Eligibility | Flexible depending on local policy. | Must meet income or special eligibility requirements. |
| Restrictions for Part-time Students | Only if colleges exercise the fee waiver option. | No. |

V. Additional Resources

The Chancellor's Office has provided additional resources, listed below, regarding the California College Promise.

- AB 19 Q &A (Attachment 1)
- 2020-2021 California College Promise Allocation (Attachment 2)

For questions regarding this memo, you may contact Gina Browne at gbrowne@cccco.edu.

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