



## CLOSING THE GAP: STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING HIGHER EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IN NEVADA

### Executive Summary

Despite recent gains, the high school graduation rate in Nevada continues to be one of the lowest in the nation and falls well below the national average. In addition, enrollment in post-secondary education and college attainment rates continue to lag in the Silver State. These are troubling statistics given that by 2020, 49 percent of jobs in Nevada will require some sort of post-secondary degree or certificate, but less than a four-year degree ("middle skilled jobs").

Researchers and policy experts around the country have argued that the rising costs of higher education are among the greatest obstacles facing individuals who are interested in higher education. In the Silver State, registration fees at community colleges rose 93 percent over the period 2002-2003 to 2015-2016.

In recent years, the federal government, as well as many state governments and systems of higher education have implemented programs designed to increase the college-going and higher education attainment rates, and address the issue of college affordability. One of the more popular initiatives is the government sponsored program to pay tuition and fees for students who enroll in community college. These initiatives, known as **Promise programs**, vary in requirements but all have the same goal of reducing student loan debt and encouraging college enrollment and completion. During the 79<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, the Nevada Legislature passed a Nevada Promise program (Senate Bill 391), which will launch in Fall 2017.

The Nevada Promise program, as described in Senate Bill 391, has the following principal characteristics:

- Last-dollar scholarship, covering tuition and fees, not covered by federal (Pell) grants and state financial aid (e.g., Silver State Opportunity Grant, Millennium Scholarship).
- Eligible students must be a resident of the state, must not have reached 20 years of age, and must not have previously been awarded an associate's degree or bachelor's degree.
- Students must complete and submit Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by April 1.
- Student must have obtained a high school diploma from a high school in Nevada.
- Student must be enrolled in at least 12 semester credit hours in an associate's degree program, a bachelor's degree program, or a certificate of achievement program at a community college for each semester of the school year immediately following the school year in which the student was awarded a high school diploma.
- To retain the scholarship, student must maintain a 2.5 grade point average.
- Students must complete at least hours of 20 hours of community service.

Research reveals that Promise programs have achieved success in reducing student debt loads and increasing the college-going rates and education attainment levels of young adults. Below is a summary of the impact of these programs:

- Improved K-12 test scores, higher graduation rates and lower drop-out rates
- Higher student grade point averages (GPAs) and improved student behavior
- An increase in the number of first-time freshman
- Higher retention (persistence) rates in college, and
- Higher numbers of high school graduates earning post-secondary credentials within 6 years of graduation.



## CLOSING THE GAP: STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING HIGHER EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IN NEVADA

### Introduction

Despite recent gains, the high school graduation rate in Nevada continues to be one of the lowest in the nation and falls well below the national average.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Department of Education reported that the national high school graduation rate for the 2014-2015 cohort was 83.2 percent, compared to only 71.3 percent in Nevada.<sup>2</sup> In addition, enrollment in post-secondary education and college attainment rates (the percentage of Nevadans with a higher education degree) continue to lag in the Silver State. In fact, college attainment is well below the national average. Less than one-third (31 percent) of our Silver State's population (age 25-64) has an Associate's degree.<sup>3</sup>

This is a troubling statistic given that by 2020, 49 percent of jobs in Nevada will require some sort of post-secondary degree or certificate, but less than a four-year degree ("middle skilled jobs"). As noted by Dr. Steve Canavero, Superintendent of Instruction of Nevada Department of Education, "Middle skilled jobs are the majority of the in-demand occupations and those without a high school diploma are excluded from 90 percent of the in-demand occupations."<sup>4</sup>

Researchers and policy experts around the country have argued that the rising costs of higher education are among the greatest obstacles facing individuals who are interested in higher education.<sup>5</sup> In the Silver State, registration fees at community colleges rose 93 percent over the period 2002-2003 to 2015-2016.<sup>6</sup>

In recent years, the federal government, as well as many state governments and systems of higher education have implemented several programs designed to increase the college going and higher education attainment rates, and address the issue of college affordability. One of the more well-known initiatives is the government-sponsored program to pay tuition and fees for students who enroll in community college. These initiatives, known as Promise programs, vary in requirements but all have the same goal of reducing student loan debt and encouraging college enrollment and completion. During the 79<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, the Nevada Legislature passed a Nevada Promise program (Senate Bill 391), which will launch in Fall 2017.<sup>7</sup>

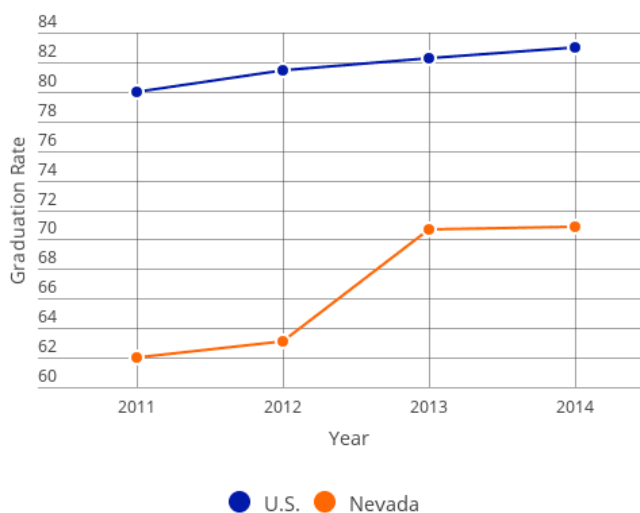
Preliminary research indicates that Promise programs have had their intended impact. In states where Promise programs exist, student debt loads have fallen, college going rates have increased, and college retention (persistence) rates have increased.

This policy report presents data on higher education attainment in Nevada, surveys the potential need for a Promise program in Nevada, reviews a selection of Promise programs around the country, summarizes recent legislation to launch a Promise program in Nevada, and describes the impact of said programs around the country.

## Data

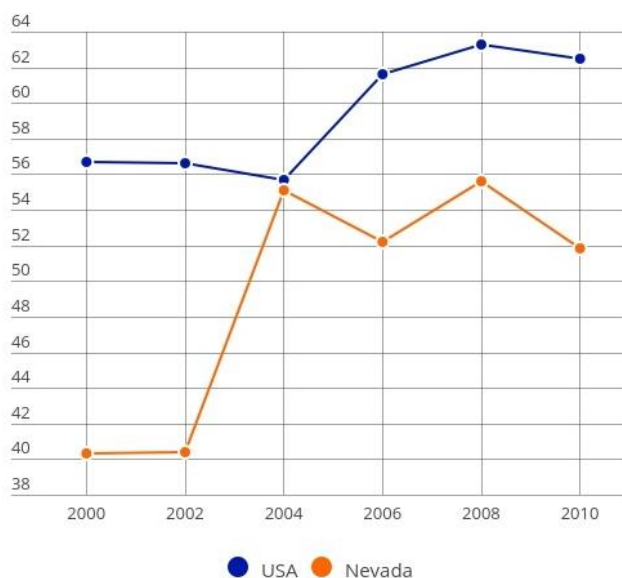
The high school graduation rate in Nevada continues to be one of the lowest in the nation and falls well below the national average.<sup>8</sup> The U.S. Department of Education reported that the national high school graduation rate for the 2014-2015 cohort was 83.2 percent, compared to only 71.3 percent in Nevada.<sup>9</sup> Figure 1 compares graduation rates in Nevada to the U.S. from 2011 to 2014. Further, roughly 375,000 Nevadans in the workforce do not have a high school diploma.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 1: High School Graduation Rates in the U.S. and Nevada, 2011-2014<sup>11</sup>**



Given the low graduation rate, Nevada ranked 45<sup>th</sup> nationally in 2010 for the rate at which high school graduates enter college immediately after graduation.<sup>12</sup> Figure 2 presents the college-going rates of recent high school graduates in Nevada over the period 2000-2010.

**Figure 2: College-Going Rates of Recent High School Graduates in Nevada, 2000-2010<sup>13</sup>**

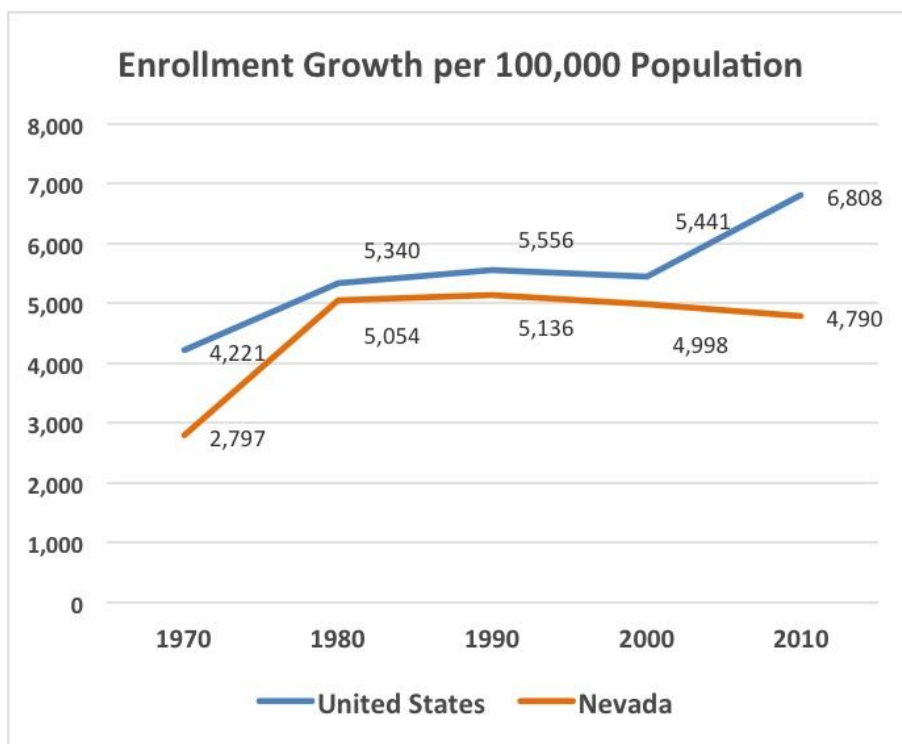


Since 2010, the college-going rate in Nevada has improved. Almost two-thirds (65.7 percent) of Nevada's high school graduates in the 2013 cohort enrolled in college in the fall of the same year, compared to the national average of 65.9 percent.<sup>14</sup> More than half (53.2 percent) enrolled in NSHE institutions, and 12.5 percent enrolled in private schools in Nevada (including on-line schools) and schools outside of Nevada.<sup>15</sup>

However, despite the gains, significant disparities remain across different sub-groups. For example, among Latino high school students in the 2013 cohort, only 60.9 percent enrolled in college in Fall 2013; among Native American students, only 54.6 percent of students enrolled in college in the semester immediately following graduation.

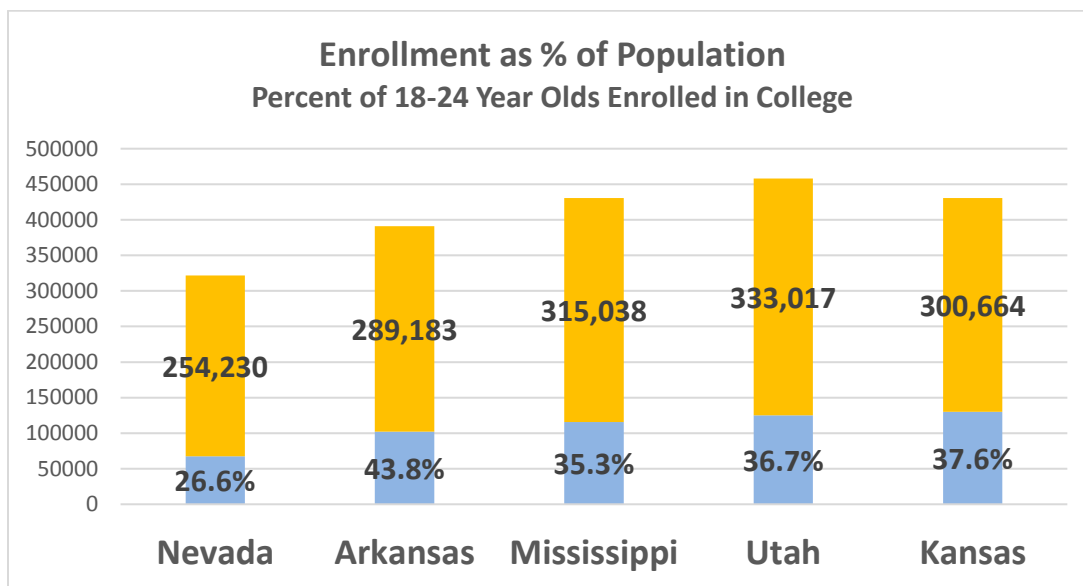
In addition, enrollment in postsecondary education continues to lag in the Silver State. Figure 3 presents data on postsecondary enrollment trends over time. As Chancellor John V. White wrote in his State of the State of Higher Education, "it is apparent that Nevada has too few students in higher education."<sup>16</sup>

**Figure 3: Postsecondary Enrollment Growth per 100,000 Population**



Among states with similar populations, Nevada's higher education enrollment rate is lower than its peers (based on similar population size). Figure 4 reveals that only 26.6 percent of Nevada's 18-24 year olds are enrolled in college, compared to 35.3 percent in Arkansas, 43.3 percent in Kansas, 36.7 percent in Mississippi, and 37.6 percent in Utah.<sup>17</sup>

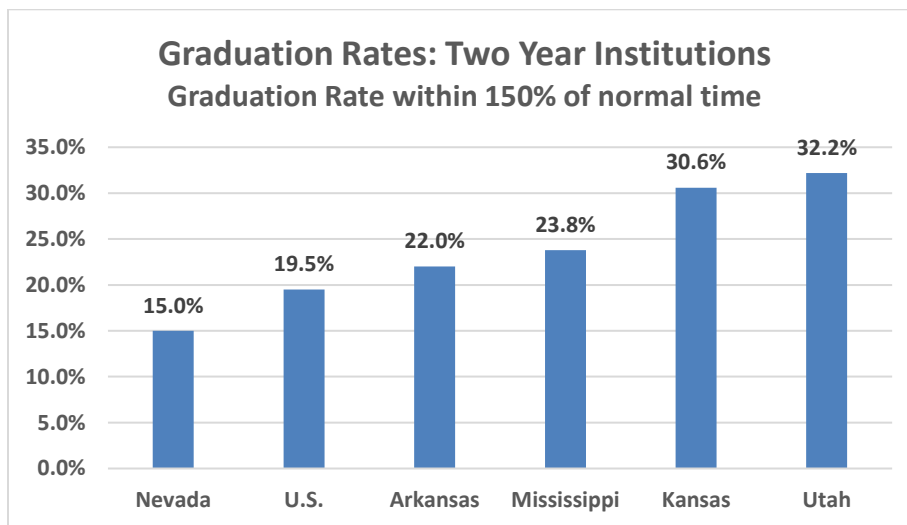
Figure 4. Higher Education Enrollment as Share of Population, 2013



Persistence rates at community colleges, defined as the percent of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking community college students returning to any NSHE institution after one year, has averaged 60 percent over the period 2010-2014.<sup>18</sup>

College graduation rates are lower than the national average and the average among Nevada's peer states (based on similar populations) (see Figure 5). Here graduation rate is defined as the percentage of students entering the institutions as first-time, full-time, degree-seeking freshmen who complete their program within 150 percent of normal time (e.g., 3 years for associate's degrees, 1.5 years for certificates).

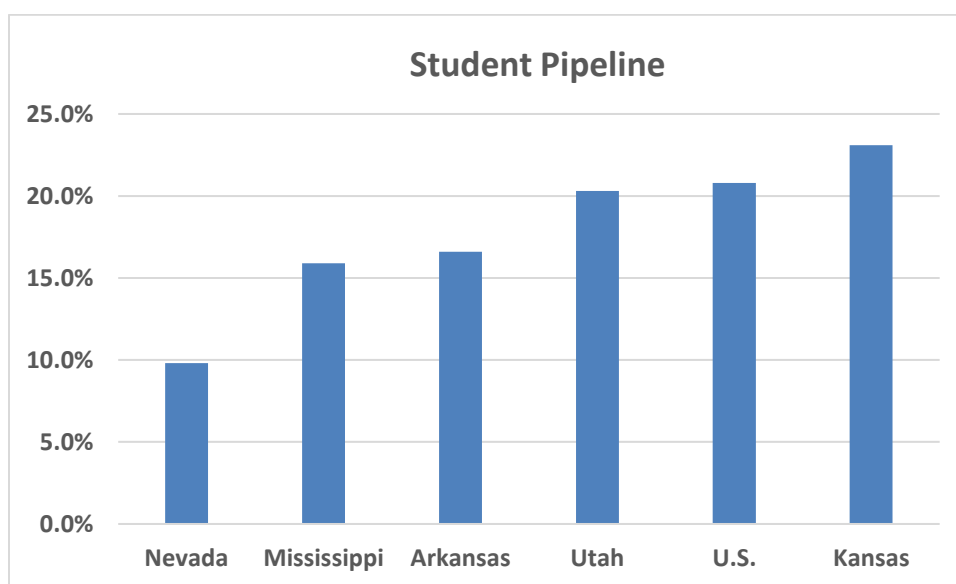
Figure 5. Graduation Rates Within 150 Percent of Normal Time, 2-Year Public Institutions, NSHE



College attainment rates in Nevada are also well below the national average. Less than one-third (31 percent) of our Silver State's population (age 25-64) has an Associate's degree.<sup>19</sup> This figure is much lower than the national average of 40 percent, and below the percentage in peer states – Utah (41 percent), and Kansas (42 percent).

Finally, the student pipeline in Nevada, defined as the percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> graders who graduate from high school on time, go directly to college, return for their second year, and graduate within 150 percent of program time, is lower than the national average and lower than the percentage among the Silver State's set of peer states (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Student Pipeline in Nevada, 2010**



Collectively, this is a troubling set of statistics given that by 2020, 49 percent of jobs in Nevada will require some sort of post-secondary degree or certificate, but less than a four-year degree ("middle skilled jobs"). Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval has stated that his goal is that "by 2025, 60 percent of Nevadans aged 25-34 possess some form of postsecondary degree, certificate, or credential."<sup>20</sup>

## Barriers to Higher Education Attainment

Policy makers and education experts have argued that the rising cost of college is one factor that has deterred students from attending college, and makes it difficult to persist year over year. For example, one study summarizes the research that explores the reasons individuals are not completing college as the following: “poor academic preparation that undermines minority and low-income students’ access to and performance in college, students’ difficulties in navigating the college enrollment process, and the declining real value of financial aid combined with rising college costs.”<sup>21</sup> Specifically, “confusion about financial aid and real college costs are a barrier.”<sup>22</sup>

The U.S. Department of Education notes that the maximum Pell grant covers roughly “30 percent of the cost of a four-year public college education—the lowest proportion in history and less than half of what it covered in 1980.”<sup>23</sup>

As noted earlier, registration fees at community colleges in Nevada rose 94 percent over the period 2002-2003 to 2015-2016.<sup>24</sup> However, while tuition and fees at community colleges (and universities) in Nevada have steadily increased, data indicates that Nevada’s costs of education are lower than most of its peers in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Resident tuition and fees, 2-year public colleges<sup>25</sup>**

State	Resident Tuition & Fees (2014-2015)
California	\$1,380
New Mexico	\$1,603
Arizona	\$2,437
Wyoming	\$2,602
<b>Nevada</b>	<b>\$2,700</b>
Idaho	\$3,009
Utah	\$3,410
Montana	\$3,434
Hawaii	\$3,499
Colorado	\$3,848
North Dakota	\$4,210
Washington	\$4,294
Oregon	\$4,638
South Dakota	\$6,020

In response to the rising costs of higher education, states have explored strategies for increasing the college-going rate of high school students and retaining them once they arrive on campus. For example, in 2008, the City of University of New York launched its Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), which sought to address low retention (high dropout) rates at its community colleges.<sup>26</sup> ASAP requires students to attend college full-time, encourages them to take developmental courses early, and to graduate within three years. The program provides comprehensive advising. ASAP covers tuition that is not paid for by federal and state grants, pays for public transit, and gives students free use of textbooks.<sup>27</sup>

Early results are promising. A 2015 evaluation found that ASAP improved students' academic outcomes, almost doubling graduation rates and increasing college enrollment rates. "On average, program group students earned 48 credits in three years, 9 credits more than did control group students. By the end of the study period, 40 percent of the program group had received a degree, compared with 22 percent of the control group."<sup>28</sup>

On average, ASAP costs \$3,900 per student each year; however, the program's estimated lifetime benefits — from increased tax revenues as well as savings in crime, welfare and health costs — are \$205,514 per associate degree graduate. Researchers also noted that "because the program generated so many more graduates than the usual college services, the cost per degree was lower despite the substantial investment required to operate the program."<sup>29</sup> Officials attribute the program's success to the fact that it addresses the primary reasons why students dropout.

Nevada has also launched programs to address increasing higher education costs. In 2015, Nevada joined the ranks of most other states by offering the state's first need-based scholarship, known as the Silver State Opportunity Grant (Senate Bill 227). This need-based scholarship program, which received an appropriation of \$5 million over the 2015-2017 biennium, established a shared responsibility model to provide need-based grants to help pay education costs of eligible students who are enrolled in Nevada's community and State colleges.<sup>30</sup> As of February 2017, the SSOG program has provided financial assistance to 1,960 students, including a significant number of minority students. The Nevada Legislature approved an appropriation of \$10 million for the Silver State Opportunity Grant during over the 2017-2019 biennium. Additionally, the Guinn Millennium Scholarship, a merit based scholarship founded in 1999, is available to students who graduate from high school in Nevada. In 2014-2015, approximately \$24.8 million was disbursed to 6,318 students enrolled in NSHE institutions.<sup>31</sup>





## Promise Programs

The Promise program was highlighted by President Obama when he proposed an America's College Promise program in his 2016 State of the Union speech to address the issue of college affordability and rising student debt loads. A complementary rationale for Promise programs is that by lowering costs and subsequently expanding access, the effort will help build a skilled workforce. Promise programs are "place-based scholarship programs that make college tuition free."<sup>32</sup> While the federal government never launched its own program, states and local governments have implemented their own programs. Currently, there are more than 150 Promise programs around the country and new ones continue to emerge.<sup>33</sup> In February 2017, San Francisco announced that the city would cover the costs should city residents attend the City College of San Francisco.<sup>34</sup> In April 2017, New York announced that it would cover the costs of tuition at the community college and four-year colleges and universities among the City University of New York and State University of New York Systems "for families with annual incomes up to \$125,000."<sup>35</sup>

With some exceptions, Promise programs are limited to enrollment in community colleges. All Promise programs have a residency requirement and require a high school diploma. Many Promise programs are last-dollar scholarship programs, which are a need-based "gap-filling" award. These 'last-dollar' scholarships are intended to fill the 'gap' between a family's expected family contribution and financial aid (from all federal, state, and local sources) and the costs of attending college (including tuition, fees, books, etc.). Because they are generally structured as last-dollar programs, Promise program awards vary. For example, in Tennessee, awards have ranged from \$14 to \$2,200.<sup>36</sup>

There is tremendous variation in the requirements of the program, including minimum grade point average, community service requirements, and course loads. Many of the Promise programs seek to strengthen civic engagement by requiring community service. Such is the case in Tennessee where Promise scholars "performed a million hours of community service" across the state since 2015.<sup>37</sup>

Reports suggest that Promise programs "are delivering what they promised -- more college attendance and completion, plus a talented workforce that helps to grow the economy."<sup>38</sup> Appendix A describes a selection of existing Promise programs around the United States.

In 2015, higher education stakeholders began exploring the option of launching a Promise program in the Silver State. During the 79<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, the Nevada Legislature passed Senate Bill 391, which established a Promise program in Nevada with an appropriation of \$3.5 million.<sup>a</sup>

The Nevada Promise program, as described in Senate Bill 391, has the following components.<sup>39</sup>

- Last-dollar scholarship, covering tuition and fees, not covered by federal (Pell) grants and state financial aid (e.g., Silver State Opportunity Grant, Millennium Scholarship). Students are eligible for up to six semesters.
- Eligible students must be a resident of the state, must not have reached 20 years of age, and must not have previously been awarded an associate's degree or bachelor's degree.

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<sup>a</sup> Senate Bill 391 was sponsored by Senator Mo Denis (D-Las Vegas), with bipartisan support. Governor Sandoval signed Senate Bill 391 on June 8, 2017. The Promise Program will launch in Fall 2017 and high school seniors in Nevada are eligible to apply.

- Student must have obtained a high school diploma from a high school in Nevada or a general equivalency diploma.
- Student must not have previously defaulted on any federal student loan.
- Before May 1 preceding the school year for which the student wishes to receive a Promise Scholarship, the student must have met at least once with the assigned mentor, and the student must have completed at least 20 hours of community service.
- Student must be enrolled in at least 12 semester credit hours in an associate's degree program, a bachelor's degree program, or a certificate of achievement program at a community college for each semester of the school year immediately following the school year in which the student was awarded a high school diploma.
- To retain the scholarship, student must maintain a 2.5 grade point average for all classes for which the student has been awarded credit.
- High school seniors must submit their Nevada Promise Scholarship Applications by November 1 of each year and must attend two mandatory meetings about the Promise Scholarship program by May 1.
- Community colleges must assign mentors to each high school student by December 31.
- Students must complete and submit Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by April 1.

Table 2A compares the proposed Promise program in Nevada with a selection of Promise programs operating around the country. Table 2B compares the proposed Nevada Promise program with the existing Silver State Opportunity Grant and the Millennium Scholarship. Appendix B provides a detailed comparison of the Promise program and the Silver State Opportunity Grant.



Table 2A. Comparison of Selected Promise Programs Around the United States

Criteria	Nevada Promise	Tennessee Promise	Oregon Promise	Chicago STAR Scholarship	Harper College Promise
Effective Date	High school seniors graduating 2018	High School seniors graduating 2015	High School seniors graduating 2016	High School seniors graduating 2015	9th grade students beginning fall 2015
<b>A. Initial Eligibility Requirements</b>					
First time students only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Must be recent high school graduate	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Must be resident student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Must be enrolled in degree seeking/certificate program	Yes	Yes	no	Yes	no
Minimum high school GPA	no	no	2.5	3.0	2.3
Minimum high school ACT	no	no	no	17 or higher	no
Must be eligible to take college math & English	no	no	no	no	no
High School attendance requirements	no	no	no	no	Yes
High School community service requirements	Yes	Yes	no	no	Yes
<b>B. Requirements to maintain scholarship</b>					
Minimum college units per semester	12	12	6	No minimum	15
Minimum college GPA	2.5	2.0	2.5	No minimum	2.2 to 2.5
Community service requirements	Yes	Yes	no	no	Yes
<b>C. Scholarship Details</b>					
Scholarship pays tuition and fees	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Scholarship pays for books	no	no	Yes	Yes	
Maximum duration of scholarship	6 semesters	5 semesters		3 years	2 years
Minimum scholarship amount			1,000		
First dollar/ Last dollar program	Last	Last	Last	Last	Not stated
Pell grant reduces scholarship?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Assume Yes
State scholarship reduces aid?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Assume Yes

Table 2B. Comparison of Proposed Nevada Promise Program with Existing Scholarship Programs in Nevada

Criteria	Nevada Promise	Silver State Opportunity Grant	Millennium Scholarship
Effective Date	High school seniors graduating 2018	High school seniors graduating 2015	High school seniors graduating 2000
<b>A. Initial Eligibility Requirements</b>			
First time students only	Yes	no	no
Must be recent high school graduate	Yes	no	Yes
Must be resident student	Yes	Yes	Yes
Must be enrolled in degree seeking/certificate program	Yes	Yes	Yes
Minimum high school GPA	no	no	3.25
Minimum high school ACT	no	no	no
Must be eligible to take college math & English	no	Yes	no
High School attendance requirements	no	no	no
High School community service requirements	Yes	no	no
<b>B. Requirements to maintain scholarship</b>			
Minimum college units per semester	12	15	9
Minimum college GPA	2.5		2.6 for first 30
Community service requirements	Yes	no	no
<b>C. Scholarship Details</b>			
Scholarship pays tuition and fees	Yes	Yes	\$40 per credit
Scholarship pays for books	no	Pays all college costs	
Maximum duration of scholarship	6 semesters		6 years
Maximum lifetime scholarship amount			10,000
Minimum scholarship amount			
First dollar/ Last dollar program	Last	Last	First
Pell grant reduces scholarship?	Yes	Yes	
State scholarship reduces aid?	Yes		

## Potential Demand for Programs to Increase Higher Education Attainment

In 2015, as conversations about a possible new state, need-based scholarship program and a Promise Program surfaced, it became apparent that decision makers and education policy makers did not have a comprehensive understanding of the profile of the average community college student in Nevada. Knowledge of the needs of the end user are critical and should inform program design. In fact, programs are more likely to be effective when they are designed to address the specific needs of the end users.

As such, in Spring 2016, the Guinn Center conducted a survey of community college students around the state to identify their needs and the challenges they face.<sup>40</sup> The administrative offices and students from the College of Southern Nevada (CSN), Great Basin College (GBC), and Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) responded. Approximately 2,136 students responded (a response rate of 5 percent), giving the survey a margin of error of 2.7 percent.

Table 3 presents some baseline data for community colleges in Nevada.<sup>41</sup>

**Table 3. Baseline data for community colleges, Nevada.**

College	Enrollment Student FTE, Fall 2016	Tuition per credit, 2016	Resident Tuition & Fees (2014)	% of First Time, Degree-Seeking Students Enrolled in 30 or more credits (Fall 2014-Spring&Summer 2015)
College of Southern Nevada	18,570	\$91.50	\$2,700	13.4%
Great Basin College	1,685	\$91.50	\$2,700	37.0%
Truckee Meadows College	6,103	\$91.50	\$2,700	17.6%
Western Nevada College	2,187	\$91.50	\$2,700	24.3%

Below, we summarize some of the key findings of the survey, which provided information on the characteristics of community college students in the Silver State and identified some of the challenges they face.

### A Profile of the Community College Student in Nevada

- Approximately 21 percent of respondents were 17-21 years of age; almost 23 percent were 40 years and older
- Fewer than 30 percent were enrolled in 12 or more credits
  - The primary reason students did not take at least 15 credits was because they were working full-time
- 31 percent did not apply for financial aid; 43 percent at GBC did not apply for financial aid
  - Of the students who did not apply for financial aid, 25 percent of the respondents said they did not know about financial or missed the deadline; 45 percent said their income was too high
- 26 percent of respondents had never used the academic counseling services on campus; 29 percent indicated that they “rarely used” academic counseling services
- 90 percent responded that they had never used or participated in a mentoring program (e.g. BUMP UP at College of Southern Nevada, FLAMES at Truckee Meadows Community College), and
- When asked how their institution could help students succeed academically, 48 percent stated that they needed financial assistance

Table 4 presents more detailed information from the survey of community college students in Nevada.

Table 4. Survey of Community College Students, Nevada, July 2016

QUESTION	Total	CSN	TMCC	GBC
<b>Number of Respondents</b>	2280	1936	231	113
<b>Age</b>				
17-21	21.1%			
22-25	21.1%			
26-40	35.2%			
40 and older	22.6%			
<b>Credits during Spring 2016</b>				
15 or More	9%	9%	13%	17%
12-14 Credits	20%	19%	27%	17%
9-11 Credits	15%	15%	17%	9%
6-10 Credits	32%	33%	27%	30%
Less than 6 Credits	23%	24%	17%	27%
<b>Reasons for Not Taking 15 Credits</b>				
Working full-time	43.9%			
Too many family demands	21.5%			
Didn't qualify for financial aid and can't afford to take 15 credits	19.7%			
Working part-time	17.8%			
Qualified for financial aid, but still can't afford to take 15 credits	14.8%			
Caring for dependents	12.9%			
Don't have adequate child care	8.8%			
<b>Did you apply for financial aid?</b>				
Yes	69%	68%	76%	56%
No	31%	30%	23%	43%
<b>Reasons for not applying for financial aid</b>				
My income/family's income too high	45.3%			
Missed deadlines/too late to apply	12.9%			
Didn't know about financial aid	12.5%			
Don't qualify/not eligible	8.6%			
Don't need it	8.3%			
<b>How often did you seek out academic advising?</b>				
Often	13%			
Sometimes	32%			
Rarely	29%			
Never	26%			
<b>How often did you seek out mentoring?</b>				
Often	3%			
Sometimes	2%			
Rarely	4%			
Never	90%			
<b>How could your institution help students achieve academic success?</b>				
Need financial assistance	47.9%			
Need class schedule that accommodates my schedule	46.0%			
Need more online classes	27.6%			
Need more academic advising/life skills classes	18.5%			
Need more tutoring services	14.6%			
Need more opportunities to work with my peers	10.7%			
Need help with child care	7.7%			

## Impact of Promise Programs around the United States

As originally conceived, Promise programs were launched in large part to address the issue of college affordability by offering scholarship programs that paid for college fees and tuition. Research indicates that Promise programs have had some impact on addressing the problem that motivated their creation. For example, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission reported that the state “led the nation in FAFSA filings the past two years, and [...] has seen a 17 percent decrease in the number of students taking out loans.”<sup>42</sup>

In addition, collectively, Promise Programs have increased college attendance rates, the number of first-time college graduates, and college retention (or persistence). For example, an evaluation of the Tennessee Promise program, which the proposed Nevada Promise program most closely resembles, found that “60 percent of the Tennessee Promise recipients are first in their family to go to college and 70 percent are from low-income families;” and the “college-going rate rose by 4.6 percent in its first year, a larger percent than in the last seven years combined.”<sup>43</sup> Additionally, following implementation of the Tennessee Promise scholarship program in 2014, “first-time freshman enrollment in public higher education has increased by 13 percent,” which reflects a “30 percent increase at the state’s community colleges.”<sup>44</sup>

Of the Kalamazoo Promise Program in Michigan, it was reported, “To a large extent, it’s working. The Promise has helped revive Kalamazoo’s public schools, sent hundreds of kids to college who normally wouldn’t have gone, and pumped new vitality into the city. But the experiment has also taken longer to reap benefits than many expected and exposed deeper social problems, spurring changes in the city’s approach.”<sup>45</sup>

Briefly, various studies have reported the following results:

- Improved K-12 test scores, higher graduation rates and lower drop-out rates
- Higher student grade point averages (GPAs) and improved student behavior
- An increase in the number of first-time freshman
- Higher retention (persistence) rates in college, and
- Higher numbers of high school graduates earning post-secondary credentials within 6 years of graduation.

Table 5 presents a summary of the impact of a selected number of Promise programs around the country.

Table 5. Impact of Selected Promise Programs in the United States

State	Impact
<b>Tennessee Promise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 33,081 students have enrolled in college through Tennessee Promise since the program began in Fall 2015.</li> <li>• 63 percent of students who began in Fall 2015 are still enrolled.</li> <li>• Tennessee had highest rate of FAFSA filings for the past two years, and 17 percent decrease in the number of students taking out student loans.</li> <li>• At the state's community colleges, 58 percent of Promise students reenrolled, a 16 percent higher rate than the reenrollment of non-Promise students.</li> <li>• The number of first-time freshman in Tennessee's higher education institutions increased by 13 percent between Fall 2014 and Fall 2016.</li> </ul>
<b>Oregon Promise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2016, the Promise Program served 6,745 students. The participants made up 5.4 percent of all community college students in the state in Fall 2016.</li> <li>• Roughly 82 percent of students who enrolled in Fall 2016 reenrolled in Spring 2017.</li> <li>• Nearly 50 percent of Promise students were eligible for a Pell Grant.</li> <li>• Because more students were eligible for the program than expected, lawmakers increased funding for the program from \$10 million to \$13.6 million in late March 2017.</li> </ul>
<b>The Kalamazoo Promise (MI)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A study found that the Kalamazoo Promise program has improved high school students' behavior and is correlated to an increase in average GPA for African-American students.</li> <li>• Before the program began in 2005, about 36 percent of Kalamazoo Public School (KPS) graduates earned any postsecondary credential within six years of graduation. As of 2015, 48 percent of KPS graduates post-Promise have received a credential.</li> <li>• The probability that a low-income high school graduate would enroll in and complete college a four-year institution increased by 50 percent. Retention rates have increased.</li> <li>• For every \$1 paid toward tuition through the program, a Promise student can expect to earn \$4.</li> </ul>
<b>Long Beach City College Promise (CA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between 2008-2014, more than 5,600 Long Beach residents participated in the program.</li> <li>• 43 percent more graduates of the K-12 school district have enrolled in the four-year California State University, Long Beach after attending the two-year Long Beach City College.</li> <li>• Since the Promise Program began in 2008, the graduation rate in the K-12 district has increased and the dropout rate has decreased, even though the number of low-income students has increased.</li> </ul>
<b>Tulsa Achieves (OK)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10,570 students participated in the program between 2007 and 2013, and approximately 1,500 new students enroll each year.</li> <li>• 48 percent of students in the first cohort (2007) had earned a bachelor's degree by 2014, compared with only 32 percent of non-Achieve Scholar students.</li> </ul>
<b>Ventura College Promise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between 2009 and 2012, Promise students earned 58 percent more degrees than non-Promise students.</li> <li>• Promise students had higher rates of persistence than their peers.</li> </ul>



State	Impact
<b>New Haven Promise (CT)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Between 2011 and 2016, 1,306 students have received Promise scholarships to attend two- or four-year college in Connecticut.</li> <li>RAND Corporation notes that the program has led to an increase in postsecondary enrollment for New Haven public high school graduates.</li> </ul>
<b>The Pittsburgh Promise (PA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since 2007, 7,283 graduates of public high school in Pittsburgh have participated in the program.</li> <li>Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) graduation rate has risen from 63 percent in 2007 to 74 percent in 2014.</li> <li>68 percent of 2010 PPS graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution in the fall of 2010, a ten percent increase in the college-going rate of 58 percent in 2005.</li> </ul>
<b>Washington State Achievers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The program, sponsored by the Bill &amp; Melinda Gates Foundation, ran from 2001 to 2016 and served more than 5,000 students.</li> <li>A study found that a student was 42 percent more likely to enroll in college if he/she received an Achiever award.</li> <li>Students were likely to work fewer hours and carry less student loan debt as a result of the program.</li> <li>Participants were more likely to enroll in four-year institutions if they received an award.</li> <li>Achievers who enrolled in a four-year school had a higher college graduation rate than the national average.</li> <li>Most Achievers had less student loan debt than non-program participants.</li> </ul>

## The Cost of A Nevada Promise Program

Around the country, Promise programs vary in size and cost depending on the structure of the program and the costs of tuition and fees at colleges. In Tennessee, the cost of its Promise program was \$25.3 million in 2016-17, and the average student award was \$1,090. (Tennessee's program is funded by its state lottery.) Oregon allocated \$10 million for the first year of its Promise program.<sup>46</sup>

The Guinn Center estimated that a Promise program could cost Nevada approximately \$3.6 million over a full two-year period of implementation (2018-2020). The Guinn Center's independent calculations are presented in Tables 6 and 7. Senate Bill 391 had an appropriation of \$3.5 million (over the biennium, with one year of implementation). Based on our internal estimates (the calculations and assumptions of which were reviewed with financial analysts at NSHE, TMCC, and CSN), we believe that the \$3.5 million appropriation is sufficient to meet expected demand for Promise scholarships in the Silver State.

The Guinn Center found that the primary driver of cost estimates in our model is the average Pell award for each student. Table 6 presents the estimated costs using different average federal Pell grant awards for students. Column A in Table 6 uses the average Pell grant award for all students in Nevada (including those that are non-degree seeking), which amounts to \$3,430. Using this average Pell award amount, the expected cost of the Nevada Promise program would amount to \$3.6 million over the biennium. Column B uses the average Pell grant award for first-time, degree seeking students, which is \$4,267. Using this average award amount, the cost to the state would be minimal – less than \$500,000 in the second year of implementation. Even though Nevada Promise requirements are such that the student would be classified as a first-time, degree-seeking student and would likely receive a higher Pell award amount, the Guinn Center believes it is more prudent to use the lower Pell award amount (of \$3,430, Column A) to calculate expected costs.

The Guinn Center ran our initial analysis (Columns A and B) against recent 2016-2017 data on the average Pell grant award among first-time, degree seeking students at CSN (Column C). Using the average CSN Pell grant award of \$1,400 results in a program cost of \$12.6 million over two years of operations.

We present this estimate (Column C) simply to illustrate how sensitive the model is to the Pell grant funds received. However, we do not believe this is an accurate cost estimate for the following reason – namely that the proposed Nevada Promise program requires that Promise scholar applicants submit their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Give the Promise requirement, it is likely that the average Pell award among CSN students would increase. Data suggests that students who are eligible for Pell grants do not apply. In fact, recent estimates found that Nevada left \$19 million “on the table” in 2014-2015 in federal Pell grants. This is down from \$26.4 million in Pell grants that the Silver State left on the table in 2013-2014.<sup>47</sup> These data points speak to the critical importance of requiring Promise program applicants to submit the FAFSA. Also, a recent analysis found that there is a positive correlation between FAFSA completion rates and high school graduation rates in Nevada.<sup>48</sup> For this reason, we believe that the current average Pell Grant award of \$1,400 at CSN is significantly lower than what students would receive based on the Promise program requirement that students file the FAFSA.

Table 7 presents the expected impact and expected costs at each community college in Nevada. This model uses the lower Pell grant award (\$3,430). Our estimates suggest that almost 10,000 students could benefit from the Promise Program in the first two years of implementation, and over 3,000 in the first year alone.

Table 6. Estimates of Cost of Promise Program in Nevada

		A	B	C
	Assumptions	Lower Pell Est. (IPEDS)	Higher Pell Est. (IPEDS)	Average CSN Pell Award (16-17)
Line 1	All Degree Seeking Students Fall 2016	28,545	28,545	28,545
Line 2	1st Yr Students in degree-seeking programs, 2014 age 18-24	5,433	5,433	5,433
Line 3	% Residents (Fall 2012, IPEDS)	97%	97%	97%
Line 4	2014-15 Persistence Rate to second year (NSHE)	63.8%	63.8%	63.8%
Line 5	New Persistence Rate Assumption (with Promise)	82%	82%	82%
Line 6	2012-13 graduates who did not enroll in college (NPWR)	13,941	13,941	13,941
Line 7	Tuition per unit 2016-17 (includes tech fee, no facilities fee)	\$ 97.00	\$ 97.00	\$ 97.00
Line 8	Tuition per unit 2017-18 (includes tech fee, no facilities fee)	\$ 101.25	\$ 101.25	\$ 101.25
	Estimate of # of Students by # of Units, with assumption of 25% increase in full-time students			
Line 9	Actual less than 12 units (based on NSHE 15 to Finish data)	2,245	2,245	2,245
Line 10	12 to 14 units	2,429	2,429	2,429
Line 11	15 or more units	759	759	759
Line 12	Total	5,433	5,433	5,433
Line 13	Total 12 or more units	3,188	3,188	3,188
	Enrollment Estimate- Through 2nd Yr of Implementation			
Line 14	Yr 1: Recent high school grads, Resident Students in 12+ units	3,134	3,134	3,134
Line 15	Yr 2: Returning Students Continuing to 2nd Yr	2,570	2,570	2,570
Line 16	Yr 2: Recent high school grads + 25% increase in enrollment	3,918	3,918	3,918
Line 17	Total enrollment	9,622	9,622	9,622
Line 18	Federal and State Aid that Offset Award			
Line 19	Pell Grants 2014-15 from IPEDS	\$ 58,361,106	\$ 58,361,106	\$ 58,361,106
Line 20	Pell Grant per student (per IPEDS)	\$ 3,430	\$ 4,267	\$ 1,400
Line 21	% of students receiving Pell Grant (per IPEDS)	47.75%	0	47.75%
Line 22	Est of students receiving Pell in this scenario (Yr 1)	1,497	1,497	1,497
Line 23	Total Pell Grant Year 1	\$ 5,134,929	\$ 6,635,030	\$ 2,182,285
Line 24	Est. # of students receiving Pell in this scenario (Year 2)	3,098	3,098	3,098
Line 25	Total Pell Grant Year 2	\$ 10,629,482	\$ 13,734,812	\$ 4,517,434
Line 26	Total Pell Grant (Years 1 and 2)	\$ 15,764,411	\$ 20,369,842	\$ 6,699,719
Line 27	Millennium Scholarship total use from Class of 2014	\$ 2,546,853	\$ 2,546,853	\$ 2,546,853
Line 28	% of Millennium Scholarships of Total (2012-2013 numbers)	10%	10%	10%
Line 29	Est. # of Millennium Scholarship Students	649	649	649
Line 30	Est. # of Millennium Scholarship students taking 9 units	257	257	257
Line 31	Est. # of Millennium Scholarship students taking 12 units	292	292	292
Line 32	Est. # of Millennium Scholarship students taking 15 units	100	100	100
Line 33	Est. # of Millennium Scholarship for 12+ units	400,195	400,195	400,195
Line 34	Silver State Opportunity Grant (SSOG) (NSHE data)	\$ 2,134,897	\$ 2,134,897	\$ 2,134,897
Line 35	Total Grants to Deduct (Pell, Millennial & Silver State)	\$ 18,299,503	\$ 22,904,934	\$ 9,234,811
	Year 1 Cost			
Line 36	Students taking 12 units	\$ 5,566,866	\$ 5,566,866	\$ 5,566,866
Line 37	Students taking 15 units	\$ 2,161,533	\$ 2,161,533	\$ 2,161,533
Line 38	Total Cost	\$ 7,728,399	\$ 7,728,399	\$ 7,728,399
Line 39	Minus Federal Pell grant, Millennium & SSOG Scholarships	\$ (7,670,021)	\$ (9,170,122)	\$ (4,717,377)
Line 40	Net Cost	\$ 58,378	\$ (1,441,723)	\$ 3,011,022
	Year 2 Cost			
Line 41	Students taking 12 units	\$ 12,052,921	\$ 12,052,921	\$ 12,052,921
Line 42	Students taking 15 units	\$ 4,675,550	\$ 4,675,550	\$ 4,675,550
Line 43	Total Cost	\$ 16,728,470	\$ 16,728,470	\$ 16,728,470
Line 44	Minus Federal Pell grant, Millennium & SSOG Scholarships	\$ (13,164,574)	\$ (16,269,904)	\$ (7,052,526)
Line 45	Net Cost	\$ 3,563,896	\$ 458,566	\$ 9,675,944
Line 46	Total 2-Year Cost	\$ 3,622,274.6	\$ (983,156.7)	\$ 12,686,966.7

**Table 7. Estimates of Cost of Promise Program in Nevada, by Institution<sup>b</sup>**

	Assumptions	CSN	GBC	TMCC	WNC	TOTAL
Line 1	All Degree Seeking Students Fall 2016	18,570	1,685	6,103	2,187	28,545
Line 2	1st Yr Students in degree-seeking programs, 2014 age 18-24	3,699	255	941	538	5,433
Line 3	% Residents (Fall 2012, IPEDS)	99%	96%	98%	97%	97%
Line 4	2014-15 Persistence Rate to second year (NSHE)	61.9%	47.7%	67.0%	64.8%	63.8%
Line 5	New Persistence Rate Assumption (with Promise)	82.0%	82.0%	82.0%	82.0%	82.0%
Line 6	2012-13 graduates who did not enroll in college (NSHE NPWR data)					13,941
Line 7	Tuition per unit 2016-17 (includes tech fee)	\$ 97	\$ 97	\$ 97	\$ 97	\$ 97.00
Line 8	Tuition per unit 2017-18 (includes tech fee)	\$ 102	\$ 101	\$ 102	\$ 102	\$ 101.25
<b>Estimate of # of Students by # of Units, with assumption of 25% increase in full-time students</b>						
Line 9	Actual less than 12 units (based on NSHE 15 to Finish data)	1,772	37	340	97	2,245
Line 10	12 to 14 units	1,615	115	450	249	2,429
Line 11	15 or more units	313	103	151	193	759
Line 12	Total	3,699	255	941	538	5,433
Line 13	Total 12 or more units	1,928	218	601	441	3,188
<b>Enrollment Estimate- Through 2nd Year of Implementation</b>						
Line 14	Yr 1: Recent high school grads, Resident Students in 12+ units	1,908	209	589	428	3,134
Line 15	Yr 2: Returning Students Continuing to 2nd Year (new persistence rate)	1,565	171	483	351	2,570
Line 16	Yr 2: Recent high school grads + 25% increase in enrollment	2,385	261	736	535	3,918
Line 17	Total enrollment	5,858	641	1,808	1,314	9,622
<b>Federal and State Aid that Offset Award</b>						
Line 18	Pell Grants 2014-15 from IPEDS	\$ 39,371,812	\$ 2,247,631	\$ 11,102,282	\$ 5,639,381	\$ 58,361,106
Line 19	Pell Grant per student (per IPEDS)	\$ 3,187	\$ 3,649	\$ 3,448	\$ 3,437	\$ 3,430
Line 20	% of students receiving Pell Grant (per IPEDS)	51%	40%	46%	54%	47.75%
Line 21	Estimated # of students receiving Pell in this scenario (Year 1)	973	84	271	231	1,497
Line 22	Total Pell Grant Year 1	\$ 3,101,355	\$ 305,021	\$ 934,169	\$ 794,383	\$ 5,134,929
Line 23	Estimated # of students receiving Pell in this scenario (Yr 2)	2,015	173	561	478	3,098
Line 24	Total Pell Grant Year 2	\$ 6,420,398	\$ 630,868	\$ 1,933,788	\$ 1,644,427	\$ 10,629,482
Line 25	Total Pell Grant (Years 1 and 2)	\$ 9,521,753	\$ 935,890	\$ 2,867,958	\$ 2,438,810	\$ 15,764,411
Line 26	Millennium Scholarship total use from Class of 2014	\$ 1,482,780	\$ 143,738	\$ 616,017	\$ 304,319	\$ 2,546,853
Line 27	% of Millennium Scholarships of Total (based on 2012-2013 numbers)	6%	1%	2%	1%	10%
Line 28	Est. # of Millennium Scholarship Students	378	37	157	78	649
Line 29	Est. # of Millennium Scholarship students taking 9 units	180.91	5.31	56.70	13.94	257
Line 30	Est. # of Millennium Scholarship students taking 12 units	164.93	16.51	75.05	35.85	292
Line 31	Est. # of Millennium Scholarship students taking 15 units	31.91	14.79	25.18	27.74	100
Line 32	Est. # of Millennium Scholarship for 12+ units	196,626	33,603	102,266	67,700	400,195
Line 33	Silver State Opportunity Grant (SSOG) (NSHE data)	\$ 1,368,414	\$ 176,842	\$ 352,007	\$ 237,634	\$ 2,134,897
Line 34	Total Grants to Deduct (Pell, Millennium & Silver State) over 2-yr period	\$ 11,086,793	\$ 1,146,335	\$ 3,322,231	\$ 2,744,144	\$ 18,299,503
<b>Year 1 Cost</b>						
Line 35	Students taking 12 units	\$ 3,721,863	\$ 256,638	\$ 1,026,648	\$ 561,717	\$ 5,566,866
Line 36	Students taking 15 units	\$ 900,218	\$ 287,323	\$ 430,622	\$ 543,370	\$ 2,161,533
Line 37	Total Cost	\$ 4,622,081	\$ 543,961	\$ 1,457,270	\$ 1,105,087	\$ 7,728,399
Line 38	Minus Federal Pell grant, Millennium & SSOG Scholarships	\$ (4,666,395)	\$ (515,466)	\$ (1,388,443)	\$ (1,099,716)	\$ (7,670,021)
Line 39	<b>Net Cost</b>	<b>\$ (44,314)</b>	<b>\$ 28,495</b>	<b>\$ 68,827</b>	<b>\$ 5,371</b>	<b>\$ 58,378</b>
<b>Year 2 Cost</b>						
Line 40	Students taking 12 units	\$ 8,062,415	\$ 549,950	\$ 2,223,818	\$ 1,216,738	\$ 12,052,921
Line 41	Students taking 15 units	\$ 1,950,081	\$ 615,705	\$ 932,768	\$ 1,176,995	\$ 4,675,550
Line 42	Total Cost	\$ 10,012,496	\$ 1,165,656	\$ 3,156,586	\$ 2,393,733	\$ 16,728,470
Line 43	Minus Federal Pell grant, Millennium & SSOG Scholarships	\$ (7,985,438)	\$ (841,313)	\$ (2,388,062)	\$ (1,949,761)	\$ (13,164,574)
Line 44	<b>Net Cost</b>	<b>\$ 2,027,058</b>	<b>\$ 324,343</b>	<b>\$ 768,524</b>	<b>\$ 443,972</b>	<b>\$ 3,563,896</b>
Line 45	<b>Total 2-Year Cost</b>	<b>\$ 1,982,744</b>	<b>\$ 352,837</b>	<b>\$ 837,351</b>	<b>\$ 449,343</b>	<b>\$ 3,622,275</b>

<sup>b</sup> Table 7 estimates are based on average Pell award for all students, including non-degree seeking students.

## Possible Challenges

While research indicates that Promise programs around the country have been successful in reducing student debt and increasing the college going and education attainment rates, policy makers and political leaders have raised some concerns about the impact of Promise programs.

### 1. Pressure on Existing Capacity

Education leaders acknowledge that the potential demand for a Promise program could place pressure on existing capacity. A sudden surge in enrollment in community colleges could result in greater demand for instructors, classroom space, administrative support, and resources. A senior level official at the Tennessee Higher Education Commission commented that “overcrowding is definitely on the state’s radar” and the State has “provided funding pools for campuses specifically to address Promise student success.”<sup>49</sup>

In the short-term, however, this may not be an immediate concern for most community colleges in Nevada as enrollment has declined in the last few years, the direct result of a healthier economy and lower unemployment rates. For example, enrollment in 2016-2017 at Truckee Meadows Community College was down 4.0 percent from the previous year; it was down 6.9 percent at Western Nevada College.<sup>50</sup> This suggests that community colleges in Nevada could absorb near term increases in enrollment resulting from the launch of the Promise Program.

### 2. Long-term sustainability

Around the country, Promise programs vary in structure and requirements. They are not inexpensive. Tennessee allocated more than \$24 million in 2016-2017 and anticipates the program will continue to grow, eventually requiring an annual investment of \$36 million. Most Promise programs are funded through several sources, including operating budgets, college foundations, K-12 school district budgets, state and federal allocations, and even lotteries. Most have multiple funding sources. The 2017 Nevada Legislature appropriated \$3.5 million to fund the Promise program. Legislators will have to monitor demand and success of the program and identify funding sources in subsequent years.

In addition to the long-term financial sustainability, there is the related concern of institutional sustainability. In a recent interview, Dr. Martha Kanter, former Under Secretary of Education at the U.S. Department of Education, noted that “although an elected official might prioritize a promise program and help it get off the ground, there is no guarantee that his or her successor would make the same commitment. ‘When [elected officials] go out, budgets change and priorities change,’ Kanter said. That means promise programs need independent funding sources.”<sup>51</sup>

### 3. Diversion of resources away from low-income students

In general, Promise programs are available to students who may not have the greatest financial aid. As such, one criticism of Promise programs is that because it is a last-dollar program and not based on need, these programs divert limited resources away from our neediest students. Given resource constraints, critics question whether financial resources might have greater impact serving low-income students than students from middle-income families. In other words, here in Nevada, education leaders would likely prefer to expand

the Silver State Opportunity Grant program, a need based scholarship program, as opposed to funding a new Promise program that might support middle-income students.

This concern is not unfounded. In Michigan, the architects of the Kalamazoo Promise program were acutely aware that the scholarship program would serve students who might not have the greatest financial need. But education leaders saw the program as a way to reverse white flight and build an economically vibrant community.

“Kalamazoo is desperate to hang onto its largely white middle class and prevent its schools from succumbing to de facto segregation, as in other hollowed-out cities. In the long run, Kalamazoo hopes that the Promise, and its spin-off economic effects, can attract more middle-class families and undergird an urban renaissance. ‘If you want the system to change, the community to change, the schools to change, you don’t want to say this is for poor children,’ [said one resident.] The effect on the city’s public schools has been noticeable. Kalamazoo is now the fastest-growing school district in the state. More students means more state funding to turn around schools and extra services that can drive up graduation rates.”<sup>52</sup>

Ultimately, legislators, policy makers and education leaders will have to balance the state’s priorities and determine how a Promise program serves the long-term, far-reaching interests of the State.

#### **4. Supply of Mentors**

Research finds that mentors can help students enroll in and complete college. As such, several Promise programs (including the Nevada Promise program) require Promise scholars to work with mentors. This component of the program is one of the drivers of the program’s success. While the mentor relationships are critical, they do offer a set of specific challenges. According to district officials, the biggest one is related to the recruitment, training, and management of mentors. In November 2016, Tennessee revealed that it needed 9,000 additional mentors to address the surge in the number of high school students enrolling in college.<sup>53</sup> Given the management requirements and related challenges, higher education officials should work closely with community groups, including Jobs for America’s Graduates – Nevada (JAG-Nevada), United Way, and others to coordinate, recruit, train, and support mentors for Nevada’s Promise scholars.

## **Conclusion**

Promise programs have demonstrated noticeable success reducing student debt loads and increasing the number of students who enroll in community college and graduate. Education leaders and supporters of Promise programs note that Promise programs can help build a workforce. As Senator Mo Denis, primary sponsor of Senate Bill 391, noted in the legislative hearing, the Promise program “is as much a workforce development bill as it is an education bill. As such, a Promise program in Nevada could help the state realize Governor Sandoval’s stated goal that “by 2025, 60 percent of Nevadans aged 25-34 possess some form of postsecondary degree, certificate, or credential.”<sup>54</sup>

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The Kenny C. Guinn Center for Policy Priorities is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, bipartisan, independent research center focused on providing fact-based, relevant, and well-reasoned analysis of critical policy issues facing Nevada and the Intermountain West. The Guinn Center engages policy-makers, experts, and the public with innovative, data-driven research and analysis to advance policy solutions, inform the public debate, and expand public engagement.

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## Appendix A. Overview of Selected Promise Programs around the United States

PROGRAM	MODEL	REQUIREMENTS	FUNDING
<b>TENNESSEE PROMISE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A scholarship and mentoring program</li> <li>Last-dollar scholarship, covering tuition and mandatory fees not covered by the Pell or other state financial aid. Does not cover textbooks, supplies or other expenses.</li> <li>Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation is the administrative agency. This agency is the coordinating body between the university system and the system for state and community/technical colleges/universities. It works with local nonprofit organizations that are selected by county mayors or executives to coordinate the mentoring and community service component of the scholarship.</li> <li>Partnering nonprofit organizations assist students with program requirements, community service, and mentorship opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>Recipients must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be a state resident</li> <li>Have graduated from state high school, complete a home school program or prior to reaching 19 years of age, obtain a GED or equivalent</li> <li>Enroll in an eligible institution and attend full-time the fall semester immediately following high school graduation</li> <li>Complete the Tennessee Promise application</li> <li>File the FAFSA and complete verification by August 1.</li> <li>Attend 2 mandatory meetings led by the local partnering organization in the spring semester prior to matriculation. Failure to attend results in loss of scholarship.</li> <li>Complete 8 hours of community service for each semester they receive the scholarship prior to the start of each term.</li> </ul> <p>To maintain eligibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain 2.0 Grade Point Average (GPA)</li> <li>Complete 8 hours of community service prior to start of semester of each term enrolled</li> <li>File the FAFSA by February 15 of each year</li> <li>Complete Tennessee Promise application for renewal by Nov. 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The state created a \$360 million endowment to pay for the \$34 million estimated annual cost of the plan.</li> <li>The scholarship is given directly to the school to administer once student's enrollment has been confirmed to cover the remaining costs of tuition and mandatory fees for eligible participants. Students never directly receive cash.</li> </ul>
<b>OREGON PROMISE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offers high school graduates that meet requirements two years of tuition/fee coverage at eligible institutions. Inaugural program was 2016-2017 academic year.</li> <li>Last-dollar plan, covering cost of full-time, full-year community college tuition, which was not covered by federal (Pell grant) or other state financial assistance.</li> </ul>	<p>Recipients must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be a state resident for at least 12 months</li> <li>Have received a high school diploma or GED or completed grade 12</li> <li>Earn a cumulative high school GPA of 2.5+ or equivalent</li> <li>Within 6 months of high school completion, enroll in a course at an Oregon community college required for transfer, an Associate's Degree, or program in career and technical education.</li> <li>Complete FAFSA and online application for the Oregon Promise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The state allocated \$10 million per year and an additional \$7 million for student success efforts</li> </ul>



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<b>OREGON PROMISE</b> (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All eligible students receive a minimum grant of \$1,000 even if their tuition/fees are covered by other aid.</li> <li>• After the grant is applied to tuition, remaining dollars can go toward transportation, books, etc.</li> <li>• Student is required to kick in \$50 per term “co-pay.”</li> <li>• Approximately 4,000-6,000 students are expected to enroll in the first year.</li> <li>• Oregon Promise is paid based upon a prorated amount.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Students attending half-time (6–8 credits) will receive 50% for the term.</li> <li>○ Students attending three-quarter time (9–11 credits) will receive 75% for the term</li> <li>○ Students attending full-time (12 or more credits) will receive 100% for the term.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Eligible students are guaranteed a minimum of \$1,000 per year and up to \$3,198. The actual award will depend on number of credits and other grants.</li> <li>• Maximum grant will cover cost of full-time, full-year of community college</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not have completed more than 90 credit hours or the curricula/programs noted above</li> <li>• Have received a 2.5 or higher GPA or a GED score of 145 or higher</li> <li>• Enroll in a community college certificate or degree program within six months of graduation or GED completion</li> </ul> <p>To maintain eligibility, students must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a GPA of 2.5 or better</li> <li>• Enroll at least half time each term for at least three terms each consecutive academic year</li> <li>• Participate in academic advising</li> <li>• Register for and successfully complete life skills course.</li> <li>• Maintain at least half-time of continuous enrollment during fall, winter and spring terms</li> <li>• Have not attempted or completed more than 90 credits</li> <li>• Completed the FAFSA</li> </ul>	
<b>CITY COLLEGE OF CHICAGO STAR SCHOLARSHIP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched in 2015, this is a last-dollar scholarship and provides free tuition, fees and books, which was not covered by federal (Pell grant) or other state financial aid, for up to three years or until the completion of an associate degree, whichever comes first, at City College of Chicago (CCC).</li> <li>• Undocumented students are eligible.</li> </ul>	<p>Recipients must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be a Chicago Public School (CPS) graduate with a 3.0 GPA, an ACT of 17 or higher, and enroll in CCC pathway</li> <li>• Be a recent high school graduate (CPS grads have three years to use the funds following the first fall semester after high school graduation)</li> <li>• Complete the FAFSA (an alternative form is available for undocumented students)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected cost is \$2 million</li> <li>• 175 students in inaugural class, graduating in 2017</li> </ul>

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<b>HARPER COLLEGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last-dollar scholarship, covering tuition and fees (cannot be used for books and other expenses) for recent high school graduates entering Harper College in fall 2019.</li> <li>• Participants must enter as high school freshmen in participating school districts and meet rigorous attendance, course rigor, persistence and community service requirements to obtain the scholarship when they enroll at Harper College. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Program starts in the second semester of a student's freshman year in high school.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Only 3-5 percent of graduating high school seniors from participating districts are expected to be eligible.</li> <li>• The scholarship covers no more than 60 academic credits for four continuous semesters for full-time (15 credits a semester) students at Harper College.</li> </ul>	<p>Recipients must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend a participating high school district</li> <li>• Maintain a GPA of 2.3 in high school, perform community service, graduate on time with their class and be ready for college courses without remedial classes.</li> <li>• Once in college, must take at least 15 credits a semester, plus volunteer 10 hours of community service per semester, while earning a 2.5 GPA by their final semester (with no Ds or Fs).</li> <li>• Not be absent more than the following number of days: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Second semester of freshman year: 5 days</li> <li>○ Sophomore year: 9 days; Junior year: 8 days; senior year: 7 days</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Participate in community service: 5 hours 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of freshman year, 10 hours sophomore years, 15 hours junior year, and 20 hours senior year.</li> <li>• Fill out FAFSA</li> </ul> <p>To maintain eligibility, students must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upon graduation from high school, students must be prepared to enter a college-level sequence of courses at Harper College.</li> <li>• Students must be eligible for enrollment in college-level math and college-level English.</li> <li>• Once in college, must attend full-time (take at least 15 credits) each semester, plus volunteer 10 hours of community service per semester, while earning a 2.5 GPA by their final semester (with no Ds or Fs).</li> <li>• Must attend full-time each semester, minimum of 15 credit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harper College is seeking to create a \$10 million endowment and estimates the program will cost \$600,000 to \$900,000 a year to operate.</li> <li>• Between 300 and 500 students are expected to participate in the 2019 inaugural year.</li> </ul>
<b>MINNESOTA PILOT: THE MNSCU COLLEGE OCCUPATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last-dollar financial aid to recent high school, ABE or GED graduates pursuing a Perkins-eligible certificate or associate degree in a "high-need" program area designed by the Department of Employment and Economic Development in Minnesota.</li> </ul>	<p>Recipients must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply for the Grant and submit FAFSA, and be Minnesota resident with family adjusted gross income of \$90,000 or less.</li> <li>• Start at a 2-year college in the fall after (1) graduating from a Minnesota secondary school, (2) passing the GED, (3) completing an ABE program or (4) finishing an approved AmeriCorps program that they started right after graduating from secondary school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State allocated \$5 million for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, and \$3.5 million for FY2018.</li> <li>• Pilot expected to provide full</li> </ul>

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<b>MINNESOTA PILOT: THE MNSCU COLLEGE OCCUPATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP</b> (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scholarships will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis for those enrolling in eligible programs.</li> <li>• The pilot program (2 years) will assign mentors to work with participating students.</li> <li>• Colleges must provide mentoring to Grantees - including frequent communication, a personalized student success plan, connection to on-campus resources and personal development opportunities, and financial planning</li> <li>• Results must be reported to the Commissioner of Higher Education - number of grantees and their race, gender and ethnicity, grantee persistence and completion, and employment outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue a certificate, diploma, AS or AAS degree in a program that is covered by the federal Perkins Act and is in a Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development designated high demand occupational field</li> <li>• Earn at least 30 program credits by the end of the first academic year (including summer term)</li> <li>• Make satisfactory academic progress with a grade point average of 2.5 after the first academic year and at the end of each academic term thereafter.</li> </ul>	funding for 1,600 grantees.
<b>LONG BEACH COLLEGE PROMISE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Long Beach College Promise is a partnership among the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), Long Beach City College (LBCC), Cal State Long Beach (CSULB) and the City of Long Beach, providing LBUSD graduates with a tuition-free fall semester at LBCC and providing LBCC students that complete the minimum college preparatory requirements or minimum community college transfer requirements guaranteed admission to CSULB.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LBUSD students visit LBCC and CSULB in fourth and fifth grades, and middle school students and parents complete an education plan pledging to follow the plan to pursue college and successfully complete college.</li> <li>• LBUSD students must enroll at LBCC in the fall semester immediately following high school graduation to receive a tuition-free fall semester at LBCC.</li> <li>• Four years after the Long Beach College Promise began, LBCC launched the Promise Pathways, which guaranteed students full-time schedules including required math, reading, and English courses, and enhanced student supports.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program costs \$1 million annually.</li> <li>• In fall 2015, the LBCC foundation covered the fees of recent high school graduates from LBUSD at a cost of \$46 dollars per unit.</li> <li>• More than 9,800 students have taken the free semester at LBCC.</li> </ul>

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<b>KALAMAZOO PROMISE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides graduates of the Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) with the opportunity to immediately attend post-secondary education with <u>up to</u> a 100% tuition scholarship for a four-year program or 130 credits at participating Michigan colleges and universities.</li> <li>Amount of the scholarship is determined by the students' length of time in KPS. (e.g. 65% of college tuition for students who enrolled in KPS in 9th grade and stay until graduation, 100% for students who have attended KPS since kindergarten.</li> <li>Limited to students with strong academic records or demonstrated financial need. Students must enroll in college and maintain a 2.0 GPA while enrolled.</li> </ul>	<p>Recipients must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply for Promise at the beginning of high school senior year.</li> <li>Be a graduate from Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) school from 2006 and beyond.</li> <li>Reside in the district and have attended KPS for four years or more.</li> <li>Be enrolled or have been admitted to at any partnering post-secondary institution.</li> <li>Recipients have 10 years from the time they graduate from high school to use the Promise scholarship and can start/stop any time.</li> </ul> <p>To maintain eligibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make regular progress toward a degree or certification as defined by Satisfactory Academic Progress standards of the school</li> <li>Be enrolled as a full-time student (12 credit hours) each semester.</li> <li>Maintain a 2.0 grade point average at the post-secondary institution. If the GPA drops below 2.0, a student may be reinstated if he/she is able to bring their GPA back to at least a 2.0.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Kalamazoo Promise is funded by anonymous donors and supplicated with participating institutions' matching funds.</li> <li>The Kalamazoo Promise has funded approximately 5,000 students over the past 10 years.</li> </ul>

**Appendix B. Comparison of proposed Nevada Promise and Silver State Opportunity Grant**

NEVADA PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP	SILVER STATE OPPORTUNITY GRANT
<b>Premise</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens the K-14 pipeline and addresses workforce needs by encouraging high school students to attend college immediately upon graduating from high school.</li> <li>• Provides a last-dollar scholarship, which covers tuition and fees not covered by other federal or state grants or scholarships, including those for developmental coursework if students do not place in college-level math or English.</li> </ul>	<b>Premise</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides state-sponsored financial assistance to students at community college and the state college based on financial need.</li> <li>• Scholarship covers cost of attendance, including registration fees, books and cost-of-living expenses.</li> </ul>
<b>Who is eligible?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only graduating high school seniors can apply. They must meet community service requirements, apply for financial aid and attend two meetings about scholarship requirements and the college-going process prior to matriculation at the community college. They must meet with their mentor.</li> <li>• If high school seniors do not apply for the scholarship in the fall of their senior year and meet entry requirements, they lose eligibility.</li> <li>• Once in college, students must be degree-seeking, full-time (at least 12 credits per semester), meet minimum federal financial aid requirements, maintain a 2.5 GPA, apply for financial aid each year, and continue to meet mentor and community service requirements.</li> <li>• No GPA or income requirements for applying high school seniors.</li> </ul>	<b>Who is eligible?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All ages of students, with or without previous college experience, are eligible to receive the grant if they meet income, credit and other specified requirements.</li> <li>• Students must apply for federal financial aid.</li> <li>• Students must maintain 15 credits each semester to continue to receive the scholarship and meet minimum federal financial aid requirements, regarding GPA.</li> <li>• Students must be a degree seeking and college ready (placement or completion of entry-level, college-level math and English).</li> </ul>
<b>Desired Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen K-14 pipeline so all K-12 students have access to college</li> <li>• Create college-going culture/enhance workforce development</li> <li>• Increase high school graduation and college-going rates</li> <li>• Increase college retention and completion</li> <li>• Increase amount of federal financial aid grants received by students in Nevada</li> <li>• Increase community service and civic engagement</li> </ul>	<b>Desired Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand access to a full-time college experience for low-income Nevadans</li> <li>• Increase college retention and completion rates among low-income students</li> <li>• Increase amount of federal financial aid grants received by students in Nevada</li> <li>• Increase credit-load of low-income students to make timely progress toward completion</li> <li>• Decrease the number of hours low-income students must work to afford college</li> </ul>
<b>Summary</b> <p>The Nevada Promise Scholarship seeks to create a college-going culture, incentivizing academic behaviors that encourage seniors to pursue college. Once in college, Promise scholars might also be eligible for the Silver State Opportunity Grant (SSOG) if they meet the specified requirements. The SSOG would be applied first to their accounts to cover mandatory fees and may cover additional education-related expenses, such as books, transportation or cost of living. Some Promise-eligible students, who are completing the requirements, may not use any Promise dollars because their mandatory fees are covered through other state or federal scholarships/grants. In addition, non-traditional students, age 24 and above, who comprise most community college students, are eligible for SSOG (but not Promise) if they meet the income, credit and other specified requirements.</p>	

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