



Columbia College Promise PROJECT SUMMARY

Overview

The Columbia College Foundation now offers a new opportunity for local high school seniors enrolling at Columbia College in fall 2019 and fall 2020. This new program, the **Columbia College Promise**, makes it possible for every qualified local public high school graduate or GED recipient to attend Columbia College fulltime, tuition free, for the academic year immediately after graduation. The program launched as a three-year pilot in fall 2018 and is funded by gifts from individuals and community partners who care deeply about education for local youth.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Columbia College Promise?

The Columbia College Promise pays for tuition and enrollment fees for up to 30 units of study during the academic year beginning in the fall immediately following graduation - a value of \$1200 to \$1500 based on the number of units taken per semester. In addition, Promise students will receive specialized guidance and support to help ensure success.

What is the goal?

The Columbia College Promise will remove the tuition barrier that often stops promising young high school graduates from pursuing their education. Once implemented, the program will increase the number of local high school graduates who attend Columbia College, thereby boosting the population of workforce-ready young adults who complete a degree, certificate or training program or successfully transfer to a 4-year college.

Why offer this program?

Only a fraction of students in our community successfully complete college or career training after high school, leaving them unprepared for the future. Some students qualify for merit scholarships, those who do not qualify often find that education is unaffordable and out of reach. Others, with no family history of attending college, may need special support and guidance to succeed.

Who is it for – How will it work?

- Beginning in Fall 2018 and continuing through 2019 and 2020, the Columbia College Promise will be offered to every public high school graduate who lives in Tuolumne County or the Bret Harte High School District in Calaveras County and enrolls fulltime at Columbia College for the fall semester immediately following graduation.
- All students must first apply for federal and state grants by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form or California Dream Act application and accept all federal or state money prior to the Promise funding. Some exceptions will apply.
- All students are eligible for the Columbia College Promise whether or not they receive financial aid.
- Promise awards will vary according to the total cost of tuition and fees and the amount of state awards that are granted to student applicants.

Is there a cap on the number of students who can receive the Columbia College Promise?

No. All students who qualify by following the steps outlined for acceptance will receive the Promise.

What schools are included?

Sonora Union High School District (including Cassina High and Ted Bird High), Summerville Union High School District (including Connections Academy, Long Barn and necessary small schools), Big Oak Flat – Groveland Unified School District (including Tioga and Don Pedro), Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools Alternative Education, Gold Rush Charter School, Bret Harte Union High School District in Calaveras County (including John Vierra High and Vallecito High) and Mountain Oaks Charter School (graduates who live in Tuolumne County or the Bret Harte High School District only). GED graduates who meet the residence requirements and enroll in the fall immediately following graduation are also eligible.

Will the Columbia College Promise cover all the costs of college?

For a fulltime student taking a minimum of 12 units for two consecutive semesters, tuition and fees cost \$1244 per year. Books and supplies can cost \$1700 for an approximate total of \$3000 per year per student.

The Columbia College Promise covers Columbia College enrollment fees for up to 30 units in the first academic year after high school (\$46/unit cost of classes) and the Columbia College Activity Fee, Health Fee, Student Representation Fee, and Student Center Fees, after receipt of any applicable state financial assistance. The Columbia College Promise does not cover individual course material fees, test or certification expenses, books, parking, or other individual course expenses.

Promise funds will be available to students whether or not they receive other merit or needs-based scholarships. Scholarship funds provided by private donors and philanthropic organizations make it possible to apply funds over and above the cost of tuition and fees toward the purchase of required books and other learning tools.

What are the criteria to qualify for fall 2019?

To qualify for the Columbia College Promise, a student must be a 2019 graduate (or GED recipient) from a qualified public high school (see above) and reside within the boundaries of the Yosemite Community College District. Students must then complete the following steps:

1. Apply to Columbia College via CCC Apply (cccapply.org).
2. Complete the 2019/2020 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA - www.fafsa.gov) or AB540/undocumented students complete the 2019/2020 Dream Act Application (www.caldreamact.org).
3. Complete the 2019-20 Columbia College Promise Application.
4. Complete the Columbia College online orientation.
5. Complete first semester educational plan with a Columbia College Counselor.
6. Enroll in and maintain 12 or more units at Columbia College for Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 (If needed, up to one Modesto Jr. College course each semester can be included in the 12-plus units.)
7. Submit official high school transcripts to Columbia College Admissions with proof of graduation, or GED, by August 26, 2019.
8. Maintain a GPA of 2.0 or higher each semester.
9. Within Fall 2019 semester, complete a comprehensive educational plan with a Columbia College Counselor.

Is there an application deadline?

Highest priority will be given to students who complete Required Steps 1-5 by May 20, 2019.

The last day Columbia College Promise Applications will be accepted is **August 19, 2019**, and all required steps must be completed by the first day of the Fall 2019 semester – August 26th.

How will the program be administered?

The program will be administered through a partnership between Columbia College offices of Financial Aid, Student Services, and the Columbia College Foundation.

Is there a scholastic requirement for enrolling in the second semester?

In order to receive the Promise in the second semester, each student must have completed 12 units and maintain a GPA of at least 2.0.

If a student enrolls in summer school immediately following graduation from high school will those costs be paid? Will units earned during that summer be deducted from the 30 unit limit in the first year?

The Promise program will cover up to 30 units in the first year, beginning in the fall immediately following graduation. Students will not be reimbursed for units taken in the summer immediately following graduation and units taken will not reduce the student's ability to be reimbursed for 30 units beginning in the fall.

Will units at MJC be counted toward the 12-unit minimum?

Understanding that a particular class may not be available at Columbia College at a convenient time for an individual student, the Promise program provides that one class per semester can be taken at Modesto Junior College (MJC) toward the 12-unit minimum. *Courses taken at MJC are not paid for by the Promise.*

Can a student still qualify if he/she takes a year off after graduating high school?

No. During this pilot period, students only qualify if they enroll for the fall semester immediately after their high school graduation.

What happens if a Promise student drops a class and falls below 12 units during the first semester?

You will not be charged for dropped units, but you will not qualify for the spring semester. You should work with your counselor to find alternate classes/late start options to fill your schedule.

What if a student qualifies for a reduced unit load through the DSPS program?

DSPS students will be considered fulltime at their reduced unit load, if verified by the DSPS program.

Can a student who has been dropped from the program appeal the decision?

Waivers will be considered from students with extenuating circumstances, if they have met all other requirements, including a revised education plan that outlines how missed units will be made up, and have the recommendation of a counselor. Appeal forms are available from Promise counselor Kirsten Miller or from the Foundation office.

Will unit fees be paid for by the Promise for summer classes?

The Promise program will cover fees for up to 30 units total for a student's first academic year. Summer courses that follow their first academic may be included in this total.

I realize that the Columbia College Promise covers tuition and fees for a student's first year only. What can I do go get help with my second year and beyond?

Many resources are available to help you afford your college education – including financial aid, scholarships, potential tax credits and student loans (when used prudently). Consider taking a budget and money-management class, and look into our Columbia College scholarships (www.gocolumbia.edu/scholarships).

The Internal Revenue Service provides guidance on educational tax credits that may be available to students and their families. Visit www.irs.gov/Individuals/AOTC and read Publication 970, "Tax Benefits for Education," to learn more.

According to the IRS, "...the American Opportunity Tax Credit may give you the break you are looking for... Even in you [or parents if you are a dependent], don't make enough money to owe taxes, you may still qualify. Money you paid for tuition, fees, and course materials may qualify for the credit. Visit www.irs.gov/Individuals/AOTC and read Publication 970, "Tax Benefits for Education," to learn more

Are undocumented students eligible for the Promise?

Yes, they will need to complete the California Dream Act application as part of the eligibility process.