



College Success. A D.C. Promise

Our children are growing up in a world with challenges and opportunities that previous generations could never have imagined. They must be equipped with the tools they will need to succeed in the increasingly competitive 21st century economy.

The “D.C. Promise Establishment Act of 2013” seeks to guarantee that every District student can pursue a college or technical education after high school.

What is the D.C. Promise?

College is expensive. And it is growing more expensive with each passing year. In fact, the cost of higher education is growing faster than family incomes.¹ As a result, many students, especially those from low-income families, are unable to continue their education after high school for financial reasons.²

The D.C. Promise is intended to encourage District students to pursue their educational goals by providing additional assistance for tuition and fees after other sources of financial aid have been exhausted.

Who is eligible for the D.C. Promise?

To be eligible for the D.C. Promise, students must meet the following criteria:

1. They must have been enrolled in a District public school (traditional or public charter school) between, at a minimum, grades 9 through 12.

¹ Economic Policy Institute, *Class of 2012: Labor Market for Young Graduates Remains Grim*, May 2012

² Pew Research Center, *“Promoting Economic Mobility by Increasing Post-Secondary Education,”* 2009.

2. They must have graduated from a District public school (traditional or public charter school) or receive an equivalency diploma.
3. They must have lived in the District for at least 4 years prior to enrolling in a qualifying post-secondary program (excluding periods of military or other national service).
4. They must be from a household with an annual taxable income of less than \$250,000.

Why is the D.C. Promise important?

In the 21st century economy, a college or technical post-secondary education is no longer a luxury. A litany of research suggests that higher education has a direct impact on a person’s lifetime earnings and that poor or low-income students can dramatically increase their chances of moving into the middle class by attaining a 2- or 4-year degree.³

But we all benefit when our students continue formal education after high school. According to the Economic Policy Institute, “Providing expanded access to high quality education will not only expand economic opportunity for residents, but also likely **do more to strengthen the overall state economy than anything else a state government can do.**”⁴

How much is the D.C. Promise worth?

The D.C. Promise will cover the costs of tuition and fees after other sources of financial aid have been exhausted. The maximum amount of the grant will depend on the student’s household income and the length of time they were enrolled in a District public school. Students who were continuously enrolled between grades 6 and 12 and who are from households with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) will be eligible for the largest awards. Students who were enrolled continuously between grades 9 and 12 will be eligible for a reduced amount.

Students Enrolled Continuously Between Grades 6 and 12

Household Income as Percentage of the Federal Poverty Limit	Yearly Award	Maximum Award
0 to 200%	\$20,000	\$100,000
201 to 400%	15,000	60,000
401 to 600%	10,000	50,000
Above 600%	5,000	25,000

³ Pew Research Center, “Promoting Economic Mobility by Increasing Post-Secondary Education,” 2009.

⁴ Economic Policy Institute, “A well Educated Workforce is Key to State Prosperity,” August 2012.

Students Enrolled Continuously Between Grades 9 and 12

Household Income as Percentage of the Federal Poverty Limit	Yearly Award	Maximum Award
0 to 200%	\$12,000	\$60,000
201 to 400%	9,000	45,000
401 to 600%	6,000	30,000
Above 600%	3,000	15,000

In addition, students in the District’s foster care system are eligible for an additional grant of \$10,000 to cover living expenses and other related costs.

Where can the D.C. Promise be used?

In today’s world of skyrocketing college tuition costs, students are increasingly forced to forgo life-changing opportunities due to the inability to pay. **The D.C. Promise is intended to help District students pursue their educational goals wherever this might lead them.** As such, D.C. Promise grants can be used at a variety of post-secondary institutions nationwide, including four (4) year colleges, two (2) year colleges, and accredited certificate programs.

How is the D.C. Promise different from the D.C.-TAG?

The D.C. Promise is fundamentally different in both goals and scope than the D.C. Tuition Assistance Grant (D.C.-TAG). First, the D.C. Promise is designed to remove financial obstacles to higher education for District students, particularly those from low-income households. Second, the D.C. Promise will provide a benefit to those families who commit to the District’s public school system. Conversely, the D.C.-TAG program is not focused on students from lower income households, and is available to all students, including those in private and independent schools. Moreover, D.C.-TAG assistance is primarily directed at public, 4-year institutions, whereas the D.C. Promise can be used at all accredited institutions of higher education, as well as accredited career programs.