



# Oregon Promise: Report from Year Seven

Meeting of the Higher Education  
Coordinating Commission

Amy G. Cox

Director, Office of Research and Data

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# The Oregon Promise is a grant program covering up to 90 credits of community college tuition

## Student Eligibility (through 2021-22)



Recent Oregon high school graduate or GED® test graduate

**2.5+ GPA**  
at HS graduation or  
145 on all GED® tests



Oregon resident for at least 12 months prior to college attendance



Enroll for 6+ credits at an Oregon community college within 6 mo. of graduation

**90**  
credit limit, completed or attempted, including accelerated learning

## Apply

File a FAFSA/ORSAA  
File an Oregon Promise Application  
Contribute \$50 co-pay each term

**Expected family contribution (EFC) may also be used as needed to control program costs**

## To maintain eligibility, students:

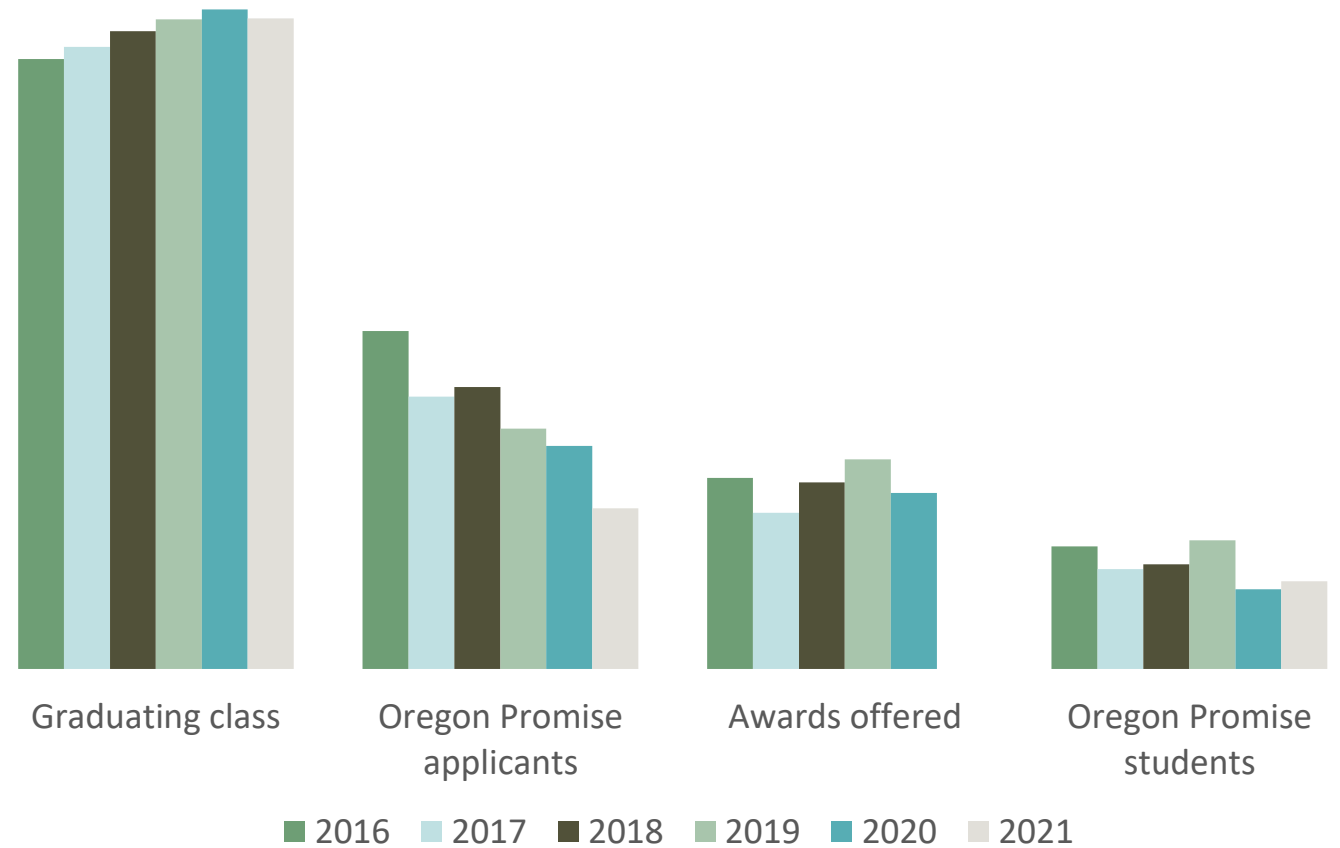
- Remain continuously enrolled for at least 6 credits each term
- File a complete FAFSA/ORSAA application by published deadline
- Have earned fewer than 90 college credits

# Created in 2015, the program is entering its seventh year of awarding grants to recent high school graduates and GED completers

The agency processes about 10,000-15,000 applications each year to disburse funds to 4,500 to 6,000 new Oregon Promise students each year.

Returning students account for 2,000 to 4,000 additional students each year.

Each year, staff in the Office of Student Access and Completion assess these numbers to determine if an EFC limit is necessary, and if so, what the limit is.



The statute requires a report each year; this year's report focuses on four questions

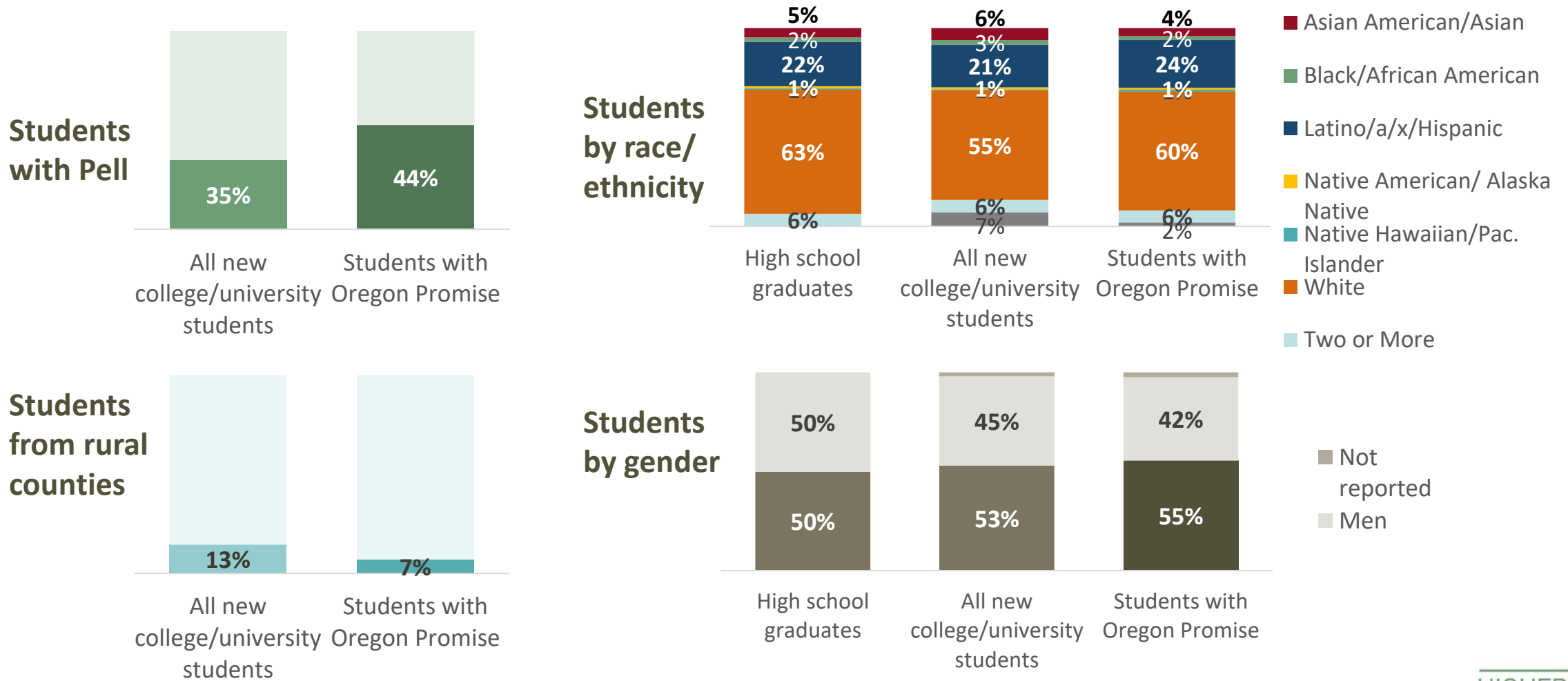
Who is using the grant?

What are the program's financial impacts?

Has the Oregon Promise led to more access to college?

Has the Oregon Promise led to more completion?

# Students with the Oregon Promise are slightly more likely to be from low-income and urban backgrounds and to be Latino/a/x/Hispanic, and women



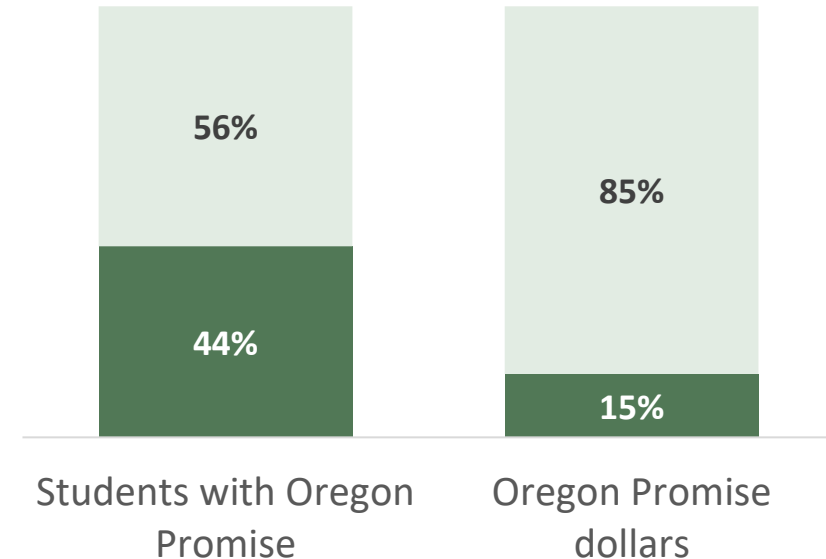
These trends generally maintain across cohorts

# Most students with the Oregon Promise are from low-income backgrounds, but most program dollars go to students from middle/upper income backgrounds

As a “last dollar” program, the Oregon Promise pays the balance of the average tuition cost after other grants (Pell, OOG) have been applied to tuition. When this covers most or all tuition costs, students receive a minimal Oregon Promise grant.

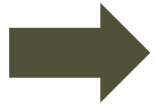
Students from middle/higher income backgrounds without these other grants receive the maximum amount of the Oregon Promise to pay the tuition. This results in most program dollars going to students from middle/higher incomes.

Students with Pell (low income)



# Outline

Who is using the grant?



What are the program's financial impacts?

Has the Oregon Promise led to more access to college?

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The program has financial impacts on students, the use of program funds, and the State

# The Oregon Promise covers tuition, though many students still struggle to cover other costs



Combined with other public aid (OOG, Pell), the Oregon Promise covers the entire cost of 12 credits of tuition per term for the whole academic year.



If we look at the entire cost of attendance (tuition + room/board + books/supplies + transportation), most low-income students cannot meet the cost of attendance.

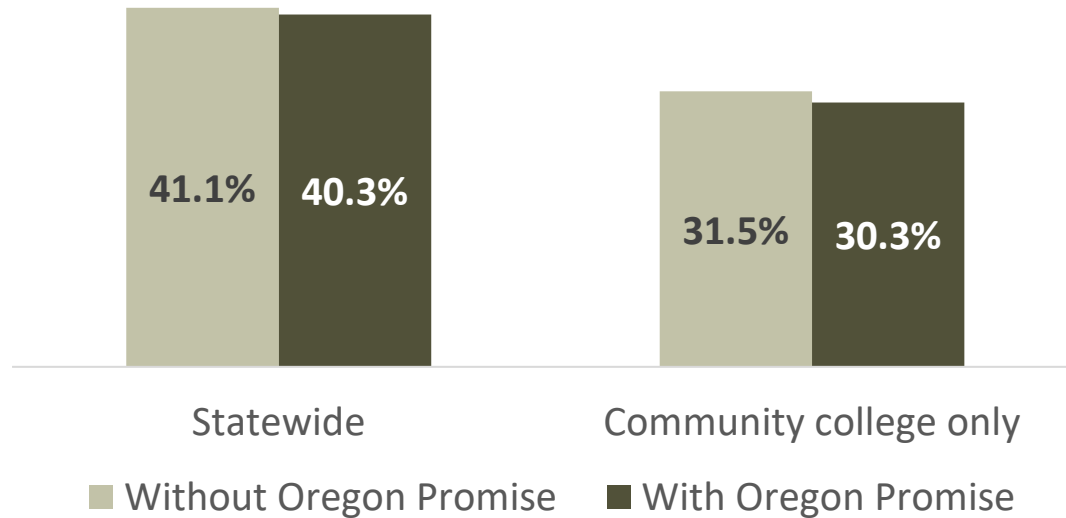


Among students who receive the Oregon Promise, **40%** cannot meet the published cost of attendance, even when other grants, EFC, and student earnings are included.



Among students eligible for the Pell grant who receive the Oregon Promise, **68%** cannot meet the published cost of attendance with these resources.

# The Oregon Promise helps recipients with college costs, though its overall impact is limited



An estimated 700 to 900 additional students are able to meet the cost of attendance each year with the Oregon Promise.

This impact is strongest among students who identify as Latino/a/x/Hispanic or White and students who are not first-generation-college students.

## Impact on affordability

The Oregon Promise helps all recipients with college costs. It reduces the overall number of all students who face unaffordable costs by about 1%.

The impact is limited by the number of students who receive the grant, its amount, and its last-dollar structure.

Students from low-income backgrounds are most likely to face unaffordable costs and also face the highest costs. These students also usually receive only the minimum Oregon Promise grant.

# The Oregon Promise also has financial impacts on the State

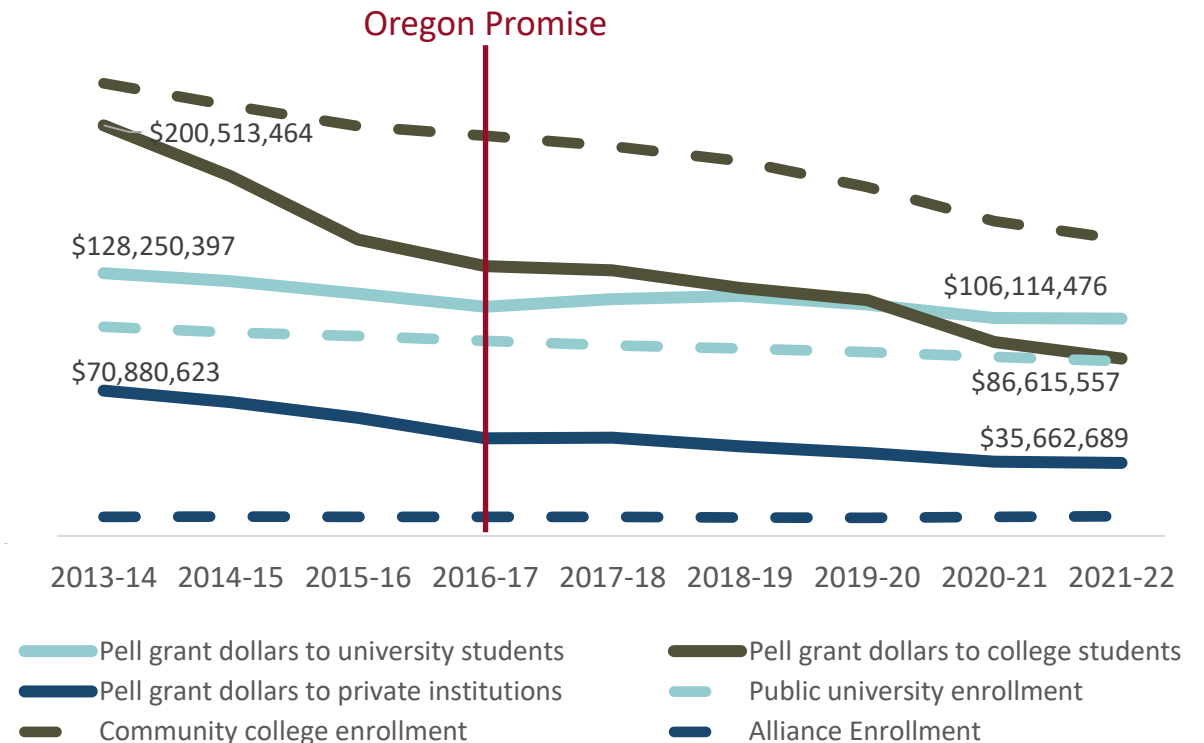
Federal Pell grant dollars coming into Oregon have declined for the last decade. This parallels a broader decline in community college enrollment.

The Oregon Promise does not appear to have affected this trend, partly because students with the Oregon Promise comprise only **13%** of all community college students.

Oregon Promise recipients received approx. **12%** of all Pell grants community college students received in 2021-22.

Because students have to file a complete FAFSA/ORSA to apply for the Oregon Promise, Pell grant dollars into the State are maximized for this group of students.

Total federal Pell grant dollars disbursed to Oregon public universities and community colleges and private institutions



# Outline

Who is using the grant?

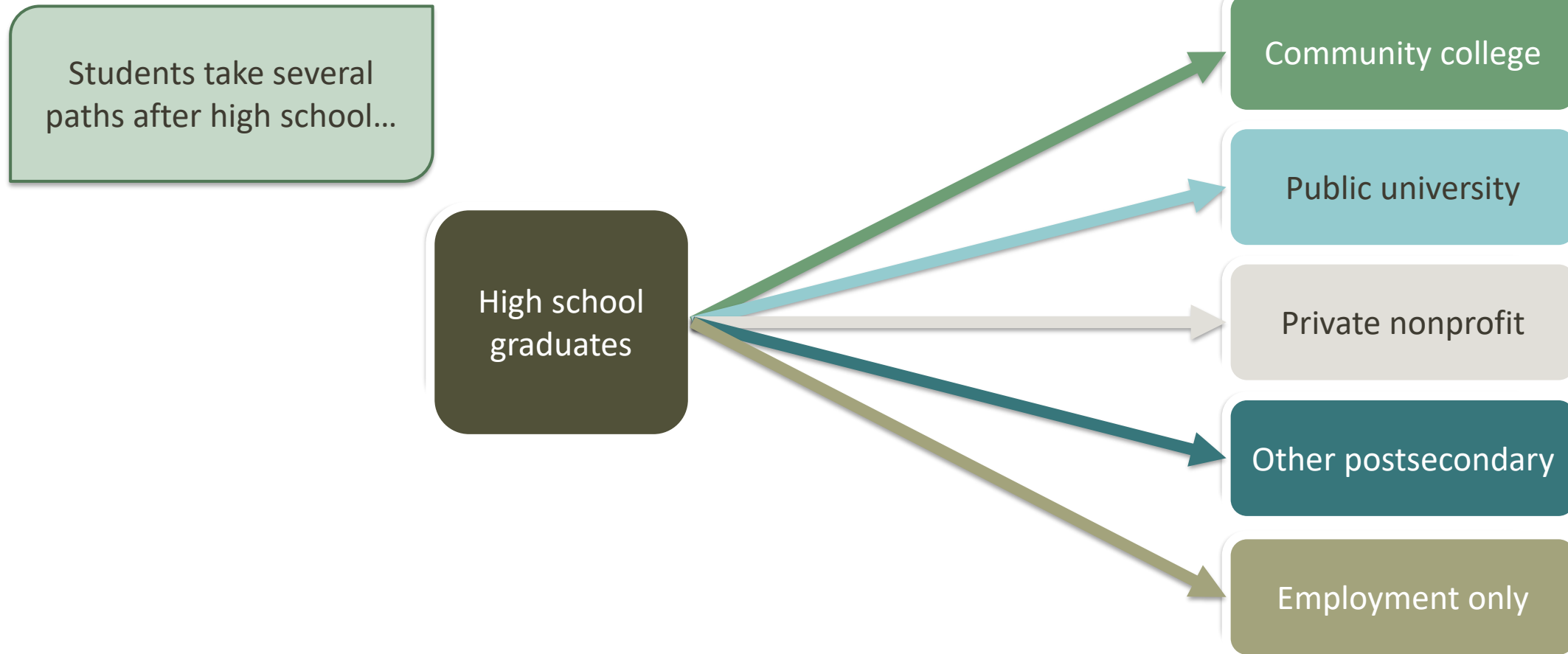
What are the program's financial impacts?



Has the Oregon Promise led to more access to college?

Has the Oregon Promise led to more completion?

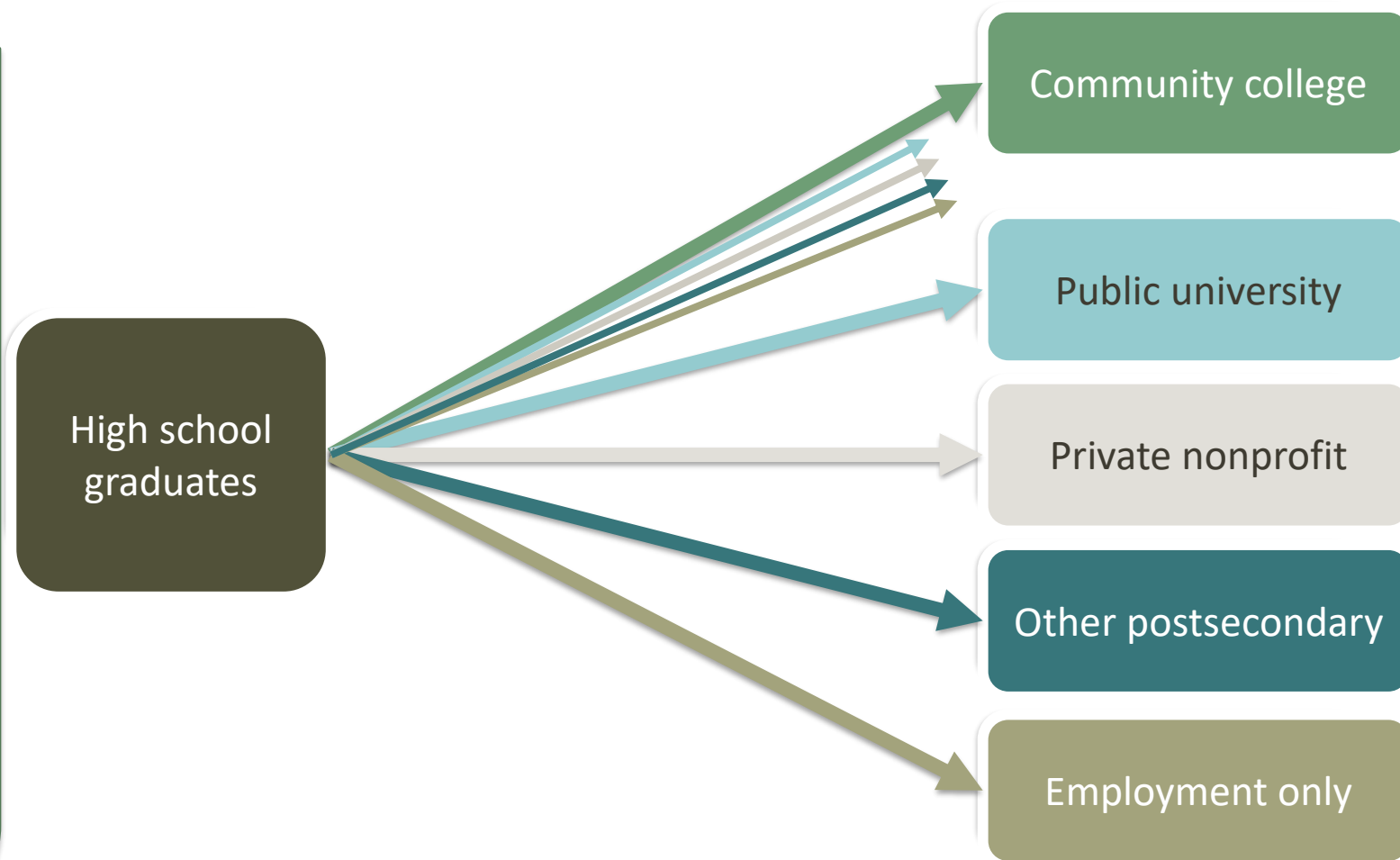
# Comparing high school cohorts



# Therefore, we compare the outcomes for the entire high school graduating class before and after the Promise

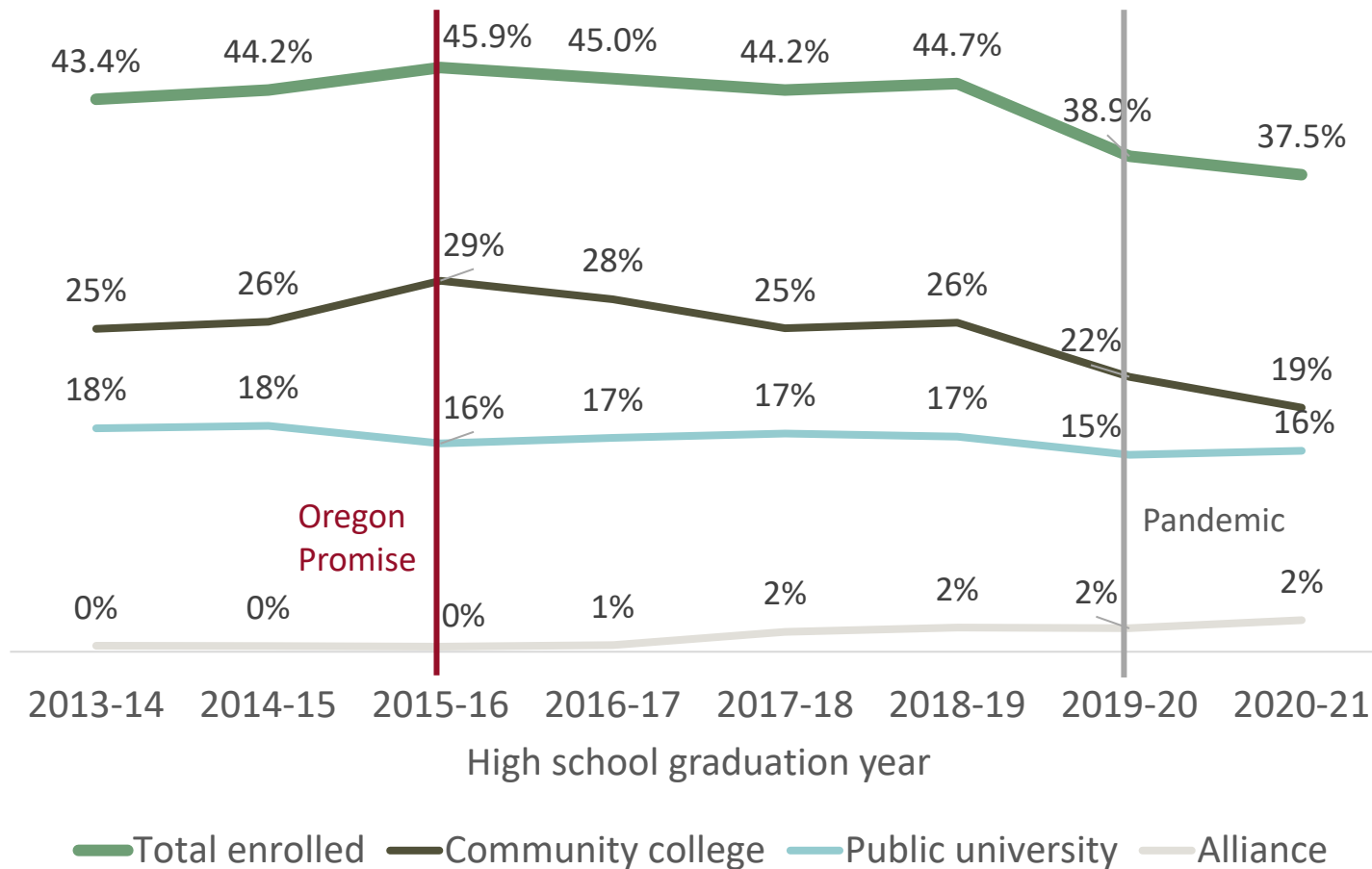
With the Oregon Promise, some students took different paths than they would have taken before because of the grant.

This means we cannot compare Oregon Promise students with community college students before the program. Oregon Promise students may be a broader group than the ones enrolled in community college before the program.



# The Oregon Promise does not appear to have increased college access beyond the first year

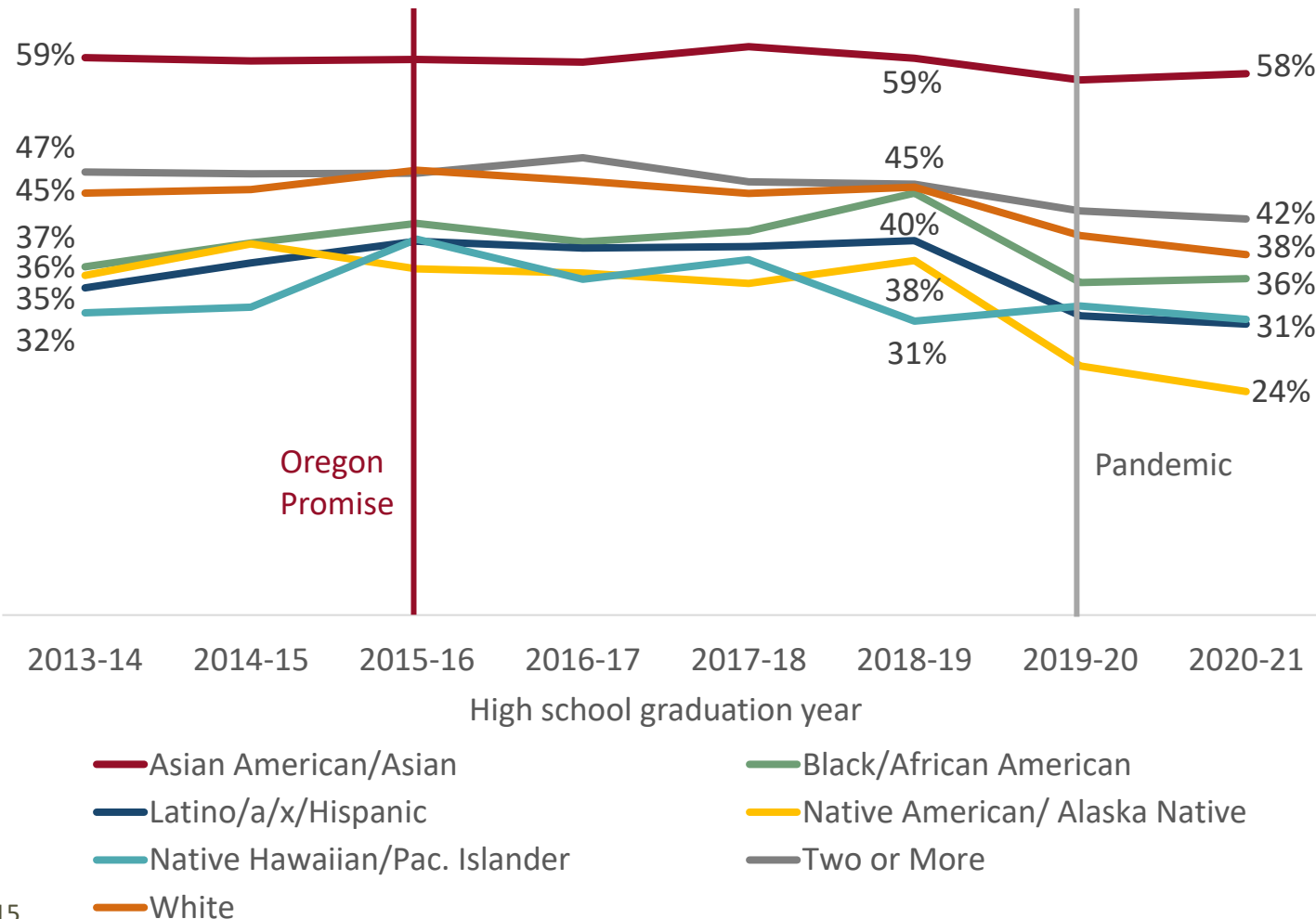
Percentage of high school graduates enrolling in college within 6 months of high school graduation, by sector and year



College-going rates rose in the first year of the Oregon Promise but lost much of this increase over the next three years. The most recent two cohorts of high school graduates finished high school during the pandemic, when college-going declined across all age groups, especially at community colleges.

# The program does not appear to have closed racial/ethnic equity gaps in college access

Percentage of high school graduates enrolling in college within 6 months of high school graduation, by race/ethnicity and year



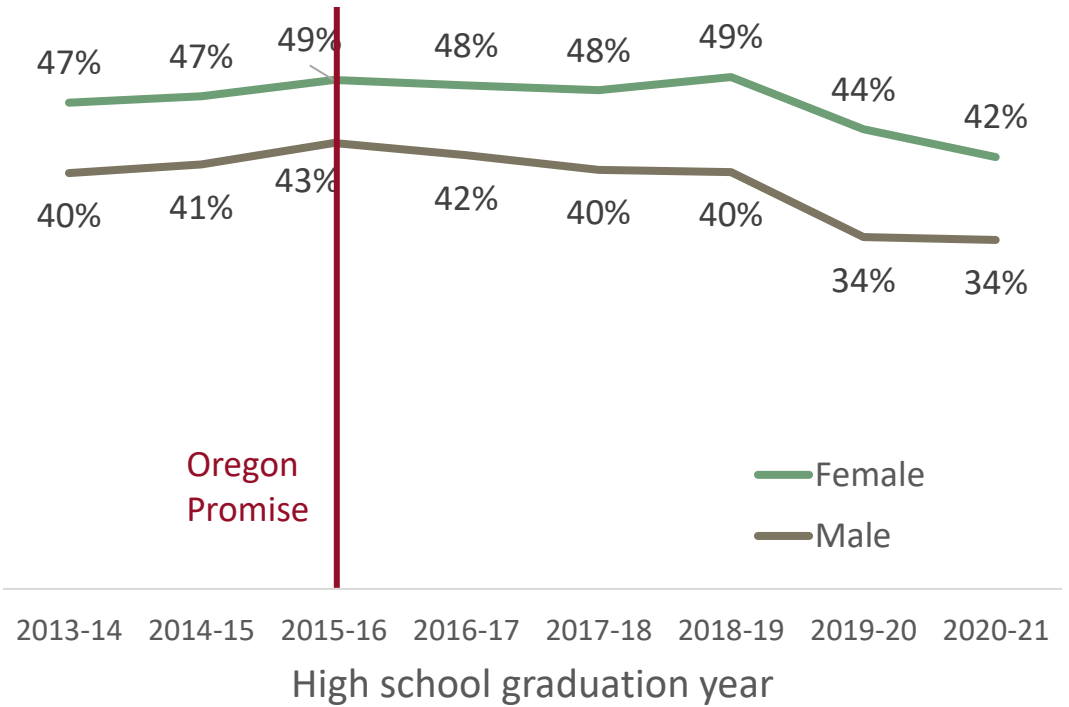
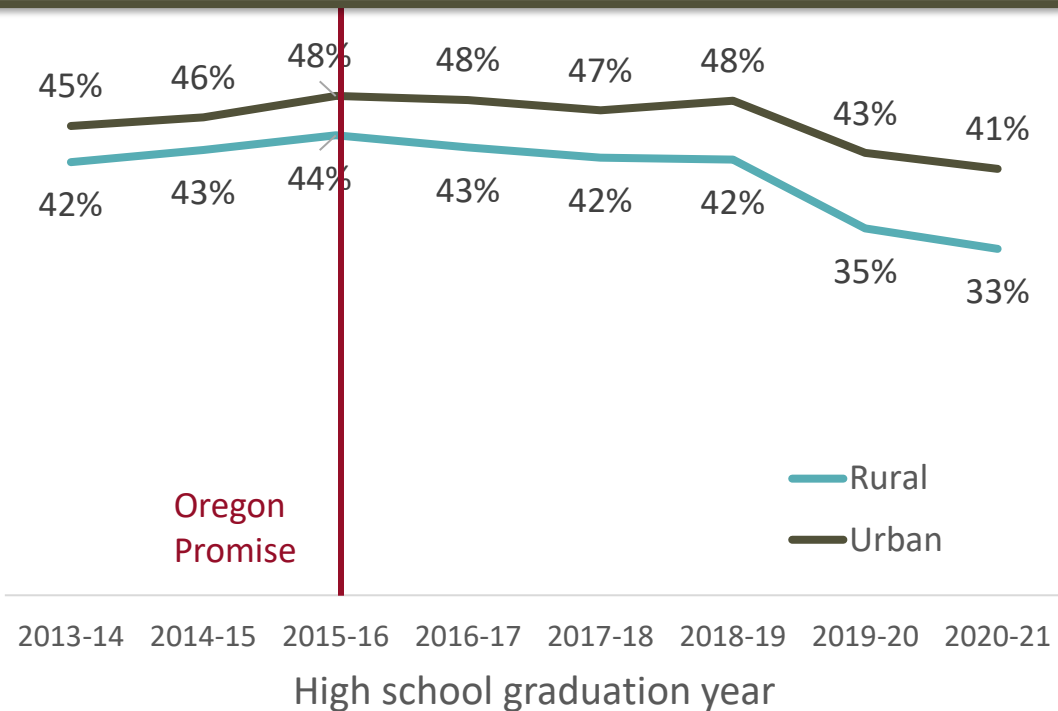
Racial/ethnic gaps in college-going were similar before and after the program, at least until the pandemic. College-going rose for Black/African American and for Latino/a/x/Hispanic graduates, but this increase started before the Oregon Promise. Rates also rose for Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and for White graduates when the program began, but these rates then declined.

Since the pandemic, college-going has fallen for most groups, especially for Latino/a/x/Hispanic, Native American/Alaska Native, and White students.

# The Oregon Promise also does not appear to have closed equity gaps by geography or gender

Percentage of high school graduates enrolling in college within 6 months of high school graduation, by geography and gender.

Since the program began, college-going rose among students from urban/mixed counties but not among those from rural counties. Since the pandemic, rates fell more among rural students, widening the gap further.



Similarly, college-going rose and remained slightly higher for women but fell for men. This widened the gap, which has remained wide during the pandemic.



# Outline

Who is using the grant?

What are the program's financial impacts?

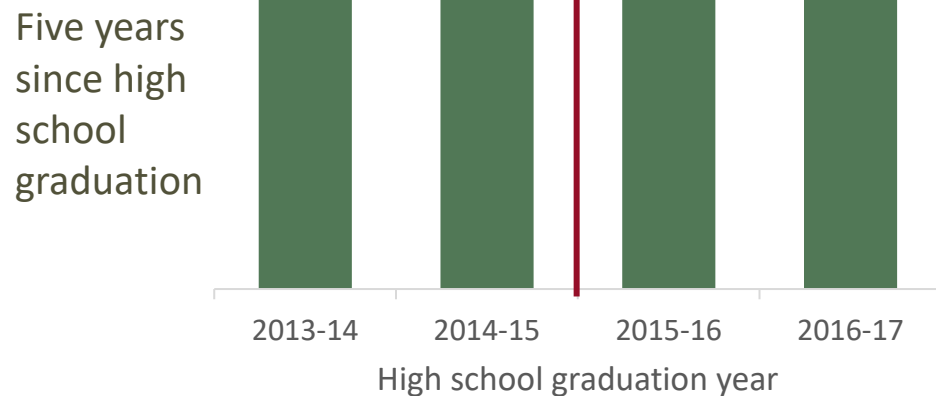
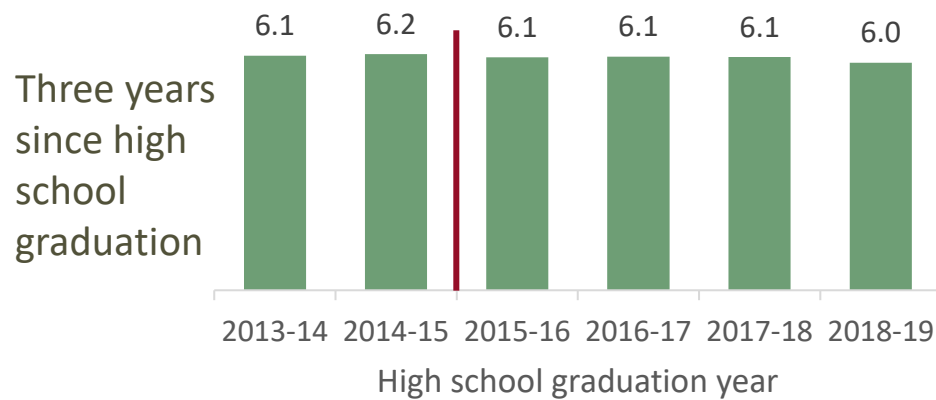
Has the Oregon Promise led to more access to college?



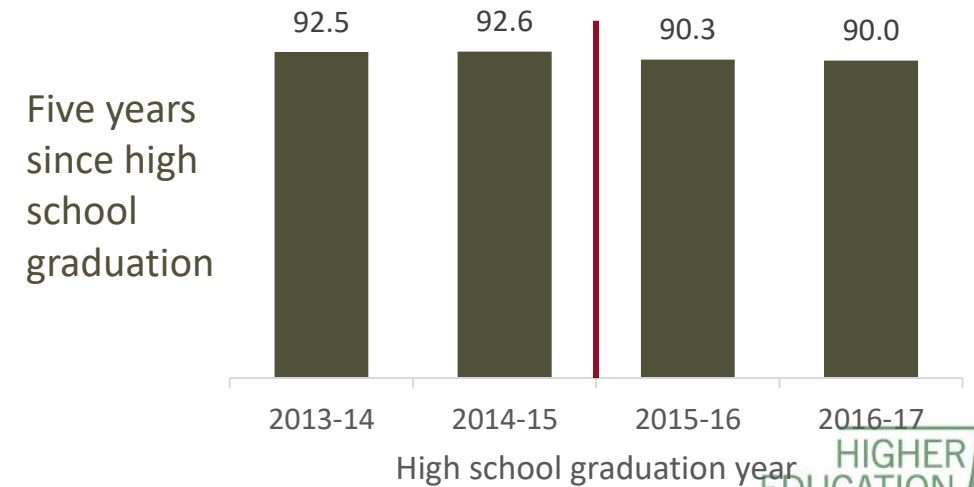
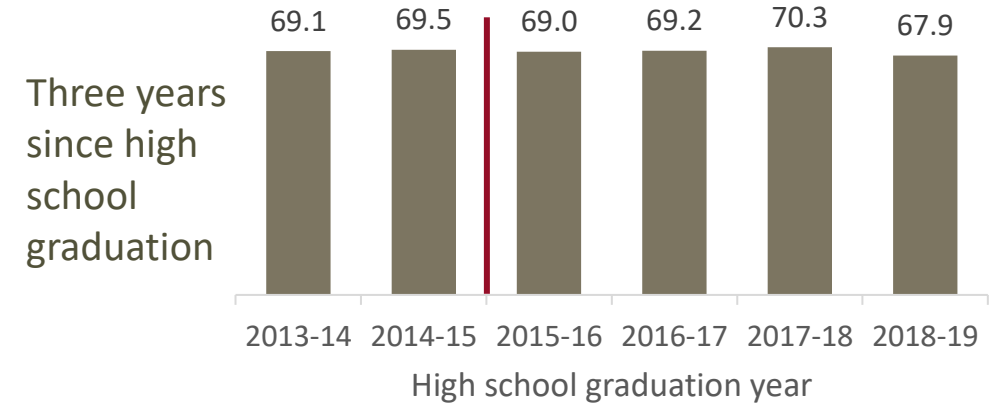
Has the Oregon Promise led to more completion?

# The program has enrollment requirements to encourage momentum toward earning a college credential. These have not increased.

Average number of college or university terms in which high school graduates enrolled in the first years since high school graduation.

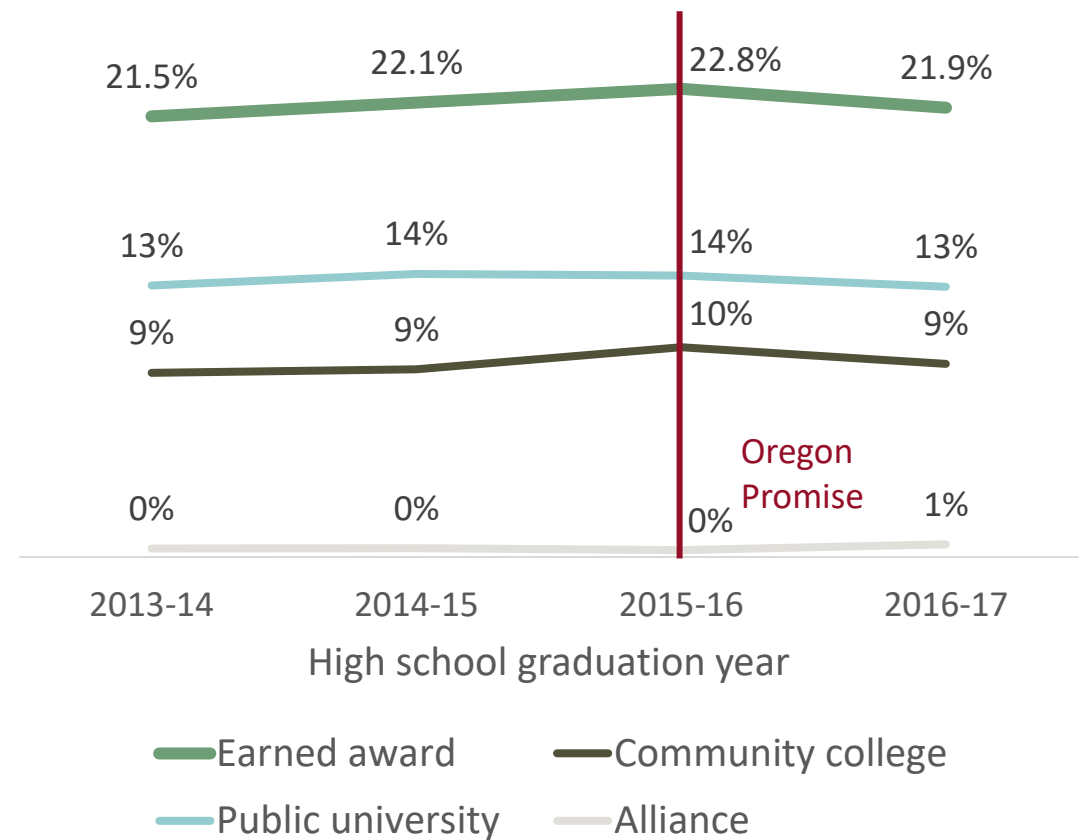
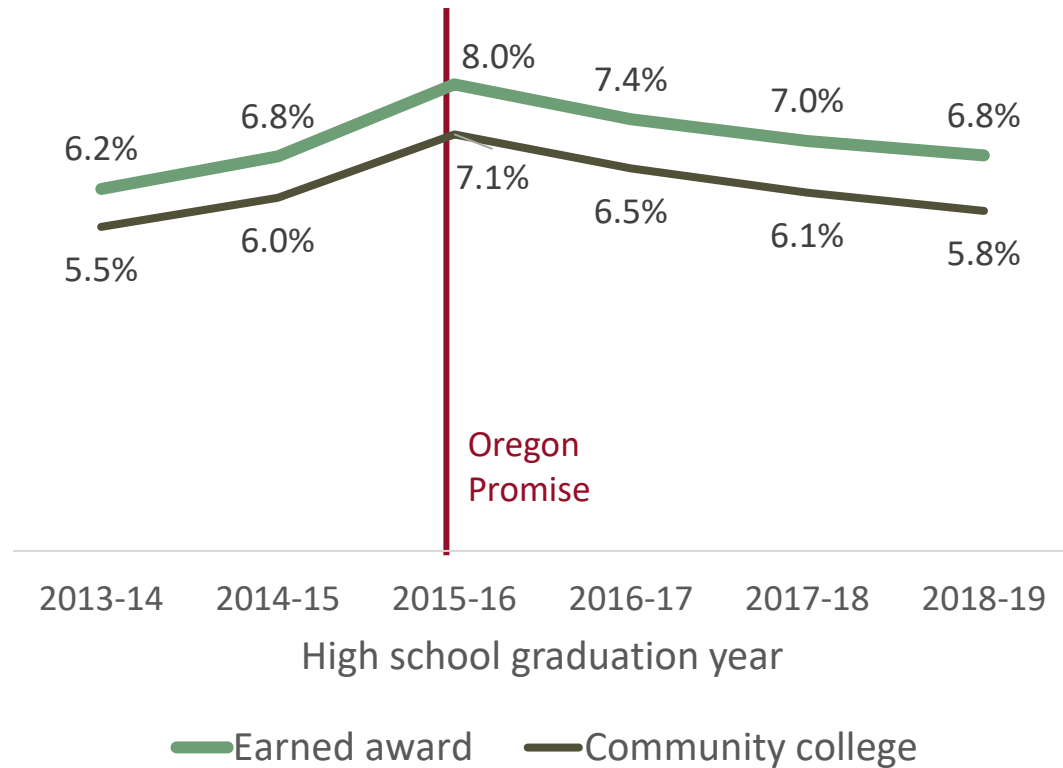


Average number of college or university credits high school graduates earned in the first years since high school graduation.



# The percentage of recent high school graduates earning a credential rose in the first year of the program, but this has not sustained

Percentage of high school graduates who earned a postsecondary credential from an Oregon community college, public university, or private, non-profit institution in the first years since high school graduation, by year.



# Key Findings

The Oregon Promise serves thousands of students seeking to continue their education after high school

Most students receiving the Oregon Promise are from low-income backgrounds, though most dollars go to students from middle/upper income backgrounds

Most students receiving the Oregon Promise still cannot pay for the cost of attendance; those most likely to face unaffordable costs are also likely to get only the minimal grant

College enrollment among recent high school graduates does not appear to have increased with the Oregon Promise

College momentum, as measured by the number of terms enrolled and the number of credits earned, does not appear to have increased with the Oregon Promise

College completion among recent high school graduates does not appear to have increased with the Oregon Promise

# What's next

In 2022, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 1522, which included changes to the program that make it more accessible, less complex, and more equitable

- The minimum GPA required for eligibility was lowered from 2.5 to 2.0
- The \$50 co-pay was eliminated
- The minimum grant award for a full-time student rose from \$1,000 to \$2,000
- The minimum grant award will rise at the same rate as the maximum award

These changes are likely to support many of the students we did not see make sustained gains thus far, especially those from low-income backgrounds

In the coming year, the HECC has a policy option package for additional changes: eliminating the GPA requirement and not counting accelerated learning credits toward the 90-credit limit