

The Oregon Promise, Year 3 Research Brief

January 2019

Senate Bill 81 (2015)

Passed in 2015, Oregon Senate Bill 81 (Oregon Revised Statute 341.522) provides community college financial support for recent Oregon high school and General Educational Development® (GED) test graduates. The program—known as “the Oregon Promise”—gives eligible students a state grant to cover average tuition for 12 credits at any of Oregon community college, up to 90 college credits. Students must complete an Oregon Promise Grant Application and a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Oregon Student Aid Application (ORSAA). To maintain eligibility, students must remain continuously enrolled for at least six credits in each of the fall, winter, and spring terms, complete a first-year college experience requirement, and make satisfactory academic progress.

Student Eligibility



Enroll at an Oregon community college within 6 months of graduation



Recent Oregon high school graduate or GED® test graduate



Oregon resident for at least 12 months prior to college attendance

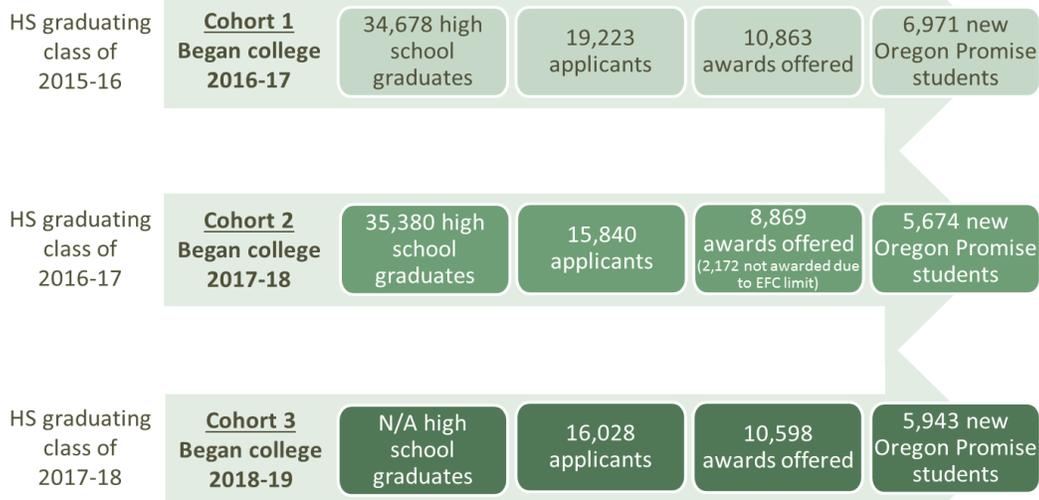
2.5+ GPA

at HS graduation or 145 on all GED® tests

90

credit limit, completed or attempted

Eligibility may also depend on expected family contribution (EFC). EFC criteria are subject to change.

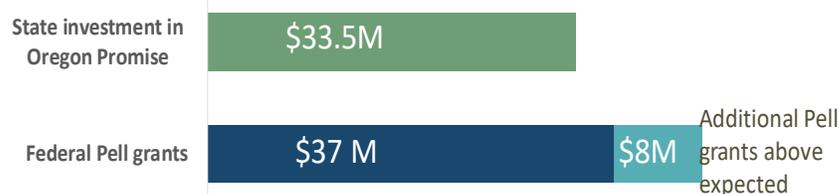


Did the Oregon Promise expand college enrollment? - Probably

Some results suggest that the Oregon Promise expanded the number of recent Oregon high school graduates who went to college, though the evidence is mixed. Even a slight expansion of enrollment is notable in this period of economic strength, when community college enrollment typically declines.

Did the Oregon Promise have a financial impact on Oregon? - YES

The last-dollar design of the program—requiring students to apply for and utilize federal aid grants—generated an estimated \$8 million more in federal Pell grants to Oregon students than was expected from previous rates of Pell receipt. These dollars reflect the increase in federal support for the first two years of the Oregon Promise program.



The Oregon Promise – Report from Year 3

Did the Oregon Promise have an impact on equity? - YES, in some ways...

Early evidence suggest the Oregon Promise has helped reduce racial/ethnic differences in enrollment. However, Oregon Promise students appear less likely than other students to be first-generation college students. Additionally, though about half of the grants go to students who have the greatest financial need (i.e., are eligible for a federal Pell grant), only about 30 percent of Oregon Promise grant dollars go to these students. Together, the findings suggest opportunities for expanded outreach to underrepresented groups of students and further considerations of how the program may better serve the most marginalized students would continue progress toward greater equity.

Are Oregon Promise students *more* successful? - NO, but not less so either...

With only two years of data, conclusions about completion rates among Oregon Promise students are not yet firm. Early findings indicate that Oregon Promise students largely experience positive outcomes. The majority of students had earned a credential, transferred to a public university, or were still enrolled in community college two years into the program. However, many of those still enrolled in college had lost eligibility for the grant because they were not continuously enrolled. The program does not appear to have led to markedly more completions among high school graduates at this early stage.

63% of Cohort 1 have completed, transferred, or are still enrolled

Do credits earned in high school affect Oregon Promise students? - YES

About half of Oregon Promise students bring college credits earned in high school with them into college (accelerated learning). This reduces the number of credits they can earn under the program before reaching the 90 college credits for which the program will pay. The financial impact of these credits is significant. College credits carry a tuition cost of about \$120 per credit (depending on the year). If the Oregon Promise had funded these credits, the additional disbursements would vary by cohort but would be considerable.

18
average # of accelerated learning credits students bring

\$2,160
Average cost of 18 credits

FINAL TAKEAWAY

With the program still relatively new, its impact on enrollment, equity, and completion is still being fully assessed. However, early findings suggest the Oregon Promise has opened doors to higher education for more students, made college more affordable, and brought in additional federal aid to help fund education for more Oregonians. Early results suggest positive impacts on equity that could be furthered with expanded outreach to underserved communities.



Where to go from here?

- Evaluate long-term impacts on the state and students of the “last-dollar” design of the program, including expanded outreach for FAFSA completions
- Determine causes of program dropout and address barriers
- Expand outreach to underserved communities
- Continue rigorous study of the Oregon Promise program

For the full report, with additional results, see

<https://www.oregon.gov/highered/research/Documents/Reports/SB-81-Oregon-Promise-2018.pdf>