Tennessee Promise at TBR Community Colleges & TCATs
Student Success for the First Three Cohorts of Promise Students

Summary
The first wave of Tennessee Promise students arrived in Fall 2015, when 13,287 Promise students enrolled at community colleges. By Fall 2017, after five semesters of eligibility, 21.5% of these students had graduated, compared to 13.8% of students from the pre-Promise 2014 cohort.

Since 2015, three additional cohorts of Promise students have continued to reshape community colleges and succeed at unprecedented rates. By fall 2017, more than 41,000 Promise students had enrolled at community colleges.

The second and third cohorts of Tennessee Promise students, who enrolled at community colleges in fall 2016 and 2017, also succeed at high rates. After five semesters of Promise eligibility, more than half of these students had earned a postsecondary credential, transferred, or were still enrolled. Moreover, 22.9% of the second cohort and 23.2% of the third cohort had graduated within five semesters.

This summary explores key findings about the participation and success of Promise students at TBR colleges. The number of first-time, full-time students enrolling at community colleges rose significantly in the first year of Promise and has remained high ever since. However, much of the enrollment growth occurred among students with lower ACT scores. Still, Promise students at community colleges are realizing unpredicted success, and Promise students at TCATs are succeeding at even higher rates.

Promise at Community Colleges
Tennessee Promise participation at TBR colleges grew steadily in the first three years. In fall 2017, 14,059 new Tennessee Promise students enrolled at community colleges, representing 72% of first-time, full-time students and 80% of recent high school graduates who enrolled.

Promise Student Diversity: In 2017, 53% of new Promise students at community colleges were low-income students, 22% were students from historically underrepresented minority groups, and 5% were from the state’s economically distressed counties. Additionally, among the 2017 new Promise students:

- 56% were female;
- 76% were white;
- 14% were Black or African American;
- 5% were Hispanic; and
- 40% were first generation college students.

Promise Awards: In 2017, the average financial aid award for new Promise students at community colleges was $558. However, 48% of Promise students (6,768 students) received $0 from Promise in their first term. For this group, the Pell grant and other aid covered students’ tuition and fees. Additionally, 28% of Promise students (3,464 students) received small awards between $500-700. For these students, tuition and fees were mostly by the HOPE scholarship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Graduated from Any College</th>
<th>Still Enrolled at a TBR Community College</th>
<th>Transferred to Another Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After five semesters, 51.2% of the 2017 Tennessee Promise cohort had graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled.
Promise Students at TBR Colleges

Promise encouraged greater full-time and first-time enrollment at community colleges.

From Fall 2014 to Fall 2015, the number of first-time, full-time students at community colleges grew 46%. In fall 2016 and fall 2017, first-time, full-time enrollment declined slightly but remained well above pre-Promise levels.

However, the highest enrollment growth occurred at the lower end of the ACT score distribution. In the first year of Tennessee Promise, the number of students with ACT scores below 19 grew by 85%. The next two cohorts saw similar patterns, and 42% of 2017 Promise students had an ACT score below 19.

The first three groups of Promise students achieved unprecedented levels of success.

At community colleges, the overall success rate for Promise students in the 2017 cohort was 51% after five semesters. This means more than half of the students from the third Promise cohort had earned a degree or certificate, transferred, or remained enrolled after five semesters of Promise eligibility. In total, 23.2% of Promise students from the 2017 cohort earned a degree or certificate, compared to 21.5% of the first Promise cohort and 13.8% of students from the 2014 pre-Promise cohort.

This success included 2,551 students who earned an Associate degree in a Tennessee Transfer Pathway or other program designed to transfer to a university, 415 students who earned an Associate of Applied Science degree designed to enter the workforce, and 245 students who earned a technical certificate.

Equity gaps persist among Promise students.

Although Promise students have achieved high rates of success, equity gaps persist—especially in graduation rates for white students compared to students of color. Community colleges would have needed to graduate an additional 270 Black Promise students from the 2017 cohort in order to close the gap between white and Black students.

Fifth-Semester Graduation Rates for the 2017 Promise Cohort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Low-Income</th>
<th>ACT Below 19</th>
<th>Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduated in 5 Semesters</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 The success rates are highest for students who received small Promise awards in their first term.

Three distinct groups of students emerged within the 2017 Promise cohort, based on differences in the value of students’ Promise awards in their first semester.²

Student Success by Promise Group: 2017 Cohort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent of Cohort</th>
<th>Promise Award</th>
<th>Percent of Promise Spending</th>
<th>Graduated in Five Semesters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>$500 -700</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>$2,000-2,220</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first group includes students who received a Promise award of $0 in fall 2016 (Group A). For most of these students, their tuition and fees were covered by other sources of aid, like the federal Pell grant. After five semesters, 18% of these students had graduated, and a total of 44% had graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled.

Success rates were highest for students who received small Promise awards in Fall 2016 (Group B). These students had the highest average ACT score, and most of these students received the state’s merit-based HOPE scholarship. After five semesters, more than 34% of these students had earned a degree or certificate, and a total of 65% had graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled.

Success rates were lowest for students who received the largest Promise awards (Group C). These students received neither a Pell grant nor the HOPE scholarship. After five semesters, 11% of these students had graduated, and only 37% had graduated, transferred, or were still enrolled.

Students in this group comprised 13% of the Promise cohort at community colleges but accounted for 49% of Promise dollars awarded to new community college students in 2017.

Promise students at TCATs are succeeding at even higher rates.

Each year, more than 2,000 new Tennessee Promise students enroll at the Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs). In the first three years, over 5,800 Promise students have enrolled in diploma or certificate programs at the 27 TCATs. By the end of fall 2018, more than 3,500 of these students had earned a diploma or certificate, and the graduation rates for the first two cohorts of TCAT Promise students were over 70%.

² In addition to these three groups, an additional 2,003 Promise students received awards outside of these three groups.

1 Based on data from TBR, TSAC, THEC, and the National Student Clearinghouse.
Tennessee Promise at TBR Colleges

Tennessee Board of Regents Committee Chairs Meeting

March 2020
Increasing First-Time, Full-Time Enrollment

Note: Includes first-time, full-time freshmen enrolled at community colleges each fall
of community college Promise students from the 2017 cohort were from a distressed, rural county.

30% of community college Promise students from the 2017 cohort had an expected family contribution (EFC) of $0.
ACT scores for recent high school graduates

Note: ACT Composite Score for Recent High School Graduates Enrolled as First-Time, Full-Time Freshmen
Within five semesters of initial enrollment, 49% of students who enrolled in 2017 at a TBR community college within a year of high school graduation had:

- earned a credential,
- transferred to a university, or
- were still enrolled at a community college.

Among Promise students who enrolled in 2017, 51% had succeeded in 5 semesters.

Note: Recent HS Graduates include Promise students and non-Promise students.
Recent High School Graduates at Community Colleges

Success After Five Semesters

• Within five semesters of initial enrollment, 21% of students who enrolled in 2017 at a TBR community college within a year of high school graduation had earned a postsecondary degree or certificate.

• This represents a 7-percentage point increase in graduation rates compared to high school graduates who enrolled at community colleges in fall 2014.
Tennessee Promise Students at Community Colleges

Success After Five Semesters

23% of Promise students graduated in 5 semesters

2015 Cohort
- Graduated: 21.5%
- Still Enrolled: 20.6%
- Transferred: 10.1%

2016 Cohort
- Graduated: 22.9%
- Still Enrolled: 19.6%
- Transferred: 9.5%

2017 Cohort
- Graduated: 23.2%
- Still Enrolled: 18.6%
- Transferred: 9.4%
Promise success rates by group

2017 Tennessee Promise Students at Community Colleges
Fifth-Semester Success Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Success Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Income</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Generation</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT Below 19</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Promise</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Promise graduation rates by group

Tennessee Promise Students at Community Colleges
Fifth-Semester Graduation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>2015 Cohort</th>
<th>2016 Cohort</th>
<th>2017 Cohort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Income</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Generation</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT Below 19</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Promise</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Significant increases at three colleges

Tennessee Promise Students at Community Colleges
Fifth-Semester Graduation Rates

Nashville State

Northeast State

Walters State

2015 2016 2017

2015 2016 2017

2015 2016 2017
Promise scholarship awards in fall 2017

Promise students can be grouped into four categories based on the value of the financial aid they received from Tennessee Promise in their first semester:

- **Group A**: 48% of students received $0. Most of these students received a full Pell grant.
- **Group B**: 25% of students received between $500-$700. Most of these students received a HOPE scholarship.
- **Group C**: 13% of students received between $2,000-$2,200. These students received neither a Pell grant nor a HOPE scholarship.
- **Other**: All other students outside of these three groups.

Note: Based on the value of the Promise award for incoming students in fall 2017.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promise Pool</th>
<th>Award in Fall 2015</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Total $ amount</th>
<th>Percent of Promise spending</th>
<th>Fifth Semester Success Rate</th>
<th>Fifth Semester Graduation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group A</strong> (Pell recipients)</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>6,768 (48%)</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group B</strong> (HOPE recipients)</td>
<td>$500-$700</td>
<td>3,464 (25%)</td>
<td>$2.19 million</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group C</strong> (Neither Pell nor HOPE)</td>
<td>$2,000-$2,200</td>
<td>1,824 (13%)</td>
<td>$3.87 million</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>Every value outside of above pools</td>
<td>2,003 (14%)</td>
<td>$1.79 million</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$0-$2,400</td>
<td><strong>14,059</strong></td>
<td><strong>$7.85 million</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td><strong>51%</strong></td>
<td><strong>23%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Awards earned by Promise graduates

Types of Credentials Earned

- **79%**
  - Transfer Pathways & other programs designed to transfer to a university

- **13%**
  - Associate of Applied Science degrees designed to enter the workforce

- **8%**
  - Technical Certificates