

AACC Summary of “America’s College Promise Act of 2021”

On April 27, Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Patty Murray (D-WA), and Representatives Andy Levin (D-MI) and Bobby Scott (D-VA), introduced identical versions of the [America’s College Promise Act of 2021](#).

The legislation creates a federal-state partnership that would eliminate community college tuition and fees for the first years of a student’s community college education. It is similar to legislation introduced following former President Obama’s 2015 proposal.

Federal-State Partnership—Basic Funding Outline

- The federal government provides $\frac{3}{4}$ of the average resident national community college tuition to states for each eligible student; states provide $\frac{1}{4}$ of the average tuition (state match may be reduced if national or state unemployment rate rises).
- States will waive community college tuition and fees for all eligible students (irrespective of the current level of tuition).
- States must meet maintenance-of-effort requirements for the average of the three previous years concerning: FTE spending for all public education; state support for operations of four-year public institutions; and, need-based financial aid.
- Federal funding is guaranteed by being made “mandatory” spending rather than subject to annual appropriations.
- Indian tribes also receive grants, generally under the same conditions as states.
- States may use funds (if any exist) beyond those needed to waive tuition and fees for a variety of purposes.

Student Eligibility

- Students must be enrolled half-time or more to qualify for zero tuition.
- Eligibility is limited to six semesters (or the equivalent).
- Students must be enrolled in Title IV-eligible program to qualify and they must qualify for “in-State resident community college tuition,” unless they are so precluded by their immigration status. States may not impose additional eligibility requirements on eligible students other than those in the legislation.
- Title IV student eligibility is not required.

Additional Requirements

- Community college tuition may not increase more than the most recent Consumer Price Index increase or 3%, whichever is lower.
- Applications must include promising and evidence-based institutional reforms and innovative practices to improve student outcomes, including transfer and completion rates, that have been or will be adopted by the community college.
- States must ensure that programs leading to a recognized postsecondary credential meet Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) quality standards.
- States must develop plans to ensure that high school graduation requirements allow students to directly enter credit-bearing community college programs.
- States must ensure that community college associate degrees are fully transferable to, and credited as, the first two years of related baccalaureate programs at public institutions of higher education in such State.

State Student Success Fund

- A \$1 billion annual formula grant program to states is created to enhance student success.
- State match starts at 25% for the first four years of program and increases over time, reaching 100% in years nine and ten.
- States are to use funds to implement promising and evidence-based institutional reforms and innovative practices to improve student outcomes.
- A variety of benchmarks and reporting requirements are associated with the receipt of funds.

For more information, please contact David Baime, dbaime@acc.nche.edu, or Jim Hermes, jhermes@acc.nche.edu.