

# COLLEGE PROMISE

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## 2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT



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## Our Mission

College Promise is a national, nonpartisan initiative that builds broad public support for funding postsecondary education for all hardworking students. By leveraging cross-sector partnerships and advocating for policies that remove barriers to higher education, College Promise works to increase college access, persistence, and completion across the country.



# ACCESS



# Celebrating the Growth of the Promise Movement

As of November 2024, the College Promise team has identified more than 440 Promise programs across all 50 states and Washington, DC. Additionally, 38 states have established active statewide programs. Notable recent developments include:

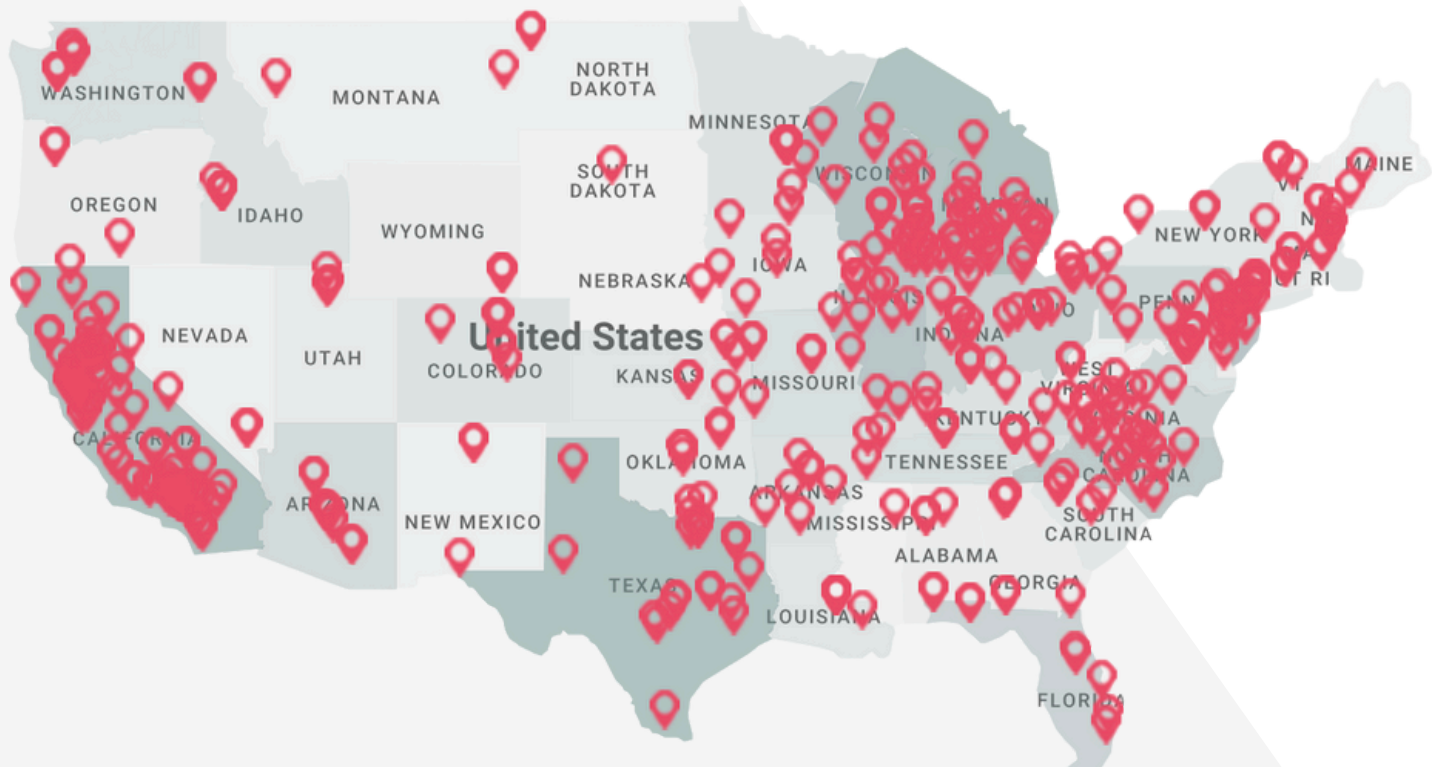
- **Arizona:** On June 18, 2024, Governor Hobbs signed Arizona House Bill 2897, allocating \$20 million for Promise Programs. College Promise continues to collaborate with our convening partners to support implementation.
- **Michigan:** On June 27, 2024, Governor Whitmer signed a budget, including the Michigan Community College Guarantee, which covers in-district tuition and fees for recent high school graduates in Michigan.
- **Colorado:** Families earning \$90,000 or less annually now qualify for a Colorado tax credit to help cover college expenses. Students at four-year colleges can expect an average of \$2,700 in tax credits per year, technical college students about \$2,000, and two-year college students around \$1,000.
- **Hawai'i:** The state of Hawaii awarded a record \$5 million in Hawai'i Promise Scholarships to University of Hawai'i Community College students this year.
- **Massachusetts:** On July 29, 2024, Governor Healey signed a new budget funding MassEducate, allowing Massachusetts residents to attend any of the state's 15 community colleges for free. The program covers all tuition and fees and provides a stipend for books and supplies for some students.



# The MyPromise Tool

The [MyPromise Tool](#) is a pioneering student-centered resource of Promise Programs available nationwide. The platform connects students, families, counselors, and mentors with Promise programs, offering scholarships for tuition, fees, and other crucial supports beyond federal and state aid. The website provides a wealth of information about statewide and local Promise programs, giving comprehensive resources to all prospective college students.

This past year, the MyPromise Tool expanded to allow Promise program staff to update program information more easily. This new feature provides public users with timely information directly from program managers and enhanced search features, allowing users to find programs specific to their needs and interests, including veterans, adult students, or formerly incarcerated individuals. The College Promise team has also added Children's Savings Accounts to its list of profile details. As programs continue to add features, the MyPromiseTool will be able to grow with them.







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# ACHIEVEMENT

# Civic Learning

The Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement Coalition (CLDE Coalition) includes education and policy organizations committed to making college students' civic learning for an engaged democracy a priority across higher education and in public policy. The American Association of Colleges and Universities, Campus Compact, College Promise, Complete College America, and State Higher Education Executive Officers led the coalition. The coalition is working in partnership with more than 70 higher education and student success organizations, including several state systems and all seven institutional accreditors.

## CLDE Learning – From First to Final Year

### The CLDE Framework:

- ★ Centers Democracy—U.S. and Global (Too Often Democracy Is *Assumed* Rather than Explored)
- ★ Connects Engagement Across Difference With Creating Solutions to Significant Problems
- ★ Values Practical Experience – And Collaborative Learning From Those Practical Experiences
- ★ Links Civic and Ethical Inquiry to Students' Career Plans and Workplace Experience





# National Convenings

This year, College Promise organized and participated in several major national convenings and events in Phoenix, AZ; Boston, MA; Louisville, KY; Los Angeles, CA, and Riverside, CA. These convenings successfully brought together policymakers, practitioners, and advocacy organizations to collaborate on strategies for improving affordability, utilizing wraparound supports, and enhancing workforce development opportunities. Local, regional, and national policymakers provided attendees with in-depth insights into the higher education landscape at each convening. We assembled state policymakers, higher education officers, and Promise leaders who were deeply involved in higher education policy and practice, enriching the discussions with their expertise.



## **June 5-6, 2024 | South Mountain Community College, Phoenix, AZ**

In partnership with Education Forward Arizona, The Helios Foundation, the Arizona Board of Regents, and the Maricopa Community College Foundation, this convening brought together over 75 regional stakeholders from higher education, government, philanthropy, nonprofit organizations, and business. The two-day convening focused on strengthening the state's talent pipeline and engaging students with Promise programs that offer training and educational support. Notable sessions included discussions on economic opportunity, workforce preparedness, and collective impact strategies.

### **Agenda Highlights:**

- The State of Economic Mobility and Workforce Preparedness in the US – John Barnshaw, College Promise
- Keynote by Steven Gonzales, Chancellor, Maricopa Community Colleges
- Reaching and Supporting Every Student – Statewide Promise & Collective Impact with Krissy DeAlejandro, President and CEO, tnAchieves, and Stephanie Rodriguez, Secretary, New Mexico Department of Higher Education
- Career Acceleration: Alternatives to and Augmentation for Traditional Degrees – Ida Hermosillo, Director of Network Engagement, Growing Inland Achievement
- Tell a Better Story: How to Break Through in a World of Noise – Terry Szuplat, Author, Say It Well, and Former Deputy Director of the White House Speechwriting Office

# National Convenings

## **August 4, 2024 | NCSL Legislative Summit Preconference Meeting: Exploring College Promise Programs, Louisville, KY**

College Promise partnered with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) on their annual pre-conference program. At this one-day summit, legislators representing 13 states learned and engaged with experts and peers about College Promise programs across the country, considered state policy options related to College Promise programs and college affordability, heard from program leaders, and contemplated potential state legislative policy options to strengthen the impact of the programs.

Agenda highlights included:

- Tennessee State Highlight: The First Statewide Free College Program – Krissy DeAlejandro, tnAchieves
- Washington State Highlight: The Washington College Grant Program – Michael P. Meotti, Washington Student Achievement Council
- Michigan State Highlight: Lessons from Detroit Promise – Wytrice Harris and Jade Scott, Detroit Promise Program
- Promise Program Sustainability & Design – Katie Bolter, W.E., Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
- Reflecting on 10 years of College Promise Progress – John Barnshaw, College Promise

## **August 13-15, 2024 | One Financial Center, Boston, MA**

The Boston Convening brought together 115 participants from across the nation and emphasized the use of wraparound supports to develop multi-generational strategies for enhancing college-going culture among opportunity populations. Our team partnered closely with the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges (MACC) and the Massachusetts state office to identify champions of their recent MassEducate legislation. Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll and Secretary of Veteran Affairs Jon Santiago spoke to the audience during the three-day convening.



## National Convenings

This convening also marked significant milestones, including celebrating the 10th anniversary of Tennessee's statewide Promise program, welcoming Massachusetts as the 37th state to adopt a statewide Promise Program, and recognizing the newly appointed College Promise Leadership Council. The event served as a platform to kick off College Promise's 10-year anniversary, setting the stage for the future of the National College Promise movement.

### *Agenda Highlights:*

- Keynote Address – Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts Kim Driscoll
- Massachusetts' Journey to Statewide Free Community College – Monique Ching, Senate President Karen Spilka's Office, and Nate Mackinnon, MACC
- Wrap Around Supports: Social Determinants of Health and Education – Jon Santiago, Secretary, Department of Veterans' Services of Massachusetts, and Robert C. Ballard, College Promise
- Empowering the Future: Latino Students and Higher Education – Ricardo Solis, South Texas College, and Rosye Cloud, College Promise
- National Promise Policy Landscape – Tom Harnisch, State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), and Andrew Smalley, National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)
- Mission and Management: Developing High-Quality Promise Programs in Every Community – David Rust, Say Yes Buffalo, Wytrice Harris, Detroit Promise, and Laura Hamilton, Lynchburg Beacon of Hope

### **October 8–9, 2024 | Toward a Shared Vision Summit | Riverside Convention Center, CA**

College Promise hosted half-day convening at the Toward a Shared Vision Summit at the Riverside Convention Center in partnership with Growing Inland Achievement. This event focused on program design and implementation. Approximately 300 participants learned how holistic support contributes to the narrative and impact on students, institutions, and communities, particularly in serving opportunity populations and delivering community-wide benefits through skilling and labor market outcomes.





# Celebrating 10 Years of Tennessee Promise

Earlier this year, College Promise released a new report celebrating the 10th anniversary of Tennessee's pioneering statewide Promise program. Since its inception, the Tennessee Promise has reshaped the state's higher education landscape, and central to this success is the innovative leadership of tnAchieves. As the engine behind the Tennessee Promise, tnAchieves has evolved from a localized initiative to a powerful statewide force, driving college access, success, and workforce readiness.

Initially launched in Knox County, tnAchieves quickly established a blueprint for success. Its early model focused on providing financial support and volunteer mentorship to students, making college more accessible for young Tennesseans. This small-scale, local initiative soon inspired the creation of the Tennessee Promise, a statewide program offering last-dollar scholarships to all eligible students.

Since its inception, Tennessee Promise has provided over 90,000 students with a pathway to higher education. The program covers tuition and fees not covered by other financial aid, ensuring that cost is not a barrier to college access. The success of this initiative is evident in the numbers: college enrollment has significantly increased, Tennessee consistently boasts one of the highest rates of FAFSA completion in the nation, and the community college three-year graduation rate has increased by 4 percentage points since the launch of TN Promise.

Tennessee was the first statewide College Promise program in the nation. Ten years later, there are more than 440 Promise programs across all 50 states and Washington, D.C. 38 states have established active statewide programs, following in Tennessee's footsteps.

*"Tennessee's leadership in higher education access has set a powerful example for other states to follow. As College Promise prepares to celebrate its own 10th anniversary in 2025, we are launching a year-long campaign to highlight the successes and best practices that programs like Tennessee's have demonstrated. Together, we are building a brighter future for students and workers nationwide."*

**Martha Kanter, College Promise National Advisory Board President & CEO Emerita**

*"tnAchieves has considered itself the engine behind the TN Promise for more than a decade. We know that it takes more than eliminating the funding barrier to ensure increased college enrollment and completion. tnAchieves is more than college access and success. It is a holistic career pathways model focused on building Tennessee's future workforce."*

**Krissy DeAlejandro, tnAchieves President and CEO**



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# SUPPORT



# Technical Assistance and Career Pathways

## *Technical Assistance*

As the free college movement expands nationally, College Promise offers expertise and direct technical assistance to emerging Promise programs to plan a successful launch by identifying federal, state, and local funds and key wraparound services for students. Over the past year, the College Promise has led successful partnerships with several communities and states, including Lynchburg Beacon of Hope and the University of Hawaii Community College System.

## *Career Pathways*

College Promise Programs are leaders in preparing students for careers through their career resources and services tailored to help meet the needs of their communities. Increasingly, communities and learners need a caring group of professionals to support learners on their journey beyond the provision of professional guidance and labor market information. Students also need a single, free, enduring, research-informed solution that connects students and job seekers to pathways and professional skill instruction that aids in the selection, development, and refinement to help launch economically mobile careers. College Promise, with its partner, Promise Pathways, an organization focused on college-career alignment, is actively working with Promise communities across the country to advance economic opportunity in their regions, utilizing the Career Acceleration Tool (CAT).

The Career Acceleration Tool (CAT) is a software solution that can clarify college and career pathways and align the skills necessary to improve educational and economic outcomes for millions of individuals from all backgrounds. The platform focuses on six components of attaining credentials that lead to increased economic opportunity and social opportunity: (1) career identification; (2) strategic skill development planning; (3) belonging and wellness support; (4) financial wellness support; (5) data literacy instruction; and (6) tools to identify community supports. Our pilot is designed to position learners into the best career possible with the least amount of financial and time investment while crafting a pathway that meets their goals, providing long-term economic opportunity. The program prioritizes the best-fit sequence of course/training and local labor market opportunities.

Highlights of this initiative include:

- Helping learners understand labor market opportunities and identify careers.
- Identifying degrees, certifications, supplemental training, and apprenticeships.
- Training on professional skills like social skills, belonging, data, and financial literacy.
- Giving employers early access to skilled candidates.

# College Promise National Leadership Council

The College Promise National Leadership Council is an initiative dedicated to furthering the Promise movement on a national scale. The Council aims to disseminate exemplary practices, address program challenges, and advocate for the expansion and sustainability of the National Promise movement through publications, events, and advocacy.

Earlier this year, College Promise appointed the inaugural National Leadership Council members:

- Krissy DeAlejandro, President and CEO, tnAchieves
- Mike Flores, Chancellor, Alamo Colleges District
- John Jones, President and CEO, Hope Toledo
- Leidra McQueen, Executive Director, Lynchburg Beacon of Hope
- David Rust, Chief Executive Officer, Say Yes Buffalo
- Christopher Whitmore, Executive Director, Richmond Promise

*“The College Promise National Leadership Council represents the best of what the College Promise movement stands for—dedicated leaders who are committed to greater access and economic opportunity for all. Their experience and vision will guide us as we expand and enhance College Promise programs nationwide.”*

*– Martha Kanter, College Promise National Advisory Board President & CEO Emerita*



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# ADVANCING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY





# College Promise–Children’s Savings Accounts Integration

Since 2017, College Promise has partnered with the Mott Foundation to leverage its experience, expertise, stakeholders, and resources to significantly change the trajectory for hundreds of thousands of children and families. College Promise aims to expand the impact of Promise programs by incorporating Children’s Savings Accounts (CSAs) into their designs to help students earn certificates and degrees. When integrated, these initiatives embed sustainable incentives, scholarships, college–community partnerships, savings, analytics, cross-sector collaboration, and a clear pathway for student success to and through postsecondary education, career, and community. College Promise’s overarching goal is cultivating momentum and fostering increased alignment within the Promise and CSA fields.

Since the launch of this work, our organization has published two playbooks, multiple policy briefs, and articles and engaged a Peer Learning Network of over 70 communities and national stakeholders committed to sharing best practices and raising awareness about CP-CSA integration.

College Promise celebrates the Promise Programs nationwide that have worked to integrate savings elements into their designs statewide (California, Maine, and Indiana) and regionally, including Boston, MA; Kansas City, MO; Wabash County, IN; Lansing, Mason County, Muskegon, MI; Providence, RI; El Monte, Oakland, and West Sacramento, CA; .

## ***Madalyn Ciampi, Executive Director, Providence Promise***

*“As municipal, state and federal offices consider their responsibility in making higher education more affordable, it is necessary that PVD Promise and similar CSA programs be embraced as key strategies of the solution to solving the college affordability crisis. Only when postsecondary is accessible to all students can education truly serve as a vehicle for upward mobility and lifetime prosperity for underserved communities.”*

# College Promise Careers Institute

The 2023 Careers Institute explored several themes that will reshape how we approach education and career development through our Promise communities. From forging innovative college-to-career pathways and tackling economic opportunity to reimagining career exploration, and enhancing job placement strategies, we delved deep into the most pressing issues facing the next generation of workers.

On November 8– 9, 2023, College Promise hosted the fourth in-person conference at the University of Tennessee–Knoxville. tnAchieves, an organization rooted in its mission to enhance post-secondary opportunities and outcomes by providing holistic student supports rooted in community and accountability, also played a pivotal role in the conference's success. UT-Knoxville and tnAchieves generously provided their space, time, and support in developing a strong agenda for local policymakers, leaders, and experts.

Key themes covered at this event include:

- College and Career Advising in the 21st Century
- Accelerated Learning Programs: Bridging the Skills Gap
- Navigating Careers for First-Generation Students
- Unleashing the Power of Artificial Intelligence in Education
- Empowering Career Exploration and Pathway Discovery
- Building the Promise Pipeline of Workers



*"A deep partnership between Promise programs and the business sector is essential. Promise programs hold the talent; employers have the opportunities. Together, they can shape the future American workforce."* — **Rosye Blancas Cloud, College Promise Interim CEO**

# A Decade of Promise



As College Promise approaches its 10th anniversary, we reflect on a decade marked by growth, innovation, and unwavering dedication to expanding access to higher education for all. Since President Obama announced our launch on September 9, 2015, the College Promise movement has transformed the landscape of opportunities for learners across the country: from 53 programs to now over 440 College Promise programs in all 50 states, including 38 statewide initiatives.

From urban centers to rural regions, these programs have empowered students to enroll in college, stay on track, and graduate with the skills needed for today's workforce. Each year, thousands of students benefit from tuition-free access to education, supported by partnerships between local governments, educational institutions, and community organizations committed to their success.

Our 10th anniversary marks not only a celebration of past achievements but a commitment to future impact. This year, we've launched an anniversary campaign that will shine a light on the transformative power of College Promise programs. The campaign is a testament to the collective effort of educators, policymakers, advocates, and communities who have worked tirelessly to expand these programs. Through events, publications, strategic partnerships, and key initiatives, we are amplifying the voices of Promise alumni, students, families, program leaders, and other stakeholders who exemplify the difference these programs make.

A cornerstone of the 10th anniversary is our focus on addressing current challenges in higher education and developing solutions that align with evolving needs. We're highlighting critical topics like affordability, student retention, and workforce readiness, all of which drive the sustainability and reach of Promise programs. Additionally, we're focusing on underserved populations—including student parents, veterans, and adult learners—who stand to benefit most from these opportunities.

In the coming year, we will host a series of convenings, culminating in a national conference that brings together leaders, partners, and advocates to reflect on the past and chart the future of College Promise. Our anniversary serves as a reminder of how much we can achieve by working together and a call to action for the next decade. We are proud of the impact made possible through College Promise. We are excited to continue this journey, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to access a high-quality, affordable education.

As we move forward, we are committed to expanding and refining our efforts, fostering resilience in College Promise programs, and addressing the evolving educational and economic landscapes that our students face. Together, we are transforming lives, and strengthening communities across the nation.

# National Advisory Board

**Martha Kanter**

Board President, CEO Emerita, College Promise  
Senior Fellow, New York University  
U.S. Under Secretary of Education  
(2009–2013)

**Robert (Bob) C. Ballard**

President & CEO (Retired)  
Scholarship America

**Randy Boyd**

President, University of Tennessee  
Founder & Chairman, Radio Systems Corporation

**Christopher Cabaldon**

Partner, Capital Impact  
Mayor (1998–2020), City of West Sacramento

**Constance Carroll**

President & CEO, California Community College Baccalaureate Association  
President Emerita, San Diego Community College District

**Kimberly Ternate Ding**

Writer, Educator, Community College Instructor, Actor

**Mike Flores**

Chancellor, Alamo Colleges District

**Dianne Van Hook**

Chancellor, Santa Clarita Community College District and College of the Canyons

**Jee Hang Lee**

President & CEO, Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT)

**Kyle Lierman**

CEO, Civic Nation, When We All Vote, Civic Advisors

**Joe May**

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**Janet Pitt**

Chief of Staff, Ambassador Esther Coopersmith, former US Ambassador to the United Nations

**Wade Randlett**

CEO, Transportation Fuels Division, General Biofuels

**Sally Rucker**

Managing Director and General Counsel, J.C. Flowers & Co.

**LaVerne Srinivasan**

Vice President, National Program  
Program Director, Education Carnegie Corporation of New York

**Lynn Tincher-Ladner**

President & CEO, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society



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