



America's College Promise Act of 2015 *Section by Section Summary*

Sec. 1. Short title: the "America's College Promise Act of 2015."

Sec. 2. Purpose: Establishes the purposes of the Act, to help individuals earn the education and skills necessary to succeed in the 21st century workforce by increasing access to higher education at both the 2-year and 4-year levels.

TITLE I - State and Indian Tribe Grants for Community Colleges

Sec. 101. In General: Authorizes the Secretary of Education ("Secretary") to make grants to States and Indian Tribes ("grantees") to waive tuition and fees at participating community colleges for eligible students.

Sec. 102. Federal Share and State or Tribal Share: Authorizes the Secretary to devise a formula where the Federal Government will contribute 75 percent of total costs and grantees will contribute 25 percent of total costs, with certain exceptions for tribal colleges.

Sec 103. Eligibility: Requires that states and tribes who wish to participate in the program agree to waive tuition and fees at all their community colleges for all eligible students.

Sec. 104. Applications: Outlines the required contents of grantee applications for funds. Applications must include: an estimate of the number of students that will be served by the grant; a description of evidence-based institutional reforms and innovative practices states will undertake to improve student outcomes; a description of how grantees will promote alignment between their secondary and their two-year and four-year postsecondary education systems; a description of how programs leading to a recognized postsecondary credential meet the quality criteria in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; an assurance that all participating community colleges have a program participation agreement under the Higher Education Act; and an assurance that the State or Indian tribe will notify eligible students of their remaining eligibility under the program.

Sec. 105. Allowable Uses of Funds: States that the primary allowable use of grant funds is to allow grantees to waive tuition and fees for eligible students at their community colleges. It also outlines additional allowable uses after grantees have met the need of waiving community college tuition and fees for all participating eligible students, including expanding the program to returning students. Participating states have a three-year maintenance of effort requirement for public higher education funding. Additionally, States must submit annual reports to the Secretary on the use of funds and progress made in fulfilling requirements of the grant and the Secretary will report to the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction. Grantees who continue to meet the requirements of the grant, as determined by the Secretary, can continue receiving funding outside the initial application period if budget authority is available. The

Secretary may also discontinue funding if a grantee is not making adequate process implementing the reforms described in its application.

Sec. 106. Definitions: Provides various definitions of key terms, including limiting eligibility to first-time students, who enroll at a community college on at least a half-time basis, and maintain satisfactory academic progress.

Sec. 107. Authorization of Appropriations: Creates mandatory funding for the State Grant program for ten years, authorizing appropriations of \$1.365 billion for fiscal year 2016 and a total of \$79.735 billion for ten years.

TITLE II - Grants To Historically Black Colleges And Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Asian American And Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges And Universities, Alaska Native-Serving Institutions, Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, Predominantly Black Institutions, And Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions

Sec. 201. Pathways for Student Success for HBCUs: Provides grants to eligible HBCUs for eligible students for two years. The per-student amount granted will not exceed the national average of public, four-year institutional tuition and fees, nor will it exceed the actual tuition and fees at the institution. In order to be eligible, HBCUs must have a student body that is at least 35 percent low-income, including Pell-eligible students. Additionally eligible HBCUs must commit to maintain or adopt evidence-based institutional reforms designed to improve student outcomes, and to set performance goals for improving those outcomes. Eligible HBCUs that enter into articulation agreements with community colleges can also receive grant funds for eligible students who transfer from those community colleges to complete their baccalaureate degrees.

Sec. 202. Pathways for Student Success for HSIs, AANAPISIs, Tribal Colleges and Universities, ANNHSIs, PBIS, and Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institutions: Provides grants to eligible MSIs for eligible students for two years. The per-student amount granted will not exceed the national average of public, four-year institutional tuition and fees, nor will it exceed the actual tuition and fees at the institution. In order to be eligible, MSIs must have a student body that is at least 35 percent low-income, including Pell-eligible students. Additionally eligible MSIs must commit to maintain or adopt evidence-based institutional reforms designed to improve student outcomes, and to set performance goals for improving those outcomes. Eligible MSIs that enter into articulation agreements with community colleges can also receive grant funds for eligible students who transfer from those community colleges to complete their baccalaureate degrees.

Sec. 203. Definitions: Provides various definitions of key terms. Eligible students are first-time students enrolling at an HBCU or MSI on at least a half-time basis, who maintain satisfactory academic progress and are low-income, including Pell-eligible students. Notwithstanding these requirements, students whose parents were denied a Parent PLUS loan between November 2011 and March 2015, who subsequently withdrew from an HBCU or MSI, may also participate in the program even though they are returning students. HBCUs are defined as institutions that meet the requirements described in Section 322 (2) part B of the Higher Education Act. MSIs are defined as institutions that meet the requirements described in any of paragraphs (2) through (7) of section 371(a) of the Higher Education Act and designated by the Secretary.

Sec. 204. Authorization of Appropriations: Creates mandatory funding for the HBCU/MSI programs for ten years, authorizing appropriations of \$55 million for fiscal year 2016 and a total of \$10.092 billion for ten years.