

FSCJ: Building the Debt-Free College Promise from the Ground Up



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What is The College Promise?

- College Promise programs are institutional or place-based initiatives that address the challenge of higher education affordability by offering funding for students who in the program's geographical area
- Many programs provide non-financial support services for students who need them
- Over the past decade, the number of College Promise programs has risen.
- Movement created by the visibility of statewide initiatives in Tennessee, Oregon and Minnesota
- In 2015, the Federal College Promise Act was introduced as a federal-state partnership
- At the same time, the College Promise Campaign was established through Civic Nation, non-profit nonpartisan organization to develop cross-sector leaders from local, state and national levels
- "Promise" Campaigns vary from state-wide to regional to local service districts. Some programs offer free tuition, others offer assistance on books and other needs
- Since the 2015 launch, more than 150 programs have been established in 37 states

Defining “Your” College Promise

The FSCJ Promise Campaign is a nonpartisan college affordability initiative that builds broad public support for funding the first two years of higher education for hard-working responsible students, starting in community college.

- Define what The Promise is, who is eligible, what the criteria is and why this is important (from an institutional and community standpoint)

National Significance

- The need for a college-educated workforce has never been greater. By 2020, more than 60% of U.S. jobs will require a post-secondary education
- 30% of jobs will require at least an associate’s degree, and another 30% will require a bachelor’s degree
- The cost of higher education has increased dramatically over the last few decades, becoming less accessible to students from low-and middle-income families
- These students accumulate more student debt and are more likely to default compared to more affluent peers – underscoring the need to address college affordability ((U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2016)

Define the Problems and Debt-Free Goals

The intention of the College Promise is to lessen student debt if not eliminate it altogether.

Considerations include answering these problems with solutions:

- What are the barriers you are looking to reduce?
- Prioritize what you are looking to promise (i.e. tuition, debt upon graduation, impact of demographics, impact of certain programs, transportation costs, other variables preventing retention or completion)
- Who are your local partners to make this possible?

Define your Current Resources and Internal and External Partners

- Build from your current resources to create your Promise umbrella
- Current college affordability programs, low- and no-cost options
- Scholarship opportunities for qualified candidates in key areas of employment
- Dual Enrollment Programs
- Mentorship Programs translating to higher job placement and satisfaction
- Utilize your Grants and Resource Development Team
- Increase FAFSA completers
- College or University Foundation - \$50 million campaign
- Expand employer involvement in the design and delivery of education and training programs
- Utilize evidence-based sector strategies to increase college completion, employability, employment earnings and outcomes of job seekers
- Leverage additional public, private and foundation resources to scale and sustain proven strategies
- Start small and grow from there

Define your Current Resources and Internal and External Partners

- Need to partner with the City, School Districts, industry, donors and non-profits
- Building out the Promise means you need to consider your messaging, marketing and communications
- Policies and processes
- Establish attainable criteria (GPA 2.0-2.5, completion in 5 years, FAFSA completion, residence etc.)
- Research and evaluations
- Infrastructure
- Use data to establish impact on the local community
- How many students are being helped per year through your college affordability programs?

FSCJ Strategies Under the Promise Umbrella

November 18, 2016, FSCJ received a \$1.8 million 4-year America's Promise Grant Award from the U.S. DOL to support the tuition-free STEM programs through advanced manufacturing training, specifically in mechatronics and welding technologies

- FSCJ will serve a minimum of 250 students from including low-income individuals and underrepresented populations, individuals with disabilities, military veterans and their spouses
- Requires partnerships with industry leaders, senior-level leadership from workforce and economic development organizations, secondary and postsecondary education institutions, elected officials and other community stakeholders

Key Regional Partners include:

- City of Jacksonville Military Affairs and Veterans Department, Anheuser-Busch, First Coast Manufacturers Association, Kaman, FabTech Supply, Now Hiring Heroes, Pal-King, Remedy Staffing, Florida Advanced Technological Education Center of Excellence, Ameri-Force, NOVA, CareerSource Northeast Florida (First Coast Workforce Development), JAX Chamber, JAXUSA Partnership, United Way of Northeast Florida, Early Learning Coalition, Fresh Ministries, FSCJ's Adult General Education Program and State of Florida Vocational Rehabilitation

FSCJ Strategies Under the Promise Umbrella

Pre-College

- FSCJ hosts College Goal Sunday events annually in Duval and Nassau counties where financial aid staff offer free help to 300 attendees in all aspects of the application process, including FAFSA completion
- Students enrolled in Adult General Education have access to free bus passes as a means of transportation (FLDOE Adult General Education grant)
- In addition to serving more than 3,000 dual enrollment students annually, FSCJ also has Early College Career Academies with Englewood High School for Advanced Manufacturing and Andrew Jackson High School for Information Technology / Cyber Security
- FSCJ's accelerated college program encourages learners to utilize academic planning, prior learning assessment, and accelerated curriculums to obtain their college degree faster, more efficiently, and with less cost than by traditional methods

FSCJ Strategies Under the Promise Umbrella

Collegewide

- FSCJ offers fully online degrees and certificates that increase affordability for students by decreasing commuting costs and allowing students the flexibility to maintain employment
- In the last year, FSCJ has increased the availability of scholarships by 8%, paid internships by 71% and program grants by 25% to make college more affordable to students in need
 - Each year, the FSCJ Foundation provides 1,000 students with scholarships. New initiative: \$50 million capital campaign
 - In 2014-15, 77 students participated in paid internships
- Between 60-70 students per year receive child care grants that pay up to 60% of eligible child care costs to attend on-campus child development centers. Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten programs are available for four-year olds at on-campus childcare centers at no cost to parents
- The College's Money Club established the FSCJ Financial Skills Academy to help students sharpen skills related to earning, spending and investing money. More than 800 students attended as of the end of Fall 2015 Semester, with another 500 enrolled in Spring 2016

FSCJ Strategies Under the Promise Umbrella

Population-Specific

Underserved or At-Risk Students

- The College provides funds to cover tuition, textbooks, consumable supplies, educational materials, support services, exam and license fees for more than 200 16-24 year olds participating in *Jax Journey at FSCJ* (Jacksonville Journey grant)
- Scholarship funds allow students to learn sustainable food production on an urban farm that uses aquaponics technology. The project also allows students to hone their social entrepreneurship skills (Social Enterprise Incubator)
- FSCJ's Ombudsman manages an emergency fund that helps students deal with sudden challenges in paying for transportation, food, and utilities. More than 300 students have been assisted by the Ombudsman's office over the last year

FSCJ Strategies Under the Promise Umbrella

Veteran's and Military

- The Complete Florida Scholarship Program provides scholarships for both full-time and part-time students (Complete Florida Scholarship Program)
- FSCJ's Military and Veterans Service Center provides a one-stop resource center to annually assist 2,250 veterans, active-duty, disabled veterans and family members utilize federal benefits efficiently

FSCJ Strategies Under the Promise Umbrella

Workforce Education

- FSCJ provides free environmental job training that will facilitate the creation of employment in emergency response and site remediation as well as other environmental and green industrial jobs (Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grant)
- FSCJ has an “earn and learn” apprenticeship model that combines on-the-job learning and classroom instruction in information technology, manufacturing, health care and construction/trades industries (Florida Apprenticeship in the 21st Century Initiative)
- TechHire participants are eligible to receive tuition, books and fees; three-week paid internship; child care scholarships for eligible families; free income tax preparation and financial education workshops (Florida East Coast TechHire Consortium)

FSCJ Strategies Under the Promise Umbrella

Program- Specific Example: School of Social, Behavioral, & Health Sciences

- FSCJ was awarded a four-year grant of \$2.5 million from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Human Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to provide 50 scholarships each year for disadvantaged full-time students in the Associate of Science (A.S.) Nursing degree program
- The scholarship will provide 200 nursing students books, uniforms and other incidentals incurred while completing the 16-month program
 - Maintain an annual 75% retention rate
 - Reach a 90% pass rate on the competency examination
 - By the end of year four, at least 50% of licensed students will need to obtain employment
- Students pursuing careers in health sciences are eligible for scholarships and grant aid (TRIO Health Sciences grant of \$220,000)
- FSCJ partnered with Baptist and Memorial hospitals to develop scheduling that allows their incumbent workers to continue to work while completing the surgical technology program at no cost to the student

Takeaways

- Focus on lessening student debt while creating a “college-going” culture in the community that makes the option of college not only accessible but affordable
- Use data to build more data that will strengthen your argument
- Cross-sector community partners should have a clear understanding of what you are trying to accomplish
- Look to begin with current partnerships between your local universities and vice versa
- There is NO one way to build this
- It is as simple as defining and redefining it through your college affordability programs
- Seek sustainable and long-term funding critical to keeping the Promise alive

Examples to Research

- The Tennessee Promise, <http://tennesseepromise.gov>
- The Kalamazoo Promise, <https://www.kalamazoopromise.com>
- The College Promise in California, a collection of Program Profiles (including college/university partnerships) <https://relwest.wested.org/resources/221>
- Milwaukee Area Technical College, <http://www.matc.edu/promise>
- Civic Nation/Heads Up America Campaign – Background, state partners and marketing materials, <https://civcnation.org>

