

Designing Promise Programs: The Current National Landscape and Case Studies in New Jersey and Tennessee



Purpose of the Session

In this session:

- RFA will present a framework for designing and evaluating Promise programs
- Tennessee and New Jersey will discuss their state's Promise program within the context of RFA's framework and present considerations for other state policymakers developing or refining their own Promise programs
- Q&A

RFA's Research on Statewide Promise Programs

Purpose:

- Examine variation across state Promise programs,
- Understand contextual factors that contribute to variation
- Identify challenges and emerging best practices, particularly with regard to equity.

RFA's Research on Statewide Promise Programs

Mixed-Methods Approach:

- A 50-state College Promise policy scan
- Comparative case studies of 4 statewide Promise Programs: Tennessee, Delaware, Oregon and Nevada
 - Site visits to 24 high schools and 12 colleges and universities
 - Interviews with 50 high school staff, 125 higher education staff, and two dozen state policymakers
 - Focus groups with 100 high school students and 100 college students
 - Extensive document review and examination of quantitative data

RFA's Conceptual Framework

Promise programs can directly affect three important elements of the higher education pipeline:

- 1.) Affordability – ↓ costs of college
- 2.) Access – ↑ college-going
- 3.) Success – ↑ progression, transfer, and degree completion

RFA's Conceptual Framework

Statewide Promise programs include five program components that have implications for affordability, access, and success:



Examining Statewide Promise Programs

Using this framework, RFA identified 21 statewide Promise programs currently operating in 19 states.

RFA distinguished statewide Promise programs from the vast array of other state-sponsored student financial aid programs with the following criteria:

1. Listed within the Penn AHEAD Promise Program Database as a statewide, state-funded program with broad eligibility (not described as merit- or need-based) (N=133).
2. At minimum, covers the full cost of tuition after other aid has been expended, for the minimum length of time/ credits required to complete a college degree (n=21).

Applying RFA's Framework for Examining Statewide Promise Programs

While these programs vary widely, our analysis identified that across the 21 statewide Promise programs:

- All programs address affordability,
- Many aim to widen access, and
- Only a few focus on student success.

Applying the Framework to 21 Statewide Promise Programs implemented in 2018-2019

ONLY AFFORDABILITY	AFFORDABILITY & ACCESS	AFFORDABILITY & ACCESS & SUCCESS
8	9	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship Program* • Louisiana Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)* • Massachusetts Cash Grant* • Howard P. Rawlings Guaranteed Access Grant - Maryland* • Minnesota Academic Excellence Scholarship* • Oklahoma's Promise • Virginia Guaranteed Assistance Program* • College Bound Scholarship - Washington* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delaware SEED Scholarship Program • Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program – Florida Academic Scholarship* • Hawai'i Promise* • Indiana Workforce Ready Grant* • NJ Stars • New York Excelsior Scholarship • Oregon Promise • Rhode Island Promise* • Tennessee Reconnect* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARFuture Grant* • Indiana's 21st Century Scholars Program* • Nevada Promise Scholarship* • Tennessee Promise*
*Programs cover fees as well as tuition		

Examining Statewide Promise Programs

In addition, RFA conducted comparative case studies of 4 statewide Promise Programs: Tennessee, Delaware, Oregon and Nevada.

All four Promise programs were designed to address affordability and affected at least one other element along the higher education pipeline (access and/ or success).

AFFORDABILITY & ACCESS	AFFORDABILITY & ACCESS & SUCCESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delaware SEED Scholarship Program• Oregon Promise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tennessee Promise*• Nevada Promise Scholarship*

*Programs cover fees as well as tuition

Initial Findings from Comparative Analysis

- Promise programs in Delaware, Tennessee, Oregon, and Nevada are framed very differently and are designed to achieve similar but distinct goals.
- All statewide college Promise programs incorporate tradeoffs with implications for affordability, access, and success.
- Promise programs are creating a sense of opportunity and increase college-going behavior among students who did not think they could afford or access college.

Initial Findings from Comparative Analysis

- Evidence is emerging that some Promise programs have increased enrollment, retention and completion.
- A range of programmatic elements have particular implications for equity and deserve closer attention.
- Colleges are responding to support the influx of Promise students, but variation in resources and capacity may be exacerbating existing inequities in terms of retention and completion.

New Jersey: Program Eligibility

FY19 – Spring Pilot

- Enrolled in at least 6 credits
- Complete FAFSA by state deadline
- Have an AGI between \$0 and \$45,000
- Do not have a prior college degree

FY20 – Expansion

(both fall and spring)

- Same requirements as FY19 pilot
- Have an AGI of \$0-\$65,000



New Jersey
Community College
Opportunity Grant

New Jersey: Outcomes

- Higher proportion of low-income students are attending tuition-free (more state aid uptake)
- More part-time students received Pell grants in spring, than fall 2018
- Tracking: enrollment data, cost & financial aid disbursements, FAFSA filing, academic progress, outreach, student narratives



New Jersey
Community College
Opportunity Grant

New Jersey: Capacity Building Grants

- FY19 and FY20 Appropriations Act included **\$5 million** in direct grants to colleges for capacity building & to support goals of program; \$250,000 per institution
- **Funds could be used for:** planning & implementation; outreach/marketing; student supports; strategies for increasing student completion and reducing financial burdens



Tennessee Promise

Intentionally simple process

- Application
- FAFSA
- Meeting
- Community Service

Last dollar

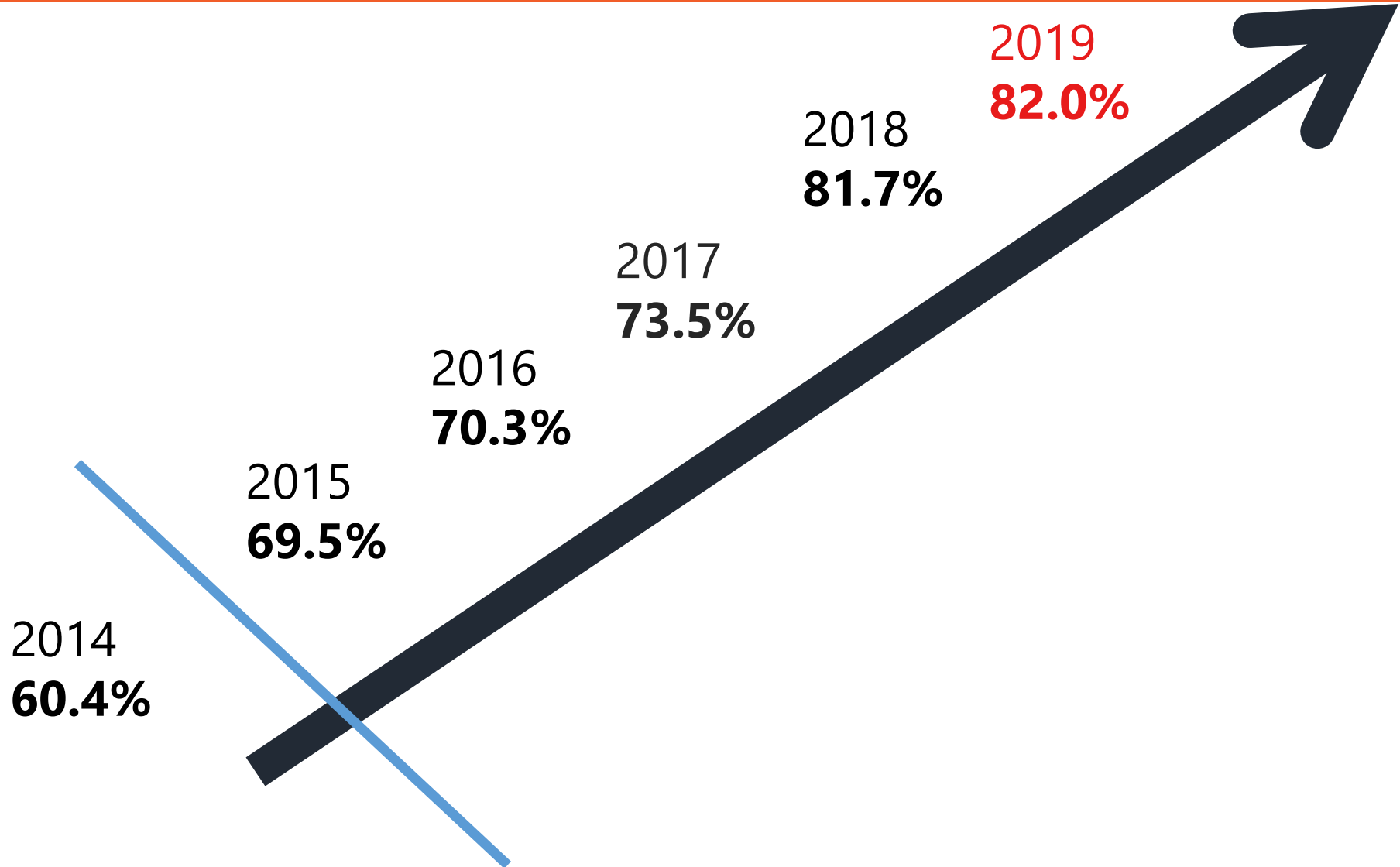
High school graduate, GED/HiSET recipient

No academic requirements to qualify

Full-time enrollment and SAP to maintain

Communication is KEY to success

Tennessee Promise – FAFSA Frenzy



Tennessee Promise – Supporting Success

- Summer Bridge Program**

 - Free 3 week intensive course

 - Opportunity to place out of learning support

- Tennessee Promise Forward Grants**

 - Funding for institutional supports

 - Ex.- Success coaches for interventions

 - Ex.- Communication software for institutions

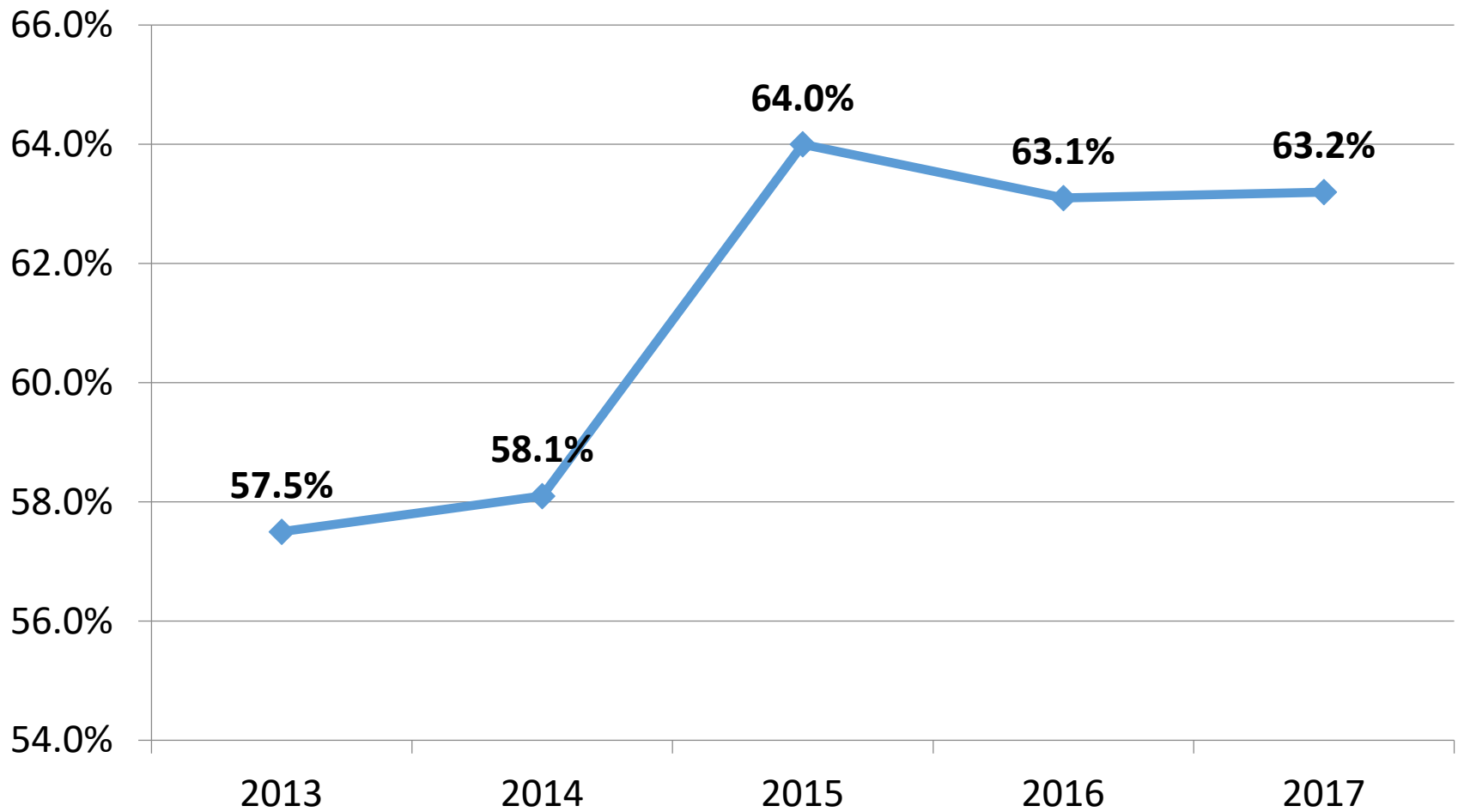
- College Coaching Initiative**

 - Emphasis on high risk student population

 - Timely intervention to foster student success and completion

- Community Service Opportunities**

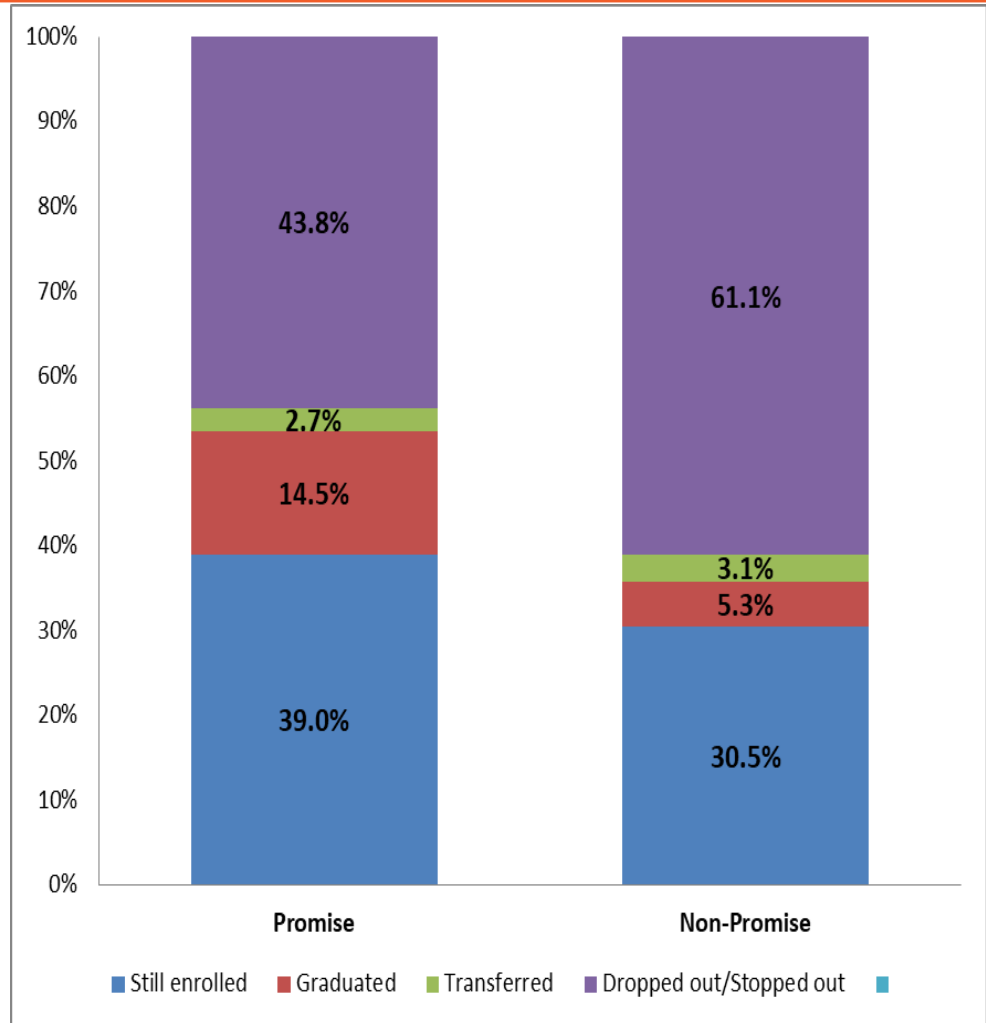
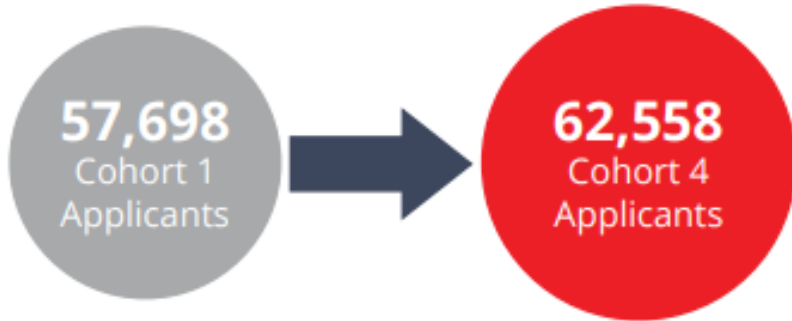
Tennessee Promise – College Going Rates



Tennessee Promise – Early Outcomes

Tennessee Promise Applicants

The number of high school seniors applying for Tennessee Promise has increased each year.





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