



SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

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NEWS RELEASE

February 19, 2016

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Free Community College “Promise” Pilot Program Approved

The San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) Board of Trustees has approved a pilot program that will implement the *America’s College Promise* free community college effort locally. The San Diego Community College District Promise will ensure that funds are provided to pay for enrollment fees and book grants for 200 local students during the 2016-17 academic year.

The SDCCD Promise program is intended to ensure that no deserving local students are denied the opportunity to go to college due to lack of resources. SDCCD Chancellor Constance M. Carroll says the district is starting with a pilot program in fall 2016 in preparation for broader implementation in fall 2017.

“I am delighted that the San Diego Community College District is joining the national and statewide movement to make community colleges free for deserving students,” Carroll said. “We will have a local impact by ensuring that students in the pilot program will come to City, Mesa, and Miramar colleges from local high schools and from our own Continuing Education division. This will be a great benefit for students.”

Pilot program participants will be required to be enrolled in at least 12 units for both fall and spring, participate in eight hours of community service each semester, and maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0.

The district leadership will work with officials from the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) to finalize the application and selection processes, which should be in place by April. The program is limited to students from the SDUSD and San Diego Continuing Education.

There will be three direct benefits under the pilot program. Students who receive state or federal financial aid will have the balance of the cost of their enrollment fees paid, ensuring free access. Students who do not receive state or federal financial aid, but still have financial need, will have their enrollment fees paid outright. Additionally, students will receive up to \$1,000 in grants for textbooks and related instructional supplies.

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The estimated cost of the first year of the pilot is \$215,000, which will be paid with non-state funds. Fundraising efforts are being ramped-up at each of the foundations that support the district’s three colleges and Continuing Education in order to support the program into the future. The district also plans to contribute through designated sources.

Chancellor Carroll, who serves as a member of the California College Promise Committee, says the local implementation of the “Promise” complements state and national efforts to make community colleges universally available to all students. In January 2015, President Barack Obama proposed the *America’s College Promise* during his State of the Union Address. Since then, efforts have been underway nationally, and at state and local levels, to explore and implement various models. In fact, nearly 100 programs now exist at local levels and more are being developed across the nation.

San Diego Unified Superintendent Cindy Marten said that she welcomes the new program. “This is an important opportunity for our students to access higher education free of charge through this new program. It is another excellent example of how our partnership with SDCCD benefits San Diego students. We are excited to participate.”

As the second-largest of California’s 72 community college districts, the San Diego Community College District serves approximately 100,000 students annually through three two-year colleges and San Diego Continuing Education. The three colleges, San Diego City College, San Diego Mesa College, and San Diego Miramar College, offer associate degrees and certificates in occupational programs that prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and entry-level jobs. Mesa College also offers a bachelor’s degree in Health Information Management. Continuing Education offers noncredit adult education at six campuses throughout San Diego.