

Foothill College Promise Program

2018-19 Academic Year

Prepared for the Revenue & Resources Committee, May 2019

First-Year Implementation Evaluation

Being that the 2018-19 college year is nearly complete, President Nguyen requested that an operations group be convened to help evaluate the first-year implementation of the Foothill College Promise (FCP) and to provide input and recommendations to her and Cabinet for a potential redesign of the program for the 2019-20 college year. The Revenue and Resources Committee would assist in the consideration of substantive recommendations.

The operations group included representatives from Admissions and Records, Financial Aid, DSPS, EOPS, Marketing/Outreach, and Institutional Research and Planning.

Background

AB 19 (2017, Santiago) creates the California College Promise (CCP) program, which includes a statutory framework to incentivize best practices in support of student enrollment and completion.

Colleges that implement specified best practices qualify for additional funding to support the goals of the program, which include improving college readiness, increasing completion rates and closing achievement gaps.

2018-19 Budget Act provided the following AB 19 funds to the FHDA District (\$46 million statewide):

- FHDA: \$2,580,932
 - De Anza: \$1,691,594
 - Foothill: \$889,338

AB 19 allows colleges to choose whether they want to waive fees for first-time, full-time students (12 units or more) or make use of program funding in other ways that meet the goals of the legislation.

Program Overview

Beginning with Fall 2018, The Foothill College Promise (FCP) was established consistent with the provisions of AB 19.

The current criteria to participate in the FCP are that students must:

- Apply to Foothill College
- Complete a FAFSA/CADAA

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- Have recently earned a high school diploma or equivalent
- Be a first-time college student
- Enroll in and maintain 12+ units
- Qualify for in-state tuition

The benefits of the FCP are as follows:

- As a first level of benefits, all participating students receive the following regardless of income level:
 - All enrollment and student body fees are waived
 - No-cost SmartPass to ride unlimited VTA public transportation each quarter
 - No-cost OwlCard for on and off campus discounts
- As a second level of benefits, participating students who qualify for the California College Promise Grant (CCPG; formerly BOG Fee Waiver) receive up to \$1,000 (equally distributed in portions of \$333.33 across each quarter) for required course materials (i.e.: textbooks and required course supplies) at the Foothill College bookstore
- As a third level of benefits, participating students who have been previously enrolled in Foothill's Early College Promise Program (ECP) for dual-enrolled high school students receive the same benefits of the ECP if enrolled full-time at Foothill (e.g., all fees, textbooks, and required course supplies paid for)

Note: The FCP provides “last-dollar-support,” which means that once all other sources of financial aid are determined, the benefit will cover remaining tuition and fees.

Thus far, in 2018-19 we have the following student participation counts:

- 343 students on FCP w/Bookstore Voucher
- 95 students on FCP w/no Bookstore Voucher (not eligible for the California College Promise Grant or CCPG, which is former BOG Fee Waiver)
- Approximately 164 students who meet all FCP criteria except they have NOT done FAFSA or California Dream Act Application (CADA)

Note: These are annual unduplicated student counts

Preliminary Substantive Issues and Recommendations

The college appears to be significantly underutilizing AB 19 funds. As of the date of this report, the college has only spent approximately \$261,831 of the \$889,338 allocated to the college for the 2018-19 college year. Although unexpended 2018-19 funds will be permitted by the State Chancellor's Office to be carried over into the next fiscal year, this carry-over provision will likely not be available in the 2019-20 fiscal year. Thus, it is imperative that the

College maximize its effectiveness and use of FCP funds. This funding underutilization is likely due to several factors, including:

Lower than expected bookstore voucher redemptions; insufficient participation by students that are not eligible for the CCPG (former BOG fee waiver);

Although 343 students have been determined eligible for the \$1,000 Bookstore Voucher due to qualifying for the CCPG, with a potential \$343,000 redemption value, only \$56,044 worth of the vouchers has actually been redeemed thus far. Although this issue is still under review, one apparent reason for this low redemption amount is that many of these participating students are likely also EOPS students for which that program also provides textbook vouchers. Being that the FCP is currently operated as a "last-dollar-support" program, this means books purchased by participating EOPS students would be paid first by EOPS funds with the FCP being a secondary payer.

The average per quarter redemption totals \$182 per student, or \$546 for the full academic year (Fall, Winter, Spring), which is significantly less than the awarded \$1,000 Bookstore Voucher.

Students that are not eligible for the CCPG are not granted bookstore vouchers under the current design of the FCP, which, removes an important participation incentive for the broader middle income or higher student population.

Of the total unduplicated student count of 438 that participate in the FCP, 343 of those students qualify for the CCPG and 95 do not, which means that for a significant majority of FCP students, their enrollment fees are actually waived via the CCPG and not actually paid from FCP funds. This is a significant FCP funds underutilization factor.

A concern has been expressed that because the FCP provides a textbook voucher to qualifying students, it may actually have the unintended effect of disincentivizing some students from entering or continuing their participating in the EOPS Program. As a pivotal and long-standing program that has been proven to improve student success among students that face economic, linguistic, and educational challenges by providing comprehensive support services, including one-on-one counseling and priority registration, it's important that this potential issue be addressed.

Recommendations

In order for the college to increase its utilization of FCP funds and broaden the pool of participating students, the FCP should provide additional participation incentives for students that may not qualify for financial aid. One such incentive could be to make ALL FCP students eligible for a Bookstore Voucher, not just those that qualify for the CCPG. This eligibility expansion for the Bookstore Voucher also has the potential of encouraging more students to complete FAFSA and CA. Dream Act (CADA) applications.

Considering this potentially significant eligibility and expenditure expansion, and being that the average per student bookstore voucher redemption currently only totals \$546 for the full

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academic year (Fall, Winter, Spring), well below the current \$1,000 voucher amount, it is also recommended that the Bookstore Voucher amount be reduced to \$750 per academic year, which would be allocated as up to \$250 per quarter (an exception for EOPS students is noted below). Thus, even though the value FCP Bookstore Voucher would be reduced, it should continue to be sufficient to cover most participating student bookstore voucher redemptions on a quarterly basis.

To address the concern that the Textbook Voucher messaging of the FCP may be inadvertently removing one of the main incentives to join EOPS, which is free textbooks, FCP and EOPS messaging should be reviewed to ensure that the FCP is perceived as an enhancement of the EOPS program. In support of this messaging effort, it is recommended that that the \$750 FCP Bookstore Voucher referenced above be in addition to the EOPS book voucher that is currently provided so that EOPS students can purchase additional required course materials in the bookstore or, at their option, purchase a laptop (in consultation with the Bookstore Director, \$750 would be sufficient to purchase a good quality laptop). To allow for the purchase of a laptop, the \$250 per quarter limit noted above would not apply to EOPS students.