

Seattle Promise

Description

Seattle Promise is a college tuition and success program that guides students on a direct path from high school to college to earn a degree or certificate and enter the workforce, or transfer to a four-year college or university. This investment area funds three strategies:

- **Tuition:** A last-dollar scholarship which covers all tuition costs after federal and state financial aid and individual student scholarships are applied.
- **Equity Scholarships:** Non-tuition related expenses such as books, fees, child care, food, housing, transportation and other needs for students with expected family contributions in alignment with the Pell Grant requirements.
- **College Preparation and Persistence Support:** Beginning junior year of high school, students receive support to and through their experience at Seattle Colleges, including financial aid workshops, application assistance, and other on-campus resources supporting persistence and retention.

The pandemic had significant impacts on college enrollment and persistence rates in Washington State that aligned with national trends. In response to students' feedback in the [2020-21 Seattle Promise Persistence and Advising Process Evaluation](#) and Racial Equity Toolkit recommendations, Seattle City Council approved DEEL-sponsored legislation in November 2020 as part of the City's COVID-19 recovery plan, funding a suite of Seattle Promise program changes between school years 2021-22 and 2024-25 to support students to remain in and complete the program. These program changes, referred to as equity enhancements, focus on increasing persistence and completion supports for students furthest from educational justice, and include:

- More flexible part-time, deferment, and program re-entry policies.
- Up to one additional year to complete certificates, credentials, or degrees for students whose progress was impacted by COVID or other challenges.
- Expanded Equity Scholarship criteria and increased maximum award from \$500 to \$1,000 per quarter.
- Personalized and differentiated staffing supports reflective of student needs.
- Path to UW, a new transfer pathway supporting 4-year degree attainment at University of Washington
- Washington State Opportunity Scholarship, a new partnership providing additional financial assistance and career-launching support services for students pursuing high-demand STEM, Career & Technical Education, and health care majors.

History

Seattle Promise was created in 2017 by the City of Seattle in partnership with Seattle Colleges and Seattle Public Schools (SPS) to bridge a gap between students and the skills required to earn high-paying local jobs. Seattle voters approved funding for the program as part of the 2018 Families, Education, Preschool, and Promise (FEPP) Levy. In alignment with the levy Implementation and Evaluation plan, program eligibility expanded in 2020-21 to serve scholars matriculating from all 17 high schools within Seattle Public Schools.

The program builds upon the success of the 13th Year Scholarship Program, established at South Seattle College in 2008 and expanded to all Seattle Colleges in 2017—North Seattle College, Seattle Central College, and South Seattle College.

Budget

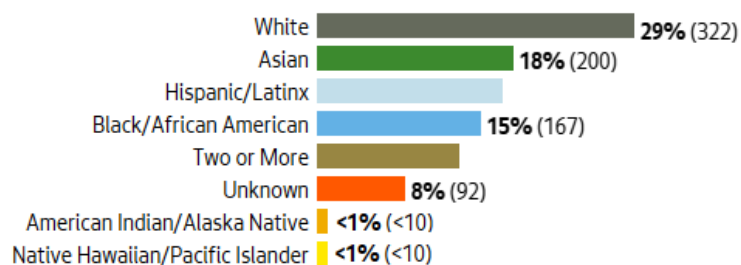
Seattle Promise is funded by a combination of FEPP levy and Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery (CLFR) funds, totaling \$54.8 million through 2026, with an average of \$7.8 million per school year.

The original FEPP Implementation and Evaluation Plan allocated \$37.7 million over 7 years. An additional \$17.1 million of combined CLFR and FEPP Levy funds were authorized for equity enhancements beginning in the 2021-22 school year.

Participants

In the 2021-22 school year, Seattle Promise served 1,114 scholars, representing 20% of the 2022 SPS graduating class. Nearly 70% (780) identified as students of color. The graph below shows Seattle Promise student demographics by race and ethnicity.

Race/Ethnicity of Seattle Promise Scholars Enrolled, SY 2021-22



Data source(s): Seattle Colleges fall enrollment 2021-22 school year.

Indicators

DEEL looks at the following indicators to measure how well Seattle Promise is supporting students to attain a certificate, credential, or degree by age 26.

Postsecondary Access & Completion

The following table shows how Seattle Promise 3-year completion rates compare to 3-year college completion rates nationally. DEEL and Seattle Colleges continue to monitor racial disparities in retention

and completion rates within the Seattle Promise program, which persist for Black and Latino scholars compared to their white and Asian peers. Newly implemented equity enhancements were designed to address racial disparities by directly supporting student's diverse needs.

Headline Indicator: Postsecondary Completion <i>Seattle Promise 3-Year Completion Rates, 2019 Cohort**</i>		
Student population by race & ethnicity:	National 3-Year Completion Rate*	Seattle Promise Completion Rate
Total	30%	30%
Black and African American	19%	19%
Hispanic and Latino	26%	20%
White	35%	34%
Asian	41%	46%

*Data source: National Center for Education Statistics, students entering public 2-year postsecondary institutions in 2016

**Fewer than 10 students who identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or Two or More Races from the 2018 Cohort completed their certificate, credential, or degree within the Seattle Promise program. Their results have been data suppressed from view due to privacy and reliability concerns.

Seattle Promise Applications, Enrollment, and Retention

According to the Columbia University Community College Research Center, Washington State community college enrollment declined 20% since the start of the pandemic. Despite this, Seattle Promise enrollment continued to rise and serve a majority of students of color. The table below shows Seattle Promise application, enrollment, and retention rates by cohort.

Supporting Indicators: <i>Seattle Promise Application, Enrollment, and Retention Rates by Cohort</i>					
Cohort	Application	Enrollment		Retention	
	<i>How many complete the application</i>	<i>How many enroll in the program</i>		<i>How many continue in the program after one and two years*</i>	
Year	<i>Number of applicants</i>	<i>Cohort Size</i>	<i>% BIPOC</i>	<i>1-year</i>	<i>2-year</i>
2018	589	186	75%	57%	43%
2019	720	285	74%	51%	36%
2020	1,739	689	64%	54%	42%
2021	2,099	708	69%	52%	TBD
2022	2,248	830	70%	TBD	TBD

*Note: 1-year retention refers to scholars enrolled in their first fall to first spring, and 2-year retention refers to scholars enrolled in their second fall to second spring.

Resources and More Information

View the following resources to learn more about DEEL's investments in postsecondary access and completion:

- [DEEL Seattle Promise webpage](#)
- [DEEL reports and data webpage, including links to annual reports and Seattle Promise evaluations](#)
- [Seattle Colleges Seattle Promise website](#)

For more information about [Seattle Promise](#), visit our website or contact education@seattle.gov.