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Community colleges to offer free tuition

By Andrea Verdin (<http://villagenews.com/author/xcont-averdin/>) on March 24, 2017 · 1 Comment
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With costs of college tuition and living expenses skyrocketing through the roof, many high school seniors have considered delaying their first year of college to save up for the expense. However, Palomar and MiraCosta community colleges have recently announced they will offer a year's tuition and funds for textbooks for students who live in eligible high school districts.

The goal of the programs is to increase the college-going rate of local high school graduates.

Palomar College's College Promise Campaign was announced by executive director Dr. Martha Kanter. She announced that the Palomar Promise will offer free community college tuition, fees and textbooks for the 2017-2018 school year.

Starting in the fall of 2017, upon successful completion of Palomar Promise eligibility requirements, students will receive tuition assistance up to \$600/semester or \$1,200/year for up to two consecutive years from The San Marcos Promise and Palomar College Foundation. This unique opportunity will allow students to attend college, tuition-free, full-time.

"Palomar College has been serving this region for over 70 years and our partnering with [area high schools] to provide a free community college education to eligible students sends a strong message to local families that we are united in supporting our community," said Adrian Gonzales, Palomar College interim superintendent/president in a recent press release. "We could not be happier to be in a position to offer the financial support that will make a difference for many students and their families."

The program eligibility requirements include that students graduate from high school with a minimum 2.5 cumulative GPA and place into transferable math, English and reading, as indicated by Palomar placement test results. In addition, students will be required to complete the Federal Application for Free Student Aid (FAFSA) by the federal deadlines for each school year. Students will be required to complete the Palomar College Foundation Scholarship Application prior to the deadline each year, to maintain eligibility.

In addition, representatives from two organizations have committed \$1.5 million to the Palomar Promise. At the Palomar Promise launch party held on Feb. 22, Mary Perry, vice president, Marketing, West, of Follett Education Group announced the Follett Corporation's pledge of \$1 million, and David Engblom, chair of the Palomar College Foundation Board announced the Foundation's pledge of \$500,000.

Palomar College promises to assist students to enroll in college, stay on track to complete their career and academic goals, and transfer to a four year college or university of their choice.

The MiraCosta Promise will provide a year of college without fees and funding toward textbooks and instructional supplies to eligible students who commit to Promise requirements. The MiraCosta Promise is funded from a variety of current resources and private donations to the MiraCosta College Foundation.

In order to be eligible for the MiraCosta Promise, a participant must: graduate in spring 2017 from any accredited high school located within the boundaries of the MiraCosta Community College District; apply to attend MiraCosta College for the fall 2017 and spring 2018 semesters and commit to enrolling in 12 units or more each semester; be a resident of the state of California for tuition purposes (or be AB 540 eligible); and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or a Dream Act application by May 11, 2017 and qualify for the Board of Governors (BOG) Fee Waiver.

Students who complete the eligibility requirements will be automatically considered for the MiraCosta Promise and will be notified by May 19, 2017.

"We're definitely all about getting our kids to college, and now they can get their first year paid," said Bonsall Union School District superintendent Dr. Justin Cunningham. "The schools promise a wonderful thing."

Cunningham stated that he is "extremely pleased" with the Bonsall High School's partnership with Palomar College.

"We have some of our students on Palomar College campuses taking classes, we have Palomar College classes being offered on our campus, and we have Palomar College teachers teaching in our classes," said Cunningham. "Palomar will teach senior level math classes as a part of our way to prep our students. Part of our graduation requirements is to have student graduate with six units of college credits. This is a taste of college, and now [the Promise] is just the whipped cream on top."

Bonsall High has students take the PSAT so they are college and career ready, said Cunningham.

"This is something that we are reaching out to parents about, and we are very excited," said Cunningham. "This is definitely something to be excited about, and intend to spread that excitement."

Attempts were made to reach Fallbrook Union High School and Fallbrook Union High School District administration, but they were unavailable.

Applications for the Palomar Promise and MiraCosta Promise are currently being accepted, with students from both Fallbrook High and Bonsall High schools being eligible.

For more information about the Palomar Promise, go to www.palomar.edu/palomarpromise. For more information about the Mira Costa Promise, go to www.miracosta.edu/student-services/financialaid/promise.html.



Community colleges to offer free tuition added by **Andrea Verdin**

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Andrea has served as a journalist and writer for nearly a decade. She has won several awards for her in-depth reporting.