

MEMORANDUM

TO: Matt Westmoreland

FROM: *Atlanta Promise Policy Group*

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RE: Comprehensive Research and Recommendations for Atlanta Promise

DATE: 25 July 2019

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I. Policy Memo Summary

As the demand for jobs requiring some post-secondary education continues to rise, the need for accessible and affordable higher education is growing exponentially.¹ Building on lessons learned from other cities' tuition-free community college programs, this memo features recommendations for the development of an Atlanta Promise Program. Atlanta Promise would close the funding gap between the cost of Atlanta Technical College's tuition and fees and the availability of scholarships as well as local, state, and federal aid, so that every City of Atlanta resident who wishes to pursue their first associate degree would have the opportunity to do so.

II. Background: Increasing Unaffordability of Community Colleges

Despite the relative affordability of technical program tuition, more students are finding community colleges unaffordable due to increasing tuition rates and fees, shrinking federal financial aid coverage, and existing indebtedness.²

Increasing two- and four-year college tuition rates are a nationwide phenomenon. Specifically at Atlanta Technical College (ATC), tuition has traditionally increased every other year by 5% to 15%. It can, however, increase by as much as 37% year-over-year, as was the case in 2010.³ In 2020, ATC's tuition will increase from \$89 per credit to \$100 per credit.

Simultaneously, the number of students receiving Pell Grants is also decreasing, both locally and nationally. Although the maximum Pell Grant amount per person has increased (to \$6,095), the number of students receiving Pell Grant dropped by 7.9% from 2016 to 2017.⁴ At ATC, for example, the number of Pell Grant recipients decreased from 89% during the 2017-2018 academic year to 76% during 2018-2019, and students' average award amount was \$3,588.⁵

In addition to increasing tuition costs, the price of fees, books, and other necessities are also on the rise. These costs, coupled with increased exposure to debt overall - in the form of car notes, previous student debt, mortgages, etc. - have heightened prospective students' reluctance to take on further education-related loans.

III. Atlanta's Current Technical College Landscape

Atlanta Technical College (ATC) is the primary technical college institution serving City of Atlanta residents. Slightly more than 4,000 students are currently enrolled at ATC. The student body is predominantly black, low income, and female.⁶ More than

Average Net Price by Income	2017-2018
\$0 - \$30,000	\$1,525
\$30,001 - \$48,000	\$3,428
\$48,001 - \$75,000	\$4,560
\$75,001 - \$110,000	\$8,164
\$110,001 and more	\$6,377

Table 1

¹ "The Key to Better Lives," Lumina Foundation, n.d., <https://www.luminafoundation.org/attainment-trend>

² Holzer and Baum 2017, Making College Work.

³ "College Costs in Georgia," CollegeCalc, n.d., <http://www.collegecalc.org/colleges/georgia/atlanta-technical-college/>

⁴ Williams, Terri. "Report: Community College Has Become Less Affordable." GoodCall, August 3, 2017.

<https://www.goodcall.com/news/community-college-less-affordable-011521>.

⁵ "Atlanta Technical College." U.S. News & World Report, Education. U.S. News & World Report, n.d.

<https://www.usnews.com/education/community-colleges/atlanta-technical-college-CC00370>.

⁶ "About ATC." Atlanta Technical College. Accessed June 19, 2019. <https://www.atlantatech.edu/about-atc/>.

three-quarters (75%) of students who received financial aid were awarded federal Pell Grants.⁷

ATC's existing financial aid program is relatively robust. In 2017-2018, 93% of its students received some type of aid, including federal loans.

More telling, however, is the average net price (amount expended after loans), which is broken down by household income in table 1.

Tuition is only a fraction of the actual cost students incur to attend ATC. In 2017-2018, the total cost of attendance for a student who lived off-campus was \$10,691 (see Table 3).⁸ Of this, tuition and fees amounted to \$2,816, and room and board made up \$4,625 of students' expenses. Room and board costs vary significantly based on where they live and their family's finances.

<i>True Cost of Attendance at Atlanta Technical College 2017-2018 Academic Year</i>	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Tuition	\$2,136
Fees	\$680
Room and Board	\$4,625
Books and Supplies	\$1,250
Other Miscellaneous Living Expenses	\$2,000
Total tuition and living expense budget for in-state Georgia residents	\$10,691

Table 3

IV. Greatest Gaps in Affordable Tuition

In addition to federal financial aid, ATC has begun offering free-tuition to students in 17 of its 35 programs. Funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education,⁹ these tuition-free programs align with "high demand" Georgia industries in which employment opportunities are abundant.¹⁰ To be eligible for a Hope Career Grant tuition-waiver students must:

- Be enrolled in one of the select programs;
- Be a Georgia resident;
- Meet enrollment requirements;
- Be in compliance with Selective Service registration requirements;
- Meet academic achievement standards;
- Be in good standing on all student loans or other financial aid programs;
- Be in compliance with the Georgia Drug-Free Postsecondary Education Act of 1990;
- Not have exceeded the maximum award limits for any HOPE program

As noted previously, tuition is just one of the many costs linked to technical college attendance. To help offset some of the other costs of attendance, 93% of Atlanta Technical College students applied for and subsequently received grant aid, including federal Pell Grants. The average total aid award (per academic year) amounted to \$6,188, leaving a funding gap of roughly \$4,500.¹¹

⁷ "College Navigator." National Center for Education Statistics. U.S. Department of Education. Accessed June 19, 2019. <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=Atlanta+Technical+College&s=all&id=138840#finaid>.

⁸ "College Costs in Georgia." CollegeCalc, n.d. <http://www.collegecalc.org/colleges/georgia/>.

⁹ "HOPE." GSFC. Georgia Student Finance Commission, n.d. <https://gsfc.georgia.gov/hope>.

¹⁰ "Hope Career Grants." Technical College System of Georgia. TCSG, n.d. <https://tcsgeu/free-tuition/>.

¹¹ Ibid.

V. Role of College Promise Programs

On September 9, 2015, President Obama launched the National Advisory Board based upon the belief that “the first two years of community college or technical college - at a minimum - should be as universal, free, and accessible as public high school.”¹² Since then, more than 200 College Promise Programs have emerged nationwide. Bipartisan political support, generous financial donations, as well as engagement from nonpartisan leaders in education, business, and other fields, have helped tens of thousands of students access higher education and better paying jobs.

According to the College Promise Campaign, programs approach funding in three ways:

- **First-Dollar:** The amount of Promise funding awarded to an eligible student does not take into account any additional funding or grants that the student is eligible for (e.g., a Federal Pell Grant). Therefore, a “first-dollar” Promise program covers the direct costs of attending college, and has the potential to reduce the associated costs that come with being a student, such as textbooks, transportation, childcare, school materials, and other college costs.
- **Last-Dollar:** The amount of College Promise funding awarded to an eligible student takes into account any additional public funding or grants the student is eligible to receive (e.g., a Federal Pell Grant, state financial aid, etc.). The total amount of “last-dollar” Promise funding a student receives varies depending on other financial aid for which the student is eligible.
- **Last-Dollar Plus:** The amount of Promise funding awarded to an eligible student takes into account any additional public funding or grants the student is eligible to receive (e.g., a Federal Pell Grant). Different from a traditional “last-dollar” model, a “last-dollar plus” program offers additional financial aid to students, for example, a minimum guaranteed scholarship amount, or a stipend for a specific cause (e.g., a book stipend).¹³

Each program is autonomous: some exist within a specific technical college, others throughout a city, and many across an entire state. The eligibility requirements and comprehensiveness of funding provided vary; however, all College Promise programs seek to expand accessibility to community and technical college education for everyone who wishes to pursue it.

VI. Insight from Four Other Promise Programs

Boston, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Seattle were selected for comparison because of their similarities to the City of Atlanta and the impact of their promise programs. A brief description of each city’s tuition-free community college promise program is featured below. A table that compares the four programs side-by-side can be found in the “Appendices” section on page 12.

¹² “2017-2018 Annual Report.” College Promise Campaign. “MATC Launches Promise Program for Adults.” *Milwaukee Area Technical College*.

¹³ Ibid.

A. Boston

Boston's Tuition-Free Community College Plan (TFCCP) covers up to three years of tuition and fees at one of four technical colleges. Students must have graduated from high school or received a GED in the last twelve months; have a 2.0 GPA; be "meet low-income status for Pell Grant; complete the FAFSA; pass the accuplacer tests, i.e., place out of developmental classes; and gain admission" to one of the participating schools.¹⁴ Students are matched with a Success Boston counselor to help facilitate their transition to college. Pell Grant eligibility is a cornerstone of TFCCP because this is a "last-dollar" program, which covers the gap between available federal aid and the cost of tuition and fees. In cases where a student's Pell Grant covers all tuition and fees, the TFCCP provides up to \$1,000 for expenses such as books and transportation.¹⁵

The TFCCP is funded through a decades-old fund in Boston called the Neighborhood Jobs Trust, which is in turn funded through impact fees. Any commercial construction projects in the city of over 100,000 square feet are charged an impact fee based on square footage. That money goes into the NJT, which funds many programs, including the TFCCP. Since 2016, the TFCCP's annual spending has amount to approximately \$180,000.¹⁶ The average student receives \$585.¹⁷

B. Detroit

Detroit's Promise Program provides two years' worth of free tuition at six community colleges. There are no GPA or testing requirements; however, students must have attended high school within city limits for at least their junior and senior years, graduated, or earned a GED within the last 12 months. To be eligible for promise funding, students must submit a FAFSA. Like Boston, Detroit's program adheres to the last-dollar model, which requires students to cover all costs beyond tuition and fees. The program is funded through a combination of tax dollars and the Detroit Promise Zone, a fund started in 2013 by the Michigan Education Excellence Foundation and the Detroit Regional Chamber. Students receiving promise funds can participate in the Promise Pathway program, which provides college coaching, transportation vouchers, and more.

C. Milwaukee

Milwaukee technically has two separate programs: one for recent high school graduates, and one for adults 24 years and older. Both new graduates and adults are eligible for up to 75 credits' worth of tuition and fees. High school graduates have the same Pell Grant eligibility and GPA requirements as in Boston, in addition to an ACT score requirement of 16.¹⁸ Individuals accessing the "adult (24+) program" must have already begun a technical degree in a "top 50

¹⁴ Mayor's Office. "Mayor Walsh Launches Tuition-Free Community College for BPS Graduates." City of Boston. Boston, April 29, 2016. <https://www.cityofboston.gov/news/default.aspx?id=20605>.

¹⁵ Mayor's Office. "Mayor Walsh Launches Tuition-Free Community College for BPS Graduates." City of Boston. Boston, April 29, 2016. <https://www.cityofboston.gov/news/default.aspx?id=20605>.

¹⁶ Cheryl Loiselle, email to Sarah Dunning, 26 June 2019.

¹⁷ Cheryl Loiselle, email to Sarah Dunning, 26 June 2019.

¹⁸ Cheryl Loiselle, email to Sarah Dunning, 26 June 2019.

in-demand career in Wisconsin.”¹⁹ An Associate in Arts degree, for transfer to a four-year institution, is not included. Milwaukee’s adult students are subject to an annual household income limit of \$56,000.²⁰

Funding for the MATC Promise for New Graduates and Adults Programs comes from public and private sources. In order to be eligible for privately-donated, “last-dollar scholarships,” students must “exhaust all other sources of available local, state, and federal funds,” namely Pell Grants.²¹ Private donations are channeled through the MATC Foundation Inc., which was established specifically to facilitate the Promise Program. Since its inception in 2015, the Foundation “has received more than \$2 million from more than 230 donors to support [Milwaukee] Promise programs.” Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele is the largest donor; he personally contributed \$250,000 and \$500,000 for the “New Graduates” and “Adults” Promise programs.”

D. Seattle

The Seattle Promise is an integrated financial assistance and mentorship program. In 2018, the City of Seattle partnered with three community colleges to provide aid to recent graduates of Seattle high schools. Recipients of this aid are called “Seattle Promise Scholars,” and they are eligible for last-dollar funding throughout the first two years of community college. There are no eligibility requirements other than that students must have graduated from a Seattle high school.

Seattle Promise is jointly funded through Seattle Technical College and the City of Seattle. Participating colleges use portions of their general aid funds to cover last-dollar costs, and the City contributes a portion of its revenue from a Sweetened Beverage Tax as well as funds from a seven-year education levy. The projected costs of operating Seattle Promise are available on page 13. Seattle Promise leaders are creating an endowment to sustain the program after the levy ends.

E. Contributing Factors to Other Promise Programs’ Impact

Successful promise programs go beyond simply offering financial aid. Boston, Detroit, and Seattle all offer additional support to students, specifically in the form of dedicated college counselors. These professionals assist students with the transition to college-level coursework, the development of time management skills, and preparing for careers. Boston and Detroit have found that students who participate in their promise programs have much higher retention and graduation rates in comparison to other students who attend the same technical colleges.²²

¹⁹ “MATC Promise for New High School Graduates.” MATC Promise. Milwaukee Area Technical College. Accessed July 11, 2019. <https://www.matc.edu/promise/#highschool>.

²⁰ “MATC Promise for Adults.” MATC Promise. Milwaukee Area Technical College. Accessed July 11, 2019. https://www.matc.edu/discover_matc/transformations/2018_matc_promise_for_adults.cfm.

²¹ “2017-2018 Annual Report.” College Promise Campaign. “MATC Launches Promise Program for Adults.” *Milwaukee Area Technical College*.

²² “A Path from Access to Success Interim Findings from the Detroit Promise Path Evaluation “ MDRC. https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/Detroit_Promise_Path_Report-Final_0.pdf

VII. Recommendations for Atlanta Promise

A. Eligibility

For Tuition and Fee Assistance, Atlanta Technical College students must:

- a. Meet ATC's enrollment requirements (refer to page 14)
- b. Maintain a 2.0 or higher GPA while enrolled at ATC
- c. Provide proof of City of Atlanta residency
- d. Not have previously completed an associate or bachelor's degree
- e. Submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form or apply for a FAFSA-waiver (only available to non-citizens)
- f. Have a household income equal to no more than 200% of the federal poverty line
- g. Meet with their "Promise Coach" at certain checkpoints, such as when registering for courses, to ensure that they are on track for a timely graduation
- h. Enroll in a minimum of 6 credit hours per semester

These requirements resulted from consideration of other promise programs as well as Atlanta's unique characteristics. For example, mandating part-time, as opposed to full-time, enrollment would make Atlanta Promise much more accessible to people who work and/or are caregivers. Similarly, using the federal poverty line, rather than Pell Grant eligibility as other cities do, makes Atlanta Promise more inclusive, while still stewarding available funds. To accommodate students' potential need for remedial classes as well as variability between degree programs, Atlanta Promise should provide "last-dollar" support for up to 90 credit hours per student.

B. Funding Strategies

Atlanta Promise could be funded through a variety of mechanisms. Of those considered, the City of Boston's model, which involves using a portion of development fees to finance its promise program, does not translate to Georgia because state law prohibits development fees from being spent on education. Unless state law changes, Atlanta will need to consider other models.²³

For instance, Atlanta could use tax revenue from particular products to help fund its promise program. For example, the City of Seattle uses general funds and sweetened beverage tax revenue. Sweetened beverage taxes in other cities have brought in significant revenue, such as in Philadelphia where more than \$167 million have been generated in less than three years.²⁴ It should be noted that sweetened beverage taxes are fairly regressive. In addition to public tax dollars, Atlanta could consider emulating the City of Detroit by applying for national and state funding as well as grants to fund its promise program.

²³ Edge, Jim. An Analysis of Development Impact Fees in Georgia. Athens, GA: University of Georgia School of Law, 2007. <http://rivercenter.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/17/2015/03/Developmental-Impact-Fees-Edge-Eshman.pdf>.

²⁴ Rhynhart, Rebecca. "Data Release: Beverage Tax Revenue and Expenditures." Office of the Controller, City of Philadelphia. City of Philadelphia, June 6, 2019. <https://controller.phila.gov/philadelphia-audits/data-release-beverage-tax/>.

Alternatively, Atlanta could follow Milwaukee's example and rely on private donors. Milwaukee Promise programs have received more than \$2 million from donors in four years.²⁵ Because Atlanta is home to many large corporations and other potential donors who would benefit from a more educated workforce, this model has considerable potential.

Regardless of the funding strategy's specifics, Atlanta should prioritize sustainability and equity throughout its promise program's design and implementation, so that the students whose enrollment in technical college is contingent upon "last-dollar" scholarships can count on this support for as long as it is needed.

C. Funding Distribution Model

We recommend a "last-dollar" funding model, meaning that Atlanta Promise would cover the difference between Atlanta Technical College students' tuition and fees and the combined total of all local, state, and federal aid, such as Pell Grants, Hope and Zell Miller, and any other scholarships, e.g., (tuition + fees - [scholarships + all financial aid] = last-dollar funding needed to enroll). For particularly low-income students and/or those who demonstrate extenuating life circumstances, ATC could also make funds available to help pay for books, transportation, childcare, and other expenses that could present a barrier to retention and/or graduation.

To promote student success, we recommend that ATC hire Promise coaches or collaborate with local organizations specializing in college access. Coaches would conduct monthly check-ins and assist students with course registration, transitioning to college, and staying on track for graduation. Coaches could also facilitate activities, such as networking, etiquette, civic engagement, and leadership development, in order to build community and promote retention.

D. Projected Costs

Our financial estimates are limited by several factors. First, Atlanta Technical College's future student population as well as the exact number of students who would be eligible for Atlanta Promise are unknown at this time. Second, the financial aid awards of students who will be enrolled at ATC after Atlanta Promise is implemented have yet to be calculated.

In 2017-2018, more than 90% of ATC students received some type of financial aid. 85% received Pell Grants, and the average award per year was \$3,588.11. This aid amount exceeds the total average cost of tuition and fees at ATC for an academic year, which are roughly \$3,000.

Based on the information available at this time, the following formulas are designed to provide preliminary estimates of the cost of implementing Atlanta Promise.

²⁵ Anderson, Lauren. "Free tuition programs aimed at providing opportunity, addressing workforce shortages." *Biz Times - Milwaukee Business News*. Milwaukee, June 24, 2019: <https://www.biztimes.com/2019/ideas/educationworkforce-development/free-tuition-programs-aimed-at-providing-opportunity-addressing-workforce-shortages/>.

(1) Formulas for Calculating the Projected Cost of Atlanta Promise

Formula 1: [(Number of Students Eligible for Atlanta Promise) x (Average Tuition and Fee Cost per Student)] Subtracted by (Total Amount that Eligible Students Received from Federal, State, and Other Financial Aid plus Scholarships) = Total Projected Cost of Atlanta Promise after Other Financial Aid is Applied

Formula 2: (Total Projected Cost of Atlanta Promise after Other Financial Aid and Scholarships are Applied) Divided by (the Number of Students Eligible for Atlanta Promise) = “Last-Dollar” Funding Required per Student

Additional explanation of these formulas and one hypothetical scenario can be found below.

Formula 1:

1. Calculating Atlanta Promise Students’ Total Cost of Tuition and Fees

Let’s assume that 200 students are eligible for Atlanta Promise. This number is based upon Seattle Promise’s 190 participants in 2018-2019.

The average ATC student’s cost of tuition and fees for 2019-2020 has been rounded to \$3,000 based on the fact that \$2,820 was the average for 2018-2019, and the price per credit hour has increased from \$89/credit to \$100.

$$200 \times \$3,000 = \$600,000.$$

Therefore, the total cost of Atlanta Promise students' tuition and fees is \$600,000.

Currently more ATC students are enrolled part-time than full-time (66% vs 34%), which affects the total tuition amount that each student would owe. To better predict the total tuition and fee costs that students eligible for Atlanta Promise would incur, the City of Atlanta could collaborate with ATC to identify the total number of credit hours in which students are enrolled during a given semester and multiply that by the price per credit.

2. Calculate the total amount covered by federal, state, other financial aid, and scholarships

If each student eligible for Atlanta Promise (200, in this example) received half of the cost of tuition plus fees for the 2019-2020 academic year (\$1,500) in the form of federal, state, and other financial aid, the total amount received would be equal to \$300,000. The 200 students’ total amount of aid and scholarships would be subtracted from the total cost of their ATC tuition plus fees.

$$\$600,000 - \$300,000 = \$300,000.$$

The remaining balance (\$300,000) equals the projected cost of operating Atlanta Promise for an academic year based on estimations affected by the aforementioned limitations.

Formula 2: (Total Projected Cost of Atlanta Promise) divided by (Number of Students Eligible for Atlanta Promise) = “Last-Dollar” Funding Required per Student. Using the same number of students (200) and tuition/fee costs (\$3,000 per student), the funding required per student equals:

$$\$300,000/200 = \$1,500$$

(2) Looking at the Big Picture

Because there are many variables at hand, the following four scenarios are designed to bring clarity to the calculation of Atlanta Promise’s anticipated cost. The first row is highlighted because it coincides with Formula 1 (discussed above), and the subsequent rows offer the opportunity to compare program costs based on enrollment, financial aid availability, and Atlanta Promise eligibility as a percentage of Atlanta Technical College’s total student enrollment.

Total Student Population at ATC	Total Cost of Tuition plus Fees Per Year	Students Fully Covered by Financial Aid or Other Means (not eligible for Atlanta Promise)	Atlanta Promise Recipients as a Percentage of the Total Student Population	Total Atlanta Promise Funding (Per Student Amount * Number of Recipients)	“Last-Dollar” Funding Needed if 50% of Tuition and Fees are Already Covered
4,000	\$3,000	95%	5% = 200 students	\$600,000	\$300,000
4,000	\$3,000	90%	10% = 400 students	\$1.2 million	\$600,000
5,000	\$3,000	95%	5% = 250 students	\$750,000	\$375,000
5,000	\$3,000	90%	10% = 500 students	\$1.5 million	\$750,000

1. Column 1 lists the total number of students enrolled at ATC. In two of the examples, the total student population is 5,000, a predicted increase in enrollment.
2. Column 2 lists the average tuition and fee cost per year. This number remains constant on the table, although it could be adjusted based on changes to tuition and fees.
3. Column 3 lists the percentage of ATC students whose tuition and fees are covered entirely by grants, scholarships, or other means, such as family contributions, which would make them ineligible for Atlanta Promise “last-dollar” funding.
4. Column 4 lists the percentage and number of ATC students eligible for Atlanta Promise support. For example, 10% of 5,000 suggests that 500 students are eligible.
5. Column 5 shows the *ceiling price* that Atlanta Promise would expend (based on the total cost of ATC tuition and fees multiplied by the number of students eligible) *before* other types of scholarship/grant funding were applied. This number, although extreme, is important because it represents Atlanta Promise’s maximum cost.
6. Column 6 assumes that students eligible for Atlanta Promise will receive grants and scholarships to cover 50% of their tuition and fees (on average). Because Column 6 uses a consistent percentage (50%), the remaining amount (funding gap) is always \$1,500 per

eligible student. In reality, this percentage would vary based upon how much aid each student received, which could range from 0% to 100% of total cost of tuition and fees.

E. Potential Challenges Outside the City's Control

There are several potential barriers that are beyond the City's control: (1) changes in technical school pricing as a result of statewide policy and administrative changes, (2) population shifts, i.e., migration into or out of the City, and (3) extenuating circumstances that could affect a person's ability to attend school (costs of living, lack of transportation or childcare, etc.).

While creating Atlanta Promise, the City should take possible state policy changes that could affect the cost of technical college tuition (and fees) into consideration. While the city cannot control how much money the state allocates to the technical college system, it can influence the amount of money budgeted for Atlanta Promise. There is little evidence that people would migrate into Atlanta solely for the Atlanta Promise program.²⁶

F. Anticipated Impact

Promise programs positively impact city residents in a number of ways. From students' and parents' perspective, promise programs help close the gap between financial aid awards and the cost of attendance, thereby making college seem more attainable even before students apply.²⁷ Further, promise programs help reduce the need for students/families to take out private loans and/or seek multiple (part-time) jobs to cover the increasing cost of college attendance beyond scholarships and federal financial aid awards.²⁸

The pursuit of a technical degree not only benefits students and their families by opening doors to higher paying jobs, but it also impacts society more broadly.²⁹ When a person holds a technical degree, they are more employable, which is positive from employers' perspectives.³⁰ Having a better educated workforce pleases existing companies and helps create a more attractive business climate for newcomers.³¹ Higher paid residents, combined with more stable and profitable companies, yield increased tax revenues. For example, an individual with an associate degree will spend an average of \$81,000 more on goods, services, and fees over his or

²⁶ Strayer, Nick. "The Great Out-of-State Migration: Where Students Go." *The New York Times*, August 26, 2016.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/08/26/us/college-student-migration.html>.

²⁷ Louis Serino. "As free college programs move forward, experts agree that design matters." *The Brookings Institute*. October 2, 2018. Brown Center Chalkboard:

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2018/10/02/as-free-college-programs-move-forward-experts-agree-that-design-matters/>

²⁸ Keith Wardrip et. al., "How Does Last-Dollar Financial Aid Affect First-Year Student Outcomes? Evidence from the Bridging the Gap Study." Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. May 2018:

<https://www.philadelphiafed.org/-/media/community-development/publications/special-reports/evidence-from-bridging-the-gap-study.pdf?la=en>

²⁹ "What are the Benefits of a Promise Program for Your Community?" Campaign for Free College Tuition.

https://d3n8a8pro7vnmx.cloudfront.net/redeemingamericaspromise/pages/156/attachments/original/1468606616/Promise_Programs_UpdateV2.pdf?1468606616

³⁰ Matt Krupnick, "After decades of pushing bachelor's degrees, U.S. needs more tradespeople." NPR. Aug 29, 2017. The Hechinger Report: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/education/decades-pushing-bachelors-degrees-u-s-needs-tradespeople>

³¹ "The Benefits of a Well-Educated Workforce." Cumberland Area Economic Development Corporation. August 10, 2016: <https://cumberlandbusiness.com/news/well-educated-workforce/>

her lifetime, including an additional \$9,000 in state and local taxes, than a high school graduate.³²

Because 95% of Atlanta Technical College graduates stay in Georgia, investment in their education yields long-term benefits in tax revenue. Moreover, a better educated and paid workforce reduces crime and promotes upward mobility in a city, thereby making promise programs a sound and cost-effective investment in the future of people and places.³³

G. Unanswered Questions

Although information on existing promise programs is robust, there are still unanswered questions regarding the creation of Atlanta Promise. The first set of questions pertain to the actual number of students at Atlanta Technical College (ATC) who require assistance with “last-dollar funding.” Anecdotally we know that students were purged during the last academic year due to insufficient funds to cover tuition and fees; however, this sub-population of students needs to be understood more thoroughly in order to design a maximally impactful promise program. Questions such as: (a) What sorts of financial aid were these students offered?, (b) How many of these students were Pell Grant eligible?, (c) Did these students face financial barriers besides the missing tuition dollars, i.e. money for textbooks? remain unanswered at this time.

Besides the cost of tuition and fees, there are questions about how best to address larger, more structural barriers to community college access. Ultimately, students still need to make childcare arrangements, balance work schedules, and find affordable transportation, even if they are able to afford to enroll in community college. Lessening the burden of tuition and fees opens a door to education for Atlanta residents, but on its own, this step will not make ATC accessible for all.

VIII. Conclusion

The cost of education continues to increase, and access to college is not necessarily equitable. Atlanta Promise would be a huge first step in addressing these issues. Importantly, the experiences of Boston, Detroit, Seattle, and Milwaukee all demonstrate that tuition-free community college for Atlanta’s low-income residents is achievable. With a focus towards the future, progress-oriented leaders willing to implement Atlanta Promise can help ensure that the City’s resources support all of its residents. Simply put, there has never been a more opportune time than now to invest in the City of Atlanta’s thriving economy and the future of Atlantans.

³²“What Colleges Do for local economiesL a direct measure based on consumption” November 17, 2015. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/what-colleges-do-for-local-economies-a-direct-measure-based-on-consumption/>

³³ “2017-2018 Annual Report.” College Promise Campaign. http://collegepromise.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/CPC_AnnualReport_2017_SMALL.pdf.

IX. Appendices

A. Side-by-Side Comparison of Exemplar Promise Programs

City	Program Implementation Date	How are funds spent/allocated?	Where does the money come from?	Who benefits from the program/who is eligible?	Impact on quality of life	Factors leading to success	Factors which can translate to ATL
Boston	April 2016	The City of Boston pays (Tuition + Fees) minus Pell Grant Award. When Pell Grant = Tuition + Fees, the City provides up to \$1,000 for other costs of attendance.	A tax on large-scale real estate development funds Promise Boston and other community programs.	Boston residents who: (A) graduated from high school within the last 12 months (or earned a GED); (B) are Pell Grant eligible; (C) low or moderate income according to HUD; (D) maintain at least a 2.0 GPA	City of Boston residents who may not otherwise have been able to attend technical college due to a gap between cost of attendance and Pell Grant awards are now able to pursue two-year degrees.	Students are matched with a counselor from Success Boston who assists with the transition to college, course registration and scheduling, so students graduate on time.	"Last-Dollar-Plus" program covering tuition, fees, and other costs of attendance when Pell Grant exceeds Tuition+Fees. Funded by taxes on development projects.
Milwaukee	September 2015	The MATC Foundation pays eligible students' (Tuition + Fees) minus "all other sources of available local, state, and federal funds," namely Pell Grants.	Private donations are channeled through The MATC Foundation Inc., which was established specifically to facilitate MATC Promise Programs. Since 2015, the Foundation "has received more than \$2 million from 230+ donors."	There are two Promise Programs: New Graduates and Adults. Eligibility for the New Graduates' program is based upon: (a) Pell Grant eligibility; (b) a minimum 2.0 GPA during the first semester of high school senior year; (c) minimum ACT score of 16; (d) graduation from or residence in the MATC District; (e) high school graduation; (f) enrollment in at least 12 credits at MATC. Students in the program for Adults must: (a) be at least 24 years old; (b) reside in the MATC District; (c) have a household income of \$56,000 or less; (d) previously have taken at least six college credits but never earned an associate or bachelor's degree; (e) have been out of college for at least two years; and (f) enroll in at least 6 credits at MATC.	The MATC Promise Programs not only connect students who may not otherwise have attended college with the opportunity to gain technical degrees, but they also supply skilled and needed workers for local employers. As household income increases, other aspects of families' lives improve, and these programs are helping people achieve greater earning potential. Milwaukee Area Technical College's "Promise" programs help students who are in default on their student loans get back to good standing, so that these students can continue accessing federal student loans to help finance their educations.	Generous donations from private donors; greater accessibility to technical education (earning potential) by offering an Adults program as well as one for New Graduates	(1) Requiring New Graduates to meet with a mentor, maintain a 2.0 GPA, and complete community service throughout their course of study; (2) Implementing a pilot Promise program for students from a particular zip code; (3) Helping students return to good-standing with student debt so that they are eligible to continue receiving federal student aid; (4) Creating a cooperative education model by which students work during their course of study for local employers, gain professional experience, and earn wages that help offset their cost of attendance at technical college as well as the need for loans/scholarships
Seattle	November 2018	Seattle Promise is designed to cover all tuition expenses remaining after other scholarships and financial aid. Aid from Seattle Promise ends after two academic years or enrollment in 90 credit hours - whichever comes first. Low-income students may qualify for additional funding for books and other expenses.	The City of Seattle and technical colleges within the City jointly fund Seattle Promise. The City of Seattle uses general fund dollars plus revenue from sweetened beverage taxes. These City funds are guaranteed for seven years as part of an education levy in support of the program.	Seattle residents who graduate from specific high schools within city limits are eligible for Seattle Promise. Funding ends after 90 credit hours have been earned. There is no GPA or household income requirement. Starting with the class of 2020, graduates of all Seattle high schools will qualify.	Very new program; little data exists at this point	Partnership between the City of Seattle and technical colleges within the City; piloting the program with a restricted number of high schools; and working out kinks/unanticipated challenges before expanding it to cover the entire city.	A term-limited levy to help fund the program initially, followed by a large endowment fundraised over the course of the levy's term. Partnering with community colleges to use their existing financial aid infrastructure to help support the Promise program. Provides students with support applying to technical college, completing financial aid requirements, assistance choosing and registering for classes, help with the college-transition, and ongoing mentorship.
Detroit	2016	The City of Detroit pays (Tuition + Fees) minus Pell Grant awards and other forms of local, state, and federal aid.	A portion of tax dollars has been permanently earmarked to fund two-year colleges scholarships. Michigan Excellence in Education Foundation and the Detroit Regional Chamber also help fund the Promise program.	Students must be: (a) Detroit residents; (b) attend any public, charter, alternative or private high school within city limits for at least their junior and senior years; (c) receive a high school diploma or GED; (d) complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). There is no grade point average or standard testing requirement.	The first cohort of students enrolled in fall 2016. Early findings from the evaluation show that the program is helping these students stay enrolled (full-time) in technical college.	The Detroit Promise Pathway connects students with a college coach/mentor, transportation vouchers, and summer programs that help students succeed and increase retention.	"Last-dollar" funding model in which the City helps close the gap between (Tuition + Fees) - (Pell Grants + other local, state, and federal aid) = more students enrolling in and graduating from technical colleges, more educated employees, better business climate, and greater tax revenue.

B. Seattle Promise Projected Costs³⁴

FAQs about Seattle Promise

3. What is the projected cost of Seattle Promise?

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	TOTAL
Tuition	\$1,393,088	\$2,070,346	\$2,319,386	\$2,377,371	\$2,436,805	\$2,497,725	\$2,560,168	\$15,654,889
Non-Tuition Support	\$337,745	\$501,798	\$562,020	\$575,940	\$590,208	\$604,824	\$619,788	\$3,792,323
College Prep & Persistence	\$2,121,742	\$2,397,238	\$2,573,388	\$2,658,113	\$2,745,789	\$2,836,485	\$2,930,342	\$18,263,097
Administration	\$393,909	\$385,965	\$402,479	\$419,707	\$437,681	\$456,433	\$475,997	\$2,972,171
TOTAL	\$4,246,483	\$5,355,348	\$5,857,273	\$6,031,131	\$6,210,482	\$6,395,467	\$6,586,295	\$40,682,480

seattlepromise.seattlecolleges.edu

³⁴ “More Than A Scholarship. A Partnership. powerpoint” Seattle Colleges | Seattle Promise.

C. Atlanta Technical College's Admission Requirements³⁵

Applicants are asked to submit the following information to the Admissions Office.

- A completed application for admission with a \$25 (nonrefundable) application fee.
- Applicants who have completed (C or better) a minimum of 30 semester or 45 semester hours at the degree level may submit official college transcripts in lieu of high school diploma or GED.
- Satisfactory scores on the SAT I, ACT, ASSET, or COMPASS placement test or a grade of C or better from an accredited post-secondary institution in English and math level 100 or higher. Algebra placement test scores are required for certain diploma programs and all degree programs. Test scores are considered valid for placement for a period of 5 years.

Applicants will be admitted with regular status to an associate degree program with the following SAT and ACT scores:

SAT	ACT
Reading: 25 (Old Score: 450)	English: 16
Writing and Language Test: 26 (Old Score: 450)	Reading: 17
Math: 24 (Old Score: 440)	Math: 19

³⁵ "Admission Requirements." Atlanta Technical College.

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/what-colleges-do-for-local-economies-a-direct-measure-based-on-consumption/https://atlantatech.edu/applynow/admission-requirements/>