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## **Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship** **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q1. What is the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship?**

The Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship is a **last dollar award** that provides tuition assistance for eligible students to attend one of Maryland's public **community colleges in the county the student resides**.

### **Q2. Who is eligible for the 2020-2021 Promise Scholarship?**

Students who graduated from **high school** on or after **January 1, 2019** and/or successfully completed a General Education Development (**GED**) in the State of Maryland on or before July 31, prior to the start of the Fall 2020 semester, and meet the following requirements:

- Enroll in a Maryland public community college as a candidate in:
  - a credit-bearing vocational certificate,
  - a credit-bearing certificate,
  - an associate degree program;
  - a sequence of credit or non-credit courses that leads to licensure or certification;
  - or
  - a registered apprenticeship program.
- Eligible for in-state tuition, as determined by the community college in accordance with Education Article, Title 15, Annotated Code;
- Earned an unweighted cumulative high school grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.3 at the end of the first semester of the students senior year of high school;
- Had an annual adjusted gross income of not more than:
  - \$100,000 if the applicant is single or resides in a single-parent household; or
  - \$150,000 if the applicant is married or resides in a two-parent household for the most recent tax year (2018) as defined by MHEC;
- Has not earned a bachelor's degree or an associate degree (or graduate degree or Ph.D.);
- Has not been awarded another educational grant or scholarship that covers the applicant's full cost of attendance at the community college; and
- Submit all documentation all required documentation to MHEC by **June 15, 2020**.

### **Q3. How do I remain eligible for the Promise Scholarship?**

Once awarded, a student must maintain eligibility by:

- Submitting the FAFSA or Maryland State Financial Aid Application (MSFAA) for students ineligible to receive federal aid but eligible for in-state tuition by March 1;
- Submit documentation, if required to **MHEC May 1, 2020**;
- Remaining eligible for in-state tuition;
- Completing at least 12 credits per semester if enrolled in credit bearing courses at the community college;
- Completing a minimum of 18 clock hours of instruction per week if enrolled in a sequence of credit or non-credit courses that leads to licensure or certification;
- Maintaining a college cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 in credit bearing courses;
- Maintaining satisfactory academic progress toward a credit-bearing vocational certificate, credit-bearing certificate, or associate degree; and
- Continuing to meet the income requirements.

**Q4. How many years am I eligible to receive the Promise Scholarship?**

Students can receive the scholarship for up to three years at the community college, as long as they continue to meet the eligibility requirements for renewing the award.

**Q5. If I am already enrolled at a community college can I still apply for the Promise Scholarship?**

Yes, as long as the student is within two years of graduating from high school or receiving a GED and meet all other eligibility requirements.

**Q6. Can homeschooled students apply for the Promise Scholarship?**

Yes. A homeschooled student must provide documentation indicating graduation from: (1) a public high school, (2) an MSDE-approved nonpublic school, (3) a religiously exempt school, or (4) an institution or other entity supervising home-school instruction.

See <http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/pages/dee/npsa/index.aspx>.

Alternatively, the applicant may demonstrate successful completion of a GED.

Homeschooled students must provide documentation to confirm they earned a cumulative unweighted high school GPA requirement of at least a 2.3 at the end of the first semester of the student's senior year of high school.

**Q7. What documentation is acceptable to verify that I meet the high school GPA requirement?**

Students may submit either a high school transcript or high school report that shows the cumulative grades earned at the end of the first semester of the student senior year in high school.

### **Q8. Who will verify that I meet the in-state tuition requirements?**

The community college the student is attending will confirm in-state tuition requirements and eligibility for the Promise Scholarship. For additional information regarding documentation that may be required, contact the community college you are planning to attend directly.

### **Q9. How can I be considered for the Promise Scholarship?**

For the 2020-2021 academic year, students must:

1. Complete either the FAFSA or MSFAA application
  - a. You are eligible to complete the **FAFSA** at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa> if you are a:
    - i. Permanent Resident
    - ii. Eligible non-citizen
    - iii. T Visa holder
  - b. You are eligible to complete the **MSFAA** if you are:
    - i. Undocumented
    - ii. Meet the non-resident exemption as described under §15–106.8. of the MD Education Article

For more information concerning how to complete the MSFAA click here (the link to the MSFAA FAQ sheet will go here). **The MSFAA is available online through the MDCAPS student portal at <https://mdcaps.mhec.state.md.us/MDCAPS/login.aspx?c=-8586543744589274723&ReturnUrl=/MDCAPS/int/FinAid/index.aspx>**

2. After completing the FAFSA or MSFAA, students will receive a notification (email/mail) from MHEC, if applicable, of the additional documentation that must be submitted for further consideration of the scholarship. Therefore, students must monitor their “Check Application Status” online in their MDCAPS student portal.

**Note there is NO separate application for students to complete to be considered for the Promise Scholarship.**

### **Q10. If I need to submit additional documentation for further consideration of the Promise Scholarship, what is the deadline and where do I submit my documentation?**

Any student that must submit additional documentation has until June 15, 2020 to submit all required documentation to MHEC. Failure to submit all required documentation by the deadline will result in the student not being considered for the scholarship.

All required documentation must be submitted to MHEC via mail at:

**Maryland Higher Education Commission  
Office of Student Financial Assistance  
6 N. Liberty Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201**

**Q11. Is there a deadline to complete the FAFSA or MSFAA for consideration of the Promise Scholarship?**

Yes, applicants must submit the FAFSA or MSFAA by March 1, 2020 for consideration of the Promise Scholarship.

**Q12. Is there a certain passing score I must receive on the GED to apply for the Promise Scholarship?**

No, applicants are not required to have a certain passing score on the GED. Applicants are only required to have successfully completed a GED in the State to be eligible for the scholarship.

**Q13. Does the Promise Scholarship consider “weighted” GPA for the high school GPA requirement?**

No. The *unweighted* cumulative high school GPA is used to determine qualification for the award.

**Q14. If I apply for the Promise Scholarship and submit all required documentation on-time, am I guaranteed to receive the scholarship?**

No, students who meet the eligibility requirements and apply by the deadline will be considered for the scholarship. Scholarships will be awarded to eligible recipients until funds are depleted.

**Q15. Do renewal recipients of the Promise Scholarship need to complete the FAFSA or MSFAA?**

Yes, in order to renew the Promise Scholarship renewal recipients must annually complete the FAFSA or MSFAA by March 1. Failure to complete the FAFSA or MSFAA by that date will result in the recipient being ineligible for the scholarship.

**Q16. Can I attend any Maryland Community College and receive the Promise Scholarship?**

Students must attend the community college located in the county (or, in the case of a regional community college, in the region) in which the student lives unless the community college located in the county or region where the student lives does not offer the degree or certification program in which the applicant wants to enroll, in which case they may enroll at any community college in Maryland that offers the program. Additionally, a student may attend any community college in Maryland that has an on-campus residential facility for students. Therefore, in most cases, students must attend the community college in the county in which they reside.

## Award Details

### **Q17. What is the award amount for the Promise Scholarship?**

The annual award amount is up to \$5,000 (\$2,500 per semester) per recipient, or actual tuition (after all non-loan aid is applied), whichever is less. The minimum award amount is \$200 annually (\$100 per semester).

### **Q18. Will awards be prioritized?**

Yes. Renewal students are prioritized over initial students as long as they continue to meet the eligibility requirements. Initial students are prioritized based on greatest demonstrated need.

### **Q19. Does the Promise Scholarship cover all community college cost?**

No. The Promise Scholarship helps pay for community college tuition (after all other non-loan aid has been applied). The Promise Scholarship does not cover other cost such as books, room, and board.

### **Q20. Are students who are dual enrolled in high school and the community college university eligible for the Promise Scholarship?**

No. A dually enrolled student is ineligible for the Promise Scholarship while enrolled in high school. However, once the student graduates from high school they can apply for the scholarship.

### **Q21. How will I be notified if I received the award?**

Students will be notified by email at the email address listed on their MDCAPS account if they have been awarded the Promise Scholarship. Also, students can monitor the status of their application online through their MDCAPS portal.

### **Q22. Before my award eligibility can be determined does my community college have to report anything to MHEC?**

Yes. Before MHEC can determine a student's award amount for the Promise Scholarship, the community college the student is attending must report the annual award amount of all non-loan aid the student is receiving and their annual tuition amount to MHEC. Once MHEC receives this information from the community college, a student's award eligibility can be determined.

### **Q23. Will I still receive the Promise Scholarship if my tuition is fully covered by federal, state, or institutional financial aid?**

No. If a student's tuition is fully covered by federal, institutional, state, or any other non-loan aid source; the student is **ineligible** for the Promise Scholarship, because the student has no unmet need. The Promise scholarship is a last dollar award, awarded to student after all non-loan aid has been applied.

**Q24. If a student is selected for the federal verification process, when will I receive the Promise Scholarship?**

Since the Promise Scholarship is a last dollar award a student's award amount is calculated after all non-loan aid has been applied. Therefore, any student selected for the federal verification process must submit all required documentation to their community college and complete the process, before MHEC can determine the student's eligibility.

After the student satisfies the federal verification requirement with the community college and the community college reports the student's non-loan aid and annual tuition amounts to MHEC, the student's award eligibility be determined for the Promise scholarship.

**Q25. When will awarding occur for the 2020-2021 academic year?**

Awarding for the 2020-2021 award year will occur by August 1, 2020. Applicants should continue to monitor their MDCAPS account for updates.

## **Information for Undocumented Students**

**Q26. Are undocumented students eligible for the Promise Scholarship?**

Yes, if they qualify for in-state tuition. Students must meet all eligibility requirements for the scholarship and qualify for in-state tuition under §15-106.8 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, available

here: <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/fmStatutesText.aspx?pid=&tab=subject5&stab=&ys=2018RS&article=ged&section=15-106.8&ext=html&session=2018RS>

Undocumented students must complete the Maryland State Financial Aid Application (MSFAA) (instead of the FAFSA) and complete the Promise Scholarship application online through the MDCAPS portal.

**Q27. Where can I find more information on the eligibility requirements for in-state tuition requirements for undocumented students?**

The requirements are set forth in §15-106.8 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, available

here: <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/fmStatutesText.aspx?pid=&tab=subject5&stab=&ys=2018RS&article=ged&section=15-106.8&ext=html&session=2018RS>

*You should consult your institution with questions.*

## **Q28. How do I complete the MSFAA?**

You may complete the MSFAA online through the Maryland College Aid Processing System (MDCAPS) at <https://mdcaps.mhec.state.md.us/MDCAPS/login.aspx?c=-8586522852886551316&ReturnUrl=/MDCAPS/int/FinAid/index.aspx>

**The MSFAA application will be available on November 15, 2019 for the 2020-2021 application cycle.**

## **Service Obligation Requirements**

### **Q29. What is the service requirement for the Promise Scholarship?**

A student of the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship must sign an agreement at the time of receiving the award to work full-time (at least 35 hours per week) within one year after:

- Earning the vocational certificate, certificate, or associate's degree;
- Completing a sequence of non-credit courses that lead to licensure or certification; or
- Completing a registered apprenticeship program.

The student must continue to reside in Maryland and use an address in the state as reported on the recipient's state income tax return, while maintaining employment for at least 1 year for each year the scholarship was awarded. (The student may be employed outside of the State of Maryland to satisfy the service requirement, but must continue to live in Maryland).

If the student fails to fulfill the service obligation and secure employment, the award will convert into a loan payable to the state.

### **Q30. Why do I need to sign a Promissory Note and Service Obligation Agreement before my award can be disbursed to the community college?**

Once a student is awarded the Promise Scholarship, the disbursement of the award is contingent upon the recipient signing both the Promissory Note and Service Obligation Agreement.

A student awarded the scholarship must sign the promissory note and service obligation agreement, agreeing to work within one year after earning the credit-bearing vocational certificate, credit-bearing certificate, or associate degree; or licensure certification; or completing a registered apprenticeship program.

If the student fails to sign the Promissory Note and Service Obligation Agreement agreeing to the requirements of the scholarship, they are ineligible for the award.

### **Q31. If I receive the Promise Scholarship award and transfer to another college/university before earning a credential; will my scholarship award convert into a loan?**

Yes, if a student is awarded the Promise Scholarship and transfers to another college or university **before** earning at least 48 hours while enrolled at the community college, the scholarship converts to a loan that must be repaid to the State of Maryland.

**Q32. Am I eligible to defer my service obligation requirement?**

A recipient of the Promise Scholarship can defer their service obligation requirement if:

- Enrolled full-time (12 or more credits per semester) or part-time (6-11 credits per semester) in a credit-bearing course of study at any post-secondary institution;
- If the recipient has earned at least 48 credits while enrolled at the community college and transfers to a 4-year institution before earning a degree;
- On a temporary leave of absence, approved by the employer in the required employment field, for a period not to exceed 12 months;
- Temporarily disabled, as determined by a licensed physician, in a manner that substantially impairs the recipient's ability to perform the service obligation, for a period not to exceed 3 years;
- Unable to maintain employment, for a period not to exceed 12 months, because the recipient must care for a spouse or child who is disabled;
- Assigned military duty outside of the state, not to exceed 3 years without filing an appeal;  
or
- Married to a spouse assigned military duty outside of the state, not to exceed 3 years without filing an appeal.