

Policy Brief

COLLEGE PROMISE

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Learnings and Reflections from the CoPro2.0 Second Annual Grantee Convening

COLLEGE PROMISE POLICY & RESEARCH TEAM

CoPro2.0, a grantmaking initiative funded by The Kresge Foundation, aims to shape programs that prioritize equity, financial sustainability, integration into local economic development efforts, and responsiveness to changing federal policies. The initiative has eleven grantees, including organizations such as the Detroit Regional Chamber Foundation, Growing Inland Achievement, HOPE Toledo, Richmond Promise, Tennessee College Access and Success Network, Bipartisan Policy Center, WestEd, The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS), Rise Education Fund, State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), National Conference of State Legislatures (NSCL), and W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. College Promise serves as the managing partner of the cohort, with support from UBUNTU for evaluation and research.



The cohort's overarching goals are as follows:

- Advance equity and dismantle systemic racism;
- Improve postsecondary outcomes for historically underserved groups;
- Strengthen the capacity of community colleges to serve their local communities;
- And foster partnerships to maximize program impact and promote sustainability in any policy climate.

The CoPro2.0 grantee cohort's 2023 Annual Convening took place on May 22 and 23 at Foothill College in California

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The event brought together a diverse group of participants to shape the future of the College Promise movement and over the course of two days, collaborative efforts were undertaken to develop strategies that would contribute to the expansion and sustainability of the movement. During the convening, participants aimed to:

- Create Deeper Connections and Relationships - Provide partners with an opportunity to develop longer-term thought partner relationships with one another
- Foster Rejuvenation & Connection - Connect partners to the larger national college promise movement, emphasizing education for social mobility and generational wealth building;
- Learn from Each Other - Acquire new knowledge and insights that positively impact their work and can be implemented within the next few months.



In addition to cohort members, the event welcomed local students and regional thought leaders. Together, they engaged in discussions on emerging trends and pressing issues that affect communities, programs, and policies. By incorporating multiple perspectives, valuable insights were gained to inform collective efforts.

Throughout the convening, participants were challenged to identify common trends, successes, and challenges across their focus areas of program innovation and redesign; research on financial sustainability; and, strategic local implementation. For many, this offered a rare opportunity to learn from and collaborate with stakeholders from other sectors. National leaders heard directly from local programs and partners about issues at the grassroots level. Through these cross-sector team activities, the cohort identified several key factors that exist and impact the Promise movement at the local, state, and national levels, including the following:

Identified Challenges:

- Financial sustainability - Institutions should align their offerings with partner colleges, communicate ROI effectively, embrace external sourcing for expertise and funding, access flexible funding options, and use data-driven decision-making to optimize financial models and ensure long-term viability.
- Wraparound Supports - Addressing support challenges involves strategic outreach, fundraising efforts, data collection systems, staff development, awareness campaigns, policy compliance, efficiency optimization, transparency, outcome analysis, and rigorous evaluation processes.

- Other Potential Roadblocks - There are several roadblocks that institutions may run into including raising awareness, funding, identifying students, staffing, federal/state policies, time and capacity, institutional inertia, and a lack of an integrated upfront evaluation.

Strategies Moving Forward:

- Financial Sustainability - Organizations should engage businesses and organizations in the community, address policies that penalize educational achievement, establish partnerships between different educational levels, enhance storytelling through student expression, and involve students in problem-solving.
- Promise Program Design - Educational institutions should evaluate current structures, consider statewide tuition models, maintain a college-focused approach, define eligibility requirements, determine funding responsibility, and advocate for statewide or regional funding models.
- Promise Program Implementation - Institutions can utilize tools and strategies such as streamlining the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) process. This involves simplifying administrative procedures and legal agreements to facilitate collaboration between institutions. Additionally, implementing a cross-segmental and cross-sector longitudinal data system that spans Pre-K, K-12, post-secondary, and workforce sectors allows for comprehensive data collection and analysis, enabling better tracking of student progress and outcomes across different stages of education and employment.



In conclusion, the participants at the CoPro2.0 grantee cohort's Annual Convening gained a deeper understanding of each other's work and the collaborative efforts required to advance the national College Promise movement. The gathering reinforced the group's commitment to the crucial relationship between policy and programmatic success, ultimately aiming to enhance student outcomes. Moreover, the convening highlighted the significance of prioritizing equity across the diverse range of practices represented by the cohort members. Although each organization may approach equity differently through their respective policies, research, and program designs, they all share a common objective of empowering future generations with successful and fulfilling careers and lives. By coming together, these collective efforts will shape the trajectory of students and workers, ensuring a brighter future for all.