

## Appendix B: Methodology and Full Results

A central question of this research report is, “What is the difference between the total federal and state grant aid that a community college student receives under a state promise program and what they would receive under America’s College Promise?” Most state promise programs are last-dollar, meaning they cover the balance of tuition and fees that remains after other grant aid has been applied, mainly federal and state aid.<sup>1</sup> America’s College Promise eliminates tuition and fees before any grants are accounted for, meaning all grant aid becomes available for non-tuition expenses.

The data source for this analysis is the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2017-18 Administrative Collection (NPSAS:18-AC). This survey of student administrative records, collected by the National Center on Education Statistics, is particularly useful because it features representative samples of the public two-year sectors in a large number of states (36), including many that have recently introduced promise programs. NPSAS-AC is the first edition of NPSAS with such breadth of state-representative samples, and it features extensive data on students’ financial aid and tuition derived from colleges and federal sources.

I selected states for this sample using the following criteria: (1) The state must have a prominent, statewide promise program that covers community college tuition through a last-dollar format.<sup>2</sup> (2) It must have a representative sample for community college students in NPSAS:18-AC.

The images below illustrate how this report’s analysis is derived from NPSAS:18-AC data. First, we apply filters to identify promise-eligible students in each state. We can then calculate average values of financial aid, tuition, and net tuition. Then, for states that did *not* have an active program in 2017-18, we calculate average values for four subgroups (see Figure B1 below). For states that *did* have an active program in 2017-18, we can only calculate average values for two subgroups (see Figure B2 below.)

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<sup>1</sup> Many students at four-year colleges also receive grant aid from institutional or private sources. However, community college students do not typically receive institutional grant aid or private grant aid. Among public two-year students in 2017-18, the average amount of institutional grant aid was just \$75, and the average amount of private grant aid was just \$34. I include these in the analysis by using the variable “total grant aid” (TOTGRT), but semantically, I refer to federal and state aid as the major sources of community college student aid. Source: NPSAS:18-AC, accessible using Datalab retrieval code *blxmid*.

<sup>2</sup> Importantly, the state did not need to have an active promise program in 2017-18. The student population that year represents projections of who would likely be eligible, using the programs’ published eligibility rules.

Figure B1: Analysis for Michigan, Nevada, and New Jersey

*Of the community college students who are eligible for their state's promise program:*

**Group A:** Would not receive scholarship money from their promise program (i.e. non-promise grants cover tuition)

**Group B:** Would receive scholarship money from their promise program (i.e. non-promise grants do not cover tuition)

**Group C:** Pell recipients

**Group D:** Pell non-recipients

For each group and for all eligible students, derive from NPSAS:

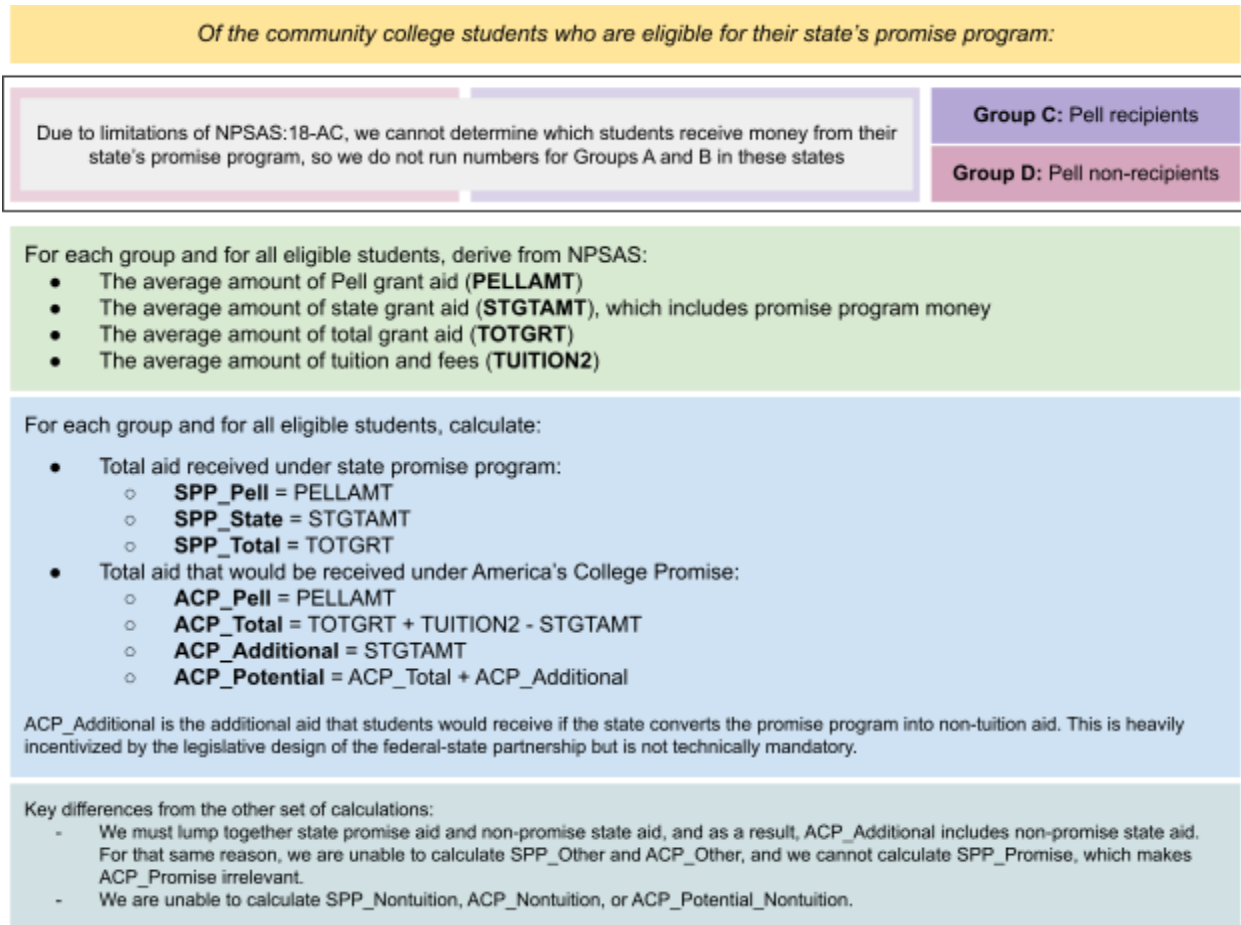
- The average amount of Pell grant aid (**PELLAMT**)
- The average amount of total grant aid (**TOTGRT**)
- The average amount of tuition and fees (**TUITION2**)
- The average amount of net tuition after subtracting all grants, set to \$0 if negative (**NETCST9**)

For each group and for all eligible students, calculate:

- Total aid received under state promise program:
  - **SPP\_Pell** = PELLAMT
  - **SPP\_Promise** = NETCST9
  - **SPP\_Other** = TOTGRT - PELLAMT
  - **SPP\_Total** = TOTGRT + NETCST9
  - **SPP\_Nontuition** = TOTGRT - TUITION2 for Group A, C, and D, \$0 for Group B
- Total aid that would be received under America's College Promise:
  - **ACP\_Pell** = PELLAMT
  - **ACP\_Promise** = TUITION2
  - **ACP\_Other** = TOTGRT - PELLAMT
  - **ACP\_Total** = TOTGRT + TUITION2
  - **ACP\_Nontuition** = ACP\_Total - TUITION2
  - **ACP\_Additional** = SPP\_Promise
  - **ACP\_Potential** = ACP\_Total + ACP\_Additional
  - **ACP\_Potential\_Nontuition** = ACP\_Potential - ACP\_Promise

ACP\_Additional is the additional aid that students would receive if the state converts the promise program into non-tuition aid. This is heavily incentivized by the legislative design of the federal-state partnership but is not technically mandatory.

Figure B2: Analysis for New York, Oregon, and Tennessee



It is worth noting that we have no way to account for changes in the types of students who enroll after a state promise program is enacted, or who would theoretically enroll under a nationwide zero-tuition guarantee such as America's College Promise. We also cannot account for possible bottlenecks in who participates in a promise program, such as applications, qualifying coursework, or a required length of residency in the state beyond one year. Because of these factors, this analysis likely includes students who would not actually participate in the promise program.

The tables with full results are in [this Google Sheets file](#).