

2019 SNAPSHOT

DALLAS, TEXAS

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OVERVIEW

Dallas County Promise is a collaborative effort among school districts, community colleges, universities and industry to increase college completion rates, particularly among low-income and first-generation students, to meet workforce needs for the growing economy in the region. Launched in fall 2017, Dallas County Promise is a scholarship provided by the Dallas County Community College District Foundation that covers the cost of tuition in partnership with matching university scholarships that are provided by University of North Texas at Dallas and other partner public and private institutions for pathways aligned to high-demand jobs.¹ Lead partners include the Commit Partnership, Dallas County Community College District Foundation, Dallas County Community College District, University of North Texas at Dallas and JPMorgan Chase & Co. Dallas County Promise is housed within the Commit Partnership, a coalition of more than 200 partners in Dallas County working to help solve the region's biggest systemic challenges in education, including early childhood, college completion and educator effectiveness.² The challenge in this case is the tale of two counties: Dallas County is among the fastest growing economies in the country, but it is plagued by poverty levels that have increased 42 percent over the past 15 years.³ A mismatch in workforce needs and supply and a gap in education opportunity are driving forces for the community.

The initiative is part of a broader regional response to 60x30TX, the state's higher education strategic plan, which includes four goals: By 2030 at least 60 percent of Texans ages 25 to 34 will earn a certificate or degree; at least 550,000 students in that year will complete a certificate or an associate, bachelor's or master's degree from a Texas institution of higher education; graduates will have identifiable marketable skills regardless of major; and undergraduate student loan debt will not exceed 60 percent of first-year wages for graduates of Texas public institutions.⁴

In 2018, the JPMorgan Chase New Skills for Youth initiative invested \$3 million to support the efforts of Dallas County Promise to meet the goals of 60x30TX by providing students with the necessary education and skills to secure well-paying, high-demand careers in growing local industries.⁵

JPMORGAN CHASE NEW SKILLS FOR YOUTH INITIATIVE

Launched in 2016, New Skills for Youth⁶ is a \$75 million, five-year global initiative aimed at transforming how cities and states ensure that young people are career ready. The overarching goals of the initiative are to:

- Dramatically increase the number of students who successfully complete career pathways that begin in secondary school and culminate in postsecondary degrees or credentials tied to high-wage, high-demand jobs; and
- Catalyze transformational approaches to the design and delivery of programs and policies to increase students' career readiness and disseminate lessons learned around the world.

This snapshot is part of a series documenting the progress of the local investments from across the globe that aim to identify and implement the most promising ideas in career education, with a special focus on communities with the greatest needs.

THE DALLAS COUNTY PROMISE INITIATIVE

Dallas County Promise is built around three key strategies:

- Providing tuition-free college, which removes the financial barrier to college and transforms students' perspectives on college access;
- Providing success coaching and mentoring, which gives critical supports to students who are primarily low income and first generation, beginning in high school through college completion and into the workforce; and
- Building career pathways and an information technology system that tracks student progress across education and workforce pathways and drives continuous improvement through real-time reporting.

The New Skills for Youth investment is providing the Commit Partnership with an opportunity to scale and enhance those three key strategies by:

- Providing technical assistance to participating high schools;
- Developing workforce/career pathways strategies; and
- Enhancing data capabilities.

Dallas County Promise is only part of the way through year one of the implementation timeline for the New Skills for Youth initiative, but it has already made headway on a number of fronts and can point to encouraging results from the first cohort of scholarship recipients. Three themes stand out in the Dallas County Promise initiative: efforts to significantly scale the scholarship model, giving a greater number of students in the region access to postsecondary education; a strong emphasis on helping students navigate the maze of the postsecondary transition; and a focus on building a shared vision among stakeholders.

Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 are demonstrating strong initial results across all indicators

	Promise Pledge	Financial Aid	Enrollment	Retention
Cohort 1 2018 HS Grads 31 High Schools 9,300 HS Seniors >8 US States	96% of eligible students signed the Promise Pledge	↑7% 67% by June 30, 2018 Ranked #4 US State \$3M New PELL Dollars	↑6% Overall ↑35% UNT DALLAS ↑30%	↑12% DCCCD 82% Fall to Spring
Cohort 2 2019 HS Grads 43 High Schools 16,500 HS Seniors >12 US States	98% of eligible students signed the Promise Pledge	↑7% 60% by March 15, 2019 Ranked #2 US State \$4.5M New PELL Dollars		

Source: Dallas County Promise

Scaling the Initiative

In fall 2018, Dallas County Promise launched its second year with a strong push for increasing participation. The number of schools participating in year two increased from 31 to 43, spanning 10 school districts and reaching nearly 17,000 high school seniors. Ninety-eight percent of those seniors signed the Promise Pledge. Postsecondary partners include University of North Texas at Dallas, Southern Methodist University, Texas A&M University – Commerce and Midwestern State University, as well as 11 additional colleges and universities.

Partners also launched a Parent Promise scholarship on a small scale to offer parents of 2019 high school seniors tuition toward a certificate or an associate degree in a limited number of high-demand career pathways at a Dallas County community college. The Parent Promise is limited to parents of students at a subset of high schools that represent the most economically disadvantaged areas with low postsecondary degree attainment.

STEPS TO RECEIVING PROMISE TUITION AND SUCCESS COACH

THE PROMISE INCLUDES THREE STEPS:

- 1** The student must first pledge and apply to a Promise partner college.
- 2** The student is then required to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and list a Promise partner college OR submit the Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) to the college.
- 3** Finally, the student must register for classes at a Promise partner college for the fall semester.

DALLAS COUNTY PROMISE PARTNERS

LEAD PARTNERS: Commit Partnership, Dallas County Community College District Foundation, Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD), University of North Texas at Dallas, JPMorgan Chase

UNIVERSITY PARTNERS: Austin College, Brookhaven College – DCCCD, Cedar Valley College – DCCCD, Eastfield College – DCCCD, El Centro College – DCCCD, Midwestern State University, Mountain View College – DCCCD, North Lake College – DCCCD, Paul Quinn College, Prairie View A&M University, Richland College – DCCCD, Southern Methodist University, Texas A&M University – Commerce, Texas A&M University—Texarkana, Texas Woman’s University, University of North Texas at Dallas

SCHOOL DISTRICT PARTNERS: Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, Cedar Hill Independent School District (ISD), Dallas ISD, DeSoto ISD, Duncanville ISD, Garland ISD, Grand Prairie ISD, Irving ISD, Lancaster ISD, Mesquite ISD, Richardson ISD

WORKFORCE PARTNERS: Dallas Regional Chamber, Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas, United Way Metropolitan Dallas

SCHOLARSHIP PARTNERS: Tom Joyner Foundation, YTexas

Providing resources and supports to schools.

Dallas County Promise hosted a summer institute to onboard schools participating in the first full year of implementation of the program, and it connects participating schools through monthly network meetings. A program website provides information, including slide decks, checklists and videos, for students, parents and educators. Schools also receive print marketing materials in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. Armed with a timeline for each of the three steps, the individual schools then build out a process for implementing the program.

Enhancing data capabilities. A big push on the implementation front thus far has been building a data infrastructure through Greenlight Credentials and Salesforce with the support of the EdFi Alliance and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation. This infrastructure will give participating partners access to student data along the full continuum from K-12 to postsecondary and the workforce. The technology has already been built and is ready to deploy. The heavy lift is to continue working on building trust in a system that has a long history of using data punitively. The Commit Partnership also needs to fully build out the processes for using the technology, such as ensuring student information security, crafting memoranda of understanding to share information to support the school-to-work journey for every student, developing processes for collecting and inputting data in a standardized way and creating toolkits for users.

Developing workforce/career pathways strategies.

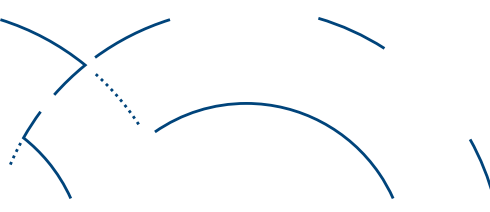
Dallas County Promise is turning its attention to building a mentoring program to help students identify a career pathway. It began the work by hosting focus groups of students and convening business leaders through the Dallas Regional Chamber to identify strategies for



providing students with meaningful mentoring experiences that include social connection and networking. The program is being tested with an inaugural cohort of 100 students and business mentors who were part of the original convenings and includes beta-testing of a technology component to more easily connect students with mentors given the geographic size of the county.

Dallas County Promise partners are also addressing a host of other issues as the program expands. For example, partners are working on strengthening communication and messaging. The work has many moving parts and many partners involved in the initiative. The Commit Partnership and other lead partners acknowledge the importance of a communications infrastructure that ensures consistent messaging across stakeholders so that everyone from reception through senior-level leadership uses common language with students and families.

As implementation progresses, there is also collective understanding among partners to focus attention on effectively scaling the program, especially given the growing popularity of the program at the high school level and the spike in enrollments at the postsecondary level. Partners across the spectrum are identifying and sharing potential challenges and areas to address to successfully serve the large number of students signing the Promise, including ensuring school-level capacity to help students and families understand the Promise and navigate the process; ensuring that postsecondary institutions have adequate space to serve the students enrolling, particularly if trends hold from the first cohort and students attend non-neighborhood community colleges; and identifying an adequate number of business partners to meaningfully support students in their career pathways.



Helping Students Navigate the “Maze”

For Dallas County Promise, the secret sauce is grounding strategies in student experiences and input. This work is accomplished by mapping needs and aligning solutions. A significant focus of the early phase of work has been to engage directly with students — to walk in their shoes to better understand the barriers to progressing to and through the postsecondary pipeline and then craft solutions to help students overcome those barriers. Partners rely heavily on student experience surveys, as well as one-on-one and group interactions with students. Partners, for example, learned a great deal about the barriers students and families face when navigating the FAFSA/TASFA financial aid forms, particularly for immigrant families and/or students whose parents do not file federal taxes. Armed with this information, the Commit Partnership and its partners are focusing on building knowledge among teachers, counselors, postsecondary leaders, employers and policymakers about the barriers students face and communicating with families and students about the opportunities available for postsecondary education. Another barrier that participating partners learned about through students: the state-required meningitis immunization, which was a financial barrier for many students to enter college. Partners are addressing this barrier through policy levers, introducing bills in the state legislature to cover the cost and provide the immunization in high school.

**“Before Promise, I didn’t get the relevance of the PSAT, and then I used that one test to tell myself I couldn’t go to college.”
—Promise Student**

**“We help learners navigate the maze between K-12 and college, and we also focus on how to make the maze simpler.”
—Commit Partnership Staff Member**

A key strategy for helping students navigate the maze is the success coach component of the Dallas County Promise, managed by the Dallas County Community College District. Success coaches work directly with students once they are enrolled in college, helping them to stay on track.

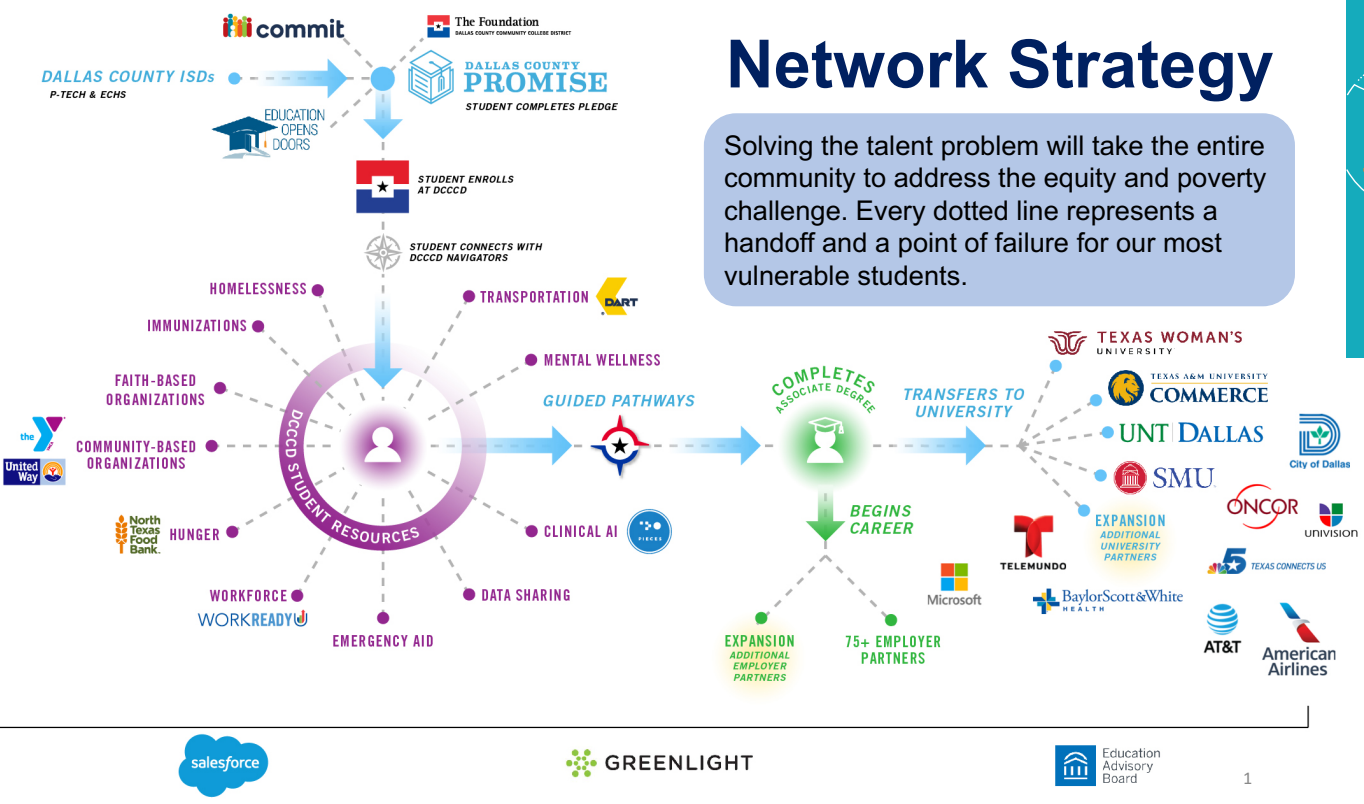
Communication is generally via text and is two way, addressing whatever needs students have; making sure students are on track with timelines related to the Promise program, such as financial aid deadlines and course enrollment; and sharing information, such as labor market figures or job opportunities.

Building a Shared Vision

Much of the work of the Dallas County Promise is building trust and collaboration among and across stakeholders that traditionally operate in silos. A shared vision and commitment among organizational leaders aims to focus on individual students instead of the systems that serve them — a focus on “the one.” Dallas County Promise is part of a larger network approach aimed at easing the transition from high school to college to the workplace. The message of the Dallas County Promise as “free college tuition” is resonating, and momentum is building around the broader vision for leveraging existing resources to support students, families and employers to grow the community. At Dallas County Community College District, for example, a network approach provides wraparound services for students to ensure success, addressing a host of issues from mental wellness to transportation to hunger, homelessness and immunizations. Another example

Network Strategy

Solving the talent problem will take the entire community to address the equity and poverty challenge. Every dotted line represents a handoff and a point of failure for our most vulnerable students.



Source: Dallas County Community College District

is the new partnership between University of North Texas at Dallas and YTexas, a statewide business network for companies relocating to Texas.⁷ The university and YTexas are developing a 12-month leadership academy that will connect Promise students with CEOs. The goal of the

academy is to identify students who can fill positions in companies moving to Texas. The partners plan to pilot the academy at University of North Texas at Dallas and then scale statewide.

LOOKING FORWARD

Dallas County Promise is early in the implementation timeline for the New Skills for Youth grant and will continue to move forward on the overarching goals to provide technical assistance to schools, further develop career pathways strategies, and expand and enhance data capabilities. In addition, the partners have plans to scope potential expansion opportunities in adjacent regions such as Fort Worth and explore if and how to expand to additional populations, such as opportunity youth or adult populations. The Commit Partnership is also serving as a resource for replication efforts in San Antonio, Houston and Austin.



“At the heart of this work is a partnership model. Our vision is to be a pathway to social mobility. And we know we can’t do it alone.”
—*University Partner*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ENDNOTES

¹ For more information about the Dallas County Community College District, see <https://www.dcccd.edu/pages/default.aspx>.

² For more information about the Commit Partnership, see <https://commitpartnership.org>.

³ <http://dallascountypromise.org/about>

⁴ <http://www.60x30tx.com>

⁵ <https://www.jpmorganchase.com/corporate/news/pr/jpmc-invests-3mm-to-prepare-dallas-students-for-high-demand-careers.htm>

⁶ For more information about New Skills for Youth, see <https://www.jpmorganchase.com/corporate/news/stories/newskillsforyouth.htm>.

⁷ For more information about YTexas, see <https://ytexas.com>.