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Tennessee Promise Students Have More Successful Higher Education Outcomes

The Tennessee Comptroller's latest evaluation of the Tennessee Promise program shows that Promise students are earning more credits, are retained, and earn awards at higher rates than non-Promise students who enroll at the same schools.

These statistics are revealed as part of the Comptroller's Office of Research and Education Accountability's regular evaluation of the effectiveness of the Promise program.

Since 2015, Tennessee Promise has given eligible high school graduates the opportunity to earn an associate degree, certificate, or technical diploma free of tuition and mandatory fees. More than \$186 million in Promise scholarships have been paid out since 2015.



While the Promise is a last-dollar scholarship that pays tuition and mandatory fees, it does not cover other costs such as textbooks, supplies, tools, lab fees, and other program-specific fees. The Comptroller's evaluation found that a Promise student at a community college may pay at least \$1,000 per year in out-of-pocket expenses. Students attending a Tennessee College of Applied Technology may pay as much as \$3,100 out-of-pocket.

The Comptroller's report includes a number of specific conclusions. Researchers found the Promise program is effective overall, but that enrollment, retention, and attainment gaps exist among certain populations of students.

The evaluation also determined that the most common reason that Tennessee Promise applicants are not eligible for the program is due to their failure to meet an initial requirement to complete eight hours of community service.

The Comptroller's report offers several policy options that may help increase access to Promise, retention of Promise students, and higher credential attainment.

To read the 2024 evaluation, please visit the Comptroller's website at: tncot.cc/orea.

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