

Deadline nears for L.A. College Promise program

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Contributing Writer

LOS ANGELES — Starting this year, seniors in the Los Angeles Unified School District can apply for a free year of community college, regardless of their grade point average or financial standing.

Applications are due May 1 for priority registration to the Los Angeles College Promise program, a partnership with the city of Los Angeles, LAUSD and the nine colleges that make up the Los Angeles County Community College District (LACCD).

To qualify, a student must be a 2017 graduate of an LAUSD school or charter, enroll as a full-time student for the 2017-18 school year and complete a free application for federal student aid and/or a fee waiver application.

Although similar programs exist in California and nationwide, “College Promise” is the largest and the first to involve a major metropolitan city, according to the LAUSD.

“Since the L.A. Community College District is the largest in the county, it would make sense for L.A. to take on a leadership role for this type of program,” said David Ysaia, the manager of public relations and communications at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College.

The program was inspired by



Mayor Eric Garcetti announces the L.A. College Promise last September at Los Angeles City College. The program offers a free year of community college tuition for Los Angeles Unified School District seniors who graduate from high school, beginning in June. Students will be able to attend any of the nine Los Angeles Community College District campuses under the program.

Courtesy photo

a 2015 effort by President Barack Obama, who proposed two free years at community college.

“It’s been a movement that spread across the country,” said Michelle Long-Coffee, a spokesperson for West Los Angeles College.

At West L.A. College, students will receive additional benefits, including the option to participate in Summer Bridge, an eight-week program running from June 19 to Aug. 11 to ease the transition from high school to college. Attendees will take a

math and English class that can count toward their graduation credits.

Other benefits include assistance completing financial forms to receive aid for a second year of community college or to put towards a four-year institution.

Students also will get priority registration for classes and sessions with counselors to help them set up a schedule.

Long-Coffee said the individualized attention is important for students because “sometimes there’s a backlog in counseling

or sometimes they don’t even know they need to see a counselor.”

She stressed the necessity for prospective L.A. College Promise applicants to meet the May 1 deadline. Otherwise, she said, while they can still qualify for the program, they may lose the priority registration benefit.

Last fall, Vice President Joe Biden and his wife Jill visited L.A. City College for the launch of the program. Mayor Eric Garcetti also showed his commitment by raising donations through the Mayor’s Fund for Los Angeles. Donors included business, educational and philanthropic organizations.

Although L.A. College Promise is an initiative of the Obama administration, Long-Coffee said she hopes the new administration will carry on the legacy.

“President Trump has spoken about putting ‘America First’ and the importance of community colleges and job growth,” she said. “So hopefully he’ll think it’s a good idea.”

West Los Angeles College, 9000 Overland Ave., Culver City, is holding an information session about the program at 6 p.m. April 18.

L.A. Southwest College, 1600 W. Imperial Highway, will hold information sessions from 10 to 11 a.m. April 15 and 6 to 7 p.m. April 24 and 26 in Multipurpose Room 127 in the School of Career and Technical Education.