Columbia College Foundation plans Promise Program expansion

The Columbia College Foundation is pleased to announce an exciting expansion of its **Columbia College Promise** for local high school seniors enrolling at Columbia College. Starting in Fall 2020, the Promise program will make it possible for every qualified local public high school graduate to attend Columbia College fulltime, tuition free, for **two full years** of consecutive semesters if they enroll immediately after graduation. The **program service area will also expand** to include high school graduates throughout the college service area which includes Oakdale and Waterford, and to Mariposa and Calaveras, both adjacent rural high school districts.

"Thanks to additional funding now available through the state's California Promise program, the Foundation is very pleased to expand the program to cover a second year of college and a larger geographical area," said Foundation President Colette Such. "We're incredibly grateful to our private donors who helped us launch and sustain the Columbia College Promise, and to the college for continuing to invest this new state funding in this exceptionally successful program. "

In 2018, the program's first year, 185 local high school graduates took advantage of the free tuition offer. Demonstrating the program's success, in 2019, full time enrollment of local high school graduates expanded to 214 students. In Tuolumne County, the response has been especially successful with more than 45% of Sonora High's Class and 50% of Summerville and Tioga High School's Class enrolling as fulltime students and taking advantage of the free tuition offer.

Though still in its infancy, the Columbia College Promise program is already exceeding expectations.

"We have been overwhelmed with the response to this program and are encouraged with its growing success. It is clear that we are meeting an important need in our community," Such said.

Columbia College President Santanu Bandyopadhyay added his support. "We are grateful for the financial support of private donors that launched this program and are pleased that the College can support program expansion.   We are confident that the Promise program will contribute greatly to the College's goal of building an educated work force. When the community and the college work together, great things happen. "

The goal of the Promise program is to remove the tuition barrier that often stops promising young high school graduates from pursuing their education while connecting them to support services to help ensure success. The intent is to increase the number of local high school graduates who attend Columbia College, thereby boosting the population of workforce-ready young adults who complete a degree, certificate or training program, or successfully transfer to a 4-year college.

Additional information on the program expansion will be posted on the Columbia College website and Facebook pages, and will be available to families in October, through their school counselors.

While state funding has allowed the Promise expansion, local donor support is still an essential element to keep the program going. As with all programs of this nature, continuation is dependent on the availability of state funding, support from the college, and donations from generous contributors.

Contributions for the Promise Scholarship program and other Foundation projects are always welcome. To join the effort or learn more, contact Amy Nilson, Director of Development at Columbia College at (209) 588-5055 or nilsona@yosemite.edu or visit www.gocolumbia.edu/foundation.

Columbia College Foundation, founded in 1972, is a nonprofit organization that promotes quality higher education that enriches the academic, economic, and cultural life of our community. The mission is to promote student success by providing community resources that support and expand educational opportunities for Columbia College students.