

# Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## Eligibility Requirements

### **Q. What is the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship?**

The Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship is a **last dollar** award that provides tuition assistance for eligible applicants to attend one of Maryland's public **community colleges**.

### **Q. Who is eligible for the Promise Scholarship? What are the eligibility requirements?**

A high school graduate or GED recipient who is planning to enroll, or is currently enrolled, at a Maryland community college as a candidate in:

- a credit-bearing vocational certificate;
- a credit-bearing certificate;
- an associate degree program;
- a sequence of credit or non-credit courses that leads to licensure or certification;
- or
- a registered apprenticeship program.
- Applicants must be eligible for in-state tuition, as determined by the community college in accordance with Title 15 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland;
- High school applicants must have earned an unweighted cumulative GPA of at least a 2.3 (or its equivalent):
  - At the end of the first semester of their senior year in high school; or
  - At the end of their senior year in high school.
- Applicants currently or previously enrolled at a community college must have earned either:
  - a cumulative GPA of at least a 2.5 from the community college; or
  - a high school unweighted cumulative GPA of at least a 2.3 or its equivalent at the end of the first semester or end of their senior year in high school

**(Applicants should submit an official or unofficial high school OR community college transcript)**

- Applicants whose annual adjusted gross income was not more than:
  - \$100,000 if the applicant is single or resides in a single-parent household; or
  - \$150,000 if the applicant is married or resides in a two-parent household for the 2018 tax year as defined by MHEC;
- Applicants who have not earned a bachelor's degree or an associate degree; and
- Applicants who have not been awarded other educational grants or scholarships that cover the applicants' full cost of attendance at community colleges.

**Q. How do I remain eligible for the Promise Scholarship?**

Once awarded, an applicant must maintain eligibility by:

- annually completing the FAFSA or MSFAA by March 1;
- continuing to remain eligible for in-state tuition;
- continuing to enroll in and complete either:
  - a sequence of credit or non-credit courses that leads to licensure or certification;
  - or
  - 12 credits at the end of each semester in credit bearing programs.
- maintaining at least a 2.5 cumulative college GPA if enrolled in a credit-bearing program;
- making satisfactory progress toward a vocational certificate, a certificate, or an associate degree;
- continuing to participate in a registered apprenticeship program; and
- continuing to meet the income requirements.

**Q. How many years am I eligible to receive the Promise Scholarship?**

An applicant can receive the scholarship for up to three years at the community college, as long as the recipient continues to meet the eligibility requirements for renewing the award.

**Q. If I'm awarded a Promise Scholarship and fail to earn a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least a 2.5 at the end of the year, do I become ineligible for the award?**

An applicant who fails to maintain the cumulative grade point average of at least 2.5 at the end of the Spring semester may enroll in the Summer semester to meet the GPA requirement. If the applicant meets the GPA requirement at the end of the Summer semester, the applicant will be placed on a waiting list and re-considered for the Promise Scholarship as long as funding is available.

If the applicant does not enroll in a Summer semester and fails to maintain the 2.5 GPA at the end of the Spring semester, the applicant will become ineligible for the Promise award and must submit an appeal to MHEC explaining the extenuating circumstances that prevented the applicant from meeting the GPA requirement. An applicant can access the appeal form on the MHEC website.

**Q. If I am already enrolled at a community college can I still apply for the Promise Scholarship?**

Yes, applicants currently or previously enrolled at a community college must have earned either:

- a cumulative GPA of at least a 2.5 from the community college; or
- a high school unweighted cumulative GPA of at least a 2.3 or its equivalent at the end of the first semester or end of their senior year in high school

**Q. Can homeschool applicants apply for the Promise Scholarship?**

Yes, as long as documentation is provided to confirm the homeschooled applicant earned a cumulative unweighted high school GPA of at least a 2.3 at the end of the first semester of the applicant's senior year in high school or at the end of the applicant's senior year.

**Q. Who will verify that I meet the in-state tuition requirements?**

The community college you are attending will confirm in-state tuition requirements and eligibility for the Promise Scholarship. For additional information regarding documentation that may be required, contact the community college directly.

**Q. Can I attend any Maryland community college and be awarded the Promise Scholarship?**

No. Eligible applicants **must** attend the community college located in their county, or in the case of a regional community college, the region in which they live.

However, if the community college located where the applicant lives **does not** offer the degree or program in which the applicant enrolled, the applicant may attend any other Maryland community college that offers that program.

**Q. What should I do if I listed a four year institution on my FAFSA or MSFAA, and now plan to attend a community college?**

An applicant may change their school of choice in **one** of the following ways:

- Go to the student's Maryland College Aid Processing System (MDCAPS) account and click on the **"Enrollment"** tab; or
- Go to the student's completed Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or completed Maryland State Financial Aid Application (MSFAA) to add the new college.

The applicant must add the community college prior to the **deadline of July 31, 2020**.

## **Application Details**

**Q. How do I apply for the Promise Scholarship?**

To apply for the Promise Scholarship for the 2020-2021 academic year, applicants must complete either the FAFSA or MSFAA application by **March 1**.

You are eligible to complete the [FAFSA](#) if you are a:

- permanent resident ;
- eligible non-citizen; or
- a T Visa holder.

You are eligible to complete the **MSFAA** if you:

- are undocumented; or
- meet the non-resident exemption as described under §15–106.8 of the Education Article.

For more information concerning how to complete the MSFAA refer to the [MSFAA FAQ](#) sheet.

**The [MSFAA Application](#) is available online through the MDCAPS portal.**

**Q. Is there a separate application to complete for consideration of the Promise Scholarship?**

A separate application is **ONLY** required for any applicant who plans to enroll at the community college as a “**Continuing Education**” applicant in:

- a sequence of credit or non-credit courses that leads to licensure or certification; or
- a registered apprenticeship program.

**You must complete the [Promise Non-Credit Application](#) online through the MDCAPS portal. For more information on the Promise requirements for Continuing Education applicants, refer to the “Program Requirements for Continuing Education Applicants” section on page 7.**

However, there is **no** separate application for applicants to complete, who plan to enroll in:

- a credit-bearing vocational certificate;
- a credit-bearing certificate; or
- an associate degree program.

All applicants **must** file the FAFSA or MSFAA application by **March 1** and meet the annual income requirements, as reported on the FAFSA or MSFAA. MHEC will notify any applicant who filed the FAFSA or MSFAA by March 1 and meets the income eligibility, as well as all other required documentation that must be submitted by the deadline for further consideration of the award.

**Q. If I apply for the Promise Scholarship and submit all required documentation on time, am I guaranteed to receive the scholarship?**

No. Scholarships are contingent upon available State funding and verification of student documentation received by the established deadline.

**Q. Is there a certain passing score I must receive on the GED to apply for the Promise Scholarship?**

No. Applicants are not required to have received a certain passing score on the GED Examination. Applicants are only required to have successfully completed a GED Examination in the State to be eligible for the scholarship.

**Q. Does the Promise Scholarship consider “weighted” GPA for the high school GPA requirement?**

No. The *unweighted* cumulative high school GPA is used to determine qualification for the award.

**Q. What documentation do I submit to verify the high school GPA requirement?**

High school applicants can verify they meet the GPA requirement in one of the following ways:

- By submitting a copy of their high school transcript, official or unofficial, that includes the cumulative GPA earned the end of the first semester or the end of the applicant’s senior year in high school; or
- The high school can upload the applicant’s cumulative GPA earned at the end of the first semester or the end of the year online through the Maryland College Aid Processing System (MDCAPS), by utilizing the GPA Upload tool.

**If a high school elects to upload the cumulative GPA into MDCAPS, the applicant will **not** need to submit a copy of his/her high school transcript.**

**Q. Are applicants who are dually enrolled in high school and the community college eligible for the Promise Scholarship?**

No. A dually enrolled applicant is ineligible for the Promise Scholarship while enrolled in high school. However, the applicant can apply for the scholarship after graduating from high school.

## **Award Details**

**Q. What is the award amount for the Promise Scholarship?**

The annual award amount is up to \$5,000 per recipient, or actual tuition and mandatory fees (after Federal and State financial aid is applied), whichever is less. The minimum award amount is \$200 annually (\$100 per semester).

**Q. How is my award determined?**

The Promise Scholarship covers the **remaining** tuition and mandatory fee amounts after all Federal and State financial aid funds have been applied.

If there is no remaining need after the Federal and State financial aid awards have been applied, the Promise Scholarship will **not** be awarded. Applicants will see a status of “Ineligible due to no unmet need” on their MDCAPS account.

**Q. Will awards be prioritized?**

Yes. Renewal applicants are prioritized over initial applicants. Initial applicants are prioritized based upon greatest demonstrated need.

**Q. Does the Promise Scholarship cover all community college costs?**

No. The Promise Scholarship helps pay for community college tuition and fees (after all Federal and State financial aid has been applied). The Promise Scholarship does not cover other costs such as books, room, and board.

**Q. If I am selected for FAFSA Verification when will I be awarded?**

If you have been selected for FAFSA verification, you **must** contact your financial aid office as soon as possible to complete this. You must complete this in order to be awarded the Promise Scholarship. Not all applicants are selected for FAFSA verification.

**Q. My award status in the MDCAPS Portal says “Qualified”. What does that mean?**

A status of “Qualified” means you are eligible for the award but have not been awarded. Until MHEC performs initial awarding in mid-August, applicants who submit all required documentation and are determined eligible for the Promise Scholarship will display this status.

Applicants selected for FAFSA Verification will also display the “Qualified” status until the school completes the verification process.

**Q. How will I be notified if I received the award?**

Applicants will be notified by email, using the email address as reported on their MDCAPS account, if they have been awarded the Promise Scholarship. Also, applicants can monitor the status of their application online through their MDCAPS portal.

**Q. How do I check the status of my award, if I haven’t received any emails from MHEC?**

Log into the MDCAPS Portal to view your Promise Scholarship status. Select “**Check Application Status**” for updates concerning your application status.

Also, check the Spam/Junk folder in your email account on a regular basis to catch any missed messages. You should add [donotreply@maryland.gov](mailto:donotreply@maryland.gov) to your email account's Safe Senders list.

**Q. When will annual awarding occur for each academic year?**

Awarding for the 2020-2021 academic year will occur by August 21, 2020. Applicants should continue to monitor their MDCAPS accounts for updates.

**Q. What if I'm not awarded the Promise Scholarship?**

Applicants not awarded a Promise Scholarship as a result of not completing the FAFSA Verification requirements with the school, or who are placed on a waitlist due to the availability of funding, should view the [MHEC website](#) for a complete listing of other scholarship and grant programs available. You should also find out what scholarships and grants are offered through the college you are attending.

## **Requirements for Continuing Education Applicants**

**Q. Do I have to file a FAFSA or MSFAA by March 1 to be considered?**

Yes. A FAFSA or MSFAA application must be filed by March 1 each year to be considered for the Promise Scholarship.

**Q. How many courses must I take to be eligible for the Promise Scholarship?**

An applicant must enroll in at least two courses per term of their sequence.

**Q. How many years am I eligible to receive the Promise Scholarship?**

Applicants can receive the scholarship for up to three years at the community college, as long as they continue to meet the eligibility requirements for renewing the award.

**Q. How do I remain eligible for the Promise Scholarship?**

An applicant must **pass** all courses taken in each term and enroll in the next available courses offered at the community college in the sequence. Failure to enroll in the next available courses offered at the community college for the sequence will result in the applicant becoming ineligible for the award.

**Q. What is the deadline to complete the application?**

Continuing Education Applicants have a rolling deadline for each academic year. MHEC will annually determine the deadline for an applicant to apply for the Promise Scholarship. Applicants must monitor the MHEC website for updates concerning the deadline date.

**Q. Do I need to complete the Promise application annually?**

No, if your sequence of courses continues into the next academic year, you will not need to complete another application. Your award will renew into the next academic year as long as you continue to pass your courses and enroll in the next available courses offered at the community college for that sequence.

**Q. If I plan to switch my enrollment to pursue an associate degree, can I still receive the Promise Scholarship?**

Yes. You must notify the financial aid office at the community college of this change in order for the community college to update your degree status in MDCAPS. Once the change has been made in MDCAPS your award will be adjusted under your new degree status.

## **Appeal Options**

**Q. If am currently receiving the Promise award and become ineligible can I submit an appeal to continue receiving the award?**

A Promise recipient can appeal the ineligible status if the applicant failed to:

- maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.5; or
- continuously enroll at the community college due to extenuating circumstances such as: *Serious illness of the applicant; Pregnancy or adoption; Extreme financial hardship of the applicant or applicant's immediate family; Fulfillment of military service; or Serious illness or death of an immediate family member).*

Applicants should visit the [MHEC Appeal](#) webpage for more information and to access the appeal form(s).

MHEC will render a decision within 30 days of receipt.