San Diego Community College District
San Diego Promise Program:
Findings from the first three years

Board of Trustees Meeting

January 30, 2020

Background

SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

SAN DIEGO
PR🎓MISE
CITY COLLEGE • MESA COLLEGE
MIRAMAR COLLEGE

A comprehensive evaluation of
the San Diego Promise Program

Helping students achieve
their educational objectives

October 2019

Prepared by the SDCCD Office of Institutional Research and Planning
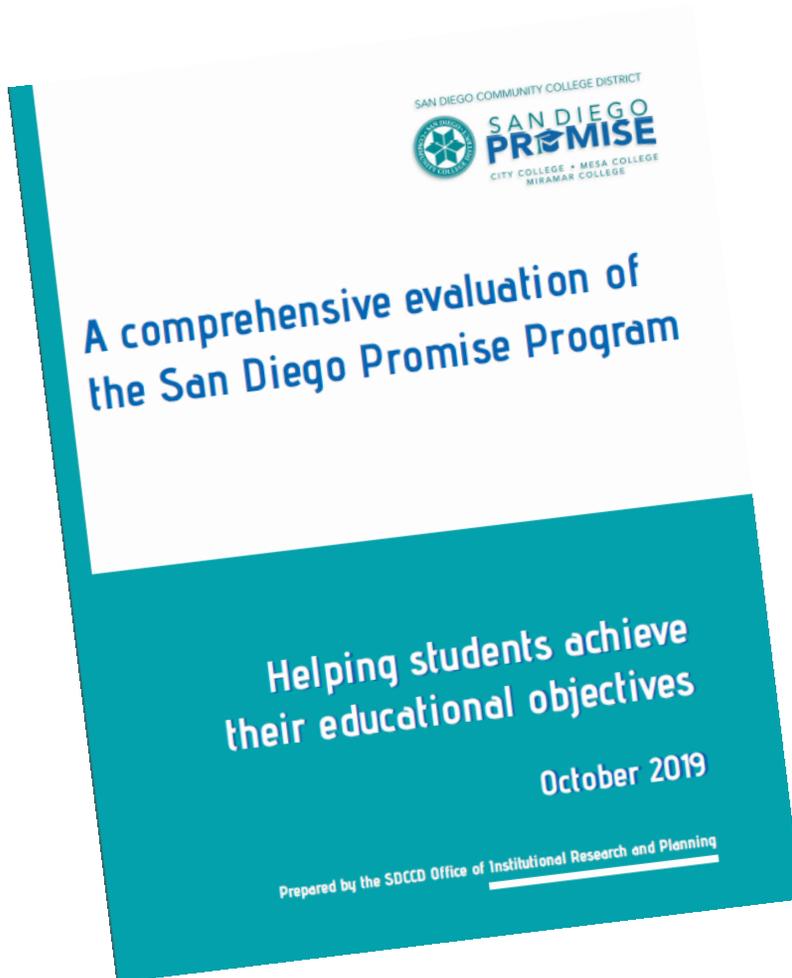
- In October 2019, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning released a comprehensive evaluation of the San Diego Promise Program in its first three years (2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019).

- Report summarizes findings from surveys, focus groups, outcomes research, and interviews.

- Report focused on three key topics:
    1. How program evolved in response to program growth and student needs;
    2. Experiences and outcomes of students who participated; and
    3. Research conclusions, implications, and next steps.

- Today's presentation summarizes the main findings of the comprehensive evaluation.

Background

2016 SDCCD started the Promise Program as a **small pilot program** to provide **financial assistance** and **student services** to support first-time, full-time students for their first year in college.

2017 Governor Brown signed Assembly Bill 19, providing free tuition for full-time students during their first year in California's community college system, enabling SDCCD to extend the Promise Program to serve students in their second year.

2018 Assembly Bill 2 expanded state funding to support first-time, full-time students in their second year. As a result, SDCCD was able to extend donor funds to support additional student groups.

Key Aspects of the San Diego Promise Program

The San Diego Promise Program has evolved over time but is built on four key components:

Financial Assistance
(e.g., assistance for enrollment fees & books)

Accountability Measures
(e.g., San Diego Promise Program commitment contract, GPA requirements)

Supports to place students on pathway to completion
(e.g., educational plan, SSSP steps)

**Supports to increase connectedness and belonging**
(e.g., peer mentors)

4

Highlight 1: Rapid Program Growth

- By 2018-2019, Promise supported roughly half of first-time, full-time students at the credit colleges.

- In Fall 2019 (after completion of study), SDCCD served 3,317 Promise students.

Promise grew by more than 10 times from 2016/17 to 2018/19.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Cohort 3 (1,712)			1,712
Cohort 2		546	330
Cohort 1	186	118	

■ Cohort 1   ■ Cohort 2   ■ Cohort 3
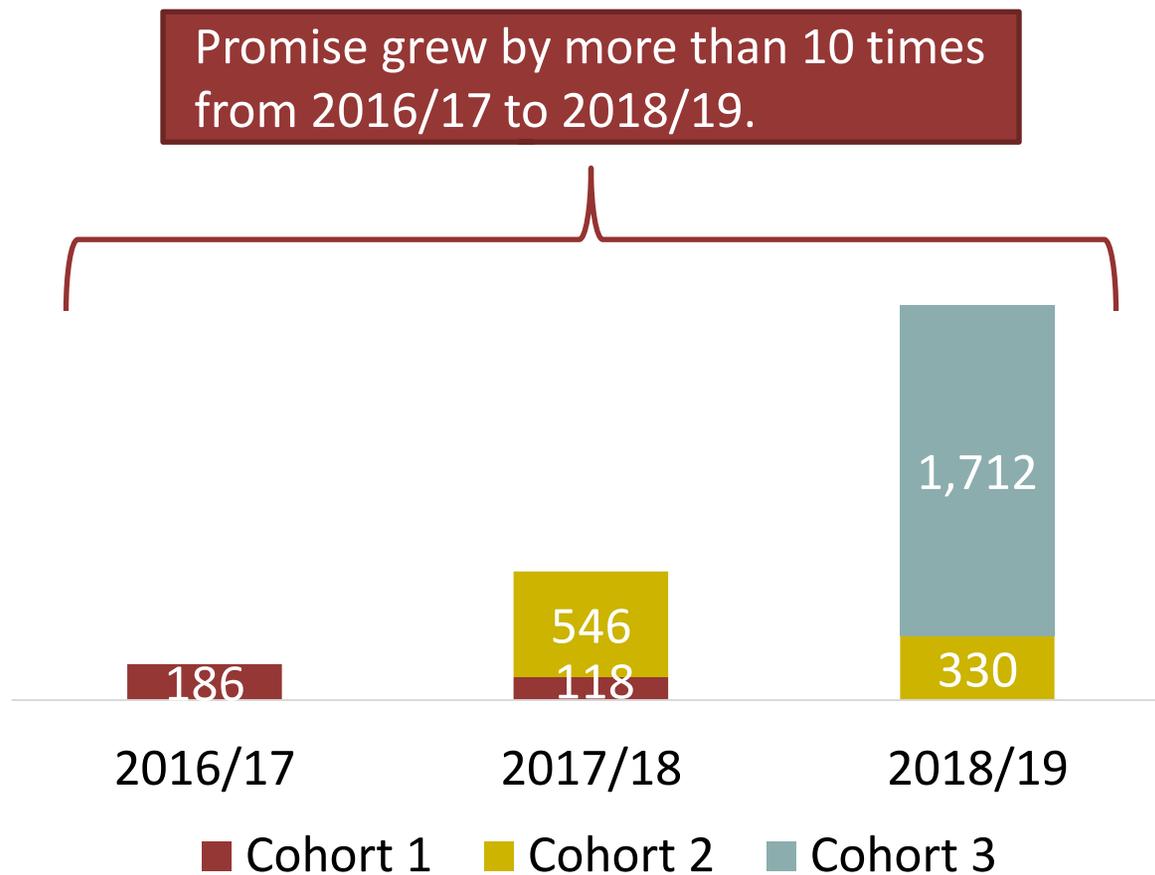
Highlight 2: Student Characteristics

- Promise students are more likely than their first-time, full-time non-Promise peers to identify as Latinx, female, and first generation to college.

	Cohort 1		Cohort 2		Cohort 3	
Latinx	60%	47%	57%	48%	56%	45%
Female	65%	51%	57%	50%	54%	45%
First Gen	38%	28%	47%	28%	36%	25%

Green = Promise, Grey = non-Promise

6
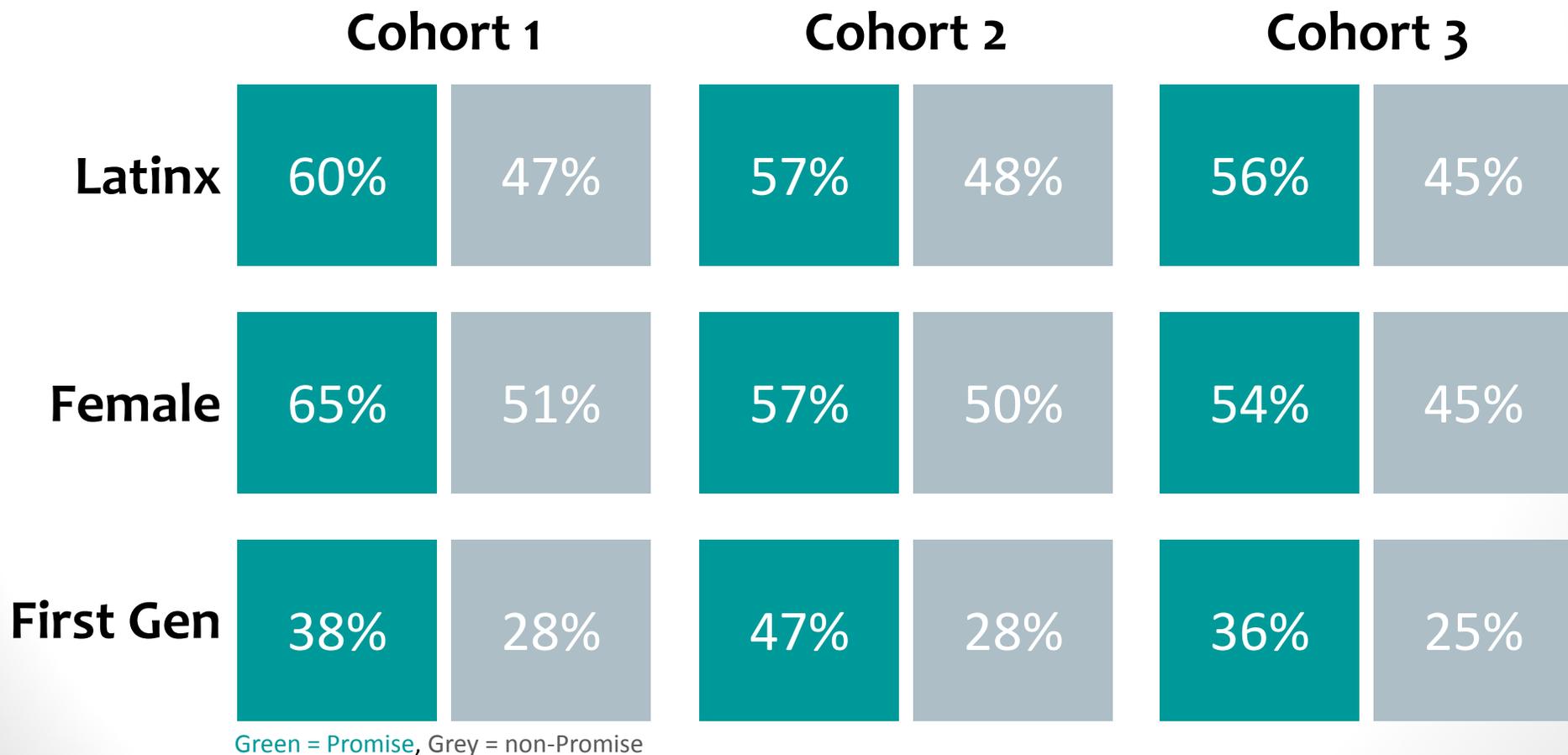
Highlight 2: Financial Support for Student Body

- Promise students are more likely than their first-time, full-time non-Promise peers to receive financial aid and to utilize Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS).

	Cohort 1		Cohort 2		Cohort 3	
Fin Aid	88%	69%	81%	68%	72%	64%
EOPS	26%	11%	24%	11%	16%	6%

Green = Promise, Grey = non-Promise
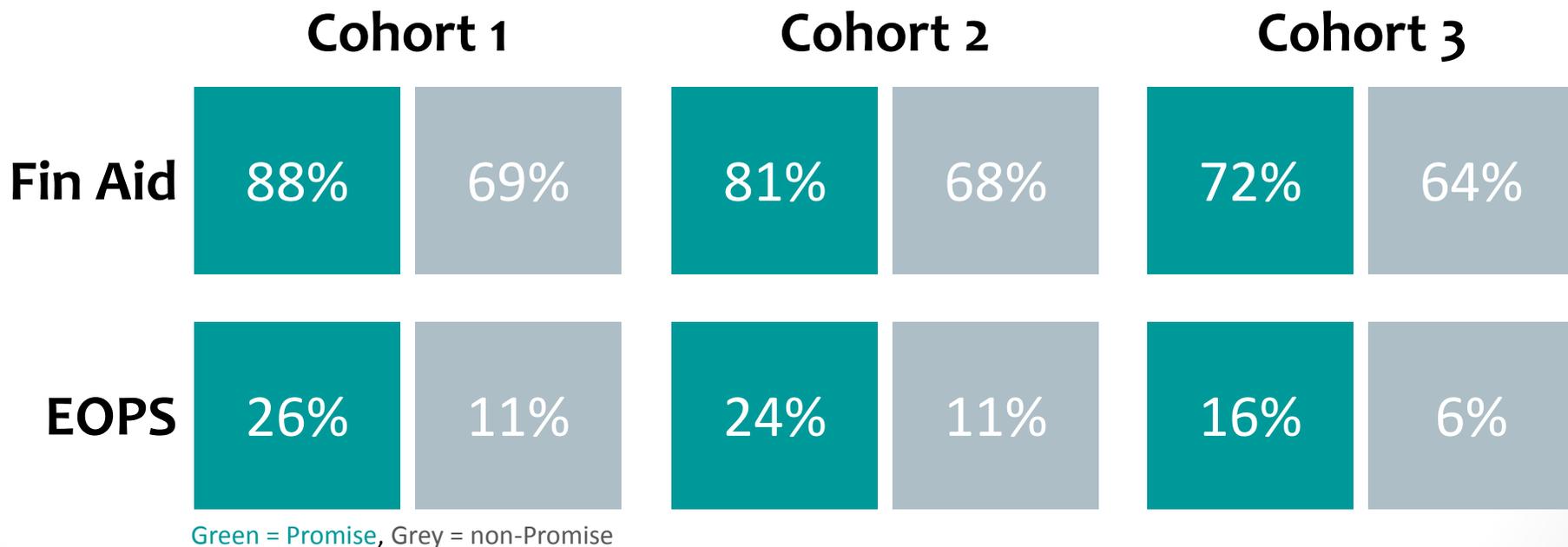
Highlight 2: High School Origin of Student Body

- In 2018-2019, there was increased representation of students from outside the San Diego Unified School District.

Nearly half of students in Cohort 3 came from non-SDUSD schools.

88%

87%

51%

SDUSD Students

■ Cohort 1   ■ Cohort 2   ■ Cohort 3
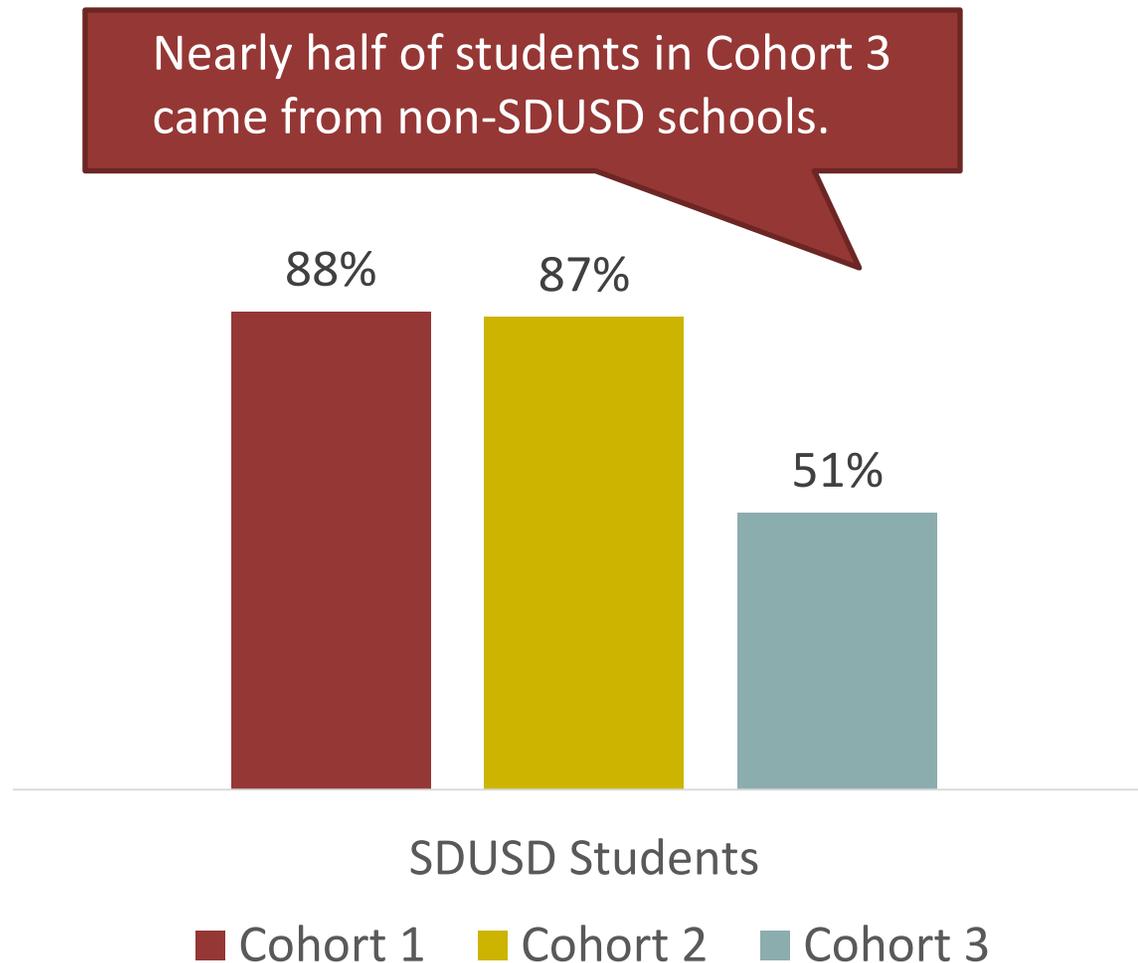
Highlight 3: Outcomes research suggests program has positive impact on student success

Outcomes Research Methods

- Compared students in Cohorts 1, 2, and 3 to their first-time-to-college peers who started in the same term and enrolled in a full-time load.

- Correlational Methods
  - Focused on substantive differences between Promise and non-Promise students

- Metrics Measured
  - Percentage met program requirements
  - Campus engagement (proxy indicator of tutoring participation)
 - Key educational/progress indicators

Research Limitations

- May **overestimate** program benefits due to omitted variable bias.

- May **underestimate** program benefits because Promise students may have otherwise been part-time students without financial and other program supports.

- Limited data on amount and quality of student interaction with program components.

- The **Cohort Effect**: each cohort has a specific set of shared characteristics and size that might influence results and show variance.

Units Attempted

- Promise students **attempted** more units than peers in their first year. This trend remained for students who continued in Promise their second year (not pictured).

Promise students were more likely to attempt 24+ units in their first year
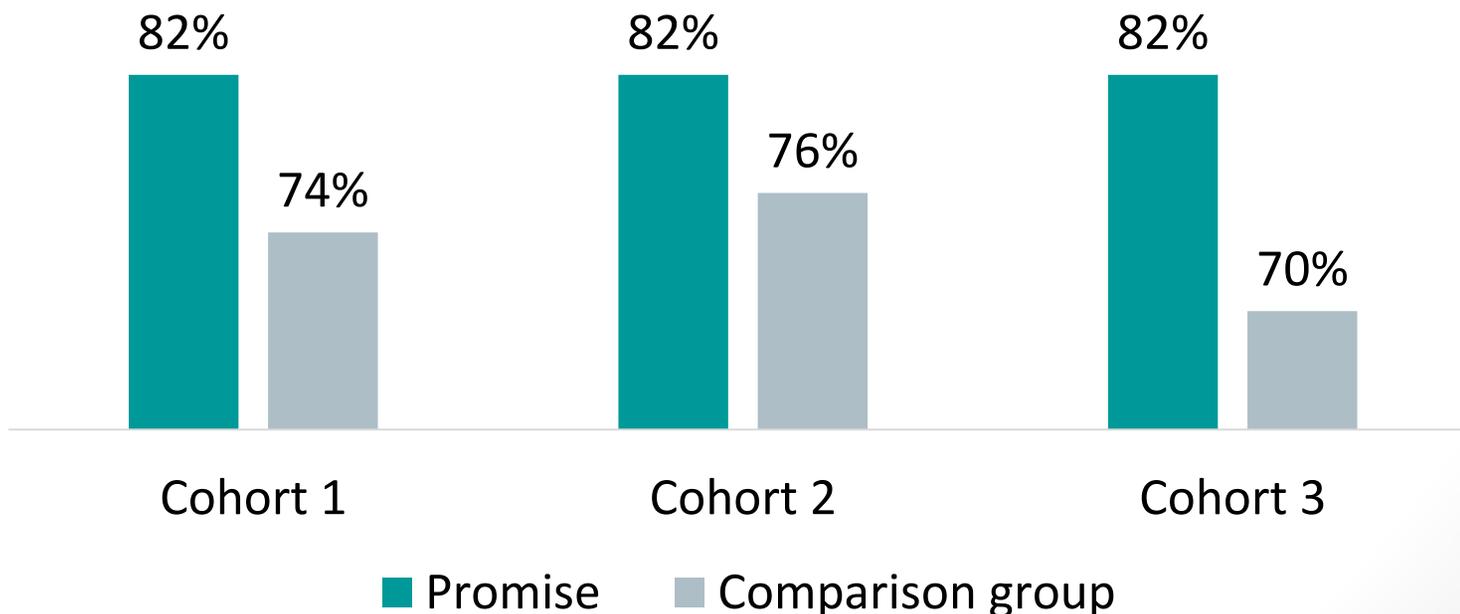
Units Earned

- Promise students **earned** more units than peers in their first year (results stronger for students in Cohort 1 and 3). This trend remained for students who continued in Promise their second year (not pictured).

Promise students were more likely to earn 24+ units in their first year

Cohort 1: Promise 55%, Comparison group 43%
Cohort 2: Promise 47%, Comparison group 46%
Cohort 3: Promise 48%, Comparison group 40%

■ Promise   ■ Comparison group
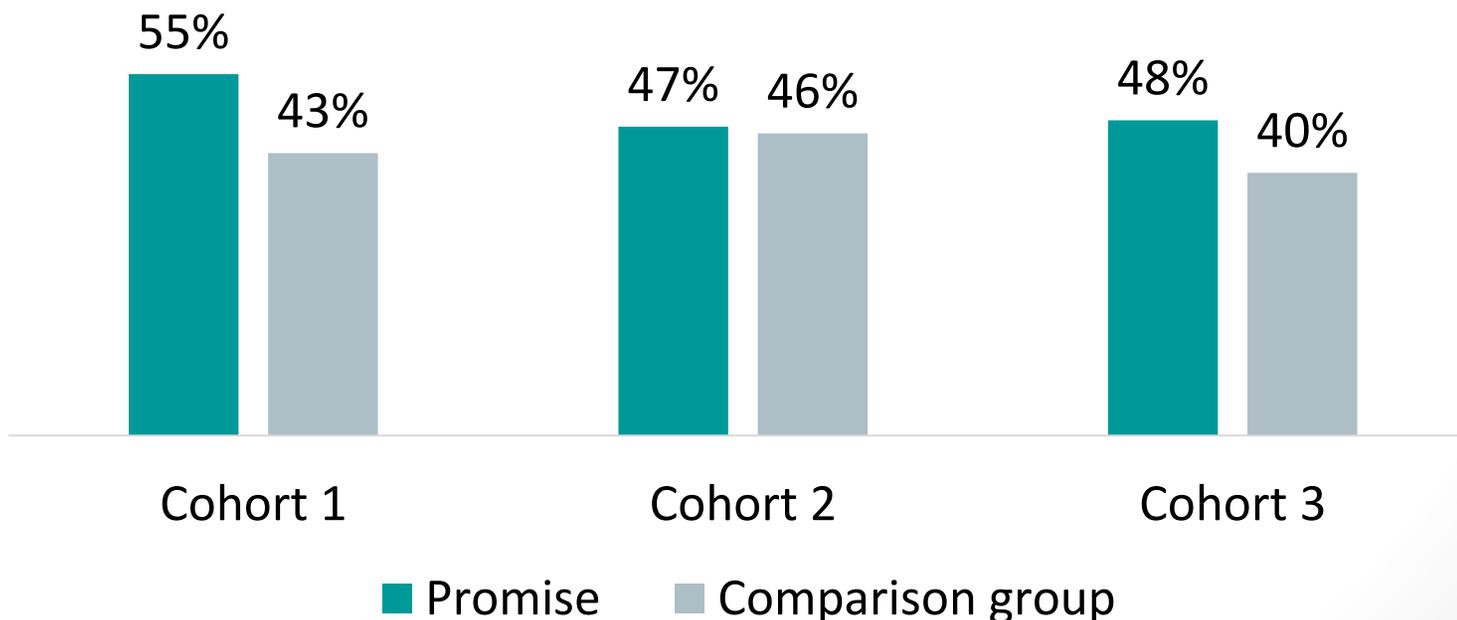
Campus Engagement

- Across cohorts, Promise students were more likely than their peers to participate in tutoring in their first year. This trend continued for students who stay in Promise their second year (not pictured).

- Finding is suggestive that participation in the San Diego Promise Program facilitates higher on-campus engagement, a key predictor of student success and completion.

Promise students were more likely to seek tutoring in their first year

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3
Promise	67%	71%	65%
Comparison group	56%	55%	54%

■ Promise   ■ Comparison group

14
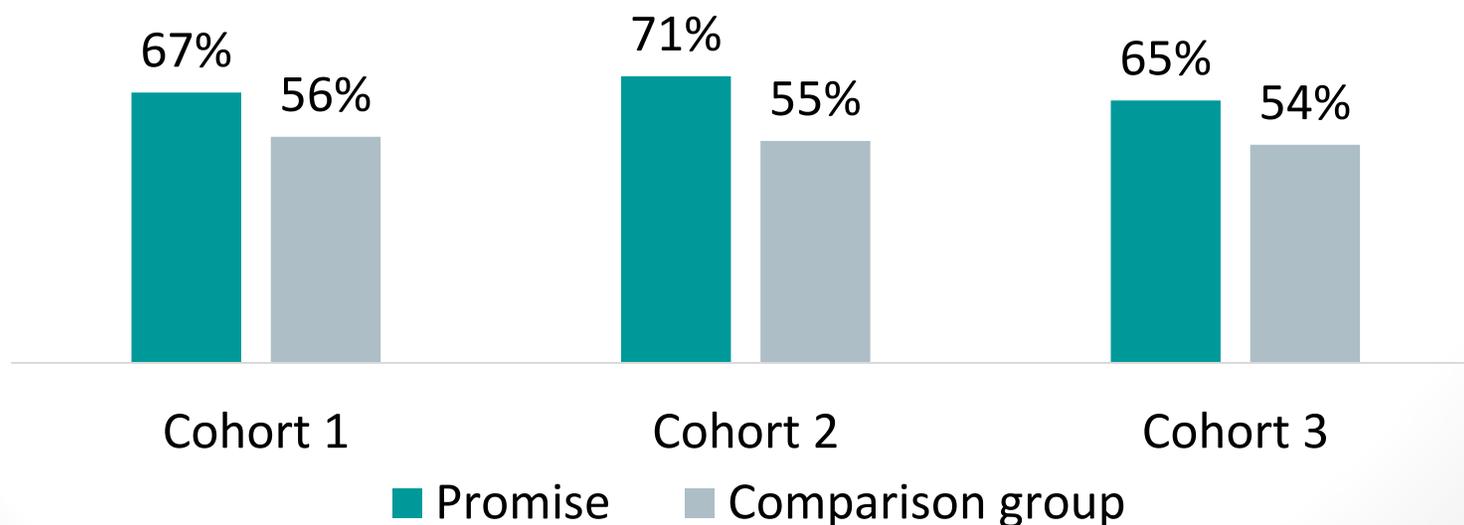
Degrees and Certificates

- There is some evidence that Promise students were more likely to earn a degree or certificate than their non-Promise peers when tracked for two years.

- Notably, when Cohort 1 was tracked for three years (through 2018-2019), 40% had received awards compared to 23% of their peer group (not pictured).

Promise students earned awards at a higher rate than their peers

13%	8%	11%	8%
Promise Students	Comparison Group	Promise Students	Comparison Group
Cohort 1		Cohort 2	
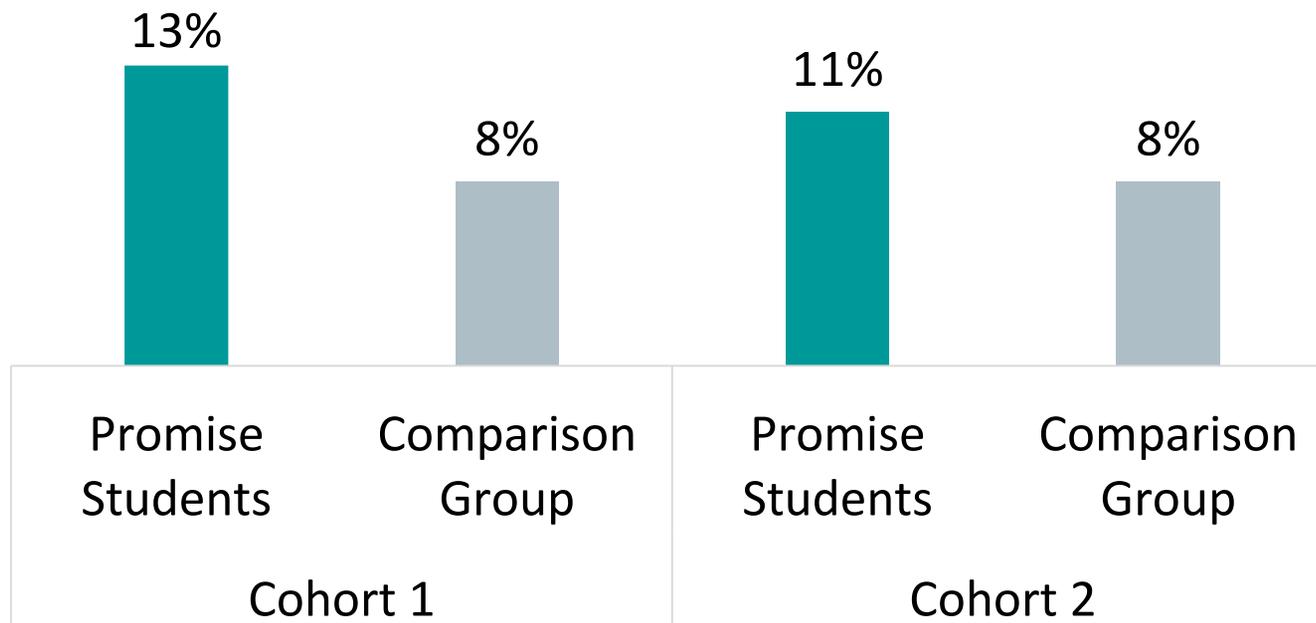
Other "Promising" Trends

- There is some evidence that the program may support students in achieving other educational/progress indicators, such as higher course success and retention rates, term persistence, and GPAs.

- Evidence is stronger for Cohorts 1 and 3.

  - Program had more resources to support students in these cohorts than Cohort 2 because of the program's rapid expansion from Cohort 1 to Cohort 2.

  - Cohorts 1 and 3 also entered SDCCD more academically prepared than students in Cohort 2 (based on high school GPAs), potentially conflating findings.

Highlight 4: More "Promising Trends"

- Doctoral research found evidence that the program supported student outcomes for low income, first generation, and students of color (Latinx and Black) in particular when matched to similar comparison groups of first-time, full-time students.

  - Findings were stronger for Cohorts 1 and 3.

  - Dissertation did not control for GPA or gender, both of which are predictive of educational outcomes.

- Study also found evidence that student interaction with program components (e.g., orientation, counseling) was predictive of student success indicators such as persistence.

17

Highlight 5: Students Self-Report Benefits of Promise Participation

- Focus groups with 59 students from the credit colleges provided evidence that the program *directly* supported **four of the six student success factors** as identified by the Research and Planning (RP) Group.

Directed Students have a goal and know how to achieve it	**Focused** Students stay on track—keeping their eyes on the prize	**Nurtured** Students feel somebody wants and helps them to succeed
Engaged Students actively participate in class and extracurriculars	**Connected** Students feel like they are part of a community	**Valued** Students' skills, talents, abilities and experiences are recognized; have ability to contribute on campus

18

DIRECTED

Students have a goal and know how to achieve it.

"Having an educational plan helps sort out my priorities in the next years. So it makes the goal seem more reachable. Because you have a goal written out on a piece of paper so it kind of gives you motivation to keep going in school and stuff." —Miramar College student in 2017 San Diego Promise Program Focus Group

FOCUSED

Students stay on track—keeping their eyes on the prize.

"Helps me stay on track, if I didn't have them I feel like I would slack a little bit like not be a full time student. The progress report, it kind of pushes you to do better." —City College student in 2017 San Diego Promise Program Focus Group

NURTURED

Students feel somebody wants and helps them to succeed.

"I had the opportunity to attend the Promise donor social. I actually had to talk to most of the donors that were helping us. A lot of them were actually interested in what we wanted to do in life. They were actually more than happy to help us or they were more than happy to donate to this program. So honestly I just feel like you know and also interacting with other people in the Promise program it just felt so rewarding. It motivates you more to do well in school honestly that you have people that actually care about you and are actually giving you money you know." —SDCCD student in 2017 San Diego Promise Program Focus Group

CONNECTED

Students feel like they are part of the college community.

"Great program it pushed me to be involved in this school. At first, like in high school I didn't go to any events. Not even football games. Here it actually pushes me to do that. It pushes me to be better and I like that it gives me the opportunity to be a better person, not only school wise but personality wise." — Mesa College student in 2017 San Diego Promise Program Focus Group

Highlight 6: Program has Evolved in Response to Student Feedback

✓ Higher levels of communication about what the San Diego Promise Program is, program eligibility requirements, and program expectations.

✓ More opportunities to create connection to peers.

In Progress Dedicated spaces on campus for student support services and creating closer connections with staff and other students.

✓ More dedicated staff members to support San Diego Promise Program students.

In Progress Additional training to improve the quality of peer mentorship received by program participants.

In Progress Greater targeting of support to meet student need level.

Highlight 7: Barriers to Participation include Family and Work

What?	Survey of students who signed up to participate in Promise in 2018/19 or 2019/20 but did not enroll at SDCCD
Who?	44 students (response rate = 25%), 19 of whom participated in Promise for one year but did not re-enroll the following fall
Why?	To understand how SDCCD can better support current/potential Promise students
Findings	• 18 of 19 students reported a positive experience with Promise. • Family obligations and work are key reasons for not continuing in Promise. A quarter of respondents chose to enroll in an institution besides SDCCD. • More financial support and help choosing classes were top needs expressed by students.

Conclusion

Student Benefits

+ Tuition-free two-year college education

+ Additional financial supports such as book grants

+ Supports to guide students during their journey to college completion

+ Increased sense of feeling directed, focused, nurtured, and connected

+ Evidence of increased engagement and improved outcomes

Community Benefits

+ A culture of college-going

+ A more educated and career-prepared workforce

+ Tighter connection between the community and the District

Questions