

Final Program Implementation Report to HOPE Toledo Promise
The Postsecondary Education Outcomes of Scott High School Graduates after
One, Two, and Three Years:
Before and After the Introduction of HOPE Toledo Promise

Lauren A. Tighe, Teresa Eckrich Sommer, & P. Lindsay-Chase-Lansdale
Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University
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Introduction and Goals

HOPE Toledo Promise is the first model two-generation college scholarship program in the United States. The program, which began in 2020, provides cost-free postsecondary education (including tuition, room, board, books, and fees) to high school graduates and one of their parents or legal guardians (Sommer et al., 2021a, 2021b, 2022). Thus far, HOPE Toledo Promise has been offered to over 350 families of youth from Jesup W. Scott High School’s graduating classes of 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023¹ in Toledo, Ohio. The purpose of this report is to examine differences in the postsecondary education outcomes of Scott High School graduates who received access to HOPE Toledo Promise and those who did not due to the lack of availability of the scholarship program.

Program Elements by Class

It is important to note that HOPE Toledo Promise has been evolving since its inception and thus program elements and the learning context vary by classes of students. See Table 1 for an overview of differences for the Classes of 2020, 2021, and 2022 on timing of notification of the Promise offer, available postsecondary options to scholarship students, number of program staff, and the influence of COVID-19 on their educational experiences. The first class to be offered the program, the Class of 2020, received the earliest offer with the most postsecondary options, i.e., any institution in the state of Ohio. At the time, there was one program staff and the students experienced virtual learning at the end of their senior year of high school and in their first year of college due to the pandemic. The second class, the Class of 2021, received their program offer slightly later than the first class. Available postsecondary options remained the same but program staff, which now included another member, steered students towards institutions in the Greater Toledo area. This class first experienced virtual learning at the end of their junior year in high school and spent their entire senior year virtual. The third class, the Class of 2022, found out about the Promise offer the latest – in May of their senior year. Like the previous class, the now-three program staff focused on student enrollment at specific partner institutions in Greater Toledo although students could still attend any Ohio institution. The Class of 2022 experienced virtual learning during their sophomore and junior years of high school but not in college. These varying elements of HOPE Toledo Promise and the changing context for student learning from year to year likely both enhanced and hindered students’ postsecondary outcomes. We cannot know the net impact for each class.

¹The Class of 2023 is not included in this report as these students have not had the opportunity to complete one full year of college (i.e., summer, fall, and winter terms since May 2023).

Table 1
HOPE Toledo Promise Program Elements

	Class of 2020	Class of 2021	Class of 2022
Notification of offer	January 2020	March 2021	May 2022
Postsecondary options	Any institution in the state of Ohio	Focus on institutions in around Greater Toledo	Focus on specific institutions (i.e., Promise partner schools)
Program staff	1 President	1 President + 1 VP	1 President + 1 VP + 1 Community & Family Navigator
COVID-19 and educational experience	Virtual for the end of senior year of high school and 1 year of college	Virtual learning for 1.5 years of high school, including senior year	Virtual learning for 1.5 years of high school

Methodology

Using data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), we descriptively examined the college enrollment, persistence, and completion outcomes of Scott graduates who did not receive access to the HOPE Toledo Promise (i.e., Classes of 2017-2019, “Pre-Promise”) compared to those who did receive access to the program (i.e., Classes of 2020-2022, “Post-Promise”). NSC provides student-level postsecondary enrollment and graduation records from their network of more than 3,600 colleges and universities, which represents 97% of postsecondary institutions in the U.S. (National Student Clearinghouse, 2023a). This report conceptualized enrollment, persistence, transfer, and completion rates in similar ways to National Student Clearinghouse and other college promise research studies. See the Appendix for a glossary of terms.

In this report, we compared students’ postsecondary outcomes across three time horizons: one, two, and three years after high school graduation. However, the available time horizons are dependent on each graduating class. At the time of this report, for example, the Class of 2020 has had three full years of postsecondary opportunities following their high school graduation in May 2020. On the other hand, the Class of 2022 has had only one full year to engage with their postsecondary education after their high school graduation in May 2022. With this in mind, we compared the most recent Scott High School graduating classes to our HOPE Toledo Promise classes in order to achieve similar sample sizes and represent similar contextual environments and experiences. In the one-year outcomes, for example, the Pre-Promise classes consisted of 2017, 2018, and 2019 for a sample size of 274. The Post-Promise classes comprised of 2020, 2021, and 2022 for a sample of 313. As each time horizon grew, the number of classes (and thus the sample size) available for analysis decreased. For instance, we compared the three-year outcomes for the Post-Promise Class of 2020 ($N = 125$) with its nearest Pre-Promise class which was the Class of 2019 ($N = 103$).

Overall Study Results

See Table 2 for the descriptive statistics of college enrollment, persistence, and transfer rates among Scott High School students one, two, and three years after high school graduation, comparing the Pre-Promise and Post-Promise groups.

Highlights

- **Enrollment:** For all three years after high school, Post-Promise students enrolled in college at higher rates than Pre-Promise students.
 - For instance, the introduction of the HOPE Toledo Promise led to a 28 percent increase in college enrollment in the first year after graduation among Scott High School graduates.
- **Persistence:** Year-to-year persistence rates for Post-Promise students were higher compared to Pre-Promise students.
 - Post-Promise students were 10-percentage points, or 38 percent, more likely to complete at least one term of college in the first year following high school graduation than Pre-Promise students.
- **Completion:** In the one to three years following high school graduation, one Post-Promise and one Pre-Promise student received postsecondary certificates according to NSC data.
 - However, there are a number of postsecondary institutions who are not included in the NSC database that have granted certifications to Post-Promise students suggesting these postsecondary outcomes are undercounted.

Postsecondary Enrollment

Forty-three percent of Post-Promise students enrolled in a postsecondary institution compared to 33 percent of Pre-Promise students within one year of high school graduation. This represents a 10-percentage point, or 28 percent, increase in college enrollment following the implementation of HOPE Toledo Promise. More Post-Promise students enrolled in four-year institutions (73%) and less in two-year institutions (27%) compared to Pre-Promise students (63% and 37%, respectively). The differences between the two groups in public and private institution enrollment were negligible (i.e., one percentage point or less difference). Of the those who enrolled, slightly more than half (53%) of Post-Promise students chose a postsecondary institution within 30 miles of Toledo compared to less than one-third (30%) of Pre-Promise students. Most students, regardless of receiving access to the Promise, first enrolled at a postsecondary institution in the fall immediately after high school graduation, rather than the summer or winter.

Two years after high school graduation, 49 percent of Post-Promise students were enrolled in a postsecondary institution compared to 35 percent of Pre-Promise students. This 14-percentage point difference represents a 38 percent increase in college enrollment for Post-Promise students compared to their counterparts who did not receive access to the program. Other enrollment statistics (e.g., type of institution) remained similar to outcomes after one year.

In the three years after high school graduation, 51 percent of Post-Promise students were enrolled in a postsecondary institution compared to 36 percent of Pre-Promise students. The proportion of Pre-Promise students enrolled in institutions near Toledo grew (42%) whereas Post-Promise student enrollment in area schools dropped slightly but remained high (48%).

Postsecondary Persistence

Although Pre-Promise students attempted slightly more credits (*average* = 18) than Post-Promise students (*average* = 16) within one year of high school graduation, Post-Promise students were 10-percentage points more likely to complete at least one term of college. This translates to a 38 percent increase since the implementation of HOPE Toledo Promise for completion of one term. Slightly more Post-Promise students completed at least two terms (22%) within one year compared to Pre-Promise students (18%), which represents a 50 percent increase.

Similar persistence patterns emerged two years after high school graduation as the difference between term completion between the Pre- and Post-Promise groups grew. For example, 46 percent of Post-Promise students completed one term within two years relative to 31 percent of Pre-Promise students. Further, 30 percent of Post-Promise students completed at least two terms whereas 22 percent of their Pre-Promise counterparts did the same. Slightly more Post-Promise students completed at least three terms (19%) compared to Pre-Promise (14%). The difference between the two groups for the completion of at least four terms was negligible. Almost one-quarter of Post-Promise students (24%) enrolled in a postsecondary institution for at least one term in their first year and then returned to a postsecondary institution for at least one term in their second year. The first year-to-second year persistence rate for Pre-Promise students, however, was lower at 17 percent. This represents a 38 percent increase following the implementation of the program as students persisted by returning to college in their second year. Fall-to-fall persistence followed a comparable pattern.

Generally, these same patterns of persistence continued when examining the outcomes of Scott's graduating classes three years after high school graduation. The second year-to-third year persistence rate for Post-Promise students was 19 percent whereas Pre-Promise students persisted in their third year at a rate of 12 percent, which represents a 53 percent increase. However, there appeared to be a leveling point between the Pre- and Post-Promise students around completing at least four terms of college coursework. At this point, Pre- and Post-Promise term completion is either similar (11% and 13%, respectively) or higher for Pre-Promise students.

Transfers Among Postsecondary Institutions

Overall, there were minimal transfers among both Pre- and Post-Promise groups one to three years after high school graduation.

Postsecondary Completion

In the one to three years following high school graduation, one Pre-Promise and one Post-Promise student completed a degree. The one Pre-Promise student received a Phlebotomy certificate from a four-year institution in Greater Toledo. The one Post-Promise student graduated from a local community college with Emergency Medical Tech and Fire Fighter certificates.

Study Results by Class

We also conducted the same analyses on postsecondary outcomes by graduating class given the program differences and varying learning contexts (see Table 1). See Table 3 for the one-year college enrollment, persistence, and transfer rates among the Classes of 2017-2022. See Table 4 for the two-year outcomes for the Classes of 2017-2021. The Class of 2022 was not included in the two-year outcome analyses as not enough time has passed (i.e., two full years of college which will be spring 2024). We did not conduct analyses on the three-year outcomes by class as only one Post-Promise cohort, the Class of 2020, was eligible for that time horizon. Their three-year descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1.

One-Year Outcomes

One year after high school graduation, the Post-Promise Classes of 2020 and 2021 had the highest enrollment at over 40 percent. Further, 45 percent of the Class of 2020 enrollees completed at least one term whereas 21 percent completed at least two terms. For the Class of 2021, 40 percent completed at least one term and 24 percent completed at least two terms. However, the Post-Promise Class of 2022 had enrollment and term completion rates similar to the Pre-Promise Classes of 2017 and 2019. The number of students enrolled in four-year and near-Toledo postsecondary institutions increased each year following the implementation of HOPE Toledo Promise.

Two-Year Outcomes

After two years, the patterns for the Post-Promise Classes of 2020 and 2021 remained constant. Although the Class of 2020 had the highest enrollment rate (51%), the Class of 2021 had the highest term completion rate in the longer-term. For example, almost 22 percent of students in the Class of 2021 completed at least three terms and 15 percent completed four terms, whereas fewer students in the Class of 2020 completed as many terms.

Interestingly, the Pre-Promise Class of 2017 had enrollment rates at the same level as the Class of 2021, which was around 45 percent. Yet only around one-tenth (13%) of students in the Class of 2017 enrolled in institutions around Toledo. Although initial enrollment was high, students in the Class of 2017 had poorer persistence rates than those of their counterparts in the Classes of 2020 and 2021.

Summary and Future Directions

This report offers initial insights into how students who graduated from Scott High School in Toledo, Ohio have fared in college after the introduction of the HOPE Toledo Promise scholarship program. We used data from Pre-Promise students (2017-19) and compared them to Post-Promise students (2020-22). We use this approach, rather than a more rigorous examination of the program's effects through a randomized trial, given the program is in the early stages of implementation and sample sizes are too small. Our comparative analysis offers insights into whether the HOPE Toledo Promise program is working as intended. Short and medium-term indicators are promising: students who had access to the program had higher enrollment and persistence rates than students who did not. For instance, 28 percent more students who were offered HOPE Toledo Promise enrolled in college within one year of high school graduation than students who were not offered the program. Likewise, 38 percent more students whose graduating class received HOPE Toledo Promise completed at least one semester one year after high school than students who were not offered the program.

The postsecondary enrollment and persistence outcomes demonstrating the positive benefit of HOPE Toledo Promise remained similar two and three years after high school graduation. However, there did appear to be a point of persistence equalization between Pre- and Post-Promise students around four terms of completion. At this point, the percentages of students in both groups completing terms were either similar or in favor of the Pre-Promise students. This may be the cut-off point marking the dedicated and motivated Scott High School graduates who are pursuing higher education, regardless of whether they received access to HOPE Toledo Promise. The program may consider intervening at this a pivotal turning point to further promote the success of their students.

For the most part, there were few differences regarding institutional transfers and graduation. Given the fact that over 60 percent of Post-Promise students were enrolled in institutions where coursework can take four years or longer, it is not surprising there were few graduates one to three years after high school graduation. However, one Post-Promise student, as well as a Pre-Promise student, did obtain a certificate in this short period. More time is needed, ideally a time horizon of four to five years, to deeply examine whether graduation rates among Scott High School students enrolled in HOPE Toledo Promise differ from Scott High School students who did not have the scholarship opportunity. Further, NSC does not contain information from all postsecondary institutions, including technical schools. HOPE Toledo Promise staff have noted there are nine institutions where program students are currently attending or have graduated from that do not participate in the NSC database (National Student Clearinghouse, 2023b). At the time of this report, Post-Promise students have graduated from such institutions with certification in healthcare sciences, forklift operator, machining and manufacturing technology, cosmetology, and massage therapy. Therefore, there are likely more students, both Pre- and Post-Promise, whose postsecondary outcomes are not part of this report.

Among the Post-Promise students, postsecondary outcomes differed somewhat by class, which was likely an artifact of the varied program elements. For example, the Class of 2021 anticipated they would also be offered the HOPE Toledo Promise as they were juniors when the announcement was made to the seniors in the Class of 2020 at Scott High School. This allowed the Class of 2021 to plan their postsecondary career further in advance, including applying to and enrolling in four-year institutions. The Class of 2022 did not receive the offer until late in the school year, which likely influenced their planning and decision-making and resulted in their lower rates of postsecondary enrollment. With each additional graduating class, the size of the staff grew along with their best practices, expertise, knowledge, and skills. For the students that did take up the program's offer, more enrolled in postsecondary institutions around Greater Toledo with each passing year. Program staff steered students, who often did not have a clear idea of their postsecondary institution choice, towards local colleges, universities, and partner schools, in order to increase the likelihood of students availing themselves of local family and community support.

As HOPE Toledo Promise continues to evolve, program staff have indicated three possible future investments. Refining staff roles, and possibly adding more team members, may improve the quantity and quality of support provided to each student. As the first college promise program targeting both youth and parents, staff also seek to improve parent recruitment efforts. Although the number of parents in HOPE Toledo Promise is low, research suggests initial postsecondary benefits to parents in the program (Sommer et al., 2021b). Moreover, youth and parents in the program who attend college at the same time experience positive intergenerational benefits such as mutual motivation, academic competition, and bidirectional support (Sommer et al., 2021b). Lastly,

postsecondary education comes at a great cost beyond tuition and education-associated expenses. In the future, students may be offered a living stipend to help offset some of these costs (e.g., transportation, emergencies).

Future research may consider using quasi-experimental methods to evaluate the impact of the HOPE Toledo Promise program by comparing the postsecondary outcomes of Post-Promise students from Scott High School with outcomes of students in the same cohort from similar public high schools in Toledo. Additional future research may focus on specific program elements and their role in student outcomes (e.g., timing of scholarship announcement, number of program staff, geography of postsecondary institutions). As students begin completing their postsecondary education, longitudinal research could focus on their next steps, which ideally includes gainful employment in the workforce. Lastly, as the program re-focuses efforts to serve parents, following and studying parents' short- and long-term outcomes are of equal importance to further understanding a two-generation approach to college promise.

Table 2.*Postsecondary Outcomes of Scott High School Students*

Outcome	One Year After High School Graduation		Two Years After High School Graduation		Three Years After High School Graduation	
	Pre-Promise	Post-Promise	Pre-Promise	Post-Promise	Pre-Promise	Post-Promise
	2017-2019 N = 274	2020-2022 N = 313	2018-2019 N = 207	2020-2021 N = 218	2019 N = 103	2020 N = 125
Enrollment						
Enrolled %	33.19	42.62	35.18	48.61	36.36	50.81
Enrolled in a 2-year inst. %	36.71	26.77	31.43	33.33	38.89	36.51
Enrolled in a 4-year inst. %	63.29	73.23	68.57	66.67	61.11	63.49
Enrolled in a public inst. %	89.87	90.55	87.14	87.62	88.89	84.13
Enrolled in a private inst. %	10.13	9.45	12.86	12.38	11.11	15.87
Enrolled in near-Toledo inst. %	30.38	52.76	35.71	49.52	41.67	47.62
Fall cohort starter %	89.87	86.61	--	--	--	--
Persistence						
Credits attempted <i>M (SD)</i>	18.41 (8.76)	16.49 (8.00)	31.45 (16.35)	29.95 (15.91)	45.43 (26.23)	40.82 (25.10)
Completed at least 1 term %	27.73	38.26	30.65	45.83	31.31	47.58
Completed at least 2 terms %	18.49	21.81	22.11	29.63	23.23	32.26
Completed at least 3 terms %	--	--	13.57	18.52	15.15	21.77
Completed at least 4 terms %	--	--	9.55	10.65	11.11	12.90
Completed at least 5 terms %	--	--	--	--	9.09	7.26
Completed at least 6 terms %	--	--	--	--	9.09	5.65
Persisted year-to-year %	--	--	17.09	23.61	12.12	18.55
Persisted fall-to-fall %	--	--	14.07	18.52	9.09	14.52
Transfers						
Transferred %	2.27	1.85	5.68	4.38	7.50	5.88

Note. Students can only persist and transfer if they enrolled in a postsecondary institution.

Table 3.*One-Year Postsecondary Outcomes of Scott High School Students by Class*

Outcome	Pre-Promise				Post-Promise	
	2017 N = 67	2018 N = 104	2019 N = 103	2020 N = 125	2021 N = 93	2022 N = 95
Enrollment						
Enrolled %	37.50	29.03	35.05	49.17	42.53	34.07
Enrolled in a 2-year inst. %	55.56	22.22	38.24	35.59	21.62	16.13
Enrolled in a 4-year inst. %	44.44	77.78	61.76	64.41	78.38	83.87
Enrolled in a public inst. %	88.89	92.59	88.24	86.44	91.89	96.77
Enrolled in a private inst. %	11.11	7.41	11.76	13.56	8.11	3.23
Enrolled in near-Toledo inst. %	11.11	29.63	41.18	45.76	56.76	61.29
Fall cohort starter %	94.44	88.89	88.24	89.83	78.38	90.32
Persistence						
Credits attempted <i>M (SD)</i>	16.22 (9.64)	20.33 (7.85)	17.79 (8.90)	15.85 (7.89)	17.50 (7.51)	16.41 (8.83)
Completed at least 1 term %	29.17	26.88	27.84	45.00	40.23	27.47
Completed at least 2 terms %	16.67	20.43	17.53	20.83	24.14	20.88
Transfers						
Transferred %	0	2.04	3.57	1.01	1.52	3.92

Note. Students can only persist and transfer if they enrolled in a postsecondary institution.

Table 4.*Two-Year Postsecondary Outcomes of Scott High School Students by Class*

Outcome	Pre-Promise			Post-Promise		
	2017 N = 67	2018 N = 104	2019 N = 103	2020 N = 125	2021 N = 93	2022 N = 95
Enrollment						
Enrolled %	44.44	34.00	36.36	50.81	45.65	The class of 2022 has not experienced a two-year time horizon (i.e., the opportunity to attend two full years of college)
Enrolled in a 2-year inst. %	54.17	23.53	38.89	36.51	28.57	
Enrolled in a 4-year inst. %	45.83	76.47	61.11	63.49	71.43	
Enrolled in a public inst. %	83.33	85.29	88.89	84.13	92.86	
Enrolled in a private inst. %	16.67	14.71	11.11	15.87	7.14	
Enrolled in near-Toledo inst. %	12.50	29.41	41.67	47.62	52.38	
Persistence						
Credits attempted <i>M (SD)</i>	22.78 (17.35)	32.14 (16.22)	30.53 (16.52)	27.76 (14.75)	32.92 (16.98)	
Completed at least 1 term %	33.33	30.00	31.31	47.58	43.48	
Completed at least 2 terms %	14.81	22.00	22.22	30.65	28.26	
Completed at least 3 terms %	9.26	15.00	12.12	16.13	21.74	
Completed at least 4 terms %	5.56	10.00	9.09	7.26	15.22	
Persisted year-to-year %	12.96	17.00	17.17	25.00	21.74	
Persisted fall-to-fall %	7.41	14.00	14.14	20.16	16.30	
Transfers						
Transferred %	2.27	4.65	6.67	2.53	6.90	

Note. Students can only persist and transfer if they enrolled in a postsecondary institution.

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Appendix Glossary of Terms

Enrollment counts students who have enrolled in a postsecondary institution and are found in the National Student Clearinghouse database.

Near-Toledo enrollment includes enrollment at postsecondary institutions within 30 miles of Scott High School in Toledo, OH.

Fall cohort starter counts students who have enrolled for any length of time in a term that began between August 1 and October 31 (Gardner, 2022).

Credits attempted is derived from enrollment intensity: full-time, three-quarter time, half-time, and less than half-time. We assigned values of 12 credits for full-time students, 9 credits for three-quarter time students, 6 credits for half-time students, and 3 credits for less than half-time students (Bartik et al., 2021).

Term completion is defined as completing a term of study at a postsecondary institution with an enrollment intensity of full-time, three-quarter time, half-time, and less than half-time. Students who took a leave of absence, withdrew, or were deceased did not complete the term.

Year-to-year-persistence is defined as continued enrollment (or degree completion) at any postsecondary education institution in any term (summer, fall, or winter) of a student's first and second year as well as the student's second and third year.

Fall-to-fall persistence is defined as continued enrollment (or degree completion) at any postsecondary education institution in the fall terms of a student's first and second year (Gardner, 2022) as well as the student's second and third year.

Transfers are counted when the currently enrolled institution is different than the institution enrolled in during the previous term. However, students who enrolled in a different institution during the summer but returned to their home institution immediately in the fall do not count as transfers. For example, a student at Ohio State University who enrolled in winter term, transferred to Owens Community College in Toledo for the summer, and returned to Ohio State in the fall term would not count as a transfer.

Completion refers to obtaining certificate, associate degree, or a bachelor's degree and being marked as "graduated" within the National Student Clearinghouse database.

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