Promise Scholarship Toolkit For High School Counselors

2024

Updated 04/04/2024

Most Updated Version can be found here: https://www.cfwvconnect.com/request-resources/financial-resources/

Promise Scholarship Toolkit

The information and instruction provided in this toolkit is intended to assist public high school counselors in their role in processing the Promise Scholarship Awards each year.

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I. COUNSELOR ROLE

- High School counselors play an important role in the awarding of the Promise scholarship for West Virginia students. The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission and the West Virginia Department of Education rely on counselors to assist with the Promise application process in the following ways:
  - Help as many seniors as possible complete the application and 2024-2025 FAFSA by the application 1 deadline.
  - Assisting and creating the grade submission file (PRM.DTA)
    - Run the grade file report (PRM.DTA) on WVEIS and assure the overall gpa is correct for all students.
    - Confirm the core gpa is correct on the report, includes all core classes (English, math, science, and history) and is being calculated correctly according to county grading policy.
    - Verify each student is meeting the minimum high school course requirements for eligibility. (Not missing core courses)
    - Verify each student completed at least 50% of their coursework required for graduation (24 credits) while attending school in West Virginia.
  - Reviewing Promise Applicants in FAMS to assist students with application errors and missing information.

II. WHERE TO APPLY

WEST VIRGINIA Student Aid MANAGEMENT

Students apply for state financial aid on the West Virginia Student Aid Management System (WVSAM). Helpful resources and links to the for navigating the WVSAM system can be found at www.collegeforwv.com/wvsam.

Create Your WVSAM Account

1. Go to the **WVSAM Portal** at CollegeforWV.com/WVSAM.
2. Click **Log in to WVSAM** button (read page first).
3. Click **Sign Up**.
4. Type in your First Name, Last Name and the email address you want associated with your account. This will be your username.
   TIP: Use a personal email you will have long-term access to.
5. Complete all required fields as prompted to continue setting up your account.
6. Check your email (junk/spam folder too) for your **Welcome to WVSAM** email.
7. Open the email and click the link to create your password. If there is not a hyperlink, move the email to your inbox.

WEST VIRGINIA Student Aid MANAGEMENT

ONLY the student should create a WVSAM Account

Got an error?
You may already have an account. Check your email for the Welcome to WVSAM email. If you cannot find it, contact us at 304.558.4618 or wvfinancialaid@wvhepc.edu.

Find video tutorials, FAQs and more at CollegeforWV.com/WVSAM

Share the Promise Application Checklist on Collegeforwv.com.
- Can be located under [Forms | College For WV](#)

III. CHANGES / RECENT UPDATES

Changes to the Promise Scholarship Requirements for the class of 2024.
- The Promise Application and FAFSA deadline were extended to May 1, 2024 due to the delay of the FAFSA.
- 2024-2025 FAFSA is in a new format and was delayed for all applicants. The new launch has caused delays in students being able to make edits or corrections to the FAFSA. Once FAFSA correction information is shared, we will notify counselors and applicants.
  - The New FAFSA requires students to invite "contributors" to fill out their part of the FAFSA form and grant permission for their tax information to be pulled from the IRS.
  - The EFC was replaced with the SAI or Student Aid Index.
  - Federal Student Aid has a YouTube page dedicated to the new FAFSA [Federal Student Aid New FAFSA Playlist](#) that would be useful to students and families looking for additional information on the FAFSA.
- The West Virginia Student Aid Management System (WVSAM) process has been streamlined so students can easily submit contact information during the account creation and verify their email address.

Self-reporting ACT/SAT scores on WVSAM.
- Applicants may self-report eligible scores on the Promise application. This is for matching purposes only. Only eligible scores should be reported. We must receive official scores before a student can be awarded. If eligible scores are achieved after submitting the application, an applicant can edit these fields on the application.

IV. PROMISE TIMELINE

The Promise scholarship timeline can help guide what to expect in a typical application year. PLEASE NOTE: the application deadline extension has moved some of these dates including release of the FAFSA and notifications to applicants for the class of 2024.

May (Junior Year)-September (Senior Year)
- Review 6th semester grade Promise report (PRM.DTA). Advise juniors regarding potential eligibility for both gpa and course requirements for Promise. Encourage all students to take the ACT or SAT test early.
- Promise report (PRM.DTA) submitted to WVHEPC from DOE using 6th semester grades. *Final determinations for Promise eligibility are based upon 8th semester grades.*
- Notify rising seniors of October 1 opening date for FAFSA and Promise Application.

October-November
- **October 1** - Promise Scholarship application become available. Students can apply by creating a West Virginia Student Aid Management Account (WVSAM). A link to the Promise application and full list of eligibility requirements can be found at www.collegeforwv.com/promise.
   a. Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) becomes available at http://www.studentaid.gov/fafsa.
- HEPC will match on 6th semester grade file periodically for students who have applied. Grades are matched with student applications via SSN, DOB, Student ID, school name in WVEIS. Incorrect information in WVEIS or on application will cause issues with information being matched properly.

December-February
- Review Promise applications at your school on WVHEPC's database the Financial Aid Management System (FAMS) www.wvhepc.org/secure/fams.
   o Advise students not on FAMS list of applicants to file an application and FAFSA by March 1 deadline.
   o Find missing information or potential problems with applications (FAFSA, ACT/SAT scores etc.)
   o Encourage students to review their status on their WVSAM account.
- Submit 7th semester Promise report (PRM.DTA) due by **March 1**.
- Submit grade report form using final grades to HEPC for any early graduates that applied the previous application year.
- HEPC will match on 6th semester grade file periodically for students who have applied.

March
- **March 1 – Promise Scholarship Application and FAFSA Deadline.** Promise application and FAFSA Deadline extended to May 1, 2024
   o *Any student who misses the deadline for application should still apply and may qualify for a late award. This option is contingent upon the availability of funding for late awards.*
- 7th semester grades received by HEPC. Report is matched with student applications via SSN, DOB, Student ID, school name in WVEIS.
- Email from HEPC to prompt counselor review on FAMS once grades are matched. (Mid-March)
   o REVIEW FAMS REFERENCE GUIDE below to resolve problems with Promise applications by April 1 with HEPC.

April-May
- Promise application and FAFSA Deadline extended to May 1, 2024
- Promise award/denial notifications sent to students via text/email. **(Late April/Early May)**
- Submit request for Promise eligibility rosters for high school award assemblies. Email from HEPC to prompt this. To request a list of Promise recipients for award ceremony, contact HEPC.
- 8th semester grades Promise report (PRM.DTA) submission. (Submit report asap after senior final grades available).
- Submit grade report forms and transcript for:
   o Any student who didn't qualify with 6th or 7th semester grades but do qualify with final grades.
   o Promise applicants graduating a year early.

June-July
- June 1 – Online Promise application taken down. Late applicants must contact HEPC for a paper application.
- Final testing dates to meet ACT/SAT requirements for the current application year.
  - **June SAT**- last SAT testing date to qualify for Promise eligibility.
  - **July ACT**- last ACT testing date to qualify for Promise eligibility
- Any student qualifying for ACT/SAT in May/June/July should self-report eligible test scores on WVSAM account. *(Official score must be received, for a student to be awarded).*

V. REVIEWING PROMISE APPLICANT STATUS IN THE FINANCIAL AID MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (FAMS)

- To access FAMS visit: https://www.wvhepc.org/secure/fams/
  - If you do not have an account, click on the "New User" link, and follow the instructions.
  - If you have an account but have forgotten your username or password, contact our office.

- Once you submit your account request, it will need to be approved by HEPC staff. Once approved, you will receive a confirmation code via email. Insert this confirmation code upon your first login to activate your account.

- To view a roster of students who have applied for Promise at your school, click "HS Counselor" tab on the drop-down list. Export or save the file to Microsoft Excel, with the green Excel Icon in the bottom left corner of your roster. FAMS Status is based upon live data, but it takes changes on the application up to 15 minutes to process!

- What am I looking at? See diagram 1, with matching information on how to review your Promise roster.

Diagram I. FAMS ROSTER EXAMPLE

1. **HS Counselor-** select HSCounselor[Default] to review your roster of Promise applicants for the current year.

2. **Name**- Name of applicant. Only students who have completed an application and list your high school will be on your roster.

Students should list legal name on application. If name is incorrect, will need updated.

3. **WV HS 50%**- West Virginia High School 50%. Student must complete 50% of high school coursework while attending a West Virginia high school.

   Y- Indicates if the student indicated they complete 50% of their coursework while attending a West Virginia high school.
   N- Student did not indicate they completed 50% of coursework at West Virginia school.

4. **Graduation Date**- Student must apply within 2 years of high school graduation. Those listing a graduation date from previous years will be flagged. Check to see the graduation month and year are correct. If incorrect, the student can update from the WVSAM account.

5. **ACT/SAT**- An eligible ACT or SAT score is required. See COLLEGEFORWV.com/promise for current ACT/SAT eligibility scores.

   OK- Scores on file meet the ACT/SAT requirement for Promise
   Low- Scores on file, but do not meet the Promise Scholarship requirements
   No- No scores on file

6. **Late App-** Late application. *Applications* must be received by March 1 deadline. Promise application and FAFSA Deadline extended to May 1, 2024

   OK- Promise application filed on time
   No- no application on file
   Late- Application filed after the March 1 deadline.

7. **ELIG/Date Elig**- **Eligible/Date Eligible**

   ELIG- **Yes**- student is eligible for Promise
   No- Student is not currently eligible for Promise
   Date Elig- Indicates the date the student became eligible in our system. Only for reference purposes.

8. **Fafsa**- Free Application for Federal Student Aid required by March 1. Promise application and FAFSA Deadline extended to May 1, 2024

   OK- FAFSA is on file and complete
   None- No fafsa on file
   Invalid- There is an issue with fafsa that is causing it not to be considered complete. Student should check www.fafsa.gov for issues.
   Late- FAFSA filed after March 1 deadline.

9. **Resident**- Student must meet residency requirements to qualify for Promise award.

   OK- Residency is ok
   NO- Student did not meet the residency requirement
   Unknown- Student has not completed FAFSA. Residency cannot be determined until a FAFSA has been filed.

10. **HS Level**- High School Level. Applicants must apply within two years of high school graduation. Applicants currently enrolled in college are not eligible.

    OK- Student High School level is ok
    Unknown- Student has not complete FAFSA. HS Level cannot be determined until a FAFSA has been filed.
    NOTFRESH1- Student indicated they will have previously been or are currently enrolled in college.

11. **GRADE**- Student must have eligible overall and core grade point average to qualify for Promise.

OK- Overall and Core grade point average qualifies.
Low- Overall and/or Core grade point average does not meet the requirement.
No- We do not have grades on file for this student.

12. **FAFSA Upload-** For those schools who are participating in the FAFSA data share program and need to upload their roster of seniors to retrieve FAFSA completion status.

13. **FAFSA Data share-** Click here to access your FAFSA data share records. Students who file a current year FAFSA will show here; based upon the grade file of seniors that our office received from the WV State Department of Education

VI. GRADE FILE SUBMISSION: PRM.DTA FILE

Counselors are required to review and submit the PRM.DTA file for the 7th and 8th semesters after grades have posted for each senior at their school. This application is available in WVEIS on the Web (WOW).

- ## 6th Semester Eligibility
  On behalf of districts and high schools, WVDE staff build a preliminary statewide student file and provide the information to the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) for an initial review of rising seniors who may become eligible to receive the Promise Scholarship.

- ## 7th Semester Eligibility
  Counselors or other school staff build and submit a preliminary eligibility file following the close of the first semester (the seniors' 7th academic semester in high school). On behalf of the districts, WVDE staff transmit the information to WVHEPC for preliminary determinations about students who may meet academic eligibility requirements for the Promise Scholarship.

- ## 8th Semester (Final) Eligibility
  Counselors or other school staff build and submit a final eligibility file following the close of the spring semester (the graduates' 8th academic semester) and/or students' high school graduation. On behalf of the districts, WVDE staff provide the information to WVHEPC to provide final information about students who meet academic eligibility requirements for the Promise Scholarship.

Please Note: Students may lose or gain eligibility with the final 8th semester grades. To qualify, they must have an overall AND core gpa of a 3.0. The Core GPA only includes English, math, science, and history coursework approved for meeting the high school graduation requirements in the state. An updated listing can be found on collegeforwv.com/promise under the high school course requirements

Students whose information is outdated and/or incomplete may not be considered for a Promise award.

Any student who doesn't qualify with 6th or 7th semester grades, but does qualify with final grades, should have a high school counselor submit a grade report form and final transcript for review in addition to the PRM.DTA report. This will ensure the student is awarded based upon the most up to

date information. Once WVHEPC receives the final grade file, most schools are on summer break and there is no one to verify the information on file is correct if there is a discrepancy.

VII. STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRM.DTA

Maintain Promise Scholarship Data (WSPRM.100)

The Promise Scholarship Report will work very much as it did in the original WVEIS.

- The file needs to be initially built in the new school year and will need to be rebuilt if student data is corrected in WVEIS.

- Student records can be marked as Counselor Reviewed individually by clicking 'Change' and then by clicking the checkbox as reviewed. Or all records can be marked as reviewed by selecting 'Mark all as Reviewed' after checking all students.

- Once the records have been reviewed and marked appropriately, the report must be finalized by selecting 'Finalize Data'. Please be sure all data is correct before finalizing! Once the report has been finalized it can not be rebuilt without contacting the WVEIS Helpdesk to clear the Finalized date.

The only data that can be changed directly in the report are the Counselor Reviewed flags and the WV Course work > 50%. All other data changes need to happen in the student records.

The default is for students to be marked as completing over 50% of their coursework in WV. Students who do not meet this qualification need the checkmark removed from their record.

The Finalized Date is displaying as 0001-01-01 until the file is finalized. This does not negatively impact the data or the performance of the application.

If a student has missing courses, they will be marked with a 'Y' in the student list. Highlight the student's name to see the missing course(s) in the student dashboard.
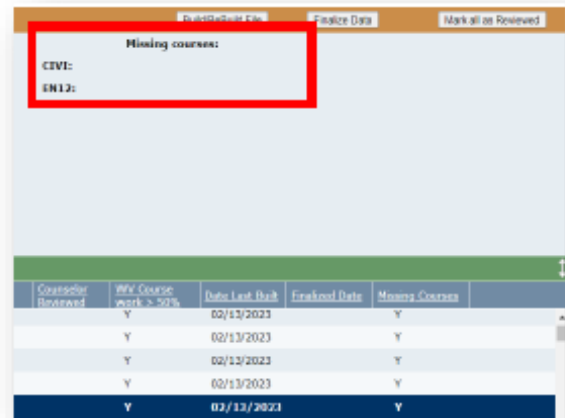
There are two dates on the student records. The 'Date Last Built' updates each time the file is built/rebuilt. The 'Finalized Date' populates once the Finalize button is selected. The student dashboard lists the user that made the last changes to the record, which is typically the last person to rebuild (or finalize) the file.

VIII. MATCHING GRADES TO PROMISE APPLICATIONS

Once WVHEPC receives the state grade file, there is an electronic process to match grade records in the PRM.DTA data file to all Promise Scholarship Applications in FAMS. Some records may not match due to conflicting information between WVEIS and the Application.

Once all matching is concluded, we will email counselors to review your roster for problems or issues. If you notice there are students who are listed as "NO" grades on the FAMS report but have completed or will complete the core course requirements and have a qualifying overall and core GPA, you should contact WVHEPC. If the information was not received, you may be asked to

submit a grade report and transcript for the applicant.

<div style="border:1px solid red;">
Please Note: Applicants must meet all eligibility requirements and deadlines for submitting the Promise application and FAFSA by deadline to be awarded. Late applications are accepted but not guaranteed an award.
</div>

IX. EARLY GRADUATES GRADE SUBMISSION

1. Any student graduating a year early or semester early must apply and meet all the eligibility requirements for the previous year's graduating class, including the ACT/SAT test requirements and all deadlines.

2. Junior graduates' grade information will not be included in the PRM.DTA submission unless they are coded as a senior when the report is run for your school.

   a. If an early graduate is not listed on your report for 7th or 8th semester grade file submission, counselors must submit a Grade Report Form and Transcript for the applicant.

3. Students graduating a semester early during their senior year and planning to start college the following spring term will not have their grades submitted via the PRM.DTA file.

   a. Counselors must submit a grade report form and final transcript for any student graduating a semester early once final grades are posted.

4. The grade report form can be found on collegeforwv.com/promise under the forms tab.

X. PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP NOTIFICATIONS

- WVHEPC will contact students via email regarding their status and eligibility. If a parent email is provided, we also send it to the parent email. If a student selects texting as their primary method of contact, we will contact them via text as well.

- WVHEPC sends Promise notifications electronically to all applicants. Initial Promise notifications typically go out in April.

XI. HIGH SCHOOL AWARD CEREMONIES

- Each year you must submit a request for your Promise eligible/awarded students to our office with the person you indicate as your contact for high school award ceremonies. WVHEPC as well as WVDOE will send an email with the links to submit your request for a list of Promise eligible students to be announced at the senior award ceremony in March.

- https://13.selectsurvey.net/WVHEPC/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=96238o3

- If you submit a request at the link above, WVHEPC will send the most up-to-date list of all students in your school who are Promise-eligible approximately two days in advance of your planned high school senior award ceremony. This will allow the representative of your choice to have an accurate and current list to announce during your event. If you have questions concerning a student's eligibility, contact WVHEPC.

- Under no circumstances should a student be given a certificate created by a high school counselor or other party that was not indicated on the list.

XII. NEED ASSISTANCE?

For Assistance with Promise Scholarship Application, Eligibility Issues, FAFSA or the Financial Aid Management System (FAMS)

Contact
304-558-4618 or toll free (877) 987-7664
Fax 18552921415
Live Chat available on collegeforwv.com/promise M-F 9am to 4pm
Email: **Promise@wvhepc.edu**
West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC)
1018 Kanawha Boulevard East, Suite 700
Charleston, WV 25301

For Technical Assistance with the Grade File Submission

- The WVDE tiered support structure emphasizes local ownership and problem solving to ensure a timely resolution to any issues and to build local capacity for long-term data management.

- First level data collectors, including school staff or district staff responsible for any part of a data collection, should address all questions, issues, or concerns about WOW applications to the local WVEIS County Contact. If the WVEIS County Contact cannot answer the question or solve the problem, he/she should contact the RESA Technical Assistance Representative. If the RESA staff member cannot answer the question or solve the problem, he/she should contact a WVDE representative and/or submit a ticket through the online issue resolution and management system.

For Assistance with the Data or Content Being Submitted

- Questions about the data or content being submitted should be directed to the appropriate program office, which may include WVEIS staff. School staff should first reach out to their district office to determine whether the question can be answered within the county, either by a district office or by the WVEIS County Contact. If the district staff member cannot answer the question or resolve the issue, he or she should try to work with RESA staff who may have knowledge of the content area. If RESA staff do not have immediate knowledge of the content area, either the district staff member or the RESA staff member may contact the appropriate WVDE program office, as listed below.

- All questions about graduation data that cannot be answered locally should be directed to the WVDE Office of Student and School Support at 304-558-3199. Emailed questions may be directed to Stephanie Hayes at stephanie.hayes@k12.wv.us

XIII. PROMISE MYTHS

- Students don't have to apply to be awarded the Promise Scholarship. *FALSE*
  - o Students must submit the Promise Scholarship Application to be awarded. Some colleges will estimate the Promise based upon a student's ACT/SAT scores and grade information. However,

Promise awards are approved and awarded by the WVHEPC. Students who do not apply and submit a valid FAFSA, will not be awarded.

- I need to wait to apply until I have the qualifying ACT or SAT scores. *FALSE*
  - The Promise Scholarship deadline is for all applicants. Students can continue to test through the end of July but need to meet the deadline for the both the Promise Application and the FAFSA.
- I can take my Promise award out of state! *FALSE*
  - Promise Scholarship can only be used at eligible institutions in West Virginia. Promise cannot be taken out of state under any circumstances.
  - Student who attends an out of state institution have up to one year to come back to West Virginia and utilize a Promise award, if they were awarded. They must meet the academic requirements of a first-year scholar, to have their scholarship reinstated. After the one-year mark, students are not permitted to attend out of state institution and remain eligible.
- We can take paper ACT or SAT score reports from a counselor. *FALSE*
  - Only official ACT or SAT the are received from the ACT or SAT organization can be used to qualify for the Promise Scholarship. We cannot accept any other form to certify ACT or SAT scores.
- Public High School Counselors must submit a grade report form for each student. *FALSE*
  - Grades for public high school students are received through the PRM.DTA submission. Counselors should only submit a grade report form for early graduates and when requested specifically for an individual student.
- Students are not permitted to apply after the deadline. *FALSE*
  - Students who miss the March 1 deadline can apply as a late applicant. Late awards are contingent upon funding of the program and are awarded the following spring term after the first fall term. Promise application and FAFSA Deadline extended to May 1, 2024
- If you graduate from a WV high school, you can qualify for Promise. *FALSE*
  - Students must graduate from a WV public or private high school AND complete at least 50% of their required courses for graduation (12 credits of 24).