

PPCC OFFERS FREE TUITION FOR JAMES IRWIN CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Pikes Peak Community College has joined with the Dakota Foundation, the Legacy Institute and Harrison School District Two to create an unprecedented opportunity for high school students. Qualifying students do not have to reside within HSD2 boundaries, but must graduate from an HSD2 high school, *including James Irwin Charter High School*.

The Dakota Promise Scholarship, set to start in fall 2020, will provide free college tuition and academic support coaches to every qualifying high school graduate in the school district.

"Those conversations at the dinner table when a parent tells their child, 'You're not going to college. We can't afford it'...Those conversations are over," said Dr. Lance Bolton, PPCC's president.

This pilot scholarship was developed with the financial support of the Dakota Foundation, which will be funding it for three years. Additional funding has been provided by the Legacy Foundation. Additional sources may provide funding to make the program sustainable for a fourth year.

"The idea behind this scholarship is to create new on-ramps, new ways for young people in some of our most under-served areas to reach their dreams," Bolton said. "We're tremendously grateful to the Dakota Foundation for sharing this vision with us, and if we can find more corporate support, we'd love to expand this to the entire Pikes Peak region."

The Dakota Promise Scholarship aims to double the number of students attending college within one year of high school graduation, and get 80 percent of those students to complete a certificate or degree or transfer to a four-year college or university.

"Education offers the most effective pathway for upward mobility in our society," said Bart Holaday, Chairman and CEO of the Dakota Foundation. "We at the Dakota Foundation, in partnership with PPCC and the Legacy Institute, are delighted to be able to create higher-education opportunities for District Two high school graduates. The Dakota Promise Scholarship will improve their lives and our society. As B. B. King said, 'Education is the one thing that no one can take from you.'"

"Our organization has been working on several projects to ensure students in Harrison receive the best educational opportunities possible," said Legacy Institute CEO Zachary McComsey. "We know this will make a huge difference, and we hope to see a significant rise in graduation rates as students see a bright future through this new scholarship beyond high school."

PPCC will play a pivotal role in the success of this program by providing participating students with intensive support from professional student success coaches which includes financial, personal, food, transportation, and academic support.

Research has shown that this kind of financial and academic support will help more underprivileged students find successful careers. It may also affect high school student dropout rates when students can see that a college education can be a reality.

Around the country, programs like this have seen an excellent return on investment especially for low-income, first-generation students. Women and students of color also showed higher levels of achievement.

Harrison School District Two was chosen for this program because of its highly under-served population and long-standing partnership with PPCC. It is also one of the most diverse school districts in the region.

To be eligible for the program, students must complete high school with a 2.5 or better GPA for their combined junior and senior years, enroll at PPCC within 12 months of graduation, enroll and complete a minimum of 24 credit hours per academic year and apply for financial aid by filling out the FAFSA or a different form for undocumented families. Any student who qualifies will be considered regardless of citizenship status.

The scholarships would pay the difference between grants a student receives from financial aid, and tuition and fees, up to \$5,000 per student, per year. Students must complete a minimum of 24 credit hours per academic year and maintain a 2.0 or better college GPA to continue receiving the scholarship.

Alex Marquez, Principal of James Irwin Charter High School, is extremely grateful to the Dakota Foundation, Legacy Institute, and Pikes Peak Community College for making this opportunity possible. Mr. Marquez stated, "As a college-prep school, the Dakota Promise Scholarship allows our graduates an amazing avenue to get their Associate's degree without worrying about finances. As a tuition-free charter school, we are honored to be included in this scholarship with other Harrison District high schools. I can't think of a better way to celebrate our school's 20th anniversary. I'm so excited for our students' future!"

For more information on the Dakota Promise Scholarship, contact a JICHS College and Career Counselor at 719-302-9109.

About the Dakota Foundation

For more than 20 years, the Dakota Foundation has sought to combine business discipline and charitable intentions to solve social problems. With grants and program-related investments, we take an investment approach: we want the total social return of our outlays to be higher than the cost.

In doing so, we hope to foster organizations and activities that are both economically and environmentally sustainable. We help people invest in themselves to improve their economic condition and those of their families and communities. This mission stems from our values: self-reliance, personal responsibility, human dignity, equal opportunity, and the preservation of life

and beauty on our earth. More info at dakotafoundation.org.

About the Legacy Institute

The vision of the Legacy Institute is to advance education and community development in Colorado Springs. Legacy has been a major champion for Harrison School District 2 and was a leading supporter of the successful 2018 \$180 million bond campaign that increased public funding for upgrading and modernizing all existing buildings (including district charter schools), building one new middle school, expanding two elementary schools into K-8 campuses, and freeing up funds to attract and retain quality teachers. More info at springslegacy.org.

About Pikes Peak Community College

Established in 1968 and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, PPCC offers associate degrees, certifications in career and technical fields and two bachelors' degrees. With three campuses, various off-campus locations, two military education centers, and hundreds of online classes, PPCC provides access to a quality, affordable and flexible education to more than 20,000 students annually with both credit and non-credit classes. More info at ppcc.edu.