



# UNIVERSITY of HAWAII<sup>®</sup>

Ke Kulanui o Hawai'i

Wendy F. Hensel  
President

**DEPT. COMM. NO. 104**

December 12, 2025

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi,  
President and Members of the Senate  
Thirty-Third State Legislature  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

The Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura, Speaker  
and Members of the House of Representatives  
Thirty-Third State Legislature  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Nakamura, and Members of the Legislature:

For your information and consideration, the University of Hawai'i is transmitting one copy of the Annual Report on the Hawai'i Promise Scholarship Program, FY 2025 (Section 304A-2102, Hawai'i Revised Statutes and Act 61, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2019) as requested by the Legislature.

In accordance with Section 93-16, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, this report may be viewed electronically at: [https://www.hawaii.edu/govrel/docs/reports/2026/hrs304a-2102\\_act61-slh2019\\_2026\\_hawaii-promise\\_annual-report\\_508.pdf](https://www.hawaii.edu/govrel/docs/reports/2026/hrs304a-2102_act61-slh2019_2026_hawaii-promise_annual-report_508.pdf).

Should you have any questions about this report, please do not hesitate to contact Stephanie Kim at (808) 956-4250, or via e-mail at [scskim@hawaii.edu](mailto:scskim@hawaii.edu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wendy F. Hensel".

Wendy F. Hensel  
President

Enclosure

# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ANNUAL REPORT



### REPORT TO THE 2026 LEGISLATURE

Annual Report on the Hawai'i Promise  
Scholarship Program FY 2025

HRS 304A-2102  
and  
Act 61, SLH 2019

December 2025

**Annual Report to the 2026 Hawai'i Legislature on  
The Hawai'i Promise Scholarship Program, FY 2025  
HRS 304A-2102 and Act 61, SLH 2019**

## **Background**

Hawai'i Promise is a state-supported scholarship program that ensures that residents with financial need can access a quality college education at the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges (UHCC). For eligible Hawai'i residents, Hawai'i Promise provides the "last dollar" to cover direct education costs (e.g., tuition, fees, books) that are not met by other forms of federal, state, and institutional financial aid.

In 2017, the Legislature provided the initial funding to establish the Hawai'i Promise Program for eligible students attending a University of Hawai'i Community College through Act 49, SLH 2017 (the supplemental budget bill).

In 2018, Governor David Ige signed Act 14, which expanded the program by providing additional financial assistance to cover unmet direct educational costs for qualified students enrolled at any UH community college. Act 14, SLH 2018, was subsequently codified as Hawai'i Revised Statutes §304A-2102 and included a reporting requirement specifying that UH must annually report the number of scholarships awarded through the University of Hawai'i Community College Promise Program during the preceding year.

In 2019, Act 61 was signed into law which appropriated funding for fiscal years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. In 2024-25, UH awarded \$5.692 million of which \$5.529 million was appropriated by the state legislature. Due to additional need, campuses contributed an additional \$0.163 million.

## **Hawai'i Promise Eligibility Requirements**

Students must meet the following requirements to be eligible for the Hawai'i Promise program:

- (1) Qualifies for Hawai'i resident tuition;
- (2) Submits the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and accepts all federal and state aid, grants, scholarships, and other aid that does not require repayment;
- (3) Is enrolled with six or more credits per semester in a UHCC degree or certificate program;
- (4) Maintains satisfactory academic progress;
- (5) Has unmet direct cost need.

Students are considered for the Hawai'i Promise when they submit their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and they do not need to apply for the program separately. Hawai'i Promise scholarships are awarded as part of a student's financial package issued by their college.

## Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Expenditures

For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, UH awarded and disbursed \$5,692,152 to assist 1,941 students from all seven UH Community Colleges who were eligible for the scholarship or the grant. The average amount awarded to each student was \$2,933 (Table 1).

**Table 1. Hawai'i Promise Scholarship Program, 2024-25\***

Campus	# of Recipients	Avg Award (\$)	Total Awarded (\$)
Hawai'i CC	312	\$2,185	\$681,820
Honolulu CC	263	\$2,913	\$766,159
Kapi'olani CC	399	\$3,365	\$1,342,535
Kaua'i CC	147	\$3,393	\$498,826
Leeward CC	459	\$2,912	\$1,336,637
Maui College	271	\$2,902	\$786,489
Windward CC	90	\$3,108	\$279,686
<b>UHCC Total</b>	<b>1,941</b>	<b>\$2,933</b>	<b>\$5,692,152</b>

\* Awards as of 11/18/25

Of the \$5.692 million awarded in Hawai'i Promise funds, **\$5.529 million was appropriated by the state legislature**, and due to additional need, **campuses contributed an additional \$0.163 million** (Figure 01).

**Figure 01. Break Down of Hawai'i Promise Funds by Legislative and Campus Funds**

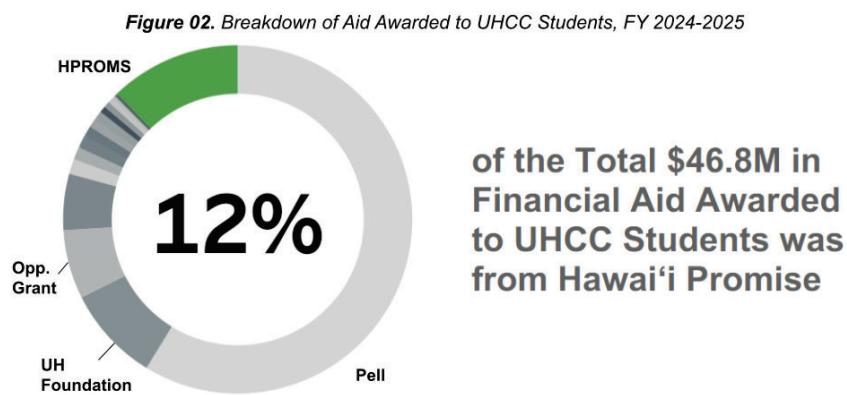


**of the \$5.692M was appropriated by the State Legislature and \$0.163M was contributed by the campuses.**

## **Addressing Unmet Need with Multiple Sources**

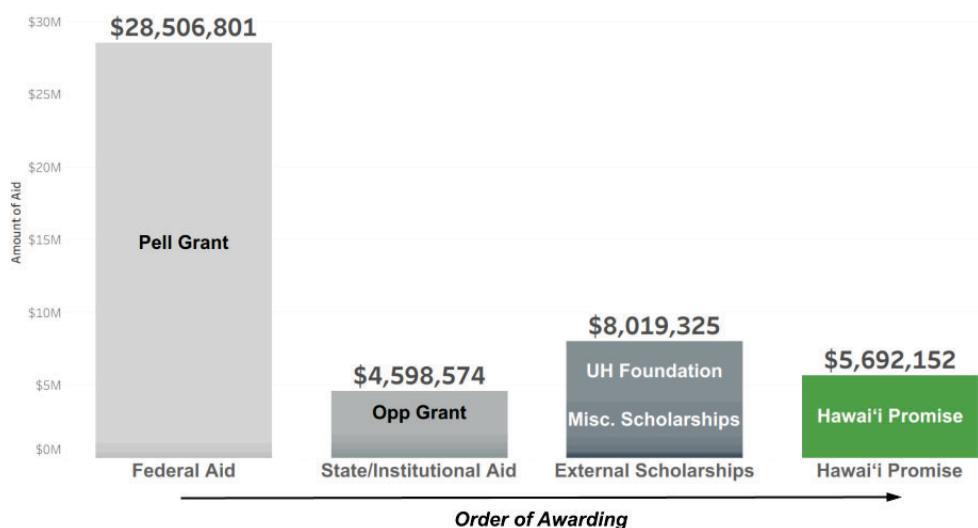
The Hawai'i Promise Scholarship Program is one part of the diverse package of aid opportunities afforded to UHCC students that have unmet need. Unmet need is calculated by subtracting a student's financial aid—including the Student Aid Index (SAI)—from the federally recognized Cost of Attendance (approximately \$24,000 for a full-time student). The SAI is determined using the federal need analysis formula and, in most cases, federal tax information retrieved directly from the IRS.

In 2024-25, Hawai'i Promise funds allocated from the Hawai'i State legislature accounted for 12% of all financial aid awarded to UHCC students (Figure 02).



As a last dollar program, the Hawai'i Promise program addresses the gap in any direct costs not covered by other sources of financial aid including federal Pell grants, other need-based state and institutional grants (B Plus, Second Century scholarship), merit-based institutional achievement scholarships, and external sources of scholarships. In FY 2024-25, UHCC administered over \$46.8 million in financial aid to its students (Figure 03).

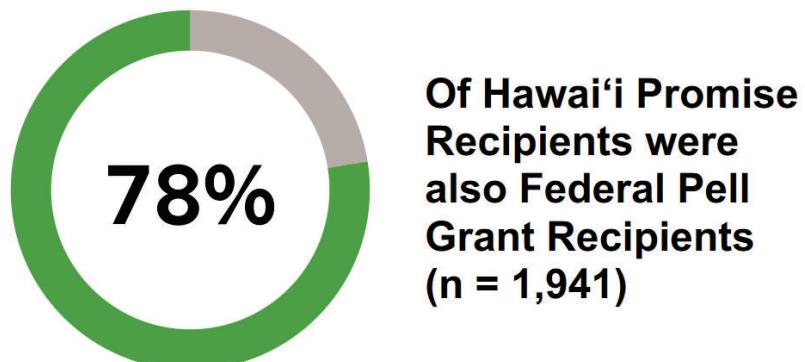
*Figure 03. Hawai'i Promise is a "Last Dollar" Source of Financial Aid*



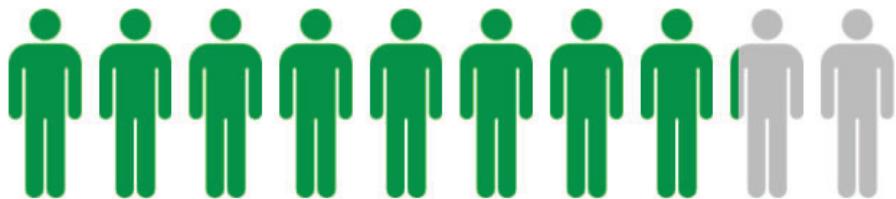
**Lower average family income.** The Hawai'i Promise program supports students that come from households with a lower average family income than the state's median and lower than the AUW Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) threshold which may describe families that have a job or multiple jobs, are doing everything they can to make ends meet, but may still be living paycheck to paycheck. Average family income of Hawai'i Promise scholarship recipients was \$62,456 (Adjusted Gross Income), well below the state's median household income of \$100,745 (Census, 2024) and Aloha United Way's "ALICE" threshold of \$97,608 for a family of four with two adults and two school age children (AUW, 2023). In addition, the average SAI (Student Aid Index) of an Hawai'i Promise recipient was 4,402.

**The majority of students receive Federal Pell Grants.** Seventy-eight percent (78%) of Hawai'i Promise scholarship awardees were also Federal Pell Grant recipients, the federal program designed to assist college students from low-income households. Twenty-two percent (22%) of recipients did not receive Federal Pell grants, indicating over one out of five students belonged in a "gap" group that had financial need, but did not qualify for the Pell grant (Figure 04).

*Figure 04. Breakdown of HP Recipients with/without Pell Grant, FY2025*



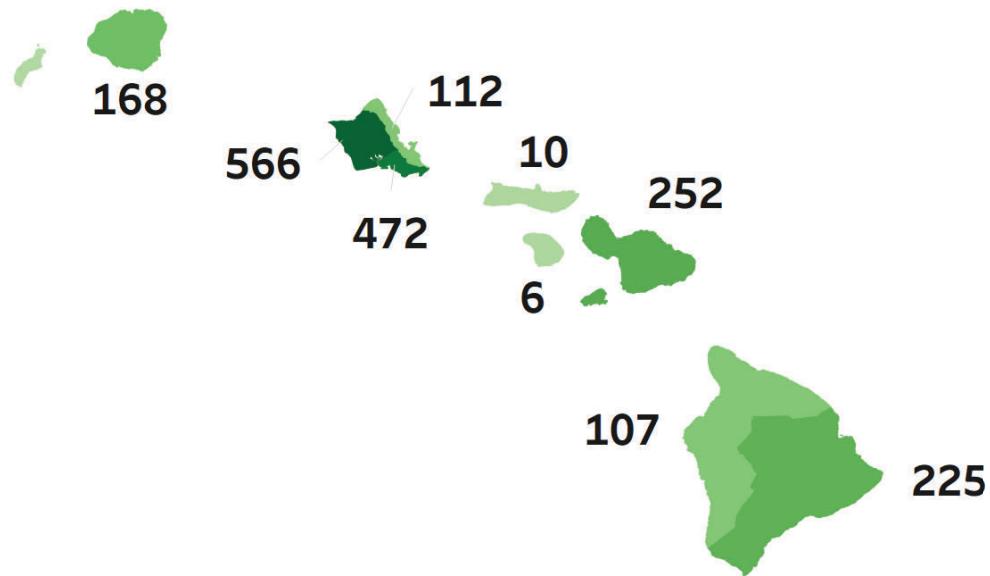
**The majority of students are from historically underserved racial groups.** While ethnicity is not a factor in the administration or intent of the Hawai'i Promise Program, eighty-one percent (81%) of Hawai'i Promise scholarships were awarded to students from historically underrepresented/underserved groups: Native Hawaiians (31%), Filipinos (51%), Pacific Islanders, American Indian or Alaskan Native, African American, and Hispanic (Figure 05).



*Figure 05.* 81% of HP recipients belong to underrepresented communities in the UHCC campuses.

**Hawai'i Promise recipients come from all geographic regions of the state.** Hawai'i Promise continues to serve our local communities throughout the state. In the most recent cohort, recipients came from Kaua'i (168), Leeward O'ahu (566), Windward O'ahu (112), Honolulu (472), Moloka'i (10), Maui (252), Lāna'i (6), West Hawai'i (107), and East Hawai'i (225). (Figure 05). The Hawai'i Promise program supports access and opportunity for individuals with need, irrespective of geographic location (Figure 06).

*Figure 06. Where Our Promise Recipients Come From, FY 2025*



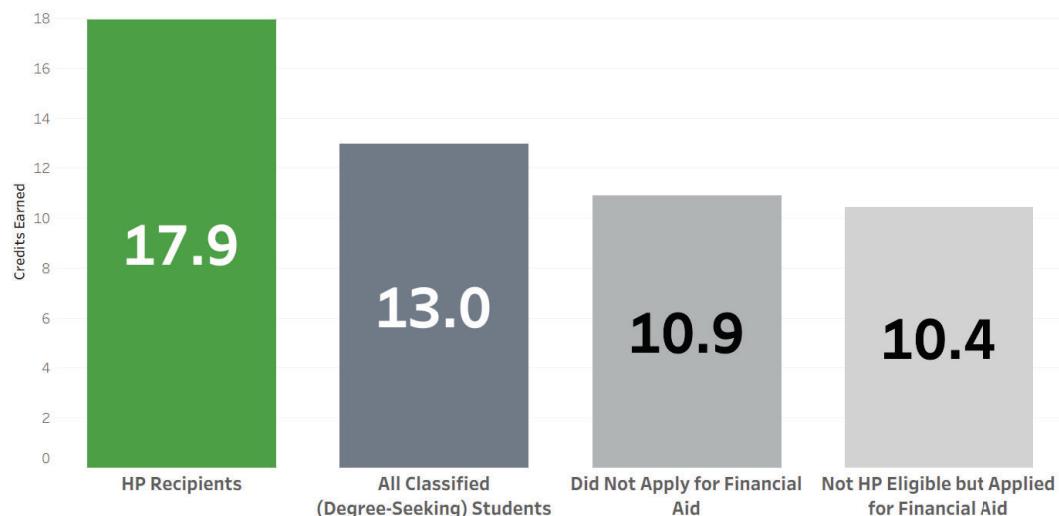
#### Hawai'i Promise Scholarship has a positive impact

In general, Hawai'i Promise recipients outperform their counterparts with regard to finding academic success. This is true for the FY2025 cohort of students and has been true for all Hawai'i Promise cohorts since the inception of the program in 2017.

- **More credits earned:** In 2024-25, Hawai'i Promise recipients attempted and earned more credits than non-Hawai'i Promise awardees. More credits earned has academic and financial benefits to the student including reducing time to degree and increased likelihood of persistence and degree completion. This comparison held true for Hawai'i Promise recipients relative to: (a) all degree-seeking students, (b) those who applied for financial aid, but did not receive Hawai'i Promise, and (c) those who did not apply for aid.

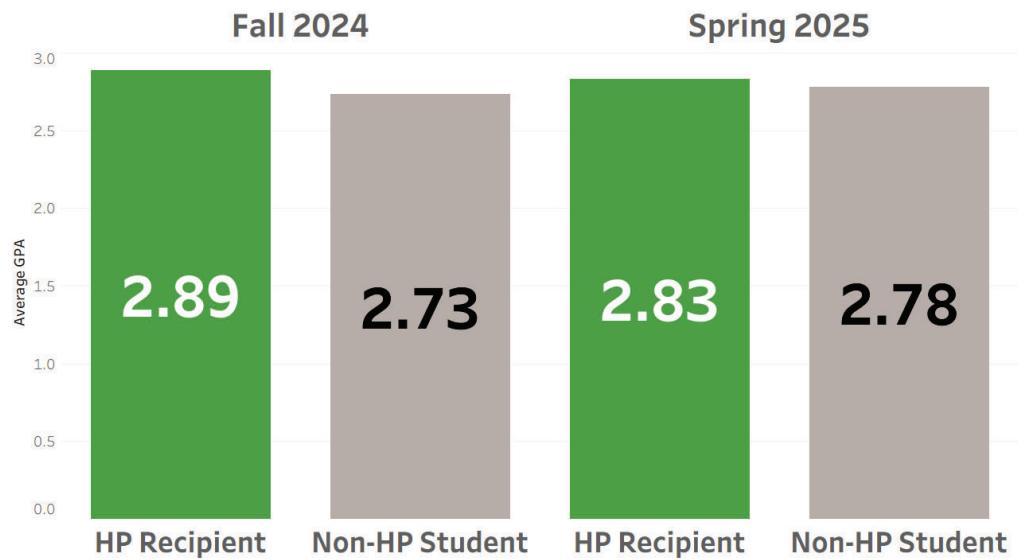
On average, during the 2024-25 academic year, Hawai'i Promise recipients earned nearly 5 or more credits than students classified in these other categories (Figure 07).

*Figure 07. Average Credits Earned, AY 2024-2025*



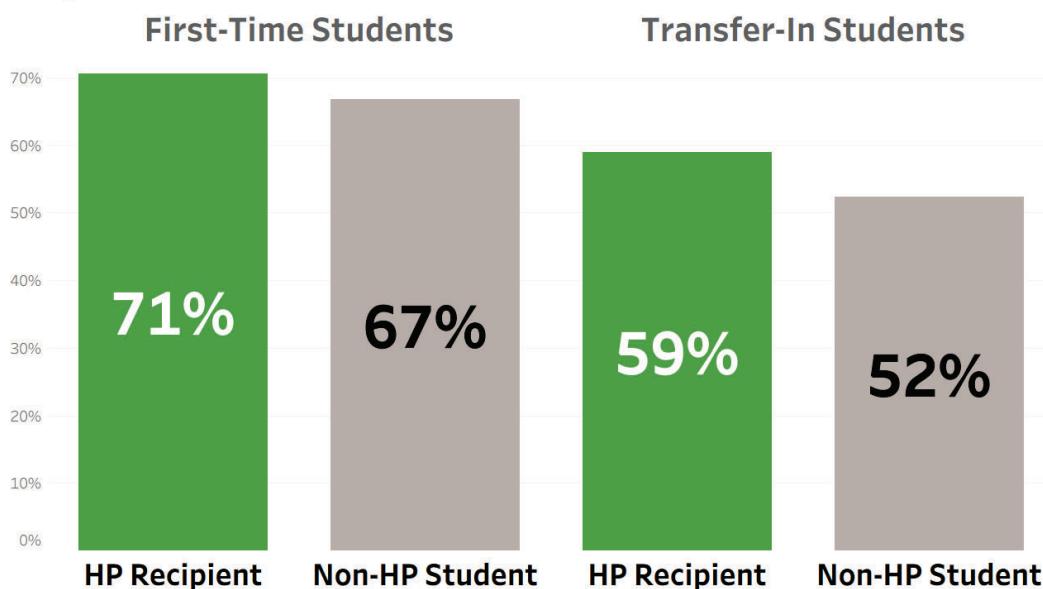
- **Better grades:** Hawai'i Promise recipients had higher passing rates than their peers, and they earned higher grades than their peers. In each term since Hawai'i Promise began, scholarship recipients have earned a 2.8 Grade Point Average (GPA) or higher (Figure 08).

*Figure 08. Average Cumulative GPA, AY 2024-2025*

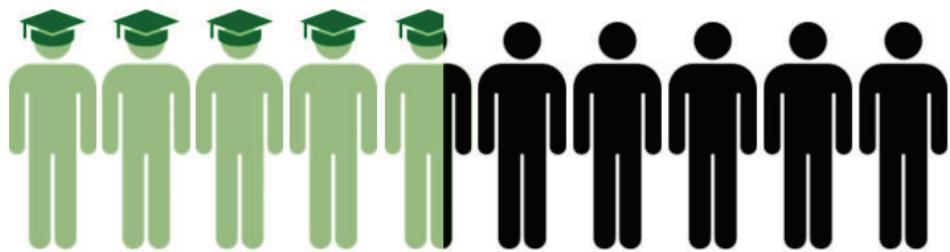


- **Higher persistence rates for full-time students:** Hawai'i Promise recipients were more likely to continue to be enrolled in UH than their peers who did not receive Hawai'i Promise. Seventy one percent (71%) of first-time (new freshmen) Hawai'i Promise scholarship recipients who enrolled full-time in Fall 2024 continued to be enrolled in Fall 2025, at a rate of four percentage points higher than non-Hawai'i Promise first-time students. One-year persistence rates were higher for full-time transfer students as well, 59% compared to 52%, for Hawai'i Promise recipients vs. non-Hawai'i Promise recipients (Figure 09).

*Figure 09. One Year Persistence Rates of Full-Time Fall 2024 Students*



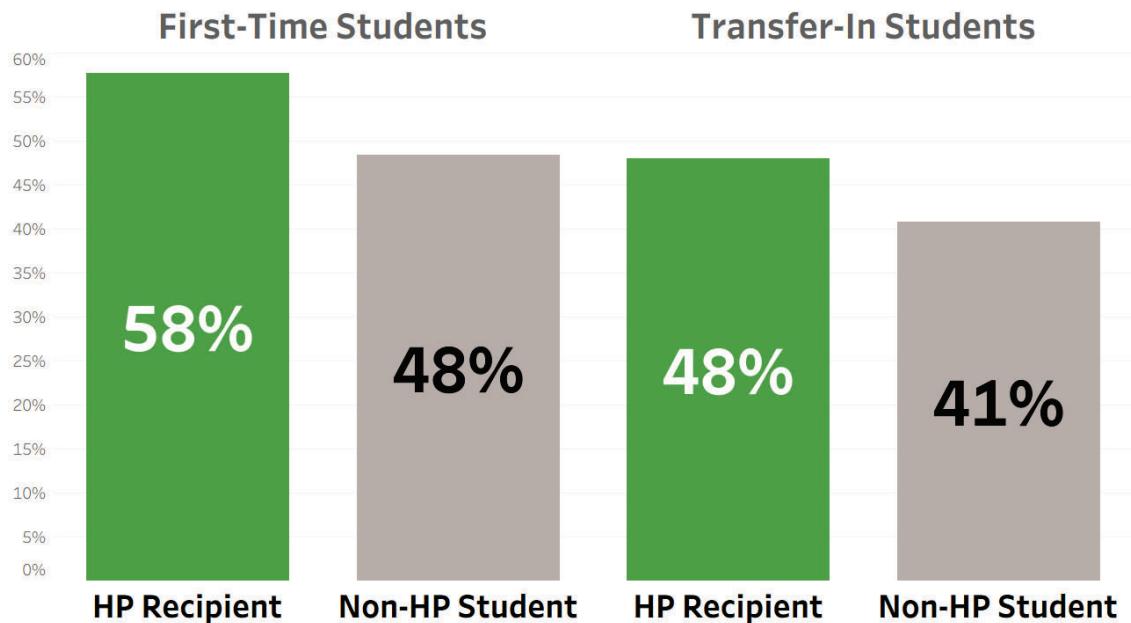
Students who received Hawai'i Promise scholarships in prior years continue to be enrolled, meet transfer goals, and earn degrees and certificates at comparable or greater rates than peers. For example, among students who received scholarships as new students in Fall 2022, 47% of Hawai'i Promise students successfully transferred to another institution and/or graduated, which is eight percent higher than their peers (Figure 10).



**Figure 10.** Since Fall 2022, 47% of HP recipients have graduated or transferred to another institution.

- **Higher persistence and completion rates for part-time students:** For first-time, part-time students, Hawai'i Promise scholarship recipients returned at a rate ten percentage points higher than their peers: **58% vs. 48%**. Additionally, for transfer-in, part-time students, Hawai'i Promise recipients also returned at a rate of seven percentage points higher than their peers: **48% vs. 41%** (Figure 11). Part-time Hawai'i Promise scholarship recipients graduate or continue to be enrolled at higher rates than their peers, which has been the case for all part-time student cohorts for the past six years.

*Figure 11. One Year Persistence Rates of Part-Time Fall 2024 Students*



## Perspectives from Scholarship Recipients

Act 61, SLH 2019, requested additional information on how many students would have enrolled without the benefit of the program, how many scholarship recipients are unable to complete their program despite receiving a scholarship, and the likelihood that receiving a scholarship increased students' degree completion. Hawai'i Promise recipients provided feedback in November 2025 that addressed the impact of the scholarship on their ability to enroll, persist, and complete their college goals.

### ***Kaua'i Community College, student***

*"The Hawai'i Promise Scholarship has been more than just financial aid, but it's been a lifeline that allowed me to pursue my education without the constant stress of tuition costs. As a past student at a UH Community College, I've always dreamed of transferring to a UH 4-year campus to deepen my studies and contribute meaningfully to my community. But like many local students, the financial burden felt overwhelming.*

*Receiving the Hawai'i Promise Scholarship changed everything. It gave me the freedom to focus on my academics, participate in campus activities, and even explore research opportunities that align with my passions, especially around cultural identity, language preservation, and socio-economic dynamics in Hawai'i. I no longer had to choose between working long hours and attending class. Instead, I could invest my time in learning, growing, and preparing for the future I envision. This scholarship didn't just help me, but it empowered me. It reminded me that my goals are valid and achievable, and that Hawai'i believes in its students. I'm now attending University of Hawai'i, Mānoa, and I carry with me the confidence and support that this program instilled.*

*Expanding the Hawai'i Promise Scholarship means opening doors for more students like me. Students with big dreams, deep roots, and the potential to uplift our islands. Mahalo for believing in us. Truly a blessing!"*

### ***Hawai'i Community College, student***

*"The Hawai'i Promise Scholarship has helped me be able to afford to go to Culinary school. I am a first generation college student. If I get the experience and the degree in the culinary field, I will have more of a chance to have a successful career in the industry. I want to give back to my family who have raised me and supported me."*

### ***Honolulu Community College, student***

*"As a young adult living in Hawai'i, affording to go to school and live is a very real struggle for me. It was the biggest reason my educational journey has been prolonged. This scholarship allowed me to focus on school and lessened my worries of affording basic necessities."*

### ***Kapi'olani Community College, student***

*"The Hawai'i Promise Scholarship has truly changed my life. As a mom, a substitute teacher of 17+ years on the Leeward Coast, and a full-time student at KCC, this support allows me to focus on my classes without stressing about tuition. It helped me stay on track toward graduating with*

*my AA in Elementary Education and transferring into a UH 4-year SPED program. This scholarship gives me the chance to reach my dream of becoming a special education teacher in my own community of Wai'anae, and I'm so grateful for the opportunity. "*

**Leeward Community College, student**

*"I was always worried about money. I kept second guessing my decision if I should go to school or not. But, thanks to this scholarship, I am able to finish my school year."*

**Windward Community College, student**

*"Hawai'i Promise has given me the opportunity to pursue a college degree. Before knowing about this scholarship my only goal was to take a couple of classes to learn my mother tongue olelo Hawai'i because I did not think I could afford to get a degree. After receiving the scholarship and assistance from TRIO and WCC staff, they showed me that a degree is affordable and within reach. Mahalo nui loa to the Hawai'i Promise Scholarship."*

**UH Maui College, student**

*"The Hawai'i Promise Scholarship has made an enormous difference in my life and my educational journey. As a first-generation college student working toward a career in nursing, financial barriers were one of the biggest obstacles standing between me and my goals. This scholarship lifted that weight off my shoulders and allowed me to focus fully on my classes, labs, and clinical training without worrying about how I would afford tuition, books, uniforms, or essential supplies.*

*Because of Hawai'i Promise, I've been able to stay enrolled full-time at UH Maui College and make real progress toward becoming a Licensed Practical Nurse and eventually an RN. Instead of working extra hours to cover school costs, I've been able to dedicate my time to studying, practicing my nursing skills, and preparing for the Prometric exam. This support has truly changed my life by giving me the stability and confidence I needed to keep moving forward.*

*Hawai'i Promise doesn't just help with finances — it creates opportunity. It gave me the chance to stay in school, continue my training, and work toward serving my community as a future healthcare professional. I am deeply grateful, and I hope this program can continue expanding so that even more UHCC students, especially those planning to transfer to a UH 4-year campus, can receive the same life-changing support I did."*

**(1) How many scholarship recipients would have enrolled in the University of Hawai'i Community College system without the benefit of the program;**

A survey to gather student feedback on Hawai'i Promise was emailed to all 1,941 students that received a Hawai'i Promise scholarship in academic year 2024-2025. The survey was administered in November 2025 and 128 survey responses were received. The student sample of 128 Hawai'i Promise Scholarship recipients (6.6% response rate) provides a picture of Hawai'i Promise Scholarship students as a whole and is acceptable for educational purposes with a 95% confidence interval and a 8% margin of error.

The large majority of survey respondents reported that the Hawai'i Promise scholarship provided positive benefit and impact to their ability to afford, decision to enroll, and likelihood to persist in the University of Hawai'i Community College System.

- **99% of respondents** Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the Hawai'i Promise scholarship helped me decide that college was affordable this year;
- **89% of respondents** Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the Hawai'i Promise scholarship helped me to make the decision to enroll in college this year;
- **83% of respondents** Strongly Agreed or Agreed that returning to college next semester depends on continuation of my financial aid including the Hawai'i Promise scholarship.

Conversely, only **1% of respondents** Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that the Hawai'i Promise scholarship helped to decide that college was affordable this year and **2% of respondents** Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that returning to college next semester depended on continuation of their financial aid including the Hawai'i Promise scholarship.

Based on this sampling, it is projected that 1,728 students (89% of AY 2024-2025 Hawai'i Promise recipients) enrolled within the University of Hawai'i Community College System because of the benefits of the Hawai'i Promise program.

While Hawai'i Promise scholarships are applied only to direct educational expenses (such as tuition), all respondents indicated that the Hawai'i Promise scholarship enabled them to benefit in many ways to support their educational success.

The Hawai'i Promise Scholarship allowed me to:	Percent of Sample
Support my living expenses and basic needs, such as food or housing	72%
Purchase books or supplies that I could not afford	83%
Take more classes/credits	68%
Reduce the amount of student loans I borrowed	59%
Reduce the amount of my work hours	35%

**(2) How many scholarship recipients begin a degree program, but are unable to complete the program, despite receiving the benefit of a Hawai'i community college promise program scholarship;**

In December 2025, an analysis was conducted to assess the outcomes of all Hawai'i Promise recipients since program inception (Fall 2017 - Fall 2025). A total of 11,921 unique recipients were assessed.

### 70% Success Rate (Degree Completion, Transfer, and/or Persistence)

- 4,753 students completed a UH certificate or degree (CA or higher);
- 294 students successfully transferred from a UH Community College to a UH four-year institution;
- 331 students transferred to a non-UH college;
- 2,953 students are still pursuing a UH degree program (includes Fall 2025 Hawai'i Promise recipients).

### 30% Stop-out Rate

- 3,590 students have some college experience, but did not successfully transfer to a UH four-year, complete a degree, or persist with their education. It is possible that many of these students successfully transferred to a non-UH four-year institution, but the finalized transfer data was not available at the time of this report.
- It is noted that the 30% Hawai'i Promise stop-out rate compares favorably to the 45% national measure for not enrolled, no-degree status within six years for students that begin at a public, two-year institution according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

### **(3) The degree to which receipt of a Hawai'i community college promise program scholarship directly increases the likelihood that a recipient completes a degree program.**

Hawai'i Promise recipients have higher "success rates" as measured by graduation at a UH Community College, transfer to a baccalaureate program, and continued enrollment. Overall success rates for first-time, full-time students were 45% for Hawai'i Promise recipients compared with 37% for non-Hawai'i Promise recipients. Hawai'i Promise recipients had higher 150% graduation rates than their counterparts (39% vs. 29%). Non-Hawai'i Promise recipients were found to have higher transfer rates than Hawai'i Promise recipients (Figure 12).

*Figure 12. Combined Success Rates of Students from Fall 2017-22*

