

EDUCATION

More Private, Public Funding Committed to Alamo Colleges' Free Tuition Program

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SCOTT BALL / RIVARD REPORT

Alamo Colleges Chancellor Mike Flores attends the Toyota Manufacturing announcement and gift of \$500,000 to the Alamo Promise program.

When Alamo Colleges officials first announced a scholarship program that will allow students graduating from Bexar County high schools to attend the community college system for free, funding for the program was uncertain.

In July, [Alamo Colleges officials projected the first year of the Alamo Promise program \(https://therivardreport.com/alamo-promise-set-to-recruit-from-25-local-high-schools-this-fall/\)](https://therivardreport.com/alamo-promise-set-to-recruit-from-25-local-high-schools-this-fall/), slated to start in fall 2020 in 25 high schools, would cost \$5 million, with most of the cost covered by federal financial aid.

This week, San Antonio leaders filled in the blanks, providing additional funding sources to support the program.

Related: [Alamo Promise Set to Recruit From 25 Local High Schools This Fall \(https://therivardreport.com/alamo-promise-set-to-recruit-from-25-local-high-schools-this-fall/\)](https://therivardreport.com/alamo-promise-set-to-recruit-from-25-local-high-schools-this-fall/)

Kevin Voelkel, the senior vice president of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Texas, announced on Tuesday a \$500,000 donation for Alamo Promise's next five years. On Thursday, City Council approved an additional \$154,218 (<https://sanantonio.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4132792&GUID=BC10A923-4F45-42FE-AC54-A73BB14F28C2&FullText=1>) for the program.

Over the next five years, the City plans to commit roughly \$11.2 million to Alamo Promise, Mayor Ron Nirenberg said at a *Rivard Report* event Wednesday.

"This is our moonshot," Nirenberg said. "This year's public safety budget is \$820 million – one year – this year's [transportation and capital improvements budget] is \$110 million, both record levels. If this city – our city government, but also the entire community – cannot muster up \$11.2 million to fund a generation of students being able to be the first in their families to go to college, shame on us."

The City's fiscal year 2020 budget puts aside \$1.4 million for Alamo Promise in 2021.

"The Alamo Colleges classroom and enrollment is only one part of the Alamo promise program," Nirenberg told reporters Wednesday. "The other is a network that provides various nonprofits [funding] that help aid a student."

These organizations will help recruit and enroll students, give them career advice, and track student progress in the program, he said. "It's really an ecosystem that's created with the Alamo Promise."

At the [Toyota announcement on Tuesday](https://therivardreport.com/toyota-to-invest-391-million-in-san-antonio-truck-plant/), (<https://therivardreport.com/toyota-to-invest-391-million-in-san-antonio-truck-plant/>) Voelkel underscored the importance of the Alamo Promise program.

"By eliminating barriers to education, the Alamo Colleges District is working to end poverty," Voelkel said. "Toyota is a mobility company. Not just building cars and trucks, we believe in social and economic mobility, and Alamo Promise is the vehicle for that change."

Officials with the colleges expect more than 3,000 students to enroll from the first 25 high schools in the program's first year, almost 1,000 students more than the number who would normally enroll.

The program works as a last-dollar scholarship. To become eligible, students must apply for federal and state financial aid. The Alamo Promise program covers the remaining balance needed for 60 semester credit hours.

Students have to submit a federal or Texas financial aid form, register at one of the Alamo Colleges, participate in a summer orientation program prior to fall semester if the high school GPA is below 2.5, maintain a 2.0 while at Alamo Colleges, and complete at least 18 credit hours per academic year to participate.

Each year, the cost of the program is expected to grow. When the program expands in its second year, it will cost more than \$16 million. At that time, Alamo Colleges will need about \$2.8 million in financial support from the City and County.

Senior Reporter Iris Dimmick contributed to this article.
