



The Challenge Facing Denver

There is a growing crisis in the affordability of college. Tuition in Colorado has increased by 50% in just the last 5 years. As a result, thousands of Denver kids who otherwise have the dedication, talent, and grades to go to college have to skip simply because the costs are too high. In just 5 years, three out of four jobs in Denver will require a post-secondary certificate or degree. The College Matters proposal is designed to:

- Increase college enrollment by low income students
- Benefit Denver's middle class with some student loan relief
- Help Denver's economy, and help our kids compete for the jobs we're attracting in Denver's growing economy.

What is the "College Matters" Proposal?

The program will create a dedicated funding stream through a sales tax increase of less than a penny on a ten-dollar purchase, which will generate \$10.6 million annually. This will create and fund a city-funded non-profit organization (similar to the Denver Preschool Program) that will:

1. Support scholarship organizations so they can serve more Denver college students.
2. Collaborate with Colorado higher education institutions to provide student loan debt relief and support services for students without a scholarship.
3. Fund student support services that promote completion of degrees, such as tutoring, mentoring, personal financial guidance, and academic counseling.

This program is designed on a pay-for-performance model. The education support is student-centered and tied to students' achieving academic progress.

Student Eligibility

Eligible students must have: continuous Denver residency for more than 36 months before their first course at a post-secondary institution; qualify for needs-based financial aid; attend a regionally accredited, not-for-profit or public college, university, community college or technical school in Colorado; be no more than 25 years old; and demonstrate Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) as determined by their post-secondary institution.

Accountability

7-member governing board appointed by City Council and the Mayor. Annual reporting to City Council, Mayor and the community are required, and subject to audit by the Denver Auditor's Office. Scholarship organizations can only use program funds on supporting Denver students, not for operations or administrative expenses. The program is student-centered and only funds students making progress toward their degree. The sales tax will sunset in 10 years, unless reauthorized by Denver voters.

Impact

Denver residents with postsecondary education have more job opportunities, earn higher salaries, experience lower unemployment, and support Denver's economy by paying more taxes to support local services. One scholarship organization calculated a \$9.59 return (in local, state and federal taxes paid) for every scholarship dollar.