

PROVING WHAT'S POSSIBLE.

AMERICA'S FIRST PUBLICLY FUNDED
FIRST-DOLLAR PROMISE PROGRAM



877

D2 students served
since 2020



88%

Fall-to-spring retention —
highest in program history



PROMISE PROGRAMS

D2 PROMISE

Prepared for the Citizens Oversight Committee, D2 Voters and Community

For complete program information and ongoing updates visit D2Promise.org

DELIVERING ON OUR PROMISE

The D2 Promise Scholarship Program (D2 Promise) pays for all tuition and fees at Pikes Peak State College (PPSC). With college costs covered, students can utilize federal and state financial aid—plus any additional scholarships they receive—to cover living expenses, allowing them to focus on their education.

When D2 voters approved the mill levy in November 2024, the community committed \$2 million annually for 10 years to ensure students can focus on their education instead of working multiple jobs to afford college. This report shows what happened when the very first cohort of students experienced that promise—and what the results mean for Southeast Colorado Springs.

The D2 Promise Scholarship Program believes in **removing barriers**, not just creating opportunities.

First-dollar funding

D2 Promise pays tuition and fees upfront before any other aid is applied. Federal and state financial aid—plus any additional scholarships—then turns into money students can use for living expenses. Most Promise programs work backwards, covering only what's left over after other aid is applied.

Comprehensive coaching

D2 Promise students are paired with dedicated coaches at PPSC who guide them from enrollment through graduation, helping navigate everything from course selection to career planning. Since 2020, D2 Promise students have retained at a rate 20 percentage points higher than PPSC's overall student population. Proof that first-dollar funding plus dedicated coaching is a combination that works.

Community investment

In November 2024, D2 voters chose to invest \$2 million annually in their students and their future. That decision opened doors for 193 students in the fall of 2025 alone, and will continue doing so for ten years. It is publicly funded, fully transparent, and built on the belief that every young person in Southeast Colorado Springs is worth the investment.

Economic impact

When D2 students earn credentials and enter the workforce, the benefit reaches far beyond the individual. Higher wages, stronger local businesses, and graduates who return to serve the community they grew up in. That is what breaking generational poverty looks like in Southeast Colorado Springs.



MILL LEVY INVESTMENT



\$2 million

annually approved by D2 voters for 10 years, through 2035



27%

of all 2025 D2 graduates chose PPSC — building on years of growth



72%

of the Fall 2025 cohort are the first in their family to attend college



75%

of all D2 Promise students who attended PPSC have graduated, transferred, or are still enrolled

BY THE NUMBERS

FALL 2025 COHORT



PROGRAM IMPACT

2020-2025

2020

Dakota Promise (private funding) begins with 93 D2 students

2023

Program management transitions to D2, creating D2 Promise.

2024

Voters approve the District 2 mill levy, increasing opportunities for students

2025

America's first publicly funded first-dollar Promise program launches

THE FIRST OF THE FIRST:

FALL 2025 COHORT RESULTS

When 193 D2 graduates enrolled at PPSC in fall 2025, they became part of history — the inaugural cohort of America's first publicly funded first-dollar Promise program.

88%

Fall-to-spring retention rate — highest in D2 Promise history

\$2,209

Average D2 Promise scholarship per student — paid first, before any other aid

139 of 193

First gen: 72% of the inaugural first-dollar class is writing a new chapter for their families

2.79

Average GPA — Fall 2025 cohort. Plus: two students earned Nurse Aide Certifications in their first semester

RETENTION

The first-dollar model is working. Retention has climbed steadily since 2020 — and the 2025 first-dollar cohort set a new record.

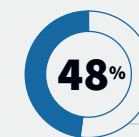


ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL

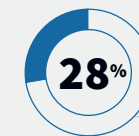
School	Grads	Promise	Percent
Aspire Online Academy	19	8	42%
Atlas Preparatory	122	30	25%
Career Readiness Academy	47	7	15%
Harrison High School	208	62	30%
James Irwin Charter	80	29	36%
Sierra High School	161	48	30%
The Vanguard School	75	9	12%
Total	712	193	27%

Complete enrollment trends available at D2Promise.org

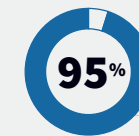
STUDENT IMPACT



of Promise students said they would not have attended college without this program



increase in retention from 2020 to 2025



of students knew at least one other Promise Scholar

THRIVING STUDENTS

THE STORIES BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Numbers tell one kind of story. Behind every data point is a real person who decided to bet on themselves and found a community betting on them right back.



Cristopher Nuñez

Harrison High School · Welding, PPSC

“I got to the US when I was 13 and didn’t speak the language. I never thought I would go to college. I felt left out in school because I didn’t speak English. Things changed when I learned English and doors opened. Now I graduated May 2025.”

Cristopher says the Promise Program gave him the support he needed to stay on track. When he was at the point of giving up, his Promise Coach stepped in and helped him keep going.



Qaiden Nieves

Harrison High School · D2 Promise Scholar



Qaiden shares his D2 Promise experience in his own words. When you remove the financial barrier, everything else becomes possible.



Quetzaly Gudino

Sierra High School Graduate, PPSC Nursing Student

“My time in Promise Programs has been one of the most unique, fulfilling times of my educational journey. The initially jarring transition into college became warm and welcoming through my Promise coaches.”

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED

D2 PROMISE WINS 2026 BELLWETHER BEST IN SHOWCASE AWARD

The Bellwether Award is one of the most prestigious honors in American community college education.

Administered by the Bellwether College Consortium and judged by an independent panel of national peers, it recognizes programs that demonstrate bold, replicable solutions to the most pressing challenges facing colleges and communities across the country.

On February 24, 2026, Pikes Peak State College, Harrison School District 2, The Legacy

Institute, and The Dakota Foundation received the 2026 Bellwether Best of Showcase Award for Workforce Development, which is a top honor during the annual competition that included 10 finalists nationwide, representing 20 states and 30 colleges.

The D2 Promise is now a national model for replication — with training for other communities planned through the Promise for All Fellowship in 2027.



Top 10

national finalists from 20 states and 30 colleges



1

Best in Showcase — Workforce Development

“Winning this award affirms what we have built together.

The D2 Promise shows what becomes possible when a community, a college, a school district, and nonprofit partners commit to removing systemic barriers.”

— Dr. Lance Bolton, President, Pikes Peak State College

YOUR INVESTMENT AT WORK FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY



Mill Levy Investment:

Up to \$2 million annually

approved by D2 voters for
ten years, through 2035

Multiple layers of transparency ensure proper stewardship:



Citizens Oversight Committee

12 community members review all mill levy expenditures annually



Regular community reports

Published three times a year with updates on student progress and fund usage, including this report



Yearly data-driven report

Comprehensive economic impact analysis and program evaluation, including graduation rates, workforce outcomes, and detailed program statistics, will be created by Data-Driven Economic Strategies (DDES)



Open financial records

Full transparency at hsd2.org/our-district/financial-transparency

Questions about mill levy spending?

Contact D2's Chief Financial Officer and Director of Finance

Contact information available at
hsd2.org/our-district/financial-transparency

BUILDING ON SUCCESS WHAT'S NEXT

This is just the beginning.

Five years ago, 93 students took a chance on a new kind of promise. Today, 877 D2 students have benefited from that promise, and the community that funded it just earned national recognition for building something the rest of the country wants to replicate.

The stories of Christopher, Qaiden, and their fellow pioneers in the Fall 2025 first-dollar cohort aren't just inspiring. They're evidence. Evidence that when a community decides every student deserves a real shot at college, not just the idea of one, extraordinary things happen.

Southeast Colorado Springs did that.
And the country is paying attention.

Additional resources

D2 Promise Program

hsd2.org/academics/direct-admissions

PPSC Promise Programs

pikespeak.edu/costs-scholarships-aid/promise-programs

Prepared by:

Harrison School District 2

In partnership with:

Pikes Peak State College, Legacy Institute,
Peak Education, and Data-Driven Economic
Strategies (DDES)

Harrison School District 2

1060 Harrison Road,
Colorado Springs, CO 80905
(719) 579-2000
hsd2.org

Acknowledgment

*This report supports
the transparency
and accountability
commitments made to D2
voters who approved the
mill levy in November 2024.*