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Cincinnati State, CPS unveil new grant program for low-income CPS grads that aims to reduce cost for tuition, books to \$0

Cincinnati State's new Be Great High School Grant program is taking aim at a financial challenge that keeps many low-income students from attending college.

That challenge is the gap that often occurs between the standard financial aid students receive (federal and state aid, and scholarships) and the total cost of tuition and books. For many low-income students, those gaps, even if they are in the hundreds of dollars, may as well be canyons.

The new Be Great Grants will provide low-income graduates of the Cincinnati Public Schools who attend Cincinnati State on a full-time basis with up to \$1,000 for tuition and \$1,000 for books to help fill gaps beyond their financial aid.

Seventy-five percent of the 14,500-plus students enrolled in CPS high schools are economically disadvantaged, according to data from the Ohio Department of Education. However, in 11 of the 15 CPS high schools for which data is available, that percentage soars to more than 98 percent economically disadvantaged.

"This program will make college possible for many CPS students who might not otherwise be able to pursue a degree," said Dr. Monica Posey, president of Cincinnati State. "This is also about the future of our region. We must provide students with opportunities to develop the skills needed by employers."

The Cincinnati State Foundation is providing funds to support the Be Great Grant program, which takes effect beginning with the 2017-2018 academic year. Any student graduating from a CPS high school who qualifies for a federal Pell Grant and who attends Cincinnati State on a full-time, degree-seeking basis will be eligible for a Be Great Grant.

"We're very excited about this new college grant opportunity for our students," said Mary Ronan, superintendent for the Cincinnati Public Schools. "While a large majority of CPS graduates are eligible for college financial assistance through federal programs, sometimes that's not sufficient to overcome all the financial barriers."

The Be Great Grant program is a key component in Cincinnati State's efforts to partner with local high schools and four-year colleges to create affordable pathways for students to earn college degrees at both the associate and bachelor level.

For example, Cincinnati State is also working closely with CPS to expand the College Credit Plus program, which allows high school students to earn college credits while still in high school, jumpstarting

their education while further reducing the cost of earning a college degree.

And on Feb. 10, Cincinnati State and the University of Cincinnati announced a new transfer agreement through which students who are pursuing bachelor's degree can save more than \$13,000, enough to pay for a full year of tuition and books at UC.

In addition, students receiving Be Great grants who complete a two-year degree at Cincinnati State and continue their education in a degree program at University of Cincinnati will also be eligible for a similar grant from UC called the Cincinnati Pride Grant.

To qualify for a Be Great Grant, students and their parents or guardians will need to complete a free Cincinnati State Admissions Application and a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), help for which can be provided by the Cincinnati State Educational Opportunity Center.

Once a student's FAFSA is complete and her or his federal, state and institutional aid have been determined, the Be Great grants kick in to cover any gaps in tuition and book costs.

Students, parents and high school counselors interested in learning more about the Be Great High School Grant program can contact Tammie Larkins, Cincinnati State College Representative, at 513-569-1470, or at tammie.larkins@cincinnatiastate.edu.

ABOUT CINCINNATI STATE

Cincinnati State (www.cincinnatiastate.edu) offers more than 130 associate degree and certificate programs in business technologies, health and public safety, engineering technologies, humanities and sciences and information technologies. It also offers a nationally recognized cooperative education program, and custom training through its Workforce Development Center.

ABOUT CINCINNATI PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Cincinnati Public Schools (<http://www.cps-k12.org>) serves 35,000 students (preschool to 12th grade) in 56 schools spread across a 90-square-mile district in southwest Ohio, Cincinnati Public Schools is Greater Cincinnati's largest school district and Ohio's third largest.