



PROGRAM HANDBOOK





Dear UT Promise students, mentors and administrators,

I talk often about making this the greatest decade in UT history. In order to do this, we must continually seek ways to honor our land-grant mission by making our universities accessible to all who wish to achieve their dream of earning a college degree. We don't want to measure ourselves by who we exclude; we want to measure ourselves by who we include.

One key component to helping ensure a college degree is more accessible and affordable is the UT Promise undergraduate scholarship program. With the UT Promise scholarship program, families with a household income of \$75,000 or less can go to any UT campus completely free of tuition and fees. This means that 66.7% of all Tennesseans can attend for free, directly addressing the misconception that college is too expensive or only for the rich. In addition, each UT Promise scholarship recipient receives a \$500 minimum award and is matched with a volunteer mentor to help them be successful.

“With the UT Promise scholarship program, families with a household income of \$75,000 or less can go to any UT campus complete free of tuition and fees. This means that 66.7% of all Tennesseans can attend for free, directly addressing the misconception that college is too expensive or only for the rich.”

Over the past few years, we have continued to increase access to this scholarship, raising the scholarship's income threshold from \$50,000 to \$75,000 and increasing the minimum award from \$100 to \$500. By further expanding the availability of this scholarship, we are ensuring more students have the chance to access higher education and receive a college degree.

UT Promise welcomed its first class of students in fall 2020 and graduated its first class in spring 2024. Many graduates have now joined Tennessee's workforce thanks to the support and guidance provided by the UT Promise program.

This handbook has been thoughtfully developed to help guide you through the many aspects of UT Promise – as a student, mentor, administrator or beyond. And be assured that the university will walk alongside you as you embark on your UT Promise journey.

Thank you, in advance, for your support. We couldn't do it without you.



Randy Boyd, President
University of Tennessee

For assistance, contact the UT Promise Team, at
utpromise@tennessee.edu.

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UT PROMISE INFORMATION

UT Promise is an undergraduate scholarship program guaranteeing free tuition and mandatory fees for qualifying Tennessee residents attending UT's campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Pulaski, Martin and Memphis.

Launched in Fall 2020, This innovative scholarship will cover a student's last-dollar amount of tuition and mandatory fees after other financial aid is applied (such as Pell grants, HOPE Scholarship or other institutional scholarships) to students who qualify for HOPE and whose adjusted gross income is under \$75,000 a year and a total maximum asset amount less than \$75,000. UT Promise also guarantees a minimum \$500 award per semester for qualifying students.

UT Promise is a student-success scholarship program. Each participating semester students are required to complete eight community service hours and work with a volunteer mentor to ensure a successful experience.

This handbook serves as a guide for students as they complete their scholarship requirements. Additionally, this handbook can be used by mentors and campus administrators to clarify program requirements and policies. Please remember that situations will arise that are not covered in this handbook. In those times, please engage the UT Promise team.

Adjusted gross income (AGI) is defined as “your or your family’s wages, salaries, interest, dividends, etc., minus certain deductions from income as reported on a federal income tax return” as defined on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

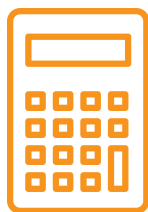
CONTACT US

If you have questions about the UT Promise program, please feel free to contact the UT Promise Team, at utpromise@tennessee.edu.

PARTNERSHIPS

tnAchieves and the Ayers Foundation are nonprofit partnering organizations to both TN Promise and UT Promise. These organizations work directly with high school students as they complete the scholarship requirements prior to enrollment at UT, including attending mandatory meetings, completing the FAFSA, working with a mentor and submitting community service hours.





What does last-dollar mean? What will UT Promise cover?

Last-dollar scholarships cover the remaining balance of tuition and mandatory fees after other state and federal financial aid have been applied.

The UT Promise scholarship only covers tuition and mandatory fees. Mandatory fees include facilities fee, maintenance fee, library fee, student services fee, technology fee, transportation fee, etc. Visit your UT campus' website for more information.

Students will still be responsible for covering any costs beyond tuition and fees such as book expenses and food/housing; however, excess UT Promise funds can be applied to these additional educational expenses until they run out. Once excess funds have been applied, the student is responsible for the remaining educational costs (e.g., remaining cost of food/housing, transportation, course materials, etc.).

Below is an example of how UT Promise will cover the last-dollar amount for three different students. These examples are based on an average of UT's campuses' tuition costs, but do not reflect actual costs:

	STUDENT 1	STUDENT 2	STUDENT 3
TUITION AND MANDATORY FEES	\$11,000	\$11,000	\$11,000
PROGRAM OF STUDY	\$600	\$0	\$0
HOPE	-\$4,000	-\$4,000	-\$4,000
PELL GRANT	-\$7,395	-\$5,000	-\$5,000
INSTITUTIONAL SCHOLARSHIP	\$0	-\$1,500	-\$2,000
TOTAL COST AFTER FINANCIAL AID	\$205	\$500	\$0
UT PROMISE	+\$1,000 (\$500/semester)	+\$1,000 (\$500/semester)	+\$1,000 (\$500/semester)
YOU PAY*	\$0	\$0	\$0
EXCESS UT PROMISE FUNDS RECEIVED**	\$795	\$500	\$1,000

*Please note that you will still be responsible for covering any additional costs beyond tuition and mandatory fees, such as room & board and book expenses.

**Excess UT Promise funds may be applied to educational expenses by the university or at the discretion of the student depending on how the institution disburses financial aid.



MENTORSHIP

Mentorship is a supportive, goal-oriented relationship between a student and a mentor designed to foster academic success, personal growth, and career readiness. Through regular engagement, mentors provide guidance, encouragement, and access to campus and community resources so they can build confidence and fulfill their potential.

UT Promise students commit to fostering mentorship relationships as part of their scholarship experience.

ROLE OF THE MENTOR

Provide insight and guidance for the mentee based on personal experience in navigating the college environment and career and academic pursuits. Students should be receptive to guidance and support, and mentors should be invested in their students' success.

ROLE OF THE MENTEE

Receive guidance and advice from a mentor in navigating the college environment, connecting to campus resources, developing career goals and transitioning into the workforce.

A mentor is a(n)...

Resource
Encourager
Supporter

A mentor is NOT a(n)...

Academic Advisor
Counselor
Tutor

The student is...

Willing to engage and ask questions
Responsive to the mentor
Respectful and kind

The student is NOT...

Disrespectful
Unresponsive
Unkind

What does not count as mentorship?

An advising appointment to review course registration
A meeting with an academic coach to learn time management skills
A peer tutoring session focused on academic content mastery
A meeting with a faculty member about a recent exam

What counts as mentorship?

Ongoing, personal interaction with an advisor beyond course selection
Ongoing, personal interaction with an academic coach beyond skill development
Ongoing, personal interaction with a peer to receive broader guidance and role modeling
Ongoing, personal interaction with a faculty member to receive personal and professional guidance

Mentors are not expected to know all the answers. Rather, they are a resource and a support system and should refer mentees to the appropriate campus offices and services when needed. Students and mentors can visit the UT Promise website for additional mentor and campus resources.



STUDENT GUIDELINES

MAINTAINING ELIGIBILITY

Once you enroll at the UT campus of your choice, you will need to meet certain requirements to maintain your UT Promise eligibility, all of which are outlined in more detail on the UT Promise website



Complete and Submit 8 Hours of Community Service Before Each Deadline

Eight community service hours must be submitted by the established deadline prior to each semester. Community service hours do not roll over from the previous semester.



Complete Mentoring Requirements Before Each Deadline

Students are required to meet with their self-identified or assigned mentor by the established deadline each semester. Mentorship meeting requirements do not roll over from the previous semester.



File the FAFSA by the Established Deadline Each Year

Submit your FAFSA at studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa by the established deadline. The FAFSA opens Oct. 1 every year. If selected for financial aid verification, you must complete verification by your UT campus' priority date each year.



Enroll as a Full-Time Student Each Semester

You must maintain enrollment in at least 12 credit hours each semester. You must also maintain continuous enrollment. Remember, in order to maintain full-time enrollment, you must attend and participate in all courses. Failure to attend class could result in the loss of your UT Promise eligibility.



Maintain the Tennessee HOPE Scholarship

You must maintain the minimum GPA requirement and make satisfactory academic progress to keep the HOPE scholarship. If you lose HOPE, you will also lose UT Promise. You can regain the HOPE scholarship once. Visit the TN HOPE website for more information on HOPE requirements.



Continue to Check Your University Email

You will receive regular email communications from UT Promise, so be sure to check your email often.

This section consists of student requirements/guidelines and are included for your reference. Additional mentor tips are provided throughout.

REMEMBER

UT Promise students are not expected to have all the answers! The UT Promise team and campus partners will guide you. In addition to providing topics to discuss during mentor meetings, the UT Promise team will also send emails reminder outlining important dates and deadlines. Please reach out to utpromise@tennessee.edu if you have questions or concerns through the academic year.



UT PROMISE POLICIES

UT Promise only funds last-dollar tuition and mandatory fees (e.g., facilities, maintenance, library, student services, technology, transportation, etc.). Students will still be responsible for covering any costs beyond tuition and fees such as book expenses and food/housing; however, excess UT Promise funds can be applied to these additional educational expenses until they run out.

Excess UT Promise funds may be applied to educational expenses by the university or at the discretion of the student depending on how the institution disburses financial aid. Once excess funds have been applied, the student is responsible for the remaining educational costs. See the UT Promise website for additional details about last-dollar programs.

To be eligible for UT Promise, the student MUST be a TN resident eligible for in-state tuition, receive the HOPE scholarship and have an adjusted gross income under \$75,000 per year and assets under \$75,000 per year.

STUDENTS MUST:

1. Begin at an eligible post-secondary institution within 16 months of high school graduation.

- a. A student may begin at their post-secondary institution prior to the fall term directly following high school graduation; however, the student will be responsible for incurred tuition and fees until fall, as UT Promise will not cover costs before the initial fall term.
- b. A student may be granted a medical or personal leave of absence from timely enrollment in the initial semester, full-time attendance or continuous enrollment at an eligible post-secondary institution as long as all other acceptable eligibility criteria are met. A student must request a HOPE leave of absence through their campus Financial Aid office and have it approved.

2. Maintain full-time status each semester.

- a. If the student falls below full-time, they will no longer be eligible.
 - i. If a student is in their last semester of classes and needs less hours to graduate than the full-time status requirement, he or she will only be required to take the remaining number of hours for degree completion.
- b. Co-ops, internships and other educational advancement programs (e.g., Disney College Program) will not count against a student's full-time requirement. Determining if the program will affect the student's full-time enrollment requirement is up to the discretion of the student's campus Financial Aid Office.

Please check with your Financial Aid Office before making decisions on semester long programs.

- c. If a student drops below full-time status, UT Promise will follow the institutional refund policy. Dropping classes could result in loss of your UT Promise scholarship.
- d. Failure to attend class could result in loss of eligibility.

What does it mean that UT Promise is a 'last-dollar' scholarship?

UT Promise covers the last-dollar or remaining balance of tuition and mandatory fees after other state and federal financial aid have been applied. Visit the UT Promise website to see how UT Promise will cover the last-dollar amount for three different students based on an average of the tuition cost at a UT campus.

3. Attend a UT institution for continuous semesters in fall and spring.

- a. A student cannot leave UT for a period of time (excluding summer) and remain eligible. If a student is not continuously enrolled at a UT campus, they will lose their UT Promise scholarship.
- b. If a student withdraws from all classes or stops attending during the semester, they will no longer be eligible.

4. Maintain the Tennessee HOPE Scholarship. For all eligibility and termination requirements for HOPE, please visit tn.gov/collegepays.

- a. Students must maintain satisfactory academic progress.
- b. Students must earn the minimum GPA to maintain HOPE.
- c. If a student ceases to be academically eligible for the HOPE Scholarship, the student may regain the award one-time only. The award may be re-established once the student meets any of the above criteria and maintains continuous enrollment and satisfactory academic progress at an eligible postsecondary institution without the HOPE Scholarship.
 - i. Students who regain HOPE for an upcoming semester are not required to complete 8 hours of community service or mentorship meetings prior to rejoining UT Promise.
 - ii. Newly eligible students are required to complete mentorship meetings and complete 8 community service hours by the dates outlined on the UT Promise website to remain eligible for future semesters.
- d. Tennessee HOPE-Nontraditional: If a student ceases to be academically eligible for the HOPE Scholarship, the student may regain the award one-time only. The award may be re-established once the student meets any of the above criteria and maintains continuous enrollment and satisfactory academic progress at an eligible postsecondary institution without the HOPE Scholarship. The student who regains HOPE-nontraditional will not be required to complete 8 hours of community service or mentorship meetings prior to rejoining UT Promise; however, once readmitted to the program, completion of community service and mentor meetings are required for eligibility in future semesters.
 - i. The Tennessee HOPE- Nontraditional scholarship has different qualifiers than the traditional HOPE scholarship. Please visit tn.gov/collegepays/money-for-college/tn-education-lottery-programs/tennessee-hope-scholarship---nontraditional.html for eligibility requirements.
 - ii. Students receiving the Tennessee HOPE-Nontraditional scholarship must achieve 2.75 GPA after 12 attempted hours to be eligible for HOPE and, thus, UT Promise.

5. Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by the established deadline each year throughout his/her post-secondary experience.

- a. Failure to complete the FAFSA by the established deadline will result in permanent loss of the UT Promise scholarship.

Frequently Asked Questions

Visit the UT Promise website to review some frequently asked questions students and mentors have about the UT Promise scholarship. Do you have a question that is not addressed on the UT Promise website or in the handbook? Email the UT Promise team at utpromise@tennessee.edu.

6. A student's family household income—based on adjusted gross income—must be under \$75,000 per year and assets under \$75,000 per year upon initial receipt of UT Promise to remain eligible.

- a. Adjusted gross income (AGI) is defined as “your or your family’s wages, salaries, interest, dividends, etc., minus certain deductions from income as reported on a federal income tax return” and as reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- b. If the student is receiving the TN HOPE-Nontraditional scholarship, the student and spouse’s adjusted gross income must be \$36,000 or less, but the total adjusted gross income a defined above must still be under \$75,000.
- c. Students who receive UT Promise are eligible for the scholarship until their adjusted gross income goes above \$75,000. At this point, the student will become ineligible for UT Promise. The student can become re-eligible if their family household income falls below \$75,000 again.
- d. If you have a change of income, please contact your Financial Aid Office.

7. Submit all financial aid verification documents by July 1 each year, if selected.

- a. UT Promise encourages students to submit all documents by July 1 to ensure the campuses have adequate time to process.
 - i. A student may be required to pay tuition and mandatory fees out of pocket if their financial aid file is not processed and verified by the beginning of classes.
- b. Student must select the eligible institution they plan to attend as their first choice on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as well as direct their TSAC Student Portal to the eligible institution.
- c. It is the student’s responsibility to confirm with the post-secondary institution that their admissions and financial aid files are verified, processed and ready for award.

8. Complete and submit at least eight hours of community service prior to the start of each semester by the established deadline through your campus service tracking site. Community service must be completed under the supervision of an established organization (e.g., nonprofit, public service organization) and must align with your UT campus’s service definition.

- a. Students must submit all information regarding community service by the established deadline through their UT campus’s service tracking site. Failure to comply by the established dates will result in permanent loss of eligibility.
- b. Community service hours do not roll over each semester.
- c. Students who fail to meet the community service or mentor meeting requirements for the semester and feel they have valid justification to appeal their resulting ineligibility for UT Promise may submit an appeal. Information about appeals are found on the UT Promise website. Appeals are reviewed by the UT Promise team and resolved within 5-7 business days.

Do you have questions about the FAFSA or HOPE scholarship?

For more information about completing the FAFSA, visit studentaid.gov.

For eligibility and termination requirements for HOPE, visit Tennessee’s financial aid website.

9. Complete mentor meetings with your assigned UT Promise mentor each semester.

- a. Students must complete all mentoring requirements by the established deadline. Failure to comply by the established dates will result in permanent loss of eligibility.
- b. Students must complete all mentoring requirements each semester (fall/spring). Mentoring requirements do not roll over each semester. Students do not have to complete mentoring requirements for summer.
- c. Newly eligible students (i.e., those who regained HOPE) and new transfer students from non-UT institutions are not required to complete mentor meetings and community service hours until they are officially part of the UT Promise program. To maintain UT Promise for future semesters, these students will be required to complete mentor meetings and community service hours therefore, it is the student's responsibility to confirm eligibility with UT Promise administrators and/or campus representatives.

10. Students who fail to meet the community service and/or mentor meeting requirements for the semester and feel they have a valid justification to appeal their resulting ineligibility can submit an appeal to the UT Promise team.

- a. Appeals must be made within 30 days of the community service/mentor meeting deadlines (June 1 and December 1) in order to allow the UT Promise team adequate time to review your case. Appeals made outside of the 30-day window will not be considered.

Students at risk of losing eligibility for any other reason (e.g., change in income or enrollment status, loss of HOPE scholarship), should contact their campus' financial aid office to appeal directly with their institution.

OTHER COMPONENTS:

1. Only UT's Financial Aid offices and UT Promise scholarship administrators may determine a student's UT Promise eligibility.
 - b. Mentors are an extension of UT Promise but are not UT Promise administrators.
 - c. UT Promise mentors are volunteers and may lack adequate time to answer all questions; therefore, it is the student's responsibility to confirm eligibility with UT Promise administrators.
2. UT Promise scholarship funds can be applied to fully distance education programs (also known as online programs).
3. UT Promise scholarship funds can be applied to summer courses if a student is receiving HOPE scholarship funds. In order to receive HOPE funds, a student must be enrolled in at least 6 hours over the summer. Note that community service and mentoring requirements apply to fall and spring semesters only. Community service hours completed after June 1 will fulfill the fall semester requirement.
4. UT Promise scholarship funds can be applied to UT faculty-led study abroad courses. UT Promise will only cover tuition and mandatory fees.
5. A student cannot be mentored by a family member.

Program Requirements

UT Promise students are required to complete and submit 8 hours of community service each semester and meet with their assigned UT Promise mentor at least 3 times each semester to maintain their eligibility. Students and mentors with questions about these requirements can visit the UT Promise website for more information.

Did you forget to submit your community service or mentor meeting requirements by the June 1 or December 1 deadlines?

If you have a valid justification for failing to meet the deadlines, you can appeal your resulting ineligibility for UT Promise by submitting the appeals form."

6. Mentors cannot choose students to mentor.
 - a. Starting Fall 2025, students have the option to either self-identify a mentor on their campus or request to be matched with a mentor.
 - b. Early high-school graduates may be eligible for early funding through UT Promise. Once an early graduate's eligibility is determined by their UT Campus, they will receive UT Promise funds for the semester in which they intend to enroll.
7. UT Promise follows the admissions requirements of the post-secondary institution.
 - a. UT Promise will fund learning support classes at UT if the student fails to meet the ACT requirements for college-level coursework.
8. Incorrect student information does not preclude a student from ineligibility.
9. Students who are at risk of becoming ineligible or are already ineligible for UT Promise due to a change in income, enrollment status, or loss of HOPE can appeal directly with their UT campus.
10. UT Promise is a scholarship for undergraduate students. UT students pursuing graduate studies are not eligible for UT Promise funding.

Should a student fail to adhere to any/all policies, UT Promise invokes the right to remove a student's eligibility.

UT Promise values honesty and integrity. A student who submits misinformation will immediately lose UT Promise eligibility.

Policies may be subject to change without notice. We encourage students, mentors, and campus administrators to refer to the policies posted on the UT Promise website for additional program information.

Who can you contact if you have questions about UT Promise?

For general questions about the UT Promise scholarship, how to apply, maintaining eligibility, and service and mentoring requirements, please contact utpromise@tennessee.edu. A member of the UT Promise team will respond to you shortly.

For questions about financial eligibility, financial aid and scholarships (such as HOPE, Pell grants, institutional scholarships), and campus admittance, please contact your campus' One Stop Shop. Campus contact information is listed on the UT Promise website.



UT PROMISE

