



CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
FINISH LINE
SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Year 1 Program Report
2020-2021
Submitted October 2021



An Unprecedented Gift. An Unprecedented Year.

34 COLLEGES

8 MONTHS

8,262 STUDENTS SUPPORTED



>\$4.6M DISBURSED TO COLLEGES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH

- EDUCATION EXPENSES
- FOOD
- HOUSING
- TECHNOLOGY & CONNECTIVITY
- TRANSPORTATION
- REPLACEMENT OF WAGES
- HEALTHCARE
- CHILDCARE
- CLOTHING


YEAR 1 An Unprecedented Gift for An Unprecedented Year

In a year filled with uncertainty and disruption to all facets of life, the Finish Line Scholars Program stood out as a beacon of hope for California Community College (CCC) students. The historic gift from the Jay Pritzker Foundation to fund this new program demonstrated a belief in the power of CCCs to lift students out of poverty and put them on the path to a better life through higher education and future job opportunities that will benefit not only the student scholars but also their families and communities.

The Foundation for California Community Colleges (FoundationCCC) was honored to partner with the Jay Pritzker Foundation to develop and launch this program within the span of two months in Summer / Fall 2021. Thanks to the flexibility and understanding of the donors, 100% of the funds for the first year of the program were allocated to emergency financial assistance, providing relief to students who faced unexpected financial hardships due to the pandemic and all of its related impacts on their lives.

“I am grateful to know that I have received this grant! This means a lot to me; I haven't felt this happy and hopeful in a long time. Thanks to you and other donors, **I am one step closer to my goal.**”

— BUTTE COLLEGE



“I would like to thank the College and everyone who makes it work for awarding me a Finish Line student emergency aid grant. Being able to attend college and receive grants has **helped me change my life for the better.** I am going to be transferring soon to another school to continue my pursuit of a Masters Degree in Environmental Science.”

— COLLEGE OF THE SISKIYOU

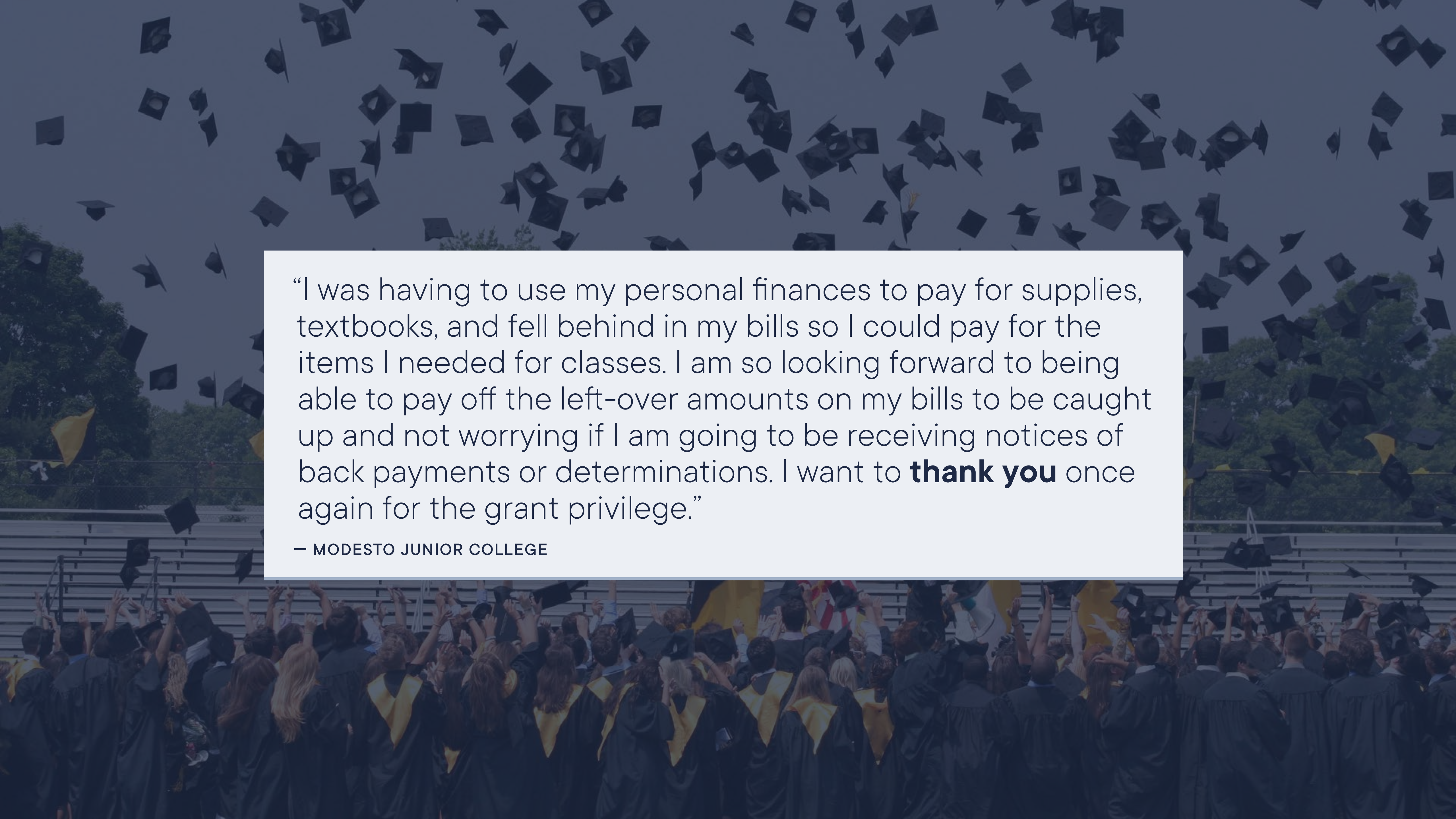
Student Success

This first year wasn't even a full academic year, given that the program launched in late October 2020, yet FoundationCCC and our colleges were able to respond quickly and nimbly in order to meet the needs of students. Colleges received funds in early 2021, at the beginning of the Spring semester, and hurried to get these dollars into the hands of students. This historic investment touched the lives of more than 8,200 students at 34 CCCs across three regions of California.

As demonstrated by personal testimonials, CCC students showed remarkable commitment to their education and resilience in the face of multiple challenges, such as housing or food insecurity, unreliable transportation, increased costs for childcare or healthcare, lack of appropriate equipment or connectivity for the shift to all-online learning, and essential education-related expenses including tuition and fees, books and supplies, uniforms, and costs for required tests or certifications.

“These funds would help increase internet access I need to finish. They would also help **cover the basic costs of food and bills** like electricity, water, and rent that have become increasingly hard to pay due to not being able to work.”

— COLUMBIA COLLEGE

A background image of a graduation ceremony. In the foreground, a large group of graduates in black gowns with yellow stoles are seen from behind, many with their arms raised. In the background, a large number of black graduation caps are being tossed into the air, creating a dense field of caps against a light sky. The overall scene is celebratory and captures a key moment of the ceremony.

“I was having to use my personal finances to pay for supplies, textbooks, and fell behind in my bills so I could pay for the items I needed for classes. I am so looking forward to being able to pay off the left-over amounts on my bills to be caught up and not worrying if I am going to be receiving notices of back payments or determinations. I want to **thank you** once again for the grant privilege.”

— MODESTO JUNIOR COLLEGE

College Efficiency

FoundationCCC partnered with the 34 eligible colleges to ensure that they had timely information and individualized support in order to successfully launch this program within just a few months. Despite the competing priorities that colleges faced as they continued to adapt to changing circumstances related to the pandemic, all of the colleges effectively implemented an application, selection, and fund distribution process that met the needs of their local students.

Colleges were able to quickly distribute almost all of the Year 1 funding, and less than 1% will be rolled over by the colleges to Academic Year

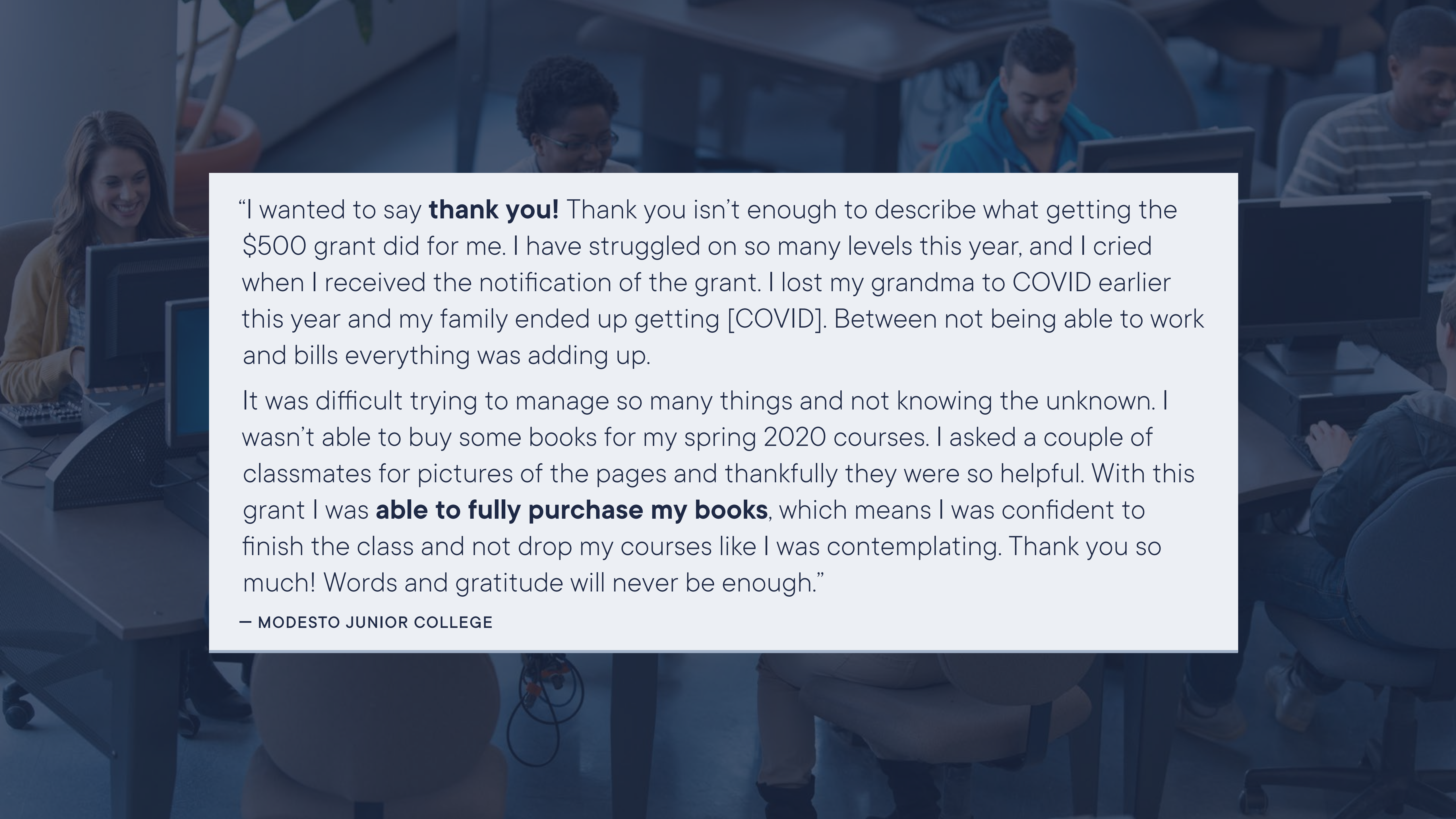
2021-2022 as part of Year 2 of the Finish Line Scholars Program.

“I lost my job in May 2021, due to the pandemic. I am a single mother with two young children. These funds [will] **help with food, and school supplies.**”

— FRESNO CITY COLLEGE

The need for this just-in-time support among students was clear, and in fact, the biggest challenge faced by colleges was this intense amount of need. Several colleges had to close their application process within hours or days due to the burst of applications they received. However, many colleges were able to

successfully leverage the Finish Line funds to attract additional resources for students, and several colleges utilized these funds to support students who didn't qualify for other sources of emergency financial assistance. Colleges also connected students to other on-campus and community resources, particularly to help with basic needs such as food, housing, transportation, childcare, and healthcare.



“I wanted to say **thank you!** Thank you isn’t enough to describe what getting the \$500 grant did for me. I have struggled on so many levels this year, and I cried when I received the notification of the grant. I lost my grandma to COVID earlier this year and my family ended up getting [COVID]. Between not being able to work and bills everything was adding up.

It was difficult trying to manage so many things and not knowing the unknown. I wasn’t able to buy some books for my spring 2020 courses. I asked a couple of classmates for pictures of the pages and thankfully they were so helpful. With this grant I was **able to fully purchase my books**, which means I was confident to finish the class and not drop my courses like I was contemplating. Thank you so much! Words and gratitude will never be enough.”

— MODESTO JUNIOR COLLEGE

FoundationCCC Program Support

Direct Program Support

To ensure that colleges received adequate support to successfully launch the new Finish Line program, FoundationCCC quickly built out additional operational and administrative infrastructure, tapping the expertise of existing staff member Jodi Samuels, PhD, to fill the new position of Director of Strategic Support for Colleges & Scholars. Jodi took over the reins of the program just two weeks after the press conference, on the same day that the Year 1 application was opened to eligible colleges, and was joined only a month later by a new Administrative Assistant, Isabel Nieves. This additional staff capacity for program management and administration proved to be a key factor of the program's success.

“We enjoyed the **one on one attention** from the Foundation team. They took time out of their busy schedules to **ensure we had all the vital information** in order for this program to succeed.”

— BAKERSFIELD COLLEGE STAFF

Having two dedicated program staff allowed FoundationCCC to provide high-touch and personalized support for the Finish Line colleges, including three live 60-minute webinars for more than 180 registrants in November 2020, December 2020, and January 2021. These webinars focused on reviewing the application process, answering college

questions, and helping colleges plan for implementation of the new program.

Towards the end of Year 1, throughout June and into July 2021, Jodi and Isabel conducted one-on-one strategy sessions with all 34 colleges. These virtual meetings provided an opportunity to strengthen connections with the colleges, answer questions, highlight upcoming deadlines, and solicit feedback for program improvement. Bi-annual strategy sessions will continue to be a regular component of FoundationCCC's support for colleges.

Direct Program Support, (cont.)

The value of these personal connections and concierge-style approach was highlighted when one college reached out to share that they were struggling with how to effectively implement Finish Line at their campus. Jodi promptly responded to the college contacts by hosting a virtual meeting, which also included FoundationCCC's Chief Advancement Officer, in order to better understand the challenges, clarify program requirements, and identify additional support mechanisms and resources. This college has been hit with a number of crises over the past few years, including multiple wildfires, leadership and staff turnover, and a significant decrease in enrollment due to

natural disasters and the pandemic. All of these issues had left staff feeling overwhelmed and unable to take on implementation of a new program, despite the fact that they were extremely appreciative of being included as part of Finish Line and were very hesitant to decline any opportunity to secure additional resources for their students.

“This will help [lower] the stress of how to keep up with my bills, so that I could **buy the books I need for my classes.** And being a single parent of two children they too are able to get the things needed.”

— MORENO VALLEY COLLEGE

After the virtual meeting, Jodi enlisted the Guided Pathways coordinators for this region to intervene with additional support for the college and reached out to the other Finish Line colleges in the region to make connections and share examples of program implementation plans, policies, and procedures. Thanks to all of these efforts, the college contacts felt much more confident about the program and are on the path to implementing a successful program for their students.

FoundationCCC is proud to partner with colleges to help build their capacity and ensure program success.

Community of Practice

In early spring 2021, Jodi and Isabel partnered across FoundationCCC with staff in the Success Center to create a Community of Practice (CoP) for participating colleges. The CoP was developed in partnership with the Guided Pathways Regional Coordinators who work with the colleges in the three Finish Line regions and who serve as true on-the-ground champions of Finish Line with their college contacts.

From March-May 2021, the CoP hosted six live 90-minute webinar sessions for more than 300 registrants to share program information, highlight best practices for colleges, and create space for networking and connections.

CoP participants appreciated the opportunities to ask questions about Finish Line and to learn

from each other, and 95% of those who attended at least one session indicated that they would recommend the CoP to their colleagues. Based on this positive feedback and input on content from college staff representing each region of Finish Line, FoundationCCC will host another CoP series in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 to strengthen connections, spread best practices, and celebrate accomplishments and impact.

“The funds will **give me the tools I need to stay enrolled** and on to a **better path in school** such as well balanced meals for me and my children, gas for my car to get back and forth to college, for books, etc. and upgrading my WiFi so I can attend my lectures for school. **Everything is appreciated!**”

— MORENO VALLEY COLLEGE

Vision Resource Center

FoundationCCC created a CCC Finish Line Scholars Community within the Vision Resource Center (VRC), the online professional development platform that serves as a centralized location for CCC faculty, staff, and leaders to access crucial information and make connections systemwide. The VRC Finish Line Scholars Community creates opportunities for colleges to engage with each other through discussion forums, acts as a clearinghouse for program documents and guidelines, and provides additional resources on best practices for financial aid and scholarships. In addition, the VRC contains links to the recording and presentation slides for each live webinar session, including the Community of Practice sessions, and facilitates sharing of materials and best practices among Finish Line colleges.

Expert Advisory Committee

To provide additional guidance to colleges and ongoing program input, FoundationCCC established an Advisory Committee that includes representatives from the Chancellor's Office, college financial aid experts, participating Finish Line colleges, and other community college stakeholders and leadership.

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to improve program design by identifying gaps, challenges, and best practices; ensure stakeholder engagement and input; provide key insights and ongoing feedback to help shape the program and ensure colleges can deliver positive results; serve as program champions to share information with the field; and share and

promote program to other networks for potential future growth.

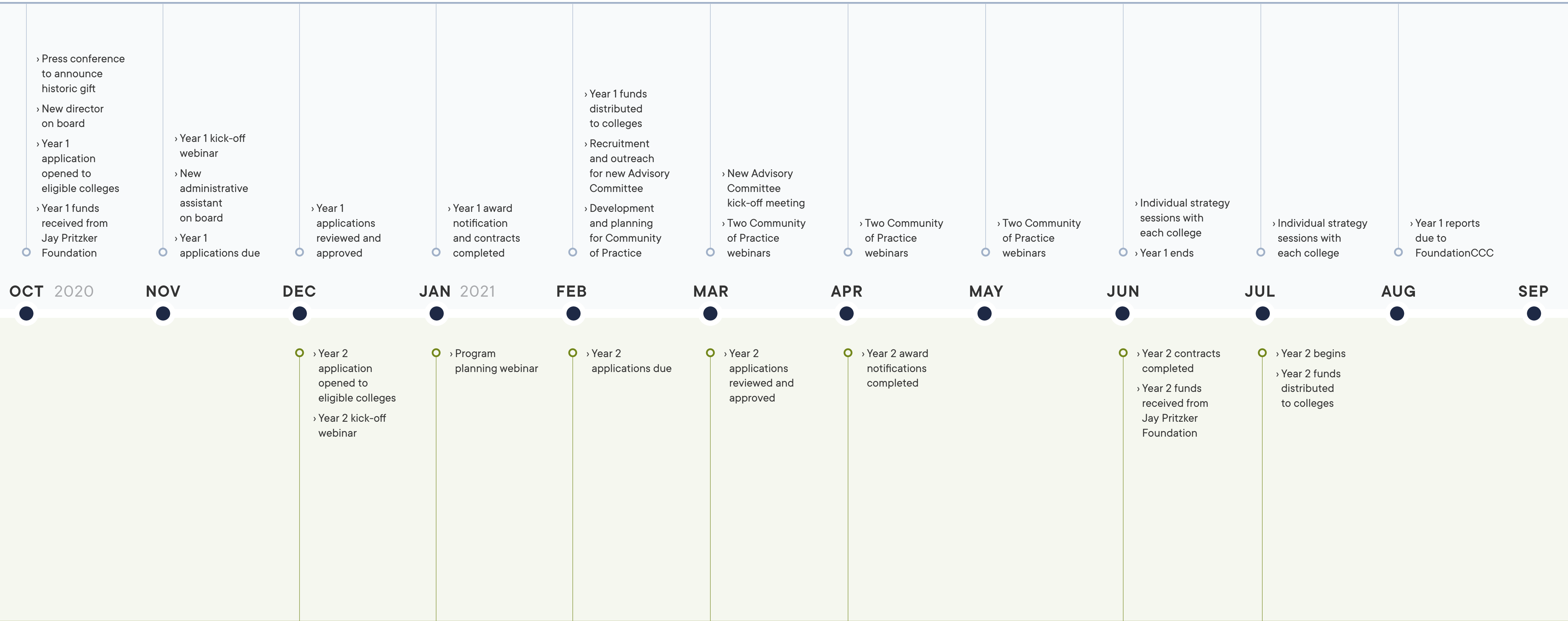
Advisory Committee members include the following:

- › Gina Browne, Dean, Education Services and Support, CCC Chancellor's Office
- › Dr. Nicky Damania, Director of Student Life, Bakersfield College (Finish Line | Central region)
- › Amparo Diaz, Senior Policy Specialist, Success Center, FoundationCCC
- › Tim Foster, Director, College of the Sequoias Foundation (Finish Line | Central region)
- › Geoff Green, CEO, Foundation for Santa Barbara City College
- › Tim Morehouse, Lead Guided Pathways Regional Coordinator, North/Far North, FoundationCCC
- › Tammera Shinar, Director of Financial Aid & Veterans Services, Butte College (Finish Line | Far North region)
- › Dr. Linda Williams, Director of Enrollment Management and Financial Aid, Sierra College

Advisory Committee members were recruited through personalized invitations and convened for the first time during a kick-off meeting in March 2021. The Committee will meet three to four times annually and provide input on topics such as tracking and reporting data, potential impacts of proposed new policies or regulations, strategies for bringing campus departments together, and methods of integrating wraparound services for students into the Finish Line program.

Program Timelines

Year 1



Year 2

YEAR 2 Looking Ahead for 2021–2022

In the midst of launching and implementing the first year of Finish Line, FoundationCCC simultaneously developed and launched the program cycle for Year 2, which shifts the focus to scholarships while still reserving some funds for emergency financial assistance. Colleges completed an expedited process to design their scholarship program plans based on local and regional needs before submitting their applications in February 2021. Award notifications were completed in April so that colleges would know how much funding would be available for them to allocate to students for the Academic Year 2021-2022. FoundationCCC also ensured that all colleges received their awards by the end of July, prior to the start of the Fall 2021 semester.

Colleges submitted their Year 1 reports to FoundationCCC in August 2021. The data shows how impactful this program was for students and how successfully the program was administered by colleges in partnership with FoundationCCC. Given that Year 1 was an anomaly in terms of dedicating 100% of funds to emergency financial assistance, FoundationCCC anticipates that Year 2 will be a time of learning and innovation for colleges as they shift their attention to the scholarship component of Finish Line. We look forward to this process of discovery as we work with colleges to explore how these funds can be used in creative ways to ensure student success and strive to close regional equity gaps.



Financials

The majority of the funding from the Jay Pritzker Foundation was used to disburse more than \$4.6 million in grants to the 34 Finish Line colleges. To determine how funds would be allocated among the eligible colleges, FoundationCCC utilized student head count statistics from the centralized CCC Data Mart database. Colleges with fewer than 10,000 student headcount were considered “smaller” and were eligible to request up to \$125,000. Colleges with 10,000 or more student headcount were considered “larger” and were eligible to request up to \$150,000. For this first round of funding, all of the colleges distributed their funds as emergency financial aid to students. The remainder of the funding was used to support costs for staffing, materials development, program supplies, and webinar development. Per the grant agreement with the Jay Pritzker Foundation, administrative costs for FoundationCCC and the colleges did not exceed 12% of the annual award.

Student Stories and the Faces of Finish Line



The money was very helpful and I used it to secure housing for when I transfer in the fall to UC Berkeley. The extra money also meant I did not have to work more hours and was able to focus on my studies to keep my grades up.

— **ASHLEY CALDERON,**
NORCO COLLEGE



MARSHINA BROWN,
CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE



I am extremely thankful for the scholarship given to me by the Finish Line Scholars program. [...] It allowed me to work less hours and focus on my studies. The funds were used to keep up with my bills. Also, I am excited to announce that I finished spring semester with a 4.0 GPA and I graduated from MSJC. Now I will continue my studies at CSU Fullerton. Thank You.

— **MARIELA A MARTÍNEZ HERNÁNDEZ,**
MT. SAN JACINTO COLLEGE



SARAH MUNTON,
CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE



Although I have huge dreams, I also have a huge amount of debt and not enough income. [...] With these funds, I plan to catch up on my essential bills to keep the lights on, and buy food for myself. I don't know how to put into words how grateful I am for the person who donated the \$500, this act of kindness will stay with me forever. I have never received anything like this, but I plan on repaying the favor when I have the means to. Thank you.

— ROXANNE MACIAS,
CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE



ROSA MORALES LEYVA,
CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE



Receiving these funds has made it possible for me to pay for the necessities of everyday living such as my housing, phone bill, and other school expenses. These funds will help me focus on my schooling, as I will not have to struggle to support myself. [...] As an individual who is recovering from having COVID-19, this is making my transition from sickness into health much more stress free. I truly appreciate your generosity.

— ISABELLA MICCICHE,
CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE



ESTERA ROTAR,
CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE



Before COVID hit I had just started a job and was doing well in school. [Then], my job ended and I was unable to find new employment. I had not worked enough hours to qualify for unemployment, so I had very little money. The Phoenix Scholars program told us about the Finish line funds and I applied on the first day. The extra money helped me with the bare necessities, especially food. Also, I found out I was pregnant and the second disbursement I used to buy things I needed for my baby. I appreciate Norco College and all they do for students, especially Phoenix Scholars. I was able to continue my classes and keep pursuing my goals.

— TASI WYRICK,
NORCO COLLEGE



KAYLA BROWN,
SHASTA COLLEGE



SKYE DONALDSON,
COLUMBIA COLLEGE



ZOE KELLY,
COLUMBIA COLLEGE



DANIEL MCCLUSKEY,
CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
FINISH LINE
SCHOLARS PROGRAM



FOUNDATION *for* CALIFORNIA
COMMUNITY COLLEGES



California Community Colleges