

THE OMAHA PROMISE



VOTE FOR
GUDGEL
20  21

Handwritten signature

The Omaha Promise

Mark Gudgel's Omaha Promise is simple: if you worked hard in high school and got into an Omaha area college, the City of Omaha will help make sure you go to college. Every year, talented students either have to drop out or never get to attend college just because higher education is often prohibitively expensive. We believe that money should not be the reason a young person is not able to pursue their dreams. The Omaha Promise hopes to help young people break out of a cycle of poverty by being the first in their families to attend college. By investing in our students, we anticipate these talented students will in turn invest back in their city with their talents and stop the brain drain leaving our city. College is expensive, and we have a plan for how the city can make it possible.

How It Works

We will model our program on a similar program created by the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We will offer a "last dollar" scholarship to students graduating from schools within the limits of the city who have been accepted into public colleges, community colleges, or trade schools while living within the City of Omaha. That is, we would cover the difference in tuition after all available scholarships and grants have been utilized to reduce the cost of tuition. The limit would be \$8,000 a year, up to \$32,000 to be used within 5 years of graduating high school. By offering up to \$8,000, Omaha students would have the ability to completely afford the cost of one semester at the University of Nebraska Omaha if they choose to go there. The Omaha Promise will function as a scholarship that will not need to be paid back by the students.

How We Will Pay For It

Investing in every graduating class will certainly not be an inexpensive endeavor, but the City of Omaha cannot afford to not make this investment. We estimate that this could potentially cost roughly \$18 million to adequately pay for each student to receive the assistance they need to attend college for each graduating class. This is calculated using the 2017 data for just OPS graduates. We assume we would need to cover the full cost for the approximately 360 students who are able to attend college academically, but unable to afford school. Spending the full \$8,000 for these students over two or four years would cost about \$5 million for just OPS students, about \$8 million for all Omaha students in this situation. Additionally, if we cover \$2,000 a year for each student who would be attending a school like UNO anyway, and \$1,000 for each student attending Metro, the total cost would amount to about \$10 million, giving us an estimated \$18 million annual cost for the whole program.¹

¹ OPS Research Division Class of 2017 Graduate Follow-Up Report
<https://district.ops.org/Portals/0/RESEARCH/Docs/Statistical%20Reports/SurveyFollowUp/2017%20GraduateFollowUp-2-1.pdf?ver=ni6xRYVIQInGAA2PUYVI7Q%3d%3d>

Once we are in office, we will commission a committee to determine the full cost of this endeavor. We plan to not use funds from the city budget to pay directly for the scholarships. We

will develop the Omaha Promise Scholarship fund, of which the mayor will be the chairman. We will create a board of trustees and raise the funds through private donations from the people and businesses of Omaha who agree with our goals of providing quality education for all Omaha students. In addition to private donations, we will hire a grant writer to pursue federal and state education grants to help supplement the fund, effectively utilizing both public and private funds to keep the Omaha Promise alive.

Conclusion

We have decided that education is a human right. Everyone deserves to have the opportunity to strive for the highest level of education they can achieve, irrespective of how much money they have. The Omaha Promise will pay dividends for the city as we will have generations of educated and passionate individuals investing back in the city that believed in them.