



Progress on the Promise 2019-2020



Progress Report Narrative

Vision and Official Launch

The Capital Area Promise is a collaborative initiative between Baton Rouge’s education institutions—LSU, Southern University, and Baton Rouge Community College—to guarantee that all students have the opportunity to enroll in college and/or enter the workforce with skills to succeed. These institutions work closely with the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, surrounding districts, Mayor’s Office, and key state agencies to make the Promise a comprehensive and inclusive effort. While the Promise reflects our community’s broad commitments, its specific goals include:

1. Increasing the number of opportunities and certified staff in early childhood education
2. Expanding college campus and workplace tours for fifth through ninth graders
3. Increasing the number of students participating in summer employment and internships
4. Increasing the percentage of high school students in East Baton Rouge Parish who are prepared for college or technical education through dual enrollment credits and articulation opportunities
5. Increasing the percentage of East Baton Rouge Parish students that place at college level math and English
6. Increasing the number of students who earn an associate degree or technical certifications, and transfer to LSU, Southern University, or another four-year university.
7. Increasing the number of BRCC students who successfully transfer to LSU, Southern University, or another four-year college/university
8. Increasing the number of LSU and Southern University students who graduate with a bachelor’s and/or advanced degree
9. Reducing barriers and increasing awareness around college affordability
10. Expanding preparation programs/initiatives for teachers and school leaders at LSU, Southern University, and BRCC

The Promise was launched on September 6, 2018, at City Hall Plaza. Our education leaders and the Mayor-President agreed to leverage their institution’s existing efforts and programs to create more college and career pathways for students of the region.

Similarly, the Capital Area Promise website, capitalareapromise.org, was launched and includes portals for students, parents, and partners.

Post-Launch Activities and Outreach: Fall 2018 – Summer 2019

To continue sharing the message of the Promise, education leaders and the Mayor-President held several events around the community including:

- The official opening of East Baton Rouge Parish School System’s Career and Technical Education Center (C-TEC). The visit’s capstone was the town hall, where leaders fielded questions from more than 100 students assembled. It was also an opportunity to highlight our collective and individual commitments to the Promise and its goals.
- Visits and tours at five (5) local middle and high schools, where leaders met with administration, faculty, and students to contextualize existing programs and gather suggestions for new collaboration.
- Visits to nine (9) K-12 district offices, where the Promise was introduced to superintendents and their executive team. Our goal remains developing district-specific targets for postsecondary enrollment, dual enrollment, teacher preparation opportunities, and additional partnerships.
- Meetings with several nonprofits and agencies on partnership opportunities.

Inaugural Progress on the Promise

On September 18, 2019, leaders gathered at the East Baton Rouge Parish Main Library to share the Promise’s first Progress Report with local media and constituents. The event demonstrated our collective commitment to expanding the initiative and public accountability regarding year-over-year progress.

Program Highlights 2019-2020

- In February 2020, the Mayor’s Office piloted its *Campus Exposure 225* initiative with 50 eighth graders from Brookstown Middle School. Students participated in one-day learning sessions and tours at each postsecondary institution, the Louisiana Art & Science Museum, and the Water Institute.
- In April and June 2020, the Mayor and team hosted leaders from each postsecondary institution for a 2-part virtual town hall at the onset of the COVID-19. These events allowed LSU, Southern University, and BRCC to speak directly with more than 800 students, families, and community members regarding our plans to deliver education and critical services in the midst of a pandemic.
- In Fall 2020, all postsecondary institutions, along with the Baton Rouge Area Chamber, announced expanded partnerships with Handshake, a talent recruitment platform to help us retain graduates to the area.
- In October 2020, each postsecondary institution partnered with the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) for #WhyApply Month programming, reaching more than 300 students and families across the region to discuss the Free Application for Student Financial Assistance (FASFA).

Postsecondary Institutions: A Unique Opportunity for Collective Impact

Baton Rouge is home to three postsecondary institutions of higher education, which presents a unique opportunity for our region. Together, we can make education the hallmark of our community.

Our collective impact can be captured in several ways. Last year, our postsecondary institutions:

- Conferred more than 8,500 two or four-year degrees, which includes more than **300 recent graduates who are certified to teach in public schools**.
- Awarded more than **\$107 million** in institutionally controlled scholarships, making college more affordable for thousands of students. When federal and state grants are included, we have processed more than **\$394 million in financial aid** (NOTE: excludes federally subsidized loans)
- Reached more than **2,500 high school students** in Baton Rouge and across the region through dual enrollment, which builds college readiness and reduces future tuition costs for families.
- Provided professional development and training for K-12 faculty across the region and sent almost 200 graduates into the workforce with credentials to teach in our public schools.
- Created sequential college-tours for middle school students, another first for Baton Rouge. Sixth graders visit LSU, seventh graders visit Southern University, and eighth graders visit BRCC. Due to COVID-19, these campus visits did not happen in 2020, but we have reimagined them as virtual experiences in 2021. All postsecondary institutions will return to in-person visits toward the end of 2021 provided public health guidelines.

NOTE: Specific data can be viewed in the Progress Report – Summary Table and Appendix.

Creating an Economic Environment for Students and Graduates

Through a myriad of efforts, the Mayor's Office demonstrates its belief that education and economic development are bellwethers of emerging cities. From 2019-2020, over 1,000 new jobs were created and capital expenditures were in excess of \$1 billion. The City-Parish has also developed public-private partnerships (P3's) to bring hard investments to North Baton Rouge, an area of historic disinvestment. A foremost example is the groundbreaking for the Howell Place Medical Complex, which is expected to serve over 10,000 patients a year, create over 100 new jobs, and drive additional commerce in the surrounding area.

Separately, the Plank Road Master Plan Corridor Project is under development and will be an economic driver for years to come. It focuses on a 4.3-mile stretch of Plank Road and is widely seen as a catalyst for economic development in North Baton Rouge. The plan's inaugural projects, a pocket park and an \$8 million mixed-use development, are now underway.

Other economic development efforts include: improving mass transit, reducing food insecurity, and small business assistance.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City-Parish created the RestartEBR Microgrant Program, a \$2,500 grant program for small businesses located in East Baton Rouge Parish. The \$1 million effort is supported by the federal CARES Act community development block grant;

and public-private partnerships between the City-Parish and Investar Bank, GMFS Mortgage, ExxonMobil, and Postlethwaite & Netterville. It is meant to assist businesses whose owners qualify as low- to moderate-income individuals or operate in low- to moderate-income areas. As of January 8, 2021, the microgrant program has approved \$135,000 to 54 applicants.

Sustaining the Promise through Leadership Changes

Though several education leaders have transitioned to new opportunities since the Promise's 2018 launch, our work is sustained by a Core Team – representatives from each postsecondary institution, the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, the Mayor's Office, and the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA).

Next Steps

In addition to the Core Team, progress toward our goals will be managed and monitored by five (5) Work Groups:

- (1) Credentials and Curriculum
- (2) Early Childhood Education
- (3) Affordability and Access
- (4) Data Reporting and Analytics
- (5) Communications and Public Relations

As last year's report, we have set goals for next year's cycle. They can be found in the rightmost column of the Progress Report Summary Table.

LSU will continue serving as lead facilitator for the Capital Area Promise.