

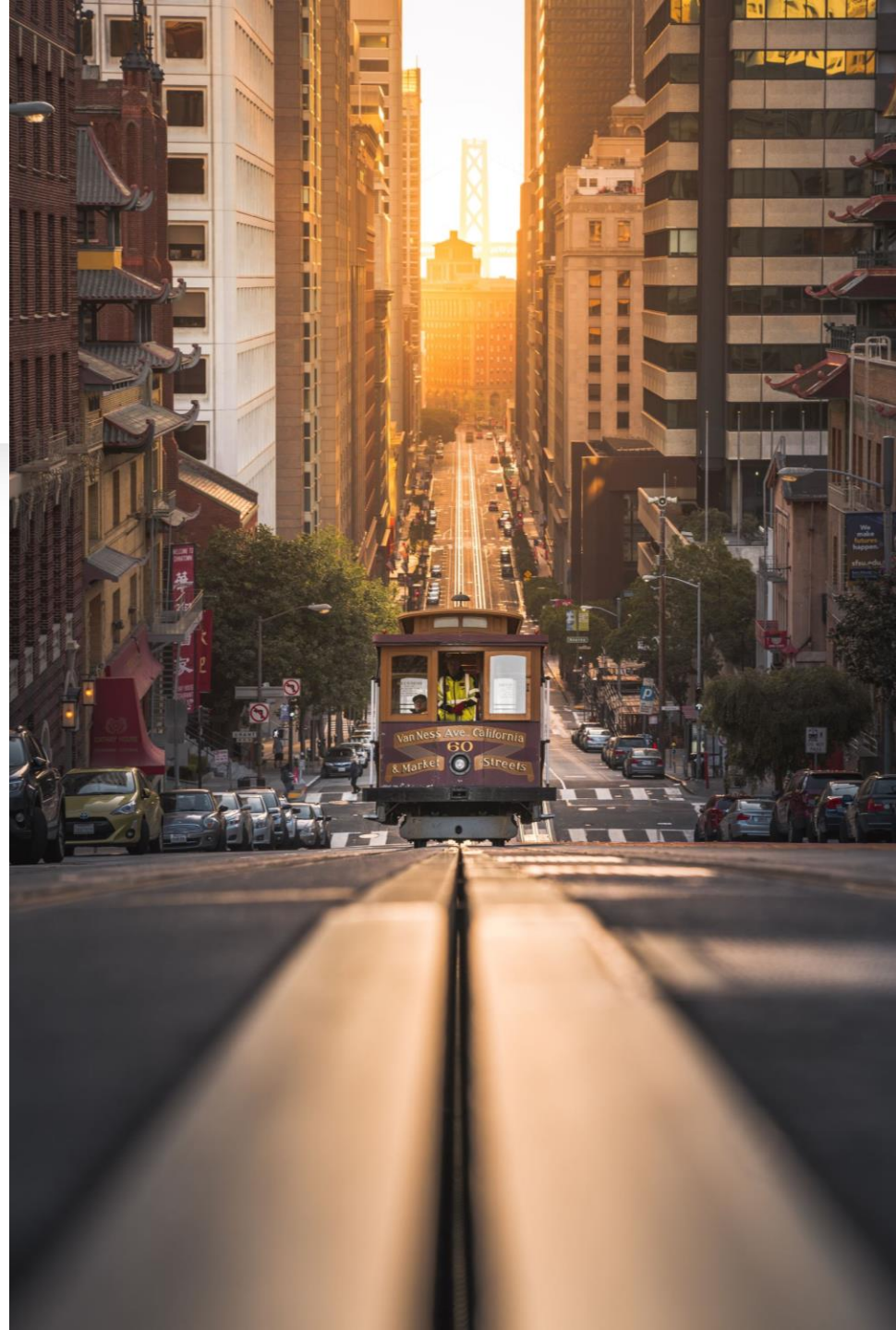
An aerial, high-angle view of a dense city skyline, likely New York City, featuring numerous skyscrapers and buildings. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue and white gradient that fades from the bottom left towards the top right, creating a modern, digital aesthetic.

Free City College Program Overview

Wednesday
May 20, 2026

What is Free City?

- Free City was established through voter-approved City funding in 2017.
- The program provides tuition-free credit courses for eligible San Francisco residents attending CCSF.
- For low-income participants who qualify for the state's California College Promise Grant (CCPG), Free City provides \$46 for each unit they take, recognizing that tuition fees are not the full cost of a community college education.
- Free City is jointly administered by CCSF and the City and County of San Francisco through DCYF.
- The Program supports college access, workforce preparation, economic mobility, and student success.
- Free City has become one of San Francisco's most visible direct educational investments.



Administrative Structure & Operations



Approximately 30 CCSF staff support Free City administration.



CCSF integrates the Free City eligibility screening directly into the student registration process each semester.



Program operations span Student Affairs, Financial Aid, Admissions & Records, the Bursars Office, IT, and Student Services.



Core functions include residency verification, financial aid coordination, outreach, debt management, and student reinstatement.



The college has continued strengthening outreach, marketing, and operational efficiency.

2024–2025 Participation Overview

Participation & Utilization

- 20,243 students used Free City benefits.
- 93% participation among eligible students.
- 32,007 awards issued across three academic terms.
- Highest participation level in the past five years.

Award Distribution

- 63% received a tuition waiver only.
- 30% received a Free City Cash Grant.
- Cash grant participation continues increasing.
- 75% of CCSF's credit population qualified for Free City.

A photograph of a San Francisco street scene. In the foreground, a cable car is moving up a steep hill. The street is lined with tall buildings, and the Golden Gate Bridge is visible in the distance under a hazy sky. The image is used as a background for the text.

Neighborhood Impact Across San Francisco

- Free City serves students across every major San Francisco neighborhood.
- Highest participation areas include Ingleside/Excelsior/Crocker-Amazon (14%), Mission/Bernal Heights (9%), and Bayview/Hunters Point (7%).
- Additional strong participation comes from Visitacion Valley, Sunset, Tenderloin, Richmond, and SOMA districts.
- The Program directly supports communities historically impacted by educational and economic inequities.
- Free City provides citywide educational access and workforce opportunity.

Free City as a Workforce & Economic Mobility Strategy



More than 20,000 San Franciscans benefitted from Free City during 2024–2025.



The Program supports transfer preparation, workforce upskilling, career retraining, and economic mobility.



Students use Free City to access high-demand workforce pathways including healthcare, technology, automotive, and skilled trades.



Free City supports adult learners, working families, recent high school graduates, and career changers.



Students consistently describe Free City as a pathway toward long-term economic stability.

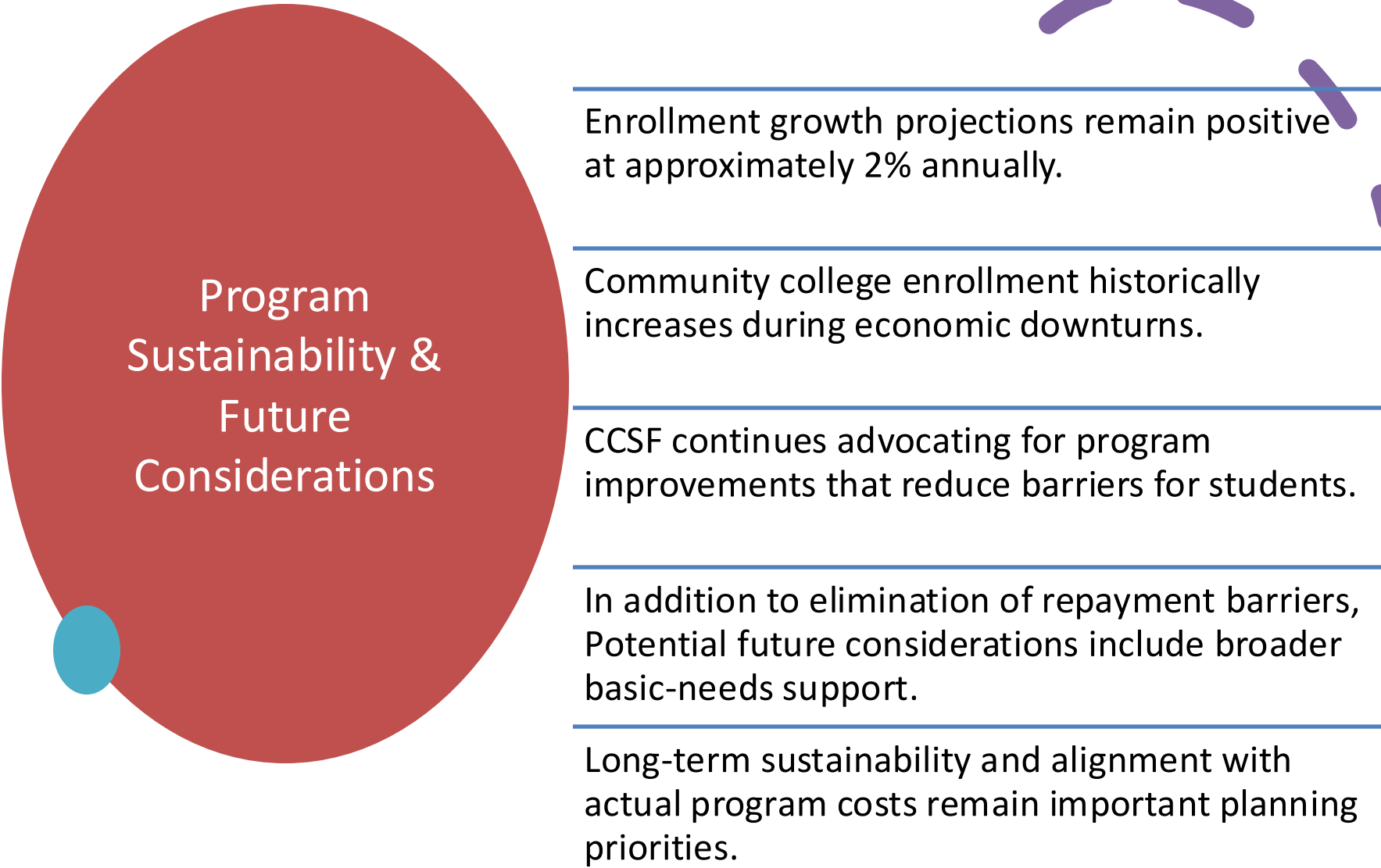
Fiscal Overview & Administrative Costs

Program Costs

- FY26 Tuition Waivers: approximately \$6.17M
- FY26 Cash Grants: approximately \$4.07M
- FY26 Student Debt Costs: approximately \$1.02M
- Estimated Annual Program Cost: approximately \$11.68M

Administrative Considerations

- Administrative reimbursement has varied significantly over time.
- CCSF has absorbed substantial operational costs.
- Given projected FY26–27 constraints, CCSF is not expecting reimbursement for administrative costs.
- The college would prefer limited available resources remain focused on students.



Program Sustainability & Future Considerations

Enrollment growth projections remain positive at approximately 2% annually.

Community college enrollment historically increases during economic downturns.

CCSF continues advocating for program improvements that reduce barriers for students.

In addition to elimination of repayment barriers, Potential future considerations include broader basic-needs support.

Long-term sustainability and alignment with actual program costs remain important planning priorities.

Program Effectiveness & Student Outcomes

- Free City participants attempt and complete more units than non-participants.
- Participants persist from fall-to-spring at higher rates.
- Equity population students persist at rates comparable to non-equity peers overall.
- Free City participants engage more consistently with FAFSA and financial aid resources.
- The program supports long-term educational attainment and workforce preparation.

Who Benefits Most from Free City?

100% of Free City Cash Grant recipients are economically underserved.

Students include first-generation students, foster youth, veterans, CalWORKs recipients, and working adults.

Many students experience significant unmet financial need despite receiving aid.

Free City reduces affordability barriers in one of the most expensive cities in the country.

The program helps students remain enrolled during periods of financial instability.

Student Stability & Basic Needs

More than 50% of surveyed CCSF students reported food insecurity.

More than 1/3 borrowed money to pay bills.

Students continue facing basic needs challenges related to food, housing, transportation, childcare, and healthcare.

Free City serves as a foundational affordability and retention strategy.

Cash grants and debt relief support students during financial emergencies and economic uncertainty.

Why Continued Investment Matters

- Free City represents a landmark San Francisco investment in educational opportunity.
- The program supports workforce preparation, economic mobility, and neighborhood stability.
- Participation remains near universal among eligible students.
- Free City directly advances affordability, persistence, equity, and enrollment goals.
- The program remains one of CCSF's strongest tools for supporting San Francisco residents.



Questions & Discussion





Free City College

SUPPORTING SAN FRANCISCANS. BUILDING OUR FUTURE.



THANK YOU

We appreciate your continued partnership and support.

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*“When a city invests in education,
it invests in the strength, resilience,
and future of its communities.”*
