



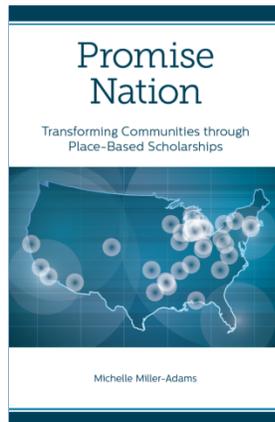
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## Promise Nation

### Transforming Communities through Place-Based Scholarships

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*“No one knows more about what is happening nationally in the college access and success scene than Michelle Miller-Adams. . . . This book grants a glimpse into that vast knowledge base.”*—Saleem Ghubril, Executive Director, Pittsburgh Promise

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—By now many people are familiar with the Kalamazoo Promise, the place-based college scholarship program that generously pays for college education for graduates of Kalamazoo Public Schools. Less familiar are the dozens of other Promise-type programs across the country that are similarly place-based, but that offer varying levels of scholarship benefits.

In a new book from the Upjohn Press, ***Promise Nation: Transforming Communities through Placed-Based Scholarships***, Michelle Miller-Adams presents the most accessible and comprehensive overview available of the emergence and development of the Promise movement nationwide as well as an up-to-date assessment of available research on the impacts of such programs.

Miller-Adams begins by defining a Promise scholarship program, a tricky task due to the wide variations in student requirements, program benefits, and college choices existing in the current crop of programs. She then maps where Promise programs fit into the larger landscape of financial aid and economic and community development strategies.

Miller-Adams also documents the spread of Promise-type programs. As she shows, Promise programs expand into new communities virally, not through top-down leadership. This

viral diffusion has created variations on the model while holding two features in common. Says Miller-Adams,

[P]eople in communities large and small, urban and rural, saw something in the model that made sense to them and then acted independently to adapt it to their local context. The result is an array of programs that share two fundamental features—the awarding of scholarships based on place and the goal of transforming both schools and communities—but that differ in many respects. On the one hand, variations in program design make it challenging to generalize about Promise scholarships, and on the other hand, they make possible comparisons that, if analyzed carefully, can yield findings about what works best.

Two key decisions that must be addressed for any Promise program are 1) which students are eligible for a scholarship, and 2) what institutions they may attend. These choices, Miller-Adams points out, ultimately determine the impact of a given Promise program.

While research on Promise programs is still nascent, there is a fast-growing body of knowledge that allows researchers to determine what these programs can be expected to accomplish as far as student achievement. Miller-Adams summarizes this research in a manner that makes it accessible to all readers.

Finally, Miller-Adams looks at the area of impact that is hardest to measure or assess—how Promise programs affect economic development. While it is difficult to infer a direct relationship between the two, there are real ways, she says, in which Promise programs impact the local economy.

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Michelle Miller-Adams is associate professor of political science at Grand Valley State University and a research fellow at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. An expert on community-building and economic development, she is the author of three previous books including *The Power of a Promise: Education and Economic Renewal in Kalamazoo* (Upjohn Press 2009). Miller-Adams received her PhD in political science from Columbia University.

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***Promise Nation: Transforming Communities through Place-Based Scholarships***, by Michelle Miller-Adams, is published by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. October 2015. 141 pp. \$14.99 paperback ISBN 978-88099-504-7. PDF is free at <http://www.upjohn.org/sites/default/files/WEfocus/promise-nation.pdf>. Opinions expressed are solely those of the author. We encourage you to download a review copy of this book. Paper review copies are also available. Contact: Rich Wyrwa.

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