

'Say Yes' to cover college costs in Guilford County

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GREENSBORO, N.C. -- The Phillips Foundation, based in Greensboro, jump started a massive fundraising campaign in Guilford County Monday.

Executive Director Elizabeth Phillips said the \$5 million commitment is the largest the foundation has ever made.

"It has the potential to guarantee every child who graduates GCS has free tuition to higher education institution," she explained.

The money will go toward a newly-announced \$28 million fundraising goal, part of a potential partnership with the national nonprofit "Say Yes to Education."

"Say Yes" invests in school systems, helping them pull the community together to create a large endowment. The goal is to offer "last dollar tuition" scholarships so any graduating high schooler can go to college without worrying about the cost.

The scholarships are meant to close the gap for students whose other scholarships don't cover full cost, for example, or for students who can't afford college. The money is available regardless of a family's financial background.

At a press conference Monday, speakers said it was an unprecedented opportunity for students to go to public colleges or universities in North Carolina or one of the 70 private post-secondary schools "Say Yes" partners with.

It's not a done deal, as one speaker pointed out. Guilford County's "Say Yes" Planning Board was challenged to raise \$28 million to get the national group's \$15

million investment.

Winston McGregor with Guilford Education Alliance explained, "They challenge communities to raise their own dollars for scholarship endowment, but they invest over \$15 million in technology, capacity, seeding programming, and in getting everyone around a common table."

McGregor said GCS is now the lead contender for the newest "Say Yes" community investment. They've been considering where to expand out of New York for more than a year.

Phillips added, "It goes beyond education. This will help with economic development. People wanting to move here with the promise of free college tuition."