

Strengthening Statewide FAFSA Completion



January 2022

What is the FAFSA?

- The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is a form needed to access federal, state, and local financial aid, including loans, grants, institutional aid, work-study, and private scholarships.
- FAFSA can help unlock aid for students attending a variety of postsecondary institutions, including technical colleges and career programs.
- Every year, the Florida high school graduating class misses out on **over \$300 million** in Pell Grants because they do not complete the FAFSA.

Why is FAFSA Completion important?

- In 2019, Governor DeSantis signed HB 7071 into law that created the SAIL to 60 Initiative, which set an ambitious goal for Florida to increase the percentage of adults holding high-value postsecondary degrees, certificates, or training experiences to **60% by 2030**.
- **Currently, Florida stands at 53%.**
- Students who complete the FAFSA are more likely to enroll in college and complete their degree.

Recommendations

Universal FAFSA with supports and a simple opt-out system

- Universal FAFSA does not mean every student must submit the FAFSA -- **a simple opt-out process ensures students are not hindered if they choose not to or cannot access information to fill out the FAFSA.**
- To ensure the work of the policy does not fall on the shoulders of already overburdened school counselors, **moving the needle requires system-level support to make sure schools can provide needed resources.**
- FCAN's annual [FAFSA Challenge](#) offers schools and counselors free resources and strategies to support efforts to increase FAFSA completions.

Ensure all districts have access to student-level FAFSA data

- **School counselors need access to student-level data, so they can see exact numbers and pinpoint which students to reach out to in order to ensure FAFSA completion.**
- The process is not overly complicated, and FCAN conducted a letter-writing campaign in 2020 that brought districts awareness about the option, and successfully helped 8 districts complete a data-sharing agreement with OFSA (Office of Financial Student Aid).