

## FAFSA Stations Key Takeaways

### Debrief/Overall Ideas

- FAFSA completion numbers between FL and other states could be different because of undocumented students population. Best practices elsewhere may not be working here.
- There could have been changes that made the process easier but others didn't know. Information is not out there to reach the people who need to help the students.
- There are different applications systems and maybe we can find a way to eliminate FAFSA since they have all the information already. Why can't they apply the data that they already have? This is a potential policy issue/solution.
- We need to educate parents and students – everything keeps changing every year so it's hard to get information out to both so they can process and be up to date. Some students want to know earlier and others don't want to know until they need to do it.
- Manatee/Sarasota County said they lost a lot of students in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. It's hard to find them in 11<sup>th</sup> because they can't create that relationship. Do we incentivize students to do this if there are new regulations? We need to back it up with funding.

### Station 1: Design Thinking

- **What are you seeing?**
  - Confusion
  - Conflicting priorities/information
  - Anxiety/uncertainty about future
  - "I already know I won't qualify"
  - Parents with student loan debt
  - Older siblings moving back home
  - Prior student graduates getting exceptions/waivers
  - Lack of parent support
  - Barriers
  - Shift in environment and lack of motivation to pursue
- **What are they hearing?**
  - Senior year is too late
  - What is FAFSA?
  - We won't qualify
  - Family won't fill it out
  - Families think it's all loans
  - Government tracking

- We don't need it
- Not filing taxes
- **What are they feeling?**
  - Overwhelmed by other senior year requirements
  - Too many forms to fill out
  - Lack of family support/trust
  - Embarrassment/fear
  - Need to work/military to pay for college
  - "We will figure it out"
- **What are they afraid of?**
  - Sharing information/gaining trust
  - Family dynamics
  - Fear of failure/lack of confidence
  - Obtaining debt
  - Expiring citizenship/legal status, exposing personal information and citizenship
- **How are they feeling about their future?**
  - "I have to work because my parents can't afford college"
  - Don't want to go into debt
  - I can make money without degree
  - Unsure
  - Fear, overwhelmed, lack of knowledge
- **What are their current priorities?**
  - Working to support themselves/family
  - High school graduation
  - Taking a break/gap year
  - Social media
  - Mobility
  - Friends/relationships
- **Students say \_\_\_ but really mean \_\_\_**
  - "I don't need FAFSA" but really mean "I don't understand"

## Station 2: Sources of friction

- **What is getting in the way of students completing FAFSA?**
  - Missing sophomore connection during COVID
  - Cultural/family issues
  - Undocumented
  - Not educated on process
  - Parent tax information
  - FAFSA known to be difficult/complex/overwhelming
  - People are busy/not enough time
  - Students are unsure of plans
  - No guarantee of award

- Electronic device inaccessible
- Undocumented parent signature (paper)
- Reading comprehension
- **What can we do to reduce friction?**
  - Rebranding/marketing (national)
  - Earlier marketing/outreach
  - FAFSA forecast
  - Award chart to understand what you can get
  - Linking back to Bright Futures
  - Universal FAFSA/graduation requirement
  - Reward schools with FAFSA completions
  - Strong relationships with local FA departments
- **How do we make information about FAFSA easier to understand?**
  - Infographics/videos
  - FAFSA ambassadors
  - YouTube/TikTok
  - Multilingual – application and instructions
  - Utilize IRS data – clean up linking process

### **Station 3: Promising Practices**

- **What are some approaches or activities you have seen be effective in getting students to complete the FAFSA?**
  - FAFSA completion scholarships
  - Schools offer/host 1 on 1 meetings
  - FAFSA labs/completion events with incentives (food, childcare)
  - Marketing/post card promotions
  - Translation services – not just automatic but person to person too
  - Engaging local support (colleges, education foundation, volunteers, neighborhood centers) to help and minimize wait
  - First generation targeted events
  - Community efforts – College Bowl Sundays
  - FAFSA completion during study hall
- **What have you tried that did not work? Why do you think it didn't work?**
  - Technology causing problems
  - Hosting events with poor/no attendance
  - Rushing or incorrect completion
  - Data tracking (state system) not accurate
  - Parents do not have FSA IDs / "Getting ahead" by creating FSA ID too early
  - In person vs. virtual visits (place dependent)
  - Waiting too late to do anything
  - Too many events
  - Relying on a single person at the school

- Not continuing the education once in post-secondary
- Didn't make it a family conversation
- The "just put zeros" tip vs. the ITIN number
- Directing them to an external (impersonal) online resource

#### **Station 4: Data dive with an equity lens**

- **What do you notice? What do you think is driving this?**
  - B.F. by race
  - Some schools/counties selective on who takes the SAT/ACT
  - Parent not completing their FAFSA part
  - Causing low completion: students who don't qualify (undocumented), or students who don't understand value
  - Schools with higher low income have lower FAFSA completion
- **What surprises you?**
  - When counties have millions of Pell money left on table
  - Those who are >100% completion – how?
- **What is the part of the story that's not being told?**
  - SAT/ACT prep – how are all students prepared?
  - Testing centers on SAT, maybe far away (transportation)
  - Some districts not offering SAT/ACT during school
  - How much Pell districts started with
  - How outreach may limit participation – calls, emails, sessions, when things are offered
  - Military/workforce
  - Working vs. not working strategies
- **What would you like to know more about?**
  - Things listed above ^
  - What are top completion states doing
- **What data is missing that you would like to see to better understand what's going on?**
  - Things listed above ^
  - What does enrollment look like post high school?