

# **Emergency Aid in Florida: Bridging the Gap to College Completion**

March 27, 2025



# Questions & Conversation

- Submit your questions in the box
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X: @FLCollegeAccess

#FCAN

#TalentStrongFL

*This webinar is being recorded; all materials  
will be available within a week of recording*



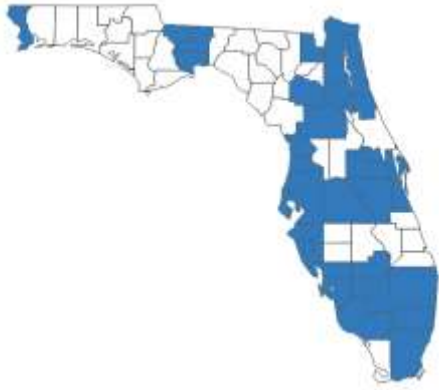
## **Our mission:**

We lead the collaborative movement to ensure every Floridian achieves an education beyond high school and a rewarding career.

## **Our vision:**

A Florida working together, where education is the pathway to economic mobility for all.

# FCAN's Work



**Research and Data:** FCAN publishes research and data on evidence-based practices and policy opportunities to strengthen Florida's talent pool.

**Advocacy:** FCAN engages with stakeholders, policy makers and community-based organizations to find ways for improving every students' postsecondary journey.

**Storytelling:** FCAN focuses on students and their communities to understand and share the impacts of Florida's education policy.

**Local college access networks (LCANs):** FCAN provides financial supports and technical assistance to local coalitions made up of community leaders who come together to create solutions and partnerships to support local talent development.



**Statewide Initiatives:** FCAN coordinates 4 College Ready Florida initiatives that provides schools and community organizations resources to help students continue their education after high school.

**Convenings for Collaboration:** FCAN hosts and facilitates data-driven, solutions-oriented conversations with student success leaders at the community-based, institutional, and statewide levels.

## 7 Conditions for Success

**Opportunity for everyone:** To build a talent-strong economy, all Floridians need access to a postsecondary education and the supports to complete it.

**Clear information and guidance:** Students and families need exposure and counseling early and often to make informed decisions about their futures.

**Affordability:** Postsecondary education needs to be within everyone's financial reach, regardless of household income or life circumstances.

**Multiple pathways to success:** Floridians benefit from multiple learning opportunities for academic achievement and career advancement.

**Lifelong learning:** No degree or credential is “one and done;” Floridians need to prepare for career changes through continuous learning.

**Effective use of data:** Transparent access to data on education and economic outcomes, especially for Florida's diverse populations, helps achieve our goals.

**Community collaboration:** When community partners work together toward a shared vision, they remove barriers, build a robust workforce, and improve the quality of life for their regions.

# JOIN US!



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**[www.FCANsummit.org](http://www.FCANsummit.org)**



# Featured Presenters



Will Carroll  
Managing Director  
Strategic Finance and Student Success  
HCM Strategists



Brenae Smith  
Associate Director  
HCM Strategists



Dr. James "JW" Kelley  
President  
McDowell Tech Community College



Dr. Torry Reynolds  
AVP, Student Services  
North Carolina Community  
College System

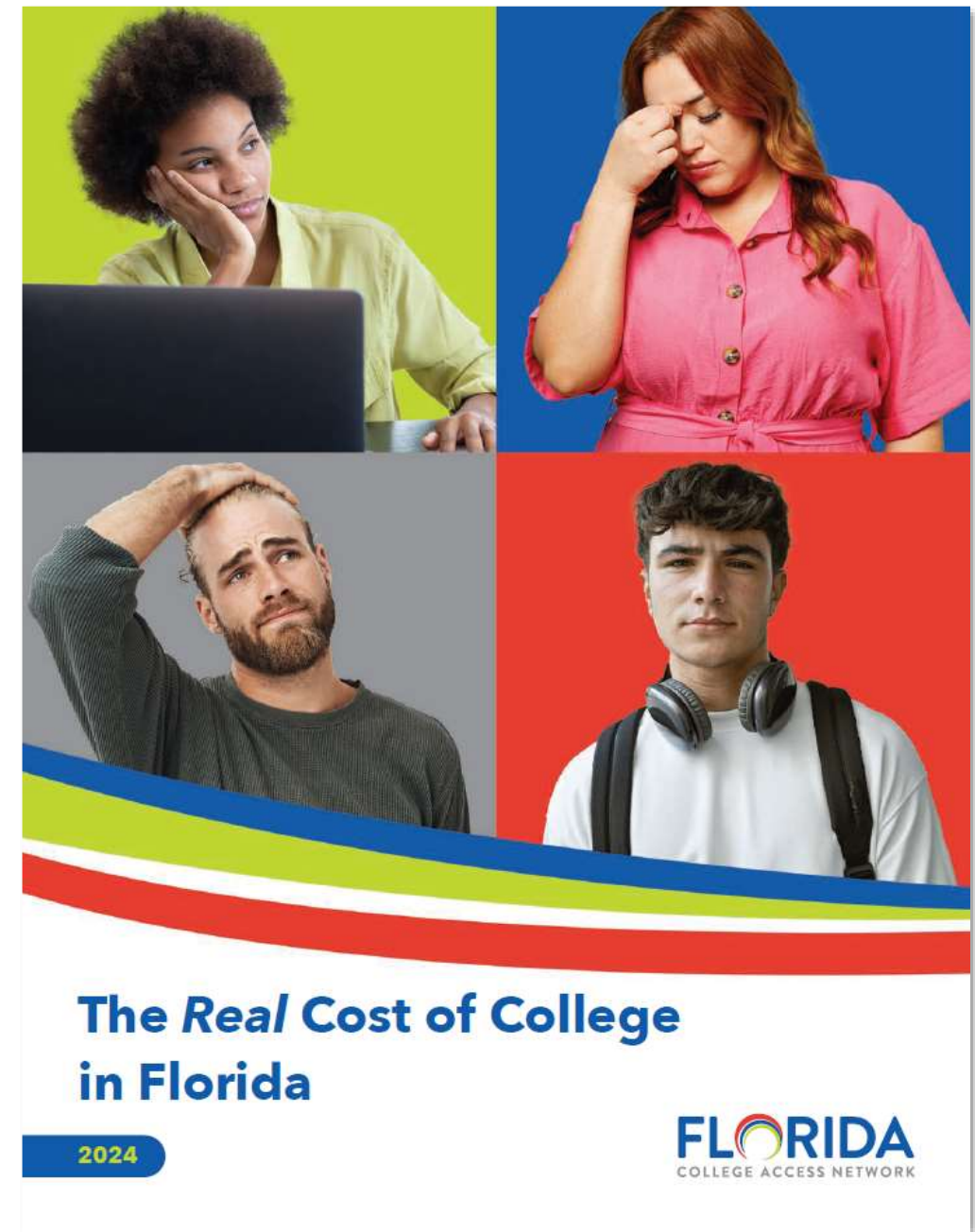
# **FCAN Research Recap: The *Real* Cost of College in Florida**





# Key Takeaways

- Although Florida tuition is low compared to other states, many students accumulate debt
- Many students struggle to afford basic necessities like food and housing—major costs of attending college
- Affordability concerns continue to depress college-going rates
- Florida's students are much more diverse today in age and life circumstances compared to past generations—and their financial needs are as diverse as they are



# Recommendations

- Adopt Universal FAFSA in Florida
- Improve awareness of and access to public assistance programs for eligible students
- Expand the Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG), strengthening need-based aid for Florida students
- Encourage development and local partnerships for enhanced emergency student aid

# Florida Emergency Aid Landscape Analysis

HCM Strategists  
3/27/25

# Why Emergency Aid?

- Research finds that nationally, 56% of college students would struggle to cover \$500 in unexpected costs.
- Affordability is an issue, even in Florida:
  - Accounting for total cost of attendance, Florida universities are only the 13th most affordable; state colleges only the 22nd.
  - Over three-quarters of Florida students who left college before completing their degree said it was due to financial reasons

# Why Emergency Aid?

- Completion gaps persist, remain priorities in FL:
  - Little progress in state college Pell grad rates and gaps
  - University System's new strategic plan aims to dramatically increase Pell grad rate
- Completion is the key to ROI:
  - Cuts in half a person's likelihood of missing student loan payments or receiving public assistance
- Emergency Aid has three advantages over need-based aid:
  - Just-in-time
  - Available to all
  - Tie into holistic supports





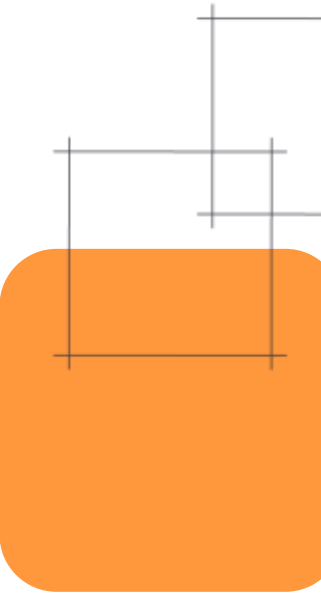
# Our Research

- Review of Emergency Aid research on impacts & best practices
- Assessment of other state programs
- Scan of Florida institutions offering Emergency Aid
- Interviews with institutions and other FL stakeholders



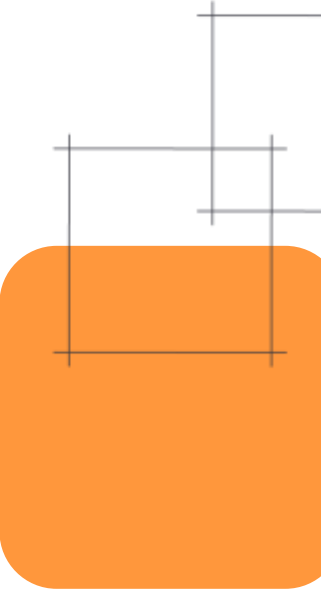
# Potential for Growth and Improvement of Florida Emergency Aid Programs

- Emergency aid programs are more common at FL's public universities
  - Available at two-thirds of state universities, but less than half of state colleges
- Variation in the design of institutional emergency aid programs, not all aligned with best practice
  - Turnaround times
  - Outreach and Communication
  - Data collection



# Lessons Learned from Other States

- **Start somewhere** – Many programs started small and grew over time, in funding and coverage
- **Balance flexibility and centralization**– Flexibility allows institutions with existing EA programs to maintain existing processes, but centralization helps data collection and common practices
- **Targeted focus**: NC, TN, and VA targeted their programs to specific student populations to help garner support
- **Leveraging public-private partnerships**: Private dollars in TX and VA helped jumpstart state-supported EA programs
- **Coalition-building**: WA and MN leveraged student basic needs coalitions to push for EA programs as one part of a basic needs agenda.



# Aligning Emergency Aid with Florida's Policy Context

## 1. Make it targeted:

- High-demand programs are a popular focus in FL policy
- State colleges have fewer EA programs and lower state investment

## 2. Emphasize completion:

- Make the ROI case (will need data)
- Could use the NC completion-oriented model

## 3. Balance flexibility in design with accountability:

- Few design requirements: Weave state funding into existing institutional programs
- Stronger transparency requirements: Require consistent reporting

## 4. Potential sources of funding:

- Carve out of existing aid programs (FSAG, FGMG)
- Leverage matching funds

# Short, Medium, Long Term Efforts

- **Short Term:** Support institutions in developing and strengthening their programs
  - Convene institutions to build a coalition and improve practices
  - Build data infrastructure to be able to share the impact
- **Medium Term:** Build the case & create system- and state-level support
  - Statewide basic needs survey
  - Pilot program
  - Amplification of outreach efforts
  - Improve access to public benefits with data sharing agreements
- **Long Term:** Pursue state investment
  - Make emergency aid an allowable use of existing state need-based aid programs
  - Fund navigators on college campuses
  - Create a new state-funded emergency aid program tailored to the state's priorities

**Thank you!**