



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Nov. 4, 2025

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FCAN Continues “First-Gen & Fearless” Storytelling for National First-Generation College Celebration

~ Statewide effort returns for a second year to uplift trailblazing students and leaders ~

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TAMPA, FL – For the second year in a row, the Florida College Access Network (FCAN) and its college access and success partners are proud to lead the statewide celebration of National First-Generation College Celebration Day. As part of its *First-Gen & Fearless* effort, FCAN is spotlighting the personal stories, achievements, and aspirations of first-generation students and professionals across Florida and providing resources that support college access and success.

This year’s celebration builds on the strong momentum from 2024, deepening the statewide effort to ensure Florida’s first-generation college students feel seen and supported. In Florida, 27% of undergraduate students are considered first-generation, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. These students are often the first in their family to attend college or complete a degree, and they represent a vital part of Florida’s workforce pipeline and economic future.

First-Generation College Students in Florida: A Snapshot

- 58% enroll in high-demand fields like healthcare, engineering, and computer science
- 41% are working-age adults (26-64 years)
- 68% are the first sibling in their family to go to college
- 55% receive federal financial aid, such as Pell Grants
- 68% of first-generation students are female, compared to 54% of continuous-generation students
- 41% are Hispanic/Latino, 28% Black, 24% White, 3% Asian, and 3% multiracial

(Source: U.S. Department of Education, NCES)

“First-generation students are the trailblazers in their families. Their stories are powerful and can help end cycles of poverty for them and their siblings,” said Braulio Colón, FCAN’s executive director. “This celebration is personal for me. As a first-generation student, I didn’t always know where to turn, but mentors and access to support systems made all the difference.”

Media Opportunity

As a first-generation graduate who now leads Florida’s college access network, Braulio Colón offers a compelling personal and professional perspective on the importance of supporting first-gen students. He attended Evans High School and played on the football team and in the school’s marching band. Colón’s neighbor drove him to register for his first term at the University of South Florida, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communications and a Bachelor of Arts in Africana Studies before earning a Master of Arts in Public Administration. This led him to experience the transformative power of education



and inspired him to become a strategic system-change leader to ensure more Floridians have access to college pathways. In 2012, Braulio co-founded FCAN, turning his passion for higher education into a statewide movement that improves college access. He was recently listed in *Florida Trend's* "Florida 500" as one of the most influential education leaders.

Reporters and media outlets are invited to schedule exclusive interviews to learn more about his story and FCAN's vision for statewide student success.

FCAN makes available a [resource page](#) and [social media toolkit](#), ensuring that first-gen students have easy access to the tools, support, and inspiration to reach their goals.

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About Florida College Access Network

Florida College Access Network (FCAN) leads the statewide collaborative movement to strengthen Florida by ensuring every Floridian attains education beyond high school towards a rewarding career. We envision a thriving Florida working together where education is the pathway to economic mobility and a prosperous economy for all.

FCAN strives to expand knowledge of research, data, policies, and practices that impact postsecondary access and attainment in Florida. For more information, visit www.floridacollegeaccess.org.