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MEDIA ALERT

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For Immediate Release: Thursday, June, 21 2012

Most Florida 12th Graders Didn't Apply for Federal Financial Aid

~A new government tracking tool shows the majority of Florida high school seniors failed to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid before the school year ended~

Tampa, FL- School's out for the summer, but before leaving campus, new numbers show most Florida high school seniors did not apply for federal financial aid.

According to a [Florida College Access Network](#) (Florida C.A.N.!) analysis of federal data, only 37.8-percent of high school seniors in Florida completed the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) as of June 10, 2012. Although this number is up from 21-percent in March, it still shows 62.2-percent of Florida's 12th graders failed to complete the form for the 2012-13 academic year.

It's been more than three months since the [U.S. Department of Education](#) unveiled the [FAFSA Completion Tool](#) website, which tracks how many students in each high school across the country, both public and private, are submitting and completing the FAFSA.

With tuition and overall college costs on the rise, access to financial aid can be a deciding factor for those considering college. By filling out a FAFSA, a student can find out if he or she is eligible for financial aid such as Pell Grants, federal student loans and work study opportunities.

For Florida students, completing the FAFSA is also important because it has been made a requirement for the [Bright Futures Scholarship Program](#), which can award students attending a Florida college or university up to \$3,000 during their first year.

A completed FAFSA must be submitted before the Bright Futures Scholarship money is disbursed and the deadline for eligible Bright Futures students to submit their completed FAFSA for the fall 2012 semester is August 31st.

Research shows one of the main reasons students fail to fill out a FAFSA is because they don't think they're eligible. Other reasons include fear of more debt, lack of information or misinformation on how or when to apply and viewing the forms as tedious and cumbersome.

"There are many deadlines posted throughout the internet that can be misinterpreted or could discourage students to apply for aid," said Braulio Colón, Executive Director for the Florida College Access Network.

"The application is free and doesn't require contracts or commitments to institutions, so simply seeing what money is available can help students and their families determine whether college will be affordable to them," said Colón.

While deadlines for some sources of money have passed, students can still complete a FAFSA and receive a Pell Grant or be offered loans depending on their eligibility.

"Not only do we need to better inform our students about the importance of completing and submitting the FAFSA, we also need to think about how we can help students and parents through the process, particularly during the summer months," said Colón.

The new FAFSA Completion Tool is updated every two weeks. For a Florida-specific data set listing FAFSA completion by school, [click here](#).

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About Florida College Access Network

Florida College Access Network's mission is to create and strengthen a statewide network that catalyzes and supports communities to improve college & career preparation, access, and completion for all students. Our Big Goal is to increase the proportion of working-age adults in Florida who hold a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential to 60% by the year 2025. For more information, visit www.floridacollegeaccess.org