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PRESS RELEASE
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New Statewide Push to Make Florida "Talent Strong" Promotes Education After High School Amid Record Unemployment

Bridging barrier to education will build a better-educated workforce, get Floridians back to work, and bring economic strength to the state

On the cusp of Labor Day, with Florida struggling under the highest unemployment in the state's history due to the COVID pandemic, The Florida College Access Network (FCAN) and its local partners across the state launched a statewide campaign to promote education after high school for recent graduates and adult learners as the key to Florida's and individual Floridians' economic recovery.

Talent Strong Florida aims to raise awareness and build a strong consensus around the need for education beyond high school for all Floridians and knock down the barriers that contribute to educational attainment gaps for lower income Floridians and people of color. Four-year college degrees, two-year degrees and high-quality certificate programs and technical training provide a range of options that make Florida workers more able to withstand economic disruptions like COVID-19.

"Florida has an opportunity to build a resilient, recession-proof economy that can withstand the current pandemic and any future crisis that Florida might face," said Charleita M. Richardson, FCAN executive director. "Past recessions have taught us that Floridians who only have a high school education are hit harder by job losses than those with more education, and most new jobs require degrees and credentials beyond high school. Creating a path for all Floridians to access higher education and training can accelerate Florida's recovery and put more Florida families on the path to economic mobility."

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The campaign supports the state's SAIL to 60 initiative, a statutory goal to increase the percentage of working-age Floridians with a high-value postsecondary certificate, degree or training experience to 60% by 2030. Currently, 52% of Florida's working-age population holds a college degree or workforce credential.

And the gap is even larger among Florida's non-white population, which will make up 54% of the workforce by 2030 but who trail white Floridians in degree attainment by double digits. Blacks and Hispanics make up bigger portions of Florida's low-income population, and only 10% of low-income students complete a degree by age 25.

Richardson noted that Floridians with bachelor's degrees, on average, annually earn more than double what those with only a high school diploma do, and the top 10 fastest growing jobs in Florida all require degrees and certificates beyond high school. Yet 58% of Floridians in a recent FCAN survey said they have suffered job loss, reduced hours, or pay cuts as a result of COVID-19, and 35% said they would need additional education or training to find work with the same wages or income. Those with the least education have been the hardest hit.

Through this campaign, FCAN invites leaders and organizations to work together to build a talent strong workforce and a more resilient economy. For information on how to get involved, visit TalentStrongFlorida.org

About Florida College Access Network

Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is Florida's first collaborative network committed to ensuring all Floridians have the opportunity to achieve an education beyond high school and prosper in Florida's dynamic economy. We envision a Florida working together where education is the pathway to economic mobility for all. For more information, visit floridacollegeaccess.org.

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