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PRESS RELEASE
Florida College Access Network
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, October 1, 2020

The Florida FAFSA Challenge starts today!

Schools, districts, and community organizations are encouraged to take the challenge

Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is pleased to announce the kick off of the [Florida FAFSA Challenge](#) for the 2020-21 school year! The challenge calls on schools, districts, and communities to increase the number of graduating high school seniors who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which helps students who qualify to access funds to pay for college.

Completing the FAFSA is one of the most important steps in making college affordable for the 4 out of 5 Florida college students that rely on financial aid to go to college each year. The Florida FAFSA Challenge begins today, **October 1, 2020** – the date the FAFSA for the 2021-22 school year becomes available – and continues through **March 26, 2021**. The highest-performing schools and districts in the following categories will receive awards and public recognition:

1. **MVP** (highest completion rate through March 26, 2021)
2. **Most Improved** (compared to previous year through March 26, 2021)

FCAN will also recognize "**FAFSA Champions**," which includes all schools and districts that increase their FAFSA completion rate by at least 5 percentage points compared to the last school year.

This year's Florida FAFSA Challenge aims to build off of last year's efforts when 153 schools from 50 counties increased the percentage of seniors who completed the FAFSA by at least 5 percentage points over the previous year, despite the challenges COVID-19 caused. As a result, Florida's Class of 2020 qualified for [an estimated \\$156 million in Pell Grant dollars](#).

- more -

Register Today

[Register your school, district, or organization for the Florida FAFSA Challenge here](#). Registered schools receive special updates, tips for success, stickers to pass out to students and other supports. To learn more about the Challenge, visit the [Statewide Initiatives](#) page on FCAN's website.

FCAN and its partners offer a variety of tools and resources to help schools and districts increase FAFSA completion:

- [The Florida FAFSA Challenge Toolkit](#): FCAN's toolkit contains resources and strategies to support efforts to increase FAFSA completions.
- [Florida Department of Education Navigating Your Financial Future \(NYFF\)](#): NYFF offers training and resources to help high school students and young adults to strengthen their financial skills.
- [Form Your Future Outreach Campaign Toolkit](#): A digital campaign launched by the National College Attainment Network to support FAFSA completion efforts, including promotional materials geared toward students.
- [U.S. Department of Education Office of Federal Student Aid \(FSA\) YouTube Channel](#): The FSA's YouTube Channel offers how-to videos on completing the FAFSA and provides overviews of the many resources they have to help counselors, advisors, and advocates assist students and their families with the financial aid process.

Additionally, the Florida Department of Education's Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) can provide districts access to the names of students in their schools who have completed the FAFSA form. Contact OSFA's outreach representative, Pedro Hernandez, at Pedro.Hernandez@fldoe.org to learn more about how to set up the data sharing agreement.

FCAN will post Florida FAFSA Challenge updates ("Leaderboards") regularly at www.FloridaCollegeAccess.org, along with publishing a "First Look" data dashboard beginning in November.

For more information about the Florida FAFSA Challenge or any of the FCAN-coordinated College Ready Florida initiatives, contact LaVerne Handfield, FCAN's Programs Coordinator, at LHandfield@floridacollegeaccess.org.

The Florida FAFSA Challenge is possible thanks to the generous support of FCAN's cornerstone funder [Helios Education Foundation](#) and sponsor [Wells Fargo](#).

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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