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PRESS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 3, 2024

The Florida FAFSA Challenge starts today after a much-awaited FAFSA release
Florida is set to receive over 800 million dollars more for students in need

Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is pleased to announce the kickoff of the Florida FAFSA Challenge for the 2023-24 school year, which runs through March 29, 2024. The challenge begins after a historic overhaul of the form, which became intermittently available on Dec. 30. Schools, districts, and communities are encouraged 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.

This year marks a significant challenge due to the late release of the FAFSA, which normally opens on October 1. Delays will affect students, college administrators, and financial aid advisors who will have less time to complete and process the application.

Nearly three months late, this year's re-designed FAFSA form has fewer questions, uses simplified language, and assigns roles for students and their families to streamline questions. The form also implements changes outlined in the bipartisan FUTURE Act passed in 2019, which allows the Internal Revenue Service to share certain federal tax information, and the FAFSA Simplification Act, which outlines processes and formulaic changes to increase the number of students who receive student aid and expand Pell Grant eligibility for low-income students.

"Millions of dollars are left on the table every year in Florida because students who would be eligible for a Federal Pell Grant just simply don't apply or they don't apply successfully," said Braulio Colón, executive director for the Florida College Access Network. "These changes will result in Florida having an increase of hundreds of millions of dollars coming into our state and have a positive impact on the lives of students."

According to the U. S. Department of Education, 150,000 more students will qualify for a Federal Pell Grant in Florida. The Pell Grant is only awarded to undergraduate students who display exceptional financial need. Based on the 2023-24 maximum Pell Grant award amount of \$7,395, an additional 113,245 of Florida's students will receive over 800 million dollars. Completing the FAFSA is one of the most important steps in making college affordable. Eighty-two percent of Florida college students receive financial aid.

Through data-informed advocacy work, FCAN leads Florida's movement to improve all students' college readiness, access, and success. Collaboration and strong partnerships are key for identifying significant educational gaps, accelerating collective action, and impacting meaningful change.

While Florida is a low-tuition state, other costs associated with attending college, such as transportation, housing, child care, and food, add to the overall cost of attendance.

FCAN has been running the Florida FAFSA Challenge since 2015 to encourage all Florida schools and districts to increase FAFSA completion by five percentage points over the previous year.

The highest-performing schools and districts will receive awards and public recognition. FCAN will also recognize “FAFSA Champions,” which includes all schools and districts that increase their FAFSA completion rate by at least five percentage points compared to the last school year.

This year’s Florida FAFSA Challenge aims to build off of [last year’s efforts when 171 schools and 10 districts increased the percentage of seniors who completed the FAFSA](#) by at least five percentage points over the previous year according to the 2022-23 FAFSA Challenge results.

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.
- [The National College Attainment Network \(NCAN\)](#): NCAN offers resources to help high school students and young adults to strengthen their financial skills.
- [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.

The Federal Student Aid (FSA) will not post FAFSA completion data of high school and public school districts until April 2024.

For more information about the Florida FAFSA Challenge or any of the FCAN-coordinated College Ready Florida initiatives, contact Adriana Pavicic, FCAN’s Communications and Initiatives Manager, at apavicic@floridacollegeaccess.org.

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

About Florida College Access Network

Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is Florida’s collaborative network committed to ensuring all Floridians have the opportunity to achieve an education beyond high school and a rewarding career. We envision a Florida working together where education is the pathway to economic mobility for all.

A nonpartisan organization, 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.

FCAN is a statewide independent organization hosted by the University of South Florida (USF). The statements and positions presented are those of FCAN and are not made on behalf of the USF Board of Trustees or intended in any way to be representative of USF.

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