



# The *Real* Cost of College in Florida

2024

**FLORIDA**  
COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK

Florida tuition and fees at its public colleges and universities are among the lowest in the country, thanks to policies that have kept tuition rates flat over the past decade. Yet the cost of college is still out of reach for many students, even for those who receive financial aid through grants and scholarships, such as the federal Pell Grant or the Florida Bright Futures scholarship. In large part, this is because Florida students are not “one size fits all” in terms of their financial needs – they face a wide variety of circumstances that impact their ability to afford college in differing ways.

This report explores the true cost of college attendance for Florida’s students. Through profiles of four model students who represent some of the real-life situations today’s students face, we present representative costs of pursuing a college degree or career credential at Florida’s public colleges, universities, and technical schools. After factoring in federal Pell grants and/or Bright Futures scholarships these students might qualify to receive, as well as any other personal sources of income such as employment, we examine financial shortfalls students face. We then explore policy opportunities and best practices that could better support Florida students’ financial needs in completing their educations.

## Why Is Affording College a Challenge for So Many Florida Students?

### **Although Florida tuition is low compared to other states, many students accumulate debt.**

Florida has some of the lowest tuition rates in the country. US News and World Report, for example, has ranked Florida #1 in the nation in higher education for the past eight years, in part due to having the lowest cost of tuition and fees among the states.<sup>i</sup> Another analysis listed three of Florida’s public universities as among the top five most affordable institutions in the country for the 2023-2024 school year.<sup>ii</sup>

A decade ago, as Floridians grappled with the economic fallout from the Great Recession, Florida leaders froze tuition rates beginning with the 2014 – 2015 school year. Tuition and fees have, as depicted in Figure 1, remained flat ever since.

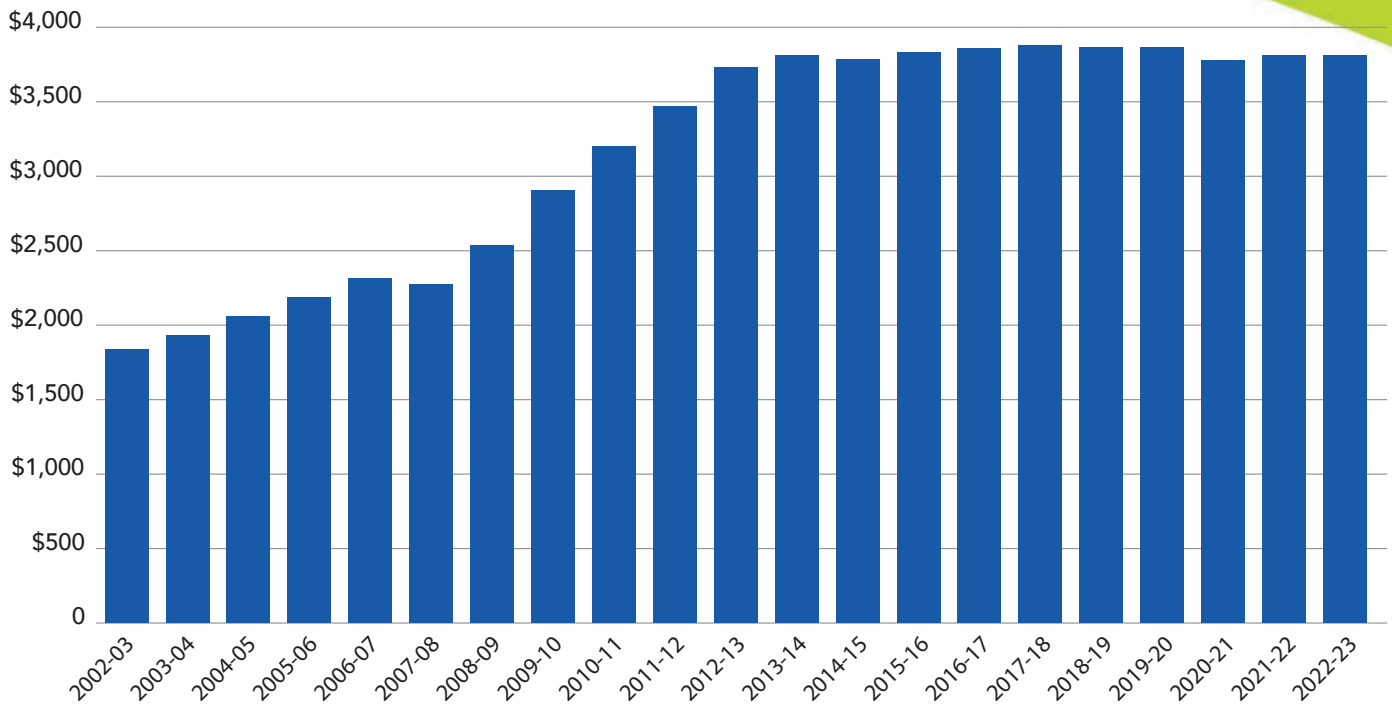
<sup>iii</sup> Additionally, during the past decade the Florida Legislature has enacted other policies to contain

the cost of college, such as ending sales tax on textbooks and creating an online open access resource depository for textbooks and other resources at no cost to students. The legislature also enacted policies with tuition savings that incentivize students to complete their degrees or pursue high-demand STEM occupations, among other programs. These policies have certainly contained students’ direct college costs.

However, nearly half (47%) of Florida’s college class of 2020 graduated from four-year institutions with debt, and across graduates of Florida’s public universities average student debt ranged between \$19,066 and \$27,077.<sup>iv</sup> The same publication that named Florida as the top state for Higher Education notes a rank of 26th for student loan debt at graduation.

Additionally, while Florida’s flat tuition rates benefit all students, the benefit is disproportionate based on students’ household income. By way of illustration, Figure 2 compares the annualized cost of a bachelor’s degree after grants and scholarships at a Florida public university as a percentage of Florida’s average annual household incomes by quintile. For students in the lowest

**Figure 1: Average Annual Tuition and Fees, Full-Time Public Florida Undergraduates**



quintile of average household income, the share of net tuition, fees, and books as a percentage of household income is more than 17 times greater than students from the highest quintile, and more than 32 times greater than students from the top 5% of households by household income.<sup>v</sup> This is one reason why students from lower-income households have disproportionately higher rates of student loan debt on average—putting them further behind on their path to economic mobility.

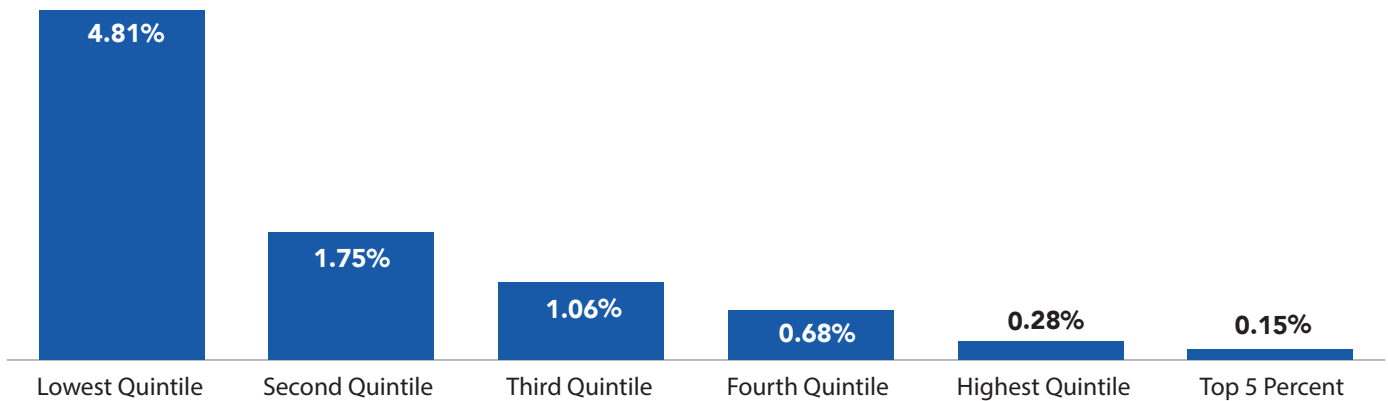
**Many students struggle to afford basic necessities like food and housing—major costs of attending college.**

College affordability is often described in terms of direct costs such as tuition, fees, and textbooks. Yet a fact often lost in the conversation is that living expenses are typically the lion’s share of a college student’s costs. Unfortunately, many college students struggle to afford even basic living expenses.

College prices across the country are three to four times higher than they were 50 years ago after adjusting for inflation, while the median family income has increased only modestly.<sup>vi</sup> Two out of five college students nationwide who apply for financial aid are estimated to have no financial ability to pay for even a portion of their college expenses out of pocket—a rate that has doubled since the mid-1990s.

Indeed, according to the United Way of Florida, 45% of Florida households struggle to afford the cost of essentials needed to live and work in the modern economy—expenses such as housing, food, transportation, childcare, health care, and technology such as internet and cell phone service. In addition to the 13% of households in Florida living below the poverty line, another 32% are ALICE—which stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. These are Floridians who cannot afford the cost of living in the counties where they live, yet do not qualify for public assistance. Taken together, an estimated 3.9

**Figure 2: Net Price of Annual SUS Tuition, Books, and Fees as Share of Average Household Income, by Household Income Cohort**



million Florida households struggle to afford basic necessities.<sup>vii</sup>

With almost half of Floridians struggling to make ends meet, it stands to reason that many Florida college students face financial challenges, as well. Florida is by no means unique on this front. Nationally, according to the Hope Center, nearly three in five college students lack adequate access to food or housing.<sup>viii</sup> The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) at the U.S. Department of Education recently released the results of a comprehensive study revealing that 23% of American undergraduate students—more than 4 million—experience food insecurity. Moreover, food insecurity is higher among students who are women, people of color, LGBTQ, parents, differently abled, and Pell Grant recipients. 31.1% of Pell Grant recipients reported low or very low food security, as did a surprisingly high 16.8% of students who don't qualify for the Pell Grant (McKibben, 2023). Additionally, 8% of U.S. undergraduate students—about 1.4 million—experience homelessness, with

higher levels among men, LGBTQ, people of color, single parents, and Pell Grant recipients.

Basic needs insecurity is an impediment to student success. Students who are food and/or housing insecure are more likely than their peers to suffer academically, are less likely to persist and complete their college education, and experience higher rates of stress and anxiety. Poor nutrition affects students' thinking skills and behavior, makes it difficult to concentrate on their studies, and affects their academic performance. Indeed, as awareness has grown about the rate of food insecurity among college students, several Florida colleges and universities have launched food banks on their campuses in recent years. Yet in spite of this growing awareness of need, according to the NCES study, the vast majority (83.8%) of students experiencing food insecurity did not receive emergency aid.

**High school students nationwide are less prone to attend a four-year college—and the cost of attendance is the biggest reason.**

Unfortunately, the costs of college attendance and awareness of the student debt crisis weigh heavily



on today's high school students—so much so that fewer plan to attend a four-year college.

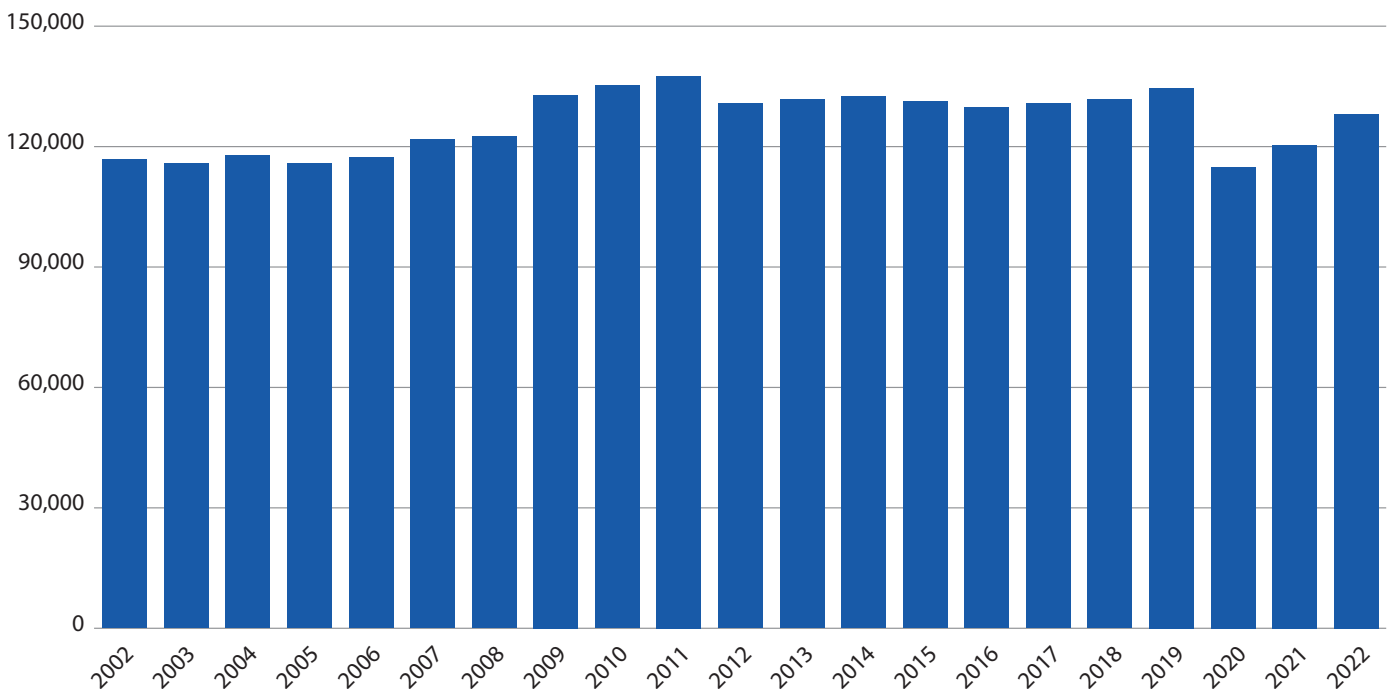
According to a national survey of high school students conducted in September 2021, the number of teens planning to attend a four-year college had dropped 23 percentage points since the pandemic began, with less than half now considering it.<sup>ix</sup> More than 65% of students surveyed said that the cost of tuition and the amount of student loans they would need were important factors in their post-high school plans. Nearly half (43%) said the cost of college was the most important factor in their future education decision, while 59% worried about how they would pay for college.

In Florida, enrollment trends reflect these perceptions and attitudes. As shown in Figure 3, Fall 2022 enrollment of first-time degree-seeking students at Florida public institutions was 128,061, 7% less than the Fall 2011 enrollment of 137,644. If enrollment had kept pace with the overall state population growth of 16.7% since then, Fall 2022 would have seen an additional 32,600 first-time degree-seeking students enrolled at Florida public institutions.<sup>x</sup>

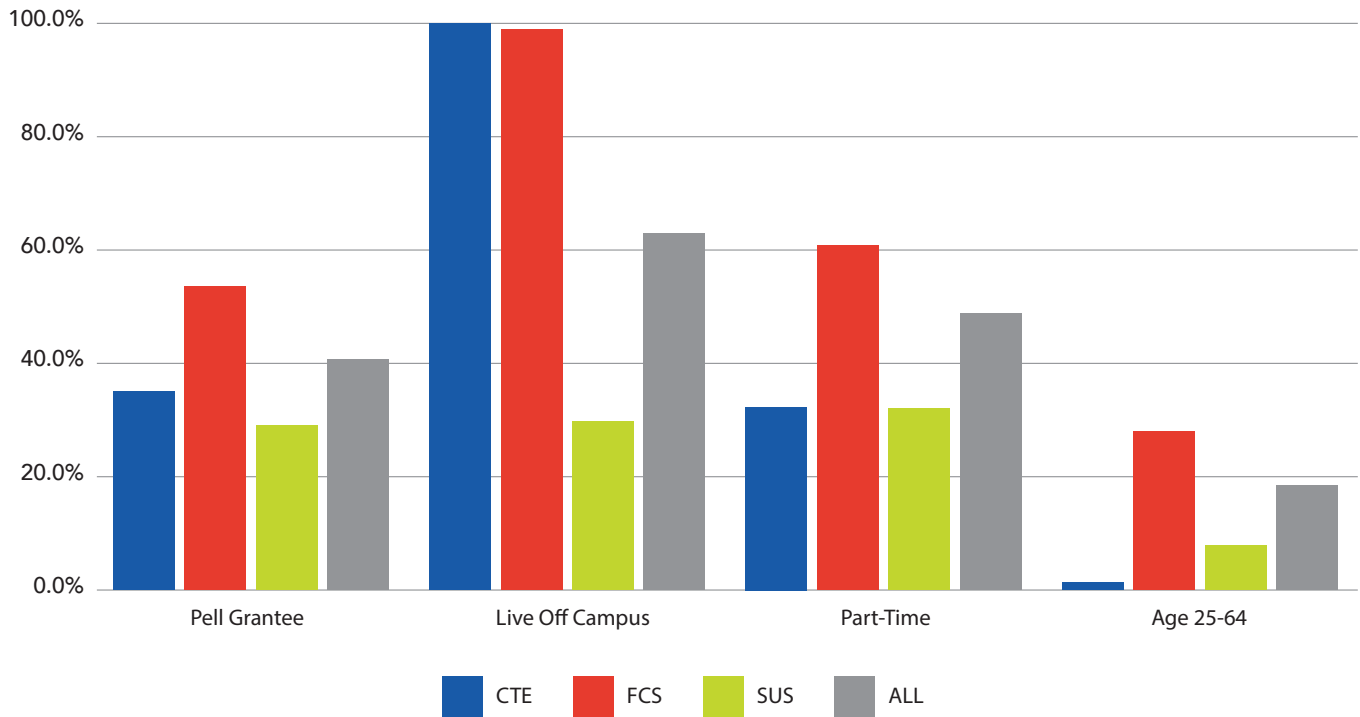
**Florida's students are much more diverse today in age and life circumstances compared to past generations—and their financial needs are as diverse as they are.**

The common image of a college student is typically of a young adult who enrolls straight out of high school, lives in a dorm on campus, and attends school full time. Although that image certainly describes many Florida college students, the reality is the majority of today's students represent a much broader spectrum of life circumstances. Of Florida's public university, college, and career and technical education undergraduate students, 40.7% are lower income (and qualify for the Pell Grant),<sup>xi</sup> 63.0% live off campus,<sup>xii</sup> 48.8% attend part time,<sup>xiii</sup> and 18.4% are adults between the ages of 25-64,<sup>xiv</sup> many of whom juggle work and family responsibilities in

**Figure 3: Fall First-Time Degree-Seeking Enrollees, Florida (Public)**



**Figure 4: Florida Public Postsecondary Students by Select Characteristic**



addition to their course loads. Figure 4 depicts these percentages with breakouts by type of public institution.

Lower-income, part-time, and adult students are also more likely to “take a break” from college due to outside pressures such as work and family responsibilities—and are less likely to complete a degree. Lower-income students are more at risk of leaving college due to their financial situation. Indeed, as FCAN has previously reported, 78% of Florida state college students who dropped out said it was because of financial reasons.<sup>xv</sup>

### Meet Four Florida College Students: What Does College Cost for Them?

Consider the financial situations of four model Florida college students who reflect the realities of many students today. After comparing their expenses to their income, including major forms of aid such as the Pell Grant and Bright Futures scholarship, we calculate the extent to which their costs are covered.<sup>xvi</sup> We then explore potential policy and practice solutions with promise to help students like them cross the college finish line without insurmountable debt loads—thus putting them on a path to economic mobility.

# DANIELLE

Age 18

Single, no dependents

High School senior looking to pursue a degree in education

Wants to live on campus

Does not own a car

Qualifies for a full

Bright Futures scholarship

## EXPENSES:

Campus Housing: \$6,656

Tuition and fees: \$5,088

Books and supplies: \$1,600

Internet: \$0 (Provided on campus)

Cell phone: \$0 (Provided by parents)

Food: \$5,776

Misc. Expenses: \$3,024

Healthcare: \$0 (Provided by parents)

## INCOME:

Bright Futures Florida

Academic Scholars Award: \$5,088

Summer Job: \$4,000

Expenses: \$22,144

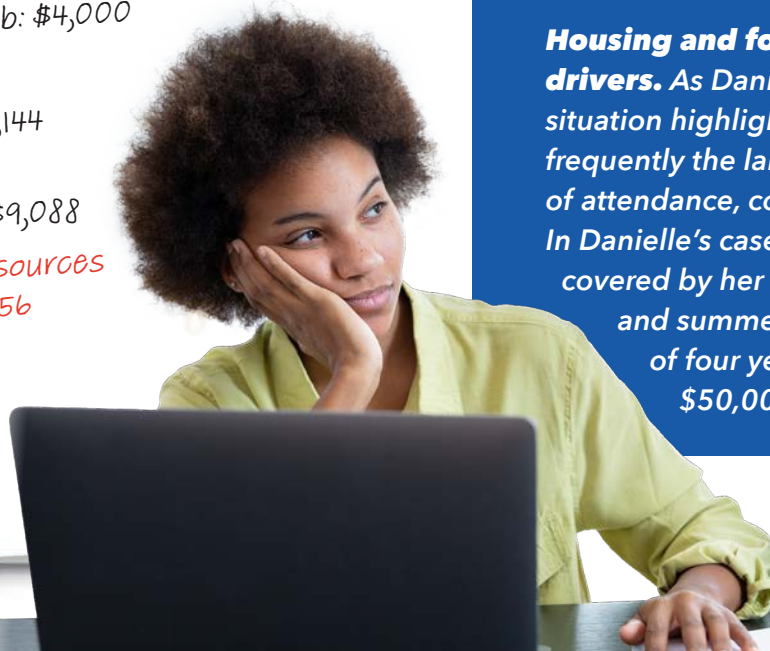
Income and  
Scholarship: \$9,088

**Additional Resources  
Needed: \$13,056**

**Danielle** is a good student in high school and, at the urging of her parents and school counselor, completed all the requirements to receive a full Florida Bright Futures merit-based scholarship. She's proud to be born and raised in Vernon, roughly 90 minutes away from the University of West Florida, where she hopes to attend in the fall. Her mom works in county government and her dad is a high school teacher. Her father is Danielle's inspiration for pursuing a degree in secondary education; Danielle's goal is to return home as a teacher and someday be a school principal.

Because Danielle lives in a dorm on campus, and doesn't work, she won't need a car. She'll use her bike to get around to class and her community volunteering. Her health insurance will be covered under her mom's employer's plan. However, because Danielle has two sisters already in college her parents can't afford to cover all of their needs. She recently landed a summer job paying \$14/hr, and figures with 30 hours per week she can clear \$4,000 before school starts to help fund his education.

**Housing and food are significant cost drivers.** As Danielle's relatively common situation highlights, housing and food are frequently the larger components of the cost of attendance, compared to tuition and fees. In Danielle's case, costs other than those covered by her Bright Futures scholarship and summer work will - over the course of four years - amount to more than \$50,000.



# MARCUS

Age 18

Student at St. Johns River  
State College (full time)

Lives at home with parents

Does not own a car

## EXPENSES:

Housing: \$0 (Lives at home)

Tuition and fees: \$2,592

Books and supplies: \$2,134

Internet: \$0 (Provided by his parents)

Phone: \$0 (Provided by his parents)

Food: \$0 (Eats at home and work)

Misc. Expenses (personal care  
and services): \$1,776

Healthcare: \$0 (On parent's  
employer health insurance plan)

Transportation: Bus pass \$15/month;  
Rideshare/Taxis \$100/month

## INCOME:

Part-time Job at a fast-casual  
restaurant: \$14/hour, 15 hours/week

Expenses: \$7,537

Income: \$8,500

Additional Resources Needed: (\$463)

**Marcus** did well in his high school classes, but he didn't give a lot of thought to his post-secondary plans before he graduated last spring. But after spending the summer thinking about it, and with his parents' support, he took his savings and started his first semester at his local state college campus. He's a first-generation student and while he isn't really sure what degree he wants to pursue and is still figuring out his career plans, he's starting to see the opportunities ahead and so he's excited about his future and enjoys his classes.

Marcus' father is a fleet maintenance supervisor and his mother stays at home to care for Marcus' two younger sisters. His health insurance is covered through his father's employer's group plan. Marcus kept his part-time job at a restaurant close to home to save for next semester's tuition and books, but finds it difficult to attend classes and pick up shifts given his transportation challenges. He has a bus pass, but limited transit frequency and timing result in taxi costs of \$100/month. More frequently than not, he's had to choose between school and work. He hates to miss





class, and wonders if he should only go part-time or take the spring semester off.

He spoke with a financial aid counselor recently and found out that his family's income would likely qualify Marcus for a Pell Grant and the federal work-study program. With federal work-study, he'll be able to coordinate his work schedule around his classes. Based on his conversation, Marcus and his

parents sat down the other night and filled out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

**Universal FAFSA.** *Too many Florida students miss out on financial aid by not completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Florida high school seniors miss out on an estimated \$300 million annually in Pell Grant dollars alone for failure to complete the FAFSA, and in the last FAFSA cycle, Florida ranked 41st among the 50 states and Washington, D.C. in the percentage of seniors who completed the form. A simple change to Florida policy requiring all high school seniors to complete the FAFSA or sign a form to opt-out from doing so would exponentially increase the amount of federal student aid for Florida students. States that have adopted so-called "universal FAFSA" policies have dramatically increased the proportion of students who receive Pell Grants, thus lessening the financial burden of college for more students. Even students who don't qualify for a Pell Grant could qualify for other benefits, such as the federal work-study program—but they will never know if they do not complete the form.*

**Briana** has her hands full. A year ago, she was working as a home health aide and taking care of her preschool-age daughter when her marriage ended. Around the same time, her father suffered a stroke. Although he survived and is back home, his recovery is slow; he still suffers limited mobility and needs help with basic tasks. Although Briana's mother can't afford to retire yet, she was forced to cut back on her work hours to care for her husband. To help her parents and save on costs, Briana has moved back into her childhood home with her daughter. While she pays no rent, she buys the groceries.

Briana wants to provide her daughter a good, stable life and a home of their own—more than she can afford with her current income. She decided to re-enroll in college and pursue a degree in nursing. Although she attended college part-time after high school and had gotten good grades, juggling her family and her job compelled her to put school on

hold. Now that her daughter is in kindergarten, Briana has recently enrolled in the part-time nursing program at Miami Dade College, and she and her mother tag-team in caring for her father and daughter.

Even though she shares custody with her ex, Briana cannot attend classes during the summer months when her daughter is out of school. She continues to work part-time but has switched to an evening and weekend schedule to better coordinate with her mother's work, her father's doctor's appointments, her daughter's school pick-up schedule, her own school schedule, and her ex's days with their daughter. Although she loves her studies, the coursework is challenging, and she is not getting as much sleep as she needs in juggling her many responsibilities. Briana is starting to catch herself nodding off during class and dragging during her clinicals. She's worried whether she can sustain this pace and complete her degree. Her

# BRIANA

Age 38

Divorced; single parent with shared custody of five-year-old daughter

Lives with parents

Part-time caregiver to her ailing father

Employed part-time

Pursuing an associate degree in nursing (ASN) at Miami Dade College (part-time)

Receives a partial Pell grant

## EXPENSES:

Housing: \$0 (lives with her parents)

Tuition and fees: \$2,838

Books and supplies: \$1,500

Phone: \$75/month

Groceries: \$1,625/month

Dining Out: \$200.00/month

Transportation: \$560/month

Misc. Expenses: \$360/month

Healthcare: \$500/month

## INCOME:

Take-home pay from part-time job: \$900/month

Federal Pell Grant: \$3,700/year

Earned Income

Tax Credit (EITC): \$3,995

Expenses: \$41,778

Income: \$18,495

Additional Resources

Needed: \$23,283

vehicle's check engine light lit up yesterday and the mechanic said the needed repair would be \$750. She's overwhelmed and wondering if it might make sense to pause her studies for a bit.

### **The value of emergency aid programs for college students.**

According to a national survey of adult learners, nearly half of respondents had stopped out for a period of time, with most citing personal, health, time, and financial reasons.<sup>xvii</sup> And according to a survey of all college students, 73% of college students experience financial difficulty while enrolled, and a majority (57%) would have trouble finding \$500.00 in an emergency. In recent years several states, including Washington, Minnesota, California, North Carolina, and Wisconsin, have instituted emergency aid programs for college students. In Florida, some institutions, including Florida State University and Seminole State College, have created emergency aid programs of their own.

Emergency aid has a profound impact on student success. Of more than 40,000 students who received emergency aid in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, 70% reported that it helped them stay enrolled, 73% said it helped them afford educational materials for their classes, 76% said it helped reduce their stress, and 82% said it improved their personal wellbeing.<sup>xviii</sup>



# CHRIS

Age 35

Student at Manatee Technical College pursuing a certificate in welding technology (full-time, 9-month program)

Married with two kids, ages 9 and 3

works part-time at a brewery

wife works full-time as a bank teller

Younger child attends daycare;

Older child attends after-school care

Family lives in a rental apartment;

both Chris and his wife own cars

## EXPENSES:

Childcare: \$920/month

Two-Bedroom Apartment: \$2,000/month

Tuition and Fees: \$6,359

Books and Supplies: \$262

Internet: \$50.00/month

Phone plan (two lines): \$150/month

Groceries: \$1,475/month

Misc. Expenses: \$545/month

Healthcare: \$500/month

Transportation: \$1,075/month

## INCOME:

wife's job as full-time bank teller: \$45,000/year

Chris' part-time work at brewery: \$17/hour, 10 hours/week

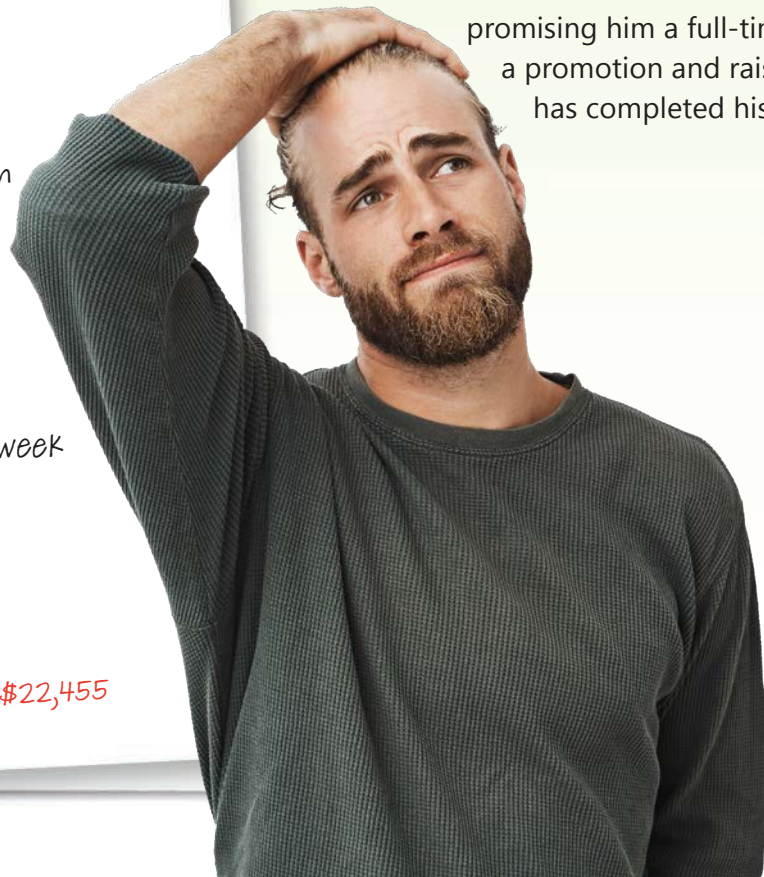
Open Door Grant: \$6,621

9-month Expenses: \$69,456

9-month Income: \$47,001

**Additional Resources Needed: \$22,455**

**Chris** and his wife were high school sweethearts and married in their early 20s. They have two children, a nine-year-old son and a precocious three-year-old daughter. His wife works as a teller at a local bank, and a couple years ago, Chris landed a job at a local craft brewery. He loves everything about the work at the brewery, especially maintenance and repair. He helps out with assorted maintenance issues but doesn't have the welding skills to repair equipment when needed. After discussing it with his wife, he has decided to pursue an industry certification as a welder, which is a nine-month program. Chris qualifies for and will receive an Open Door Grant, covering his tuition, fees, books, and supplies. His employer supports and encourages Chris' goals and his boss agreed to reduce his hours to 10 per week to accommodate his school schedule, promising him a full-time job with a promotion and raise once he has completed his program.





The temporary cut in income would put a strain on the family's finances. Although his family is covered under Chris' wife's health insurance provided through her employer, it still costs \$500 a month. Both daughters attend daycare, which makes a big

dent in their budget. Chris recently learned that his part-time job earnings disqualify the family from a childcare subsidy. He'd hate to leave the job, and the employer that has supported him, but he's seriously considering it.

**Adult learners face additional costs.** *The cost of childcare is a major barrier to adult student success. According to a report by The Education Trust, the biggest hurdles to higher education for student parents are the costs of, and finding, childcare.<sup>xix</sup> Nationwide, the out-of-pocket costs of attending a public college are 2 to 5 times higher for student parents than for their lower-income peers without children. Lack of on-campus childcare, and long wait lists at campuses that do offer the service, compel student parents to rely on a patchwork system of care that strains their budgets. Although Florida had one of the smallest affordability gaps for parent-students, center-based childcare still averaged \$12,587 annually in 2019.*

## Recommendations:

- **Adopt Universal FAFSA in Florida.**

Florida ranks 41st among the states in FAFSA completion rate and as a result more than \$300 million in Pell Grants are foregone. Florida should join the growing number of states—including Texas and Alabama—that have adopted “universal FAFSA” policies requiring all high school seniors to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form as a condition of graduation, unless they or their parents sign a simple opt-out form. The FAFSA is required for students to access federal, state, and local scholarship aid, including the Pell grant, as well as student loans, other grants, institutional aid, work-study, and private scholarships.

A universal FAFSA policy would ensure that all Florida public high school students and their

parents are aware of their potential eligibility for aid, as well as recent changes that have simplified the form and increased eligibility for a Pell Grant. Students who do not complete the FAFSA often do not know about the form, assume it is too complicated, or believe that they would not qualify for aid. Florida schools can help address any misperceptions or outdated notions about the form by providing information about the new FAFSA.

- **Encourage development and local partnerships for enhanced emergency student aid.**

As noted earlier, 73% of college students experience financial difficulty while enrolled, and 57% would struggle to find \$500 in an emergency. Florida can learn from and emulate the best practices of states like North Carolina that have implemented statewide emergency aid programs as well as look to the practices of Florida institutions like Florida State University and Seminole State College, which have established their own programs. Outcomes from the federal COVID relief funds for higher education



demonstrate the tremendous positive impact that emergency aid programs can have on student success, resulting in fewer students quitting school for financial reasons and more completing their degrees and credentials. In a state like Florida where natural disasters like hurricanes can significantly disrupt students' finances, a statewide emergency aid program is especially important.

- **Improve awareness of and access to public assistance programs for eligible students.**

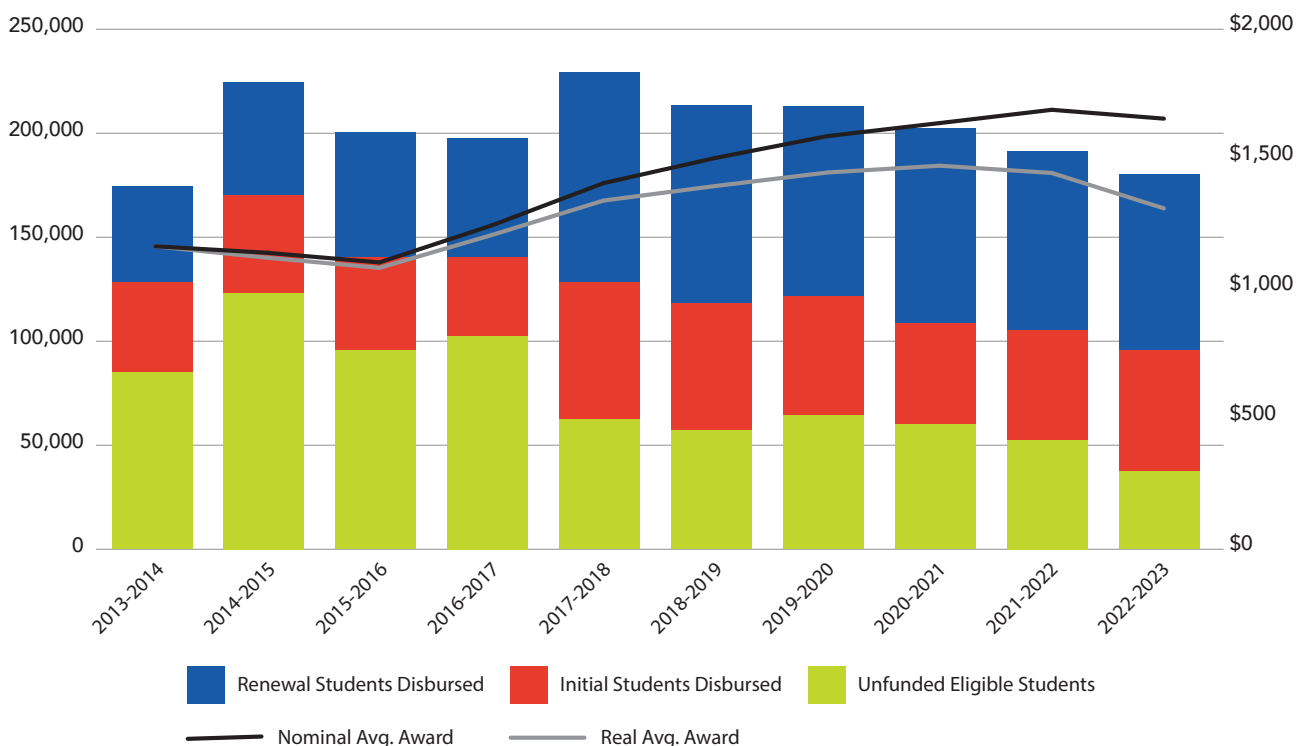
Many college students qualify for, but don't apply for, public assistance safety net programs such as SNAP (food stamps), WIC (nutrition program for women with young children), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (cash assistance for families with minor children). More colleges and universities across the country are implementing practices to make such programs more accessible to their students, nearly three in five of which lack adequate access to food or housing. Some are partnering with local social

service agencies to provide application assistance on campus, and others are training financial aid staff, faculty, and others to proactively identify students with financial need and actively support them in applying for public assistance. Florida's postsecondary institutions can adopt similar practices systemwide.

- **Expand the Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG), strengthening need-based aid for Florida students.**

Increasing the availability and amount of need-based financial aid would help alleviate the financial stressors of Florida's lower-income college students. Florida lawmakers should start with an expansion of the Florida Student Assistance Grant

**Figure 5: Florida Student Assistance Grant 2013/14 to 2022/23 Trend (Public, Degree-Seeking)**



(FSAG), which currently provides need-based financial aid in the range of \$200 to \$3,260 for eligible students. The 2023 budget allocation for this program was \$269 million.

As shown in Figure 5, an expansion of the FSAG program in the 2017/18 program year drastically reduced the number of unfunded eligible students, but the trend for Florida’s public degree-seeking (state university or state college) student applicants shows that over the past six years, an average of 55,636 applicants went unfunded compared to an average of 57,395 students receiving an initial disbursement. Moreover, the typical award has barely outpaced inflation over the past 10 years, with the average disbursement of \$1,159 in 2013/14 growing to \$1,650 in nominal terms by 2022/23, yet equating to \$1,305 in constant dollars. In terms of purchasing power, this amount is less

than the average award disbursed each year since the 2017/18 program year.

Increasing the amount of need-based aid beyond the current cap and funding the program to ensure that no students are turned away will help more degree-seeking Florida students overcome economic adversity and cross the graduation finish line.

For additional context, Figure 6 depicts the most recent student aid year and the total (new and recurring) degree-seeking students who received an aid disbursement from FSAG to attend a Florida public college or university or either of the two Bright Futures merit-based awards (Florida Academic Scholars or Florida Medallion Scholars), the share of eligible applicants served and the average award for those students who received a disbursement.

**Figure 6: Florida Need-Based vs. Merit-Based Aid, 2022-2023**

	<b>Florida Student Aid Grant<sup>xx</sup></b>	<b>Bright Futures<sup>xxi</sup></b>
Description	Need-based, subject to statutory maximum award and appropriation	Merit-based, covers a fixed share (100% or 75%) of tuition and fees
	<b>2022/23 Comparative Statistics</b>	
Disbursements	\$235,771,779	\$547,731,329
Students Served	142,872	109,646
Average Disbursement	\$1,650	\$4,995
% of Eligible Initial Applicants Served	61%	100%

With nearly 40% of qualified initial applicants excluded, and an average award of roughly half of the maximum permitted by statute, the 2022-2023 FSAG program year serves as a microcosm of the need to expand Florida's primary need-based grant. For the program year 2022-2023, funding the 37,278 aid-eligible but unfunded students at the average award of \$1,650 would have required \$61.5-million. To contextualize this figure, \$61.5-million represents 26% of FSAG disbursements, 11% of Bright Futures disbursements to degree-seeking students, 0.2% of all education appropriations, and 0.05% of overall state appropriations.

### **Discussion:**

The financial situations of four model Florida college students illustrate common challenges faced by many today. Marcus, 18, attends college full-time, lives at home, and works part-time. Despite his efforts, he's barely keeping pace, struggling with transportation costs that affect his attendance and job scheduling. Implementing universal FAFSA completion could help students like Marcus access federal work-study, potentially alleviating his transportation challenges. Briana, 32, a single mother pursuing nursing part-time, lives with her parents and faces an annual deficit of \$23,283. Juggling caregiving and work, she struggles with expenses, including healthcare and transportation, impacting her ability to continue her studies. Expanding the Florida Student

Assistance Grant could reduce the annual deficit faced by students like Briana, increasing her chances of completing her nursing degree. Chris, 35, married with two children, attends welding school full-time while his wife works full-time. They face a substantial shortfall of \$29,076 annually, mainly due to childcare costs and reduced income from Chris' part-time job, complicating their financial stability. Even Danielle, an 18-year-old aiming for an education degree, benefits from a full Bright Futures scholarship but still faces an annual shortfall of \$13,056 due to housing and living costs exceeding her scholarship and summer job income. If FSAG funding were expanded to cover all eligible applicants at the current average award level, it would require an additional \$61.5 million, potentially benefiting over 37,000 students.

Policy solutions like universal FAFSA completion and enhanced need-based and emergency aid programs could alleviate financial burdens, helping students achieve their academic goals without overwhelming debt. Practices such as increased counseling and connection to public safety net benefits can also increase the likelihood of success for students in need.

# 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.

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](http://www.floridacollegeaccess.org).

<sup>i</sup>U.S. News and World Report (n/d). Best States for Education Rankings: Higher Education. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/education/higher-education>.

<sup>ii</sup>Research.com (n/d). Most Affordable Colleges in 2023-2024 in America.

<sup>iii</sup>U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Institutional Characteristics component final data (2002-03 - 2021-22) and provisional data (2022-23).

<sup>iv</sup>Student Debt and the Class of 2020, The Institute for College Access and Success, November 2021.

<sup>v</sup>Table B19081, American Community Survey, 2022 1-year estimates, (Household Income by quintile); Cost of Degree after Financial Aid 2021-2022, State University System of Florida Florida ScoreBoard (annualized net cost of tuition, fees, and books after financial aid value calculated by dividing total cost to degree by 4).

<sup>vi</sup>The Real Price of College: Estimating and Supporting Students' Financial Needs, The Hope Center, October 2021.

<sup>vii</sup>Abrahamson, Andrew, et. al. (United Way of Florida, 2023). ALICE in the Crosscurrents: Covil and Financial Hardship in Florida.

<sup>viii</sup>Ibid

<sup>ix</sup>ECMC Group (November 9, 2021). Four-Year College Has Lost Its Luster Among Teens: Less Than Half Considering Four-Year Degree or Believe One is Necessary for Success.

<sup>x</sup>U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Institutional Characteristics component final data (2002-03 - 2021-22) and provisional data (2022-23). Degree-seeking students at Florida institutions.

<sup>xi</sup>IPEDS, First/Full Time, 21-22 Academic Year.

<sup>xii</sup>IPEDS, First/Full time in-state tuition, 21-22 Academic Year.

<sup>xiii</sup>IPEDS, Undergraduates, 21-22 Academic Year.

<sup>xiv</sup>IPEDS, Undergraduates, 21-22 Academic Year.

<sup>xv</sup>Florida College Access Network (June 2022). Emergency and Need-Based Aid for Student Success.

<sup>xvi</sup>Generalized and representative costs estimates are gathered from institution's websites, county-based data available through United Way's ALICE report, and other sources. They are not intended to be actuarial in nature, but illustrative.

<sup>xvii</sup>Munip, Lana and Klein-Collins, Rebecca (Cael, July 2023). How They Pay: The Voices of Adult Learners on College Affordability, and How Institutions Are Responding.

<sup>xviii</sup>McKibben, B. (The Hope Center for College, Community and Justice, August 16, 2023). Making College Financial Aid Flexible and Responsive: The Case for Further Federal Investment in Emergency Grants.

<sup>xix</sup>Williams, B., et. al (August 17, 2022). For Student Parents, The Biggest Hurdles to A Higher Education are Costs and Finding Child Care (The Education Trust).

<sup>xx</sup>Degree-seeking students at public institutions.

<sup>xxi</sup>For this comparison, Bright Futures excludes the Florida Gold Seal Vocational and Gold Seal CAPE Scholarship. Students attending public institutions from these two programs accounted for roughly \$670,000 of disbursements in 2022/23 compared to more than \$547,000,000 in Bright Futures awards for students attending public universities or state colleges.

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