

Media Contact:  
John Ceballos  
(813) 974-8606  
[jceballos@floridacollegeaccess.org](mailto:jceballos@floridacollegeaccess.org)

PRESS RELEASE  
Florida College Access Network  
4202 E. Fowler Ave., ALN 190  
Tampa, FL 33620



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Thursday, July 13, 2017

## **Florida ranks third in nationwide FAFSA completion**

*The state increased the number of FAFSAs filed by 17,000*

**Tampa, FL** — The Sunshine State has earned a spot on the nationwide FAFSA completion podium!

Florida had the third highest year-to-year increase of any state in the number of total Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) filings during the 2016-17 school year, according to the [National College Access Network](#). The state's 19% improvement trailed only Utah (33%) and Wyoming (22%). Florida is the third most-populous state in the country, compared to Utah (30<sup>th</sup>) and Wyoming (51<sup>st</sup>, after D.C.).

Overall, 49 states and Washington, D.C. saw gains in the total number of FAFSAs filed. (Rhode Island, which already had a high FAFSA completion rate and saw a dip in the number of seniors this past school year, was the lone exception.) The U.S. collectively reversed a four-year decline by improving the rate of all FAFSA filings by 6% during the 2016-17 school year.

NCAN notes the nationwide FAFSA completion rate for the high school class of 2017 — which was the focus of a new policy that opened FAFSA filing in October rather than January — was 61%, which represents an improvement of five percentage points from the class of 2016.

Florida's 2017 senior class increased during the 2016-17 school year, [growing by 3%](#) in public schools alone (more than 5,000 students). The state increased the number of FAFSAs filed by 17,000, bolstered in part by statewide campaigns like the [Florida FAFSA Challenge](#), which challenged schools and districts to increase their FAFSA completion rates by 5% or more compared to the previous year.

- more-

“Florida’s increase is a testament to the hard work that schools, districts, communities and organizations across the state have devoted to ensure all our students have an affordable pathway to college,” said Laurie Meggesin, executive director of [Florida College Access Network](#) (Florida CAN), which spearheaded the Florida FAFSA Challenge. (Florida CAN previously issued a [press release announcing results](#) of the statewide initiative to congratulate the 54 school districts and 390 schools that boosted FAFSA completion rates by at least 5% as of March 31.)

The state’s year-to-year improvement in FAFSA completions through the end of the Florida FAFSA Challenge on March 31 also [resulted in more than \\$37 million in additional Pell Grant dollars](#) being awarded to graduating high school seniors.

“We are grateful to the many counselors, financial aid advisors, and volunteers who helped make this accomplishment possible — and to the Local College Access Networks (LCANs) whose dedication to boosting FAFSA completion made a big difference in their communities,” Meggesin said.

Counties supported by LCANs saw FAFSA completion rates increase 12.5% higher than counties not supported by LCANs.

Thomas Vo, president of the [Florida Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators](#) (FASFAA), praised the spirit of collaboration among the state’s various education sectors.

“FASFAA is honored to contribute to the success of Florida high school seniors in completing their FAFSAs,” Vo said. “It is a privilege to host and support various FAFSA completion events, and we look forward to future opportunities in creating affordable access to high-quality postsecondary education for our students.”

Rebecca Schumacher, executive director of the [Florida School Counselor Association](#) (FSCA), is already looking ahead to next year’s FAFSA completion efforts.

“With a new school year on the horizon, FSCA looks forward to continuing efforts to increase the effective delivery of FAFSA completion strategies for every student in the Class of 2018 — and future graduating seniors — to ensure today’s students are prepared to be tomorrow’s adults,” Schumacher said. “FSCA values the leadership of Florida CAN in galvanizing statewide efforts leading to this year’s increase in FAFSA completion. This is a tremendous win for Florida seniors, their families, our local communities, and our state.”

Florida is home to four of the [10 largest schools districts in the U.S.](#) One of those school districts, [Orange County Public Schools](#), earned “Most Improved” honors during the FAFSA Challenge due to its year-to-year increase.

“We are very pleased about the increase,” said Barbara Jenkins, OCPS superintendent, [in April](#). “It is the result of an intense focus on student achievement by our college and career counselors in every high school and the commitment of our principals and staff to lead our students to success.”

NCAN also compiled state-specific FAFSA [completion](#) and [submission](#) charts.

## **About Florida College Access Network**

The mission of the Florida College Access Network is to create and strengthen a statewide network that catalyzes and supports communities to improve college and career preparation, access, and completion for all students. Our Big Goal is to increase the percentage of Florida residents who hold a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential to 60% by the year 2025. For more information, visit [www.floridacollegeaccess.org](http://www.floridacollegeaccess.org).

###