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MEDIA ALERT

FLORIDA C.A.N.!
4202 E. Fowler Avenue, BEH 236
Tampa, FL 33620

Media Contact: Lalita Llerena
(813)974-8606-main
lalita@usf.edu

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New Tracking Tool Uncovers Lack of Students Applying for Financial Aid

*~Only about 24% of high school seniors in Florida have completed the Free Application for
Federal Student Aid~*

Tampa, FL- This week, the [U.S. Department of Education](#) is unveiling a new tool to help high schools better track how many students are completing federal financial aid forms.

The [FAFSA Completion Tool](#) website allows you to track how many students in each high school across the country are submitting and completing the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#). Previously, high schools estimated their FAFSA completion rate using self-reported surveys, which are often unreliable.

[Florida College Access Network](#) (Florida C.A.N.!) crunched Florida's current numbers and uncovered out of 174,352 12th graders currently attending high schools in the state, 41,363 have completed the FAFSA as of March 8, 2012. That's only 23.7 percent. "That number is significant because although the state deadline to complete the FAFSA is May 15th, several Florida institutions' priority deadlines have already passed," said Braulio Colón, Executive Director for Florida C.A.N.!

With college costs rising, financial aid is a key factor for many people deciding whether to attend and complete college. By filling out a FAFSA, a student can find out if he or she is eligible for financial aid such as Pell Grants, federal student loans and work study opportunities. Research shows a strong correlation between FAFSA completion and college enrollment. “In order to improve college enrollment, retention and graduation rates, there’s an obvious need to boost the less than 24 percent FAFSA completion rate in Florida,” said Colón.

The new FAFSA Completion Tool will be updated every two weeks.

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About Florida College Access Network

Florida College Access Network engages communities for higher education promoting college-readiness, access, and success for all students, particularly limited-income, first generation, and underrepresented students through research, communication, advocacy, and community support. Our Big Goal is to increase the proportion of working adults in Florida who hold a quality postsecondary degree or credential to 60% by 2025. For more information, visit www.floridacollegeaccess.org