

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

PRESS RELEASE  
Florida College Access Network  
4202 E. Fowler Avenue, ALN 185  
Tampa, FL 33620



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Tuesday, October 1, 2019

## **The Florida FAFSA Challenge starts today!**

*Schools, districts, and community organizations can register for the challenge now*

Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is pleased to announce the [Florida FAFSA Challenge](#) for the 2019-20 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 the college-going process. To recognize the start date for filling out the FAFSA, the 2019-20 Florida FAFSA Challenge begins today, **October 1, 2019** and continues through **March 27, 2020**. The highest-performing schools and districts in the following categories will receive awards and public recognition:

1. **MVP** (highest completion rate through March 27, 2020)
2. **Most Improved** (compared to previous year through March 27, 2020)

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

The 2019-20 Florida FAFSA Challenge aims to build off the success of last year's efforts, when 72 schools representing 27 counties increased the percentage of seniors who completed the FAFSA by at least 5% over the previous year. As a result, Florida's Class of 2019 qualified for [an estimated \\$143 million in Pell Grant dollars](#).

## **Register Today**

[Register your school, district or organization for the Florida FAFSA Challenge here](#). Registered schools receive special updates, tips for success, and are eligible for drawings and prizes. To learn more about the Challenge, visit the [Statewide Initiatives](#) page on FCAN's website.

- more -

FCAN and its partners offer a variety of tools and resources to help schools and districts increase FAFSA completion. Just a few of them are listed here:

- [The Florida FAFSA Challenge Toolkit](#): FCAN's toolkit contains resources and strategies to support efforts to increase FAFSA completions.
- [UpNext Text Reminders](#): This service allows students to get text-based advising related to financial aid, college applications, and more.
- [Form Your Future Outreach Campaign Toolkit](#): A digital campaign launched by National College Access Network to support FAFSA completion efforts, including promotional materials geared toward students.
- [U.S. Department of Education Office of Federal Student Aid \(FSA\)](#): The FSA offers a FAFSA Toolkit, as well as Early FAFSA resources 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. OSFA also has a Speaker's Bureau that can connect your school or district with local financial aid experts to speak at your financial aid and FAFSA completion nights. Contact OSFA's outreach representative, Pedro Hernandez, at [Pedro.Hernandez@fldoe.org](mailto:Pedro.Hernandez@fldoe.org) to schedule a speaker.

FCAN will post Florida FAFSA Challenge updates ("Leaderboards") regularly at [www.floridacollegeaccess.org](http://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](mailto:lhandfield@floridacollegeaccess.org).

### **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. Our mission is to create and sustain a statewide network that catalyzes and supports communities to increase college and career preparation, access, and completion for all Florida students. For more information, visit [floridacollegeaccess.org](http://floridacollegeaccess.org).

###