

INCREASING COLLEGE ACCESS, EXPANDING STUDENT SUCCESS

UNIVERSAL FAFSA COMPLETION AT NEW YORK HIGH SCHOOLS

SUNY

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the form students and their families fill out to open the door to state and federal financial aid and to a range of scholarships that help make college affordable and reduce student loan debt. But too many students don't complete the FAFSA — and therefore don't get the financial aid they deserve. According to an analysis by the National College Attainment Network (NCAN), the high school class of 2022 left about \$3.6 billion in Pell Grants unclaimed by not completing the FAFSA, and New York students left \$200 million in financial aid on the table.

GOVERNOR HOCHUL'S PLAN TO MAKE FAFSA COMPLETION UNIVERSAL

Governor Hochul's 2024 State of the State agenda includes making FAFSA completion universal for high school seniors. In order to increase college-going and improve college affordability, Governor Hochul is proposing legislation to require school districts to ensure that every high school senior completes the FAFSA or the NYS Dream Act application (or, in the alternative, sign a waiver form indicating that they are aware of, but choose not to complete the FAFSA). All students will still be able to graduate regardless of whether they complete the FAFSA. SUNY financial aid professionals are committed to working in partnership with K-12 schools and community-based organizations to provide support and expertise about FAFSA completion.

UNIVERSAL FAFSA LAWS ARE WORKING IN OTHER STATES

Economic research has found that “individuals who received assistance with the FAFSA and information about aid were substantially more likely to submit the aid application, enroll in college the following fall, and receive more financial aid.”

In Louisiana, the first state to have the requirement, FAFSA completion increased by 26% in 2018, the first year it was in place. The state effectively closed the gap in FAFSA completion between “low-income” and “high income” school districts — with disparate districts now having nearly equal completion rates.

In Texas, an analysis from the Urban Institute found that the FAFSA submission rate in Texas during the 2021-22 school year increased to 73% from an average of 62% over the previous three years.

California saw a 17.5% increase in high schoolers filing FAFSA — which also contributed to an increase in undocumented students submitting Dream Act applications.

Illinois, Alabama, Colorado, New Hampshire, Maryland, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Connecticut, Indiana and Kansas have all also adopted universal FAFSA completion.

To support students and increase college access, New York State needs to follow these states' examples and make FAFSA completion universal!