



BOARD of REGENTS  
STATE OF LOUISIANA

# FAFSA<sup>®</sup> COMPLETION SUCCESS: LOUISIANA'S RECIPE

**Ebony Holmes**

*Director of Public Information & Advising  
College Access, Success, and Communications*



# LOSFA

LOUISIANA OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

— A PROGRAM OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS —

## ABOUT LOSFA

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) is a Program of the **Louisiana Board of Regents**, that strives to be Louisiana's first choice for college access by promoting, preparing for and providing equity of college access. LOSFA administers the state's scholarship and grant programs and the state's Internal Revenue Code Section 529 college savings programs.



BOARD *of* REGENTS  
STATE OF LOUISIANA

# AGENDA FOR TODAY'S PRESENTATION

**01** In the Beginning: Before Universal FAFSA®

**02** Overview of the FAFSA® Policy

**03** Outcomes

**04** Strategies for Success



# IN THE BEGINNING

BEFORE UNIVERSAL FAFSA®

# IN THE BEGINNING

- Prior to the FAFSA® policy in 2015, LOFSA, through the Board of Regents, already required the FAFSA® for merit-based and need-based aid in the state of Louisiana.
  - No state application.
- Louisiana students were already accustomed to completing the FAFSA® because it was the means to access state aid. Namely the state's signature scholarship program, TOPS.



# COLLEGE GOAL SUNDAY

- College Goal Sunday (CGS) was a national program designed to help students complete the FAFSA®.
- Financial aid professionals from LOSFA and Louisiana colleges and universities were available to provide free line-by-line assistance.
- CGS Louisiana was sponsored by the Louisiana Association of Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) and the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) with assistance from the Louisiana GEAR UP and TRIO programs.
- A grant from the Lumina Foundation funded CGS. Later, funding came from the College Access Challenge Grant and a grant from USA Funds.



# COLLEGE GOAL SUNDAY

- College Goal Sunday was open to anyone, from soon-to-be high school graduates to returning non-traditional students planning to attend a two or four-year postsecondary institution.
- As an added bonus for participants, \$4,800.00 in education scholarship funds were donated to further aid in the funding of a student's education.



# FAFSA® COMPLETION CHALLENGE GRANT

- In 2016, The Kresge Foundation announced a \$1.6 million grant to the National College Access Network (NCAN) to launch the 2016-17 FAFSA® Completion Challenge Grant Initiative, which would award grants of up to \$55,000 to certain U.S. cities to support their efforts to raise FAFSA® completion rates.
  - The challenge was open to 118 cities.
- NCAN accepted proposals that focused on how those cities would work across sectors to improve FAFSA® completion rates by at least 5 percent for the high school class of 2017.



# FAFSA® COMPLETION CHALLENGE GRANT

- Knowing the FAFSA® policy would soon take effect, LOSFA joined forces with the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, the Louisiana Education Loan Authority (LELA), Career Compass of Louisiana, and the Department of Education to apply for the grant.
- LOSFA was one of the 22 cities to be awarded the FAFSA® Challenge Grant 11 East Baton Rouge public schools participated in the challenge, which targeted over 2,000 students.
- The grant allowed us to look at best practices for FAFSA® Completion and look at ways to expand those practices statewide moving forward.



## PRESS RELEASE

From the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Date: May 24, 2016

Contact: Gus Wales  
Phone Number: (225) 219-7576  
E-mail: [gus.wales@la.gov](mailto:gus.wales@la.gov)

### LOSFA Receives FAFSA Completion Challenge Grant

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) has received a \$54,000.00 Grant from the National College Access Network (NCAN) and The Kresge Foundation to increase completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by high school students in East Baton Rouge Parish public schools during the 2016-17 academic year.

College Access organizations in 118 cities across America were invited to submit grant applications. Only 22 cities were awarded nationwide.

The grant challenges awarded cities to increase FAFSA completion rates by a minimum of 5 percent for the high school graduating class of 2017. FAFSA is the primary application required for most student financial assistance programs including Federal Pell Grants, Federal on-campus Work Study programs, and low interest Federal Student Loans. FAFSA is also the primary application for the Louisiana TOPS (Taylor Opportunity Program for Students) program and the Louisiana Go Grant.

LOSFA has long been a proponent of FAFSA completion by all graduating high school seniors, having partnered with the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) to sponsor College Goal Sunday FAFSA completion events for the past nine years. LOSFA representatives also routinely assist students and parents one-on-one with FAFSA completion in their respective high schools, as well as providing assistance via LOSFA's customer service hotline (800-259-5626) and with Email help at [custserv@la.gov](mailto:custserv@la.gov).

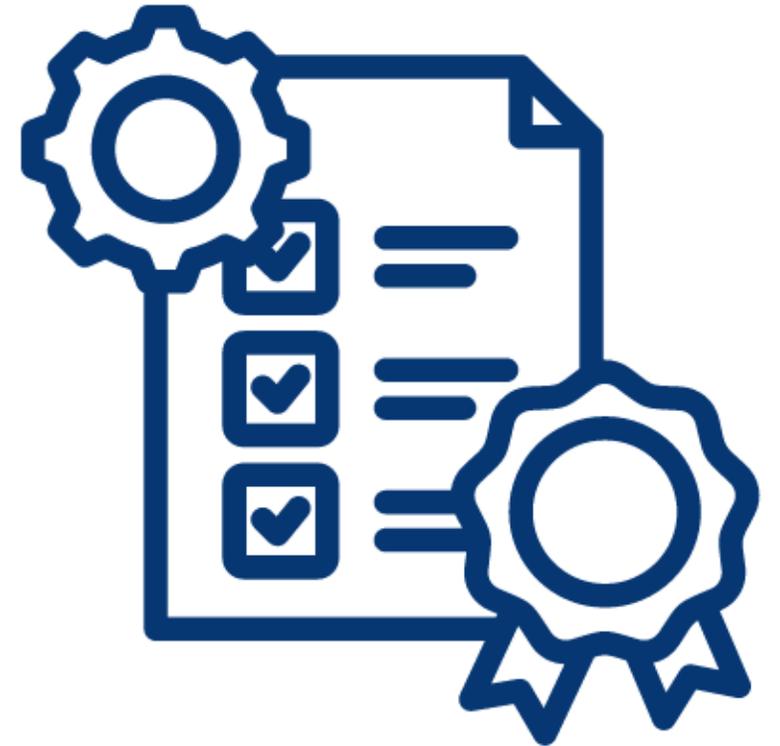
"LOSFA is dedicated to ensuring equity of access. This involves informing all students of the opportunities available and actively assisting students with all facets of the college application and access process. The FAFSA is one of the most important college access opportunities available to students and families since completion of this one form allows students access to both federal and state aid based upon need as well as merit," said LOSFA Executive Director Dr. Sujuan Boutté. "This grant presents a tremendous opportunity for multiple entities to work together towards the goal of helping our students maximize gift aid and minimize loan debt," Boutté added.

Partnering with LOSFA in the Baton Rouge FAFSA Completion Challenge are the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), The East Baton Rouge Parish School System, the Louisiana Education Loan Authority (LELA), and Career Compass of Louisiana.

"This grant will invigorate Louisiana's efforts to help our students transition to a college education and be better prepared to compete for high-wage jobs," said State Superintendent of Education John White. "We need to make sure we do everything possible to help our kids use that money to achieve all of their dreams."

# BEST PRACTICES

- LOSFA implemented several creative and innovative initiatives to encourage students and parents to complete the FAFSA®.
- Through these initiatives, the FAFSA® completion rate of Baton Rouge increased by 5% over the 2015 baseline data, and these initiatives became the groundwork for LOSFA's best practices for FAFSA® completion in the state of Louisiana.
- LOSFA has six best practices that contribute to Louisiana's rise in FAFSA® completion rates.



# FAFSA® COMPLETION WORKSHOPS

- FAFSA® Completion Workshops: LOSFA partners with Louisiana high schools statewide to host FAFSA® completion workshops.
- LOSFA staff and postsecondary partners visit Louisiana high schools to assist students with FAFSA® completion during the school day.
- LOSFA also assisted parents with completing the FAFSA® during evening or weekend events.



Ryan and his mom, Angela, received completion assistance from LOSFA Regional Coordinator Mary Cobb-Marshall during an evening FAFSA® completion event at Scotlandville Magnet High School.

# FAFSA® COMPLETION COMMUNITY EVENTS

- LOSFA hosted several community events that were successful for FAFSA® completion.
  - The FAFSA® Block Party was a fun and creative event that was hosted during the summer to assist students and parents with last-minute completion or correction of the FAFSA®.
  - Hosted as a partnership between LOSFA and the East Baton Rouge Parish Library System, students and parents were invited to complete the FAFSA® and enjoy refreshments at a local library in Baton Rouge.



**FAFSA  
BLOCK PARTY**

Completing the 2017-18 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) may qualify students for many forms of aid, including FREE money like scholarships and grants. If you decide not to fill out the FAFSA, you could be leaving all of that money on the TABLE.

FAFSA ASSISTANCE × FOOD × MUSIC × GIVEAWAYS

**SATURDAY, JUNE 10, 2017**  
**10 AM - 4 PM**

**East Baton Rouge Main Library**  
7711 Goodwood Boulevard  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

DON'T FORGET TO GRAB YOUR 2015 TAX INFORMATION!  
WE'LL SEE YOU THERE!

# FAFSA® BLOCK PARTY



"Scott helped me complete my #FAFSA & college app." - Galen



"This event was very helpful, and they are an excellent group of informed individuals." - Laura

# COMPLETE TO COMPETE PORTAL

- LOSFA developed the Compete to Complete competition as a friendly FAFSA® completion competition among the 11 public high schools in Baton Rouge.
- Schools were judged on creativity, the highest monthly FAFSA® completion, most improvement, and overall completion rate.
- The winning schools were then awarded pizza parties for the senior classes to enjoy.

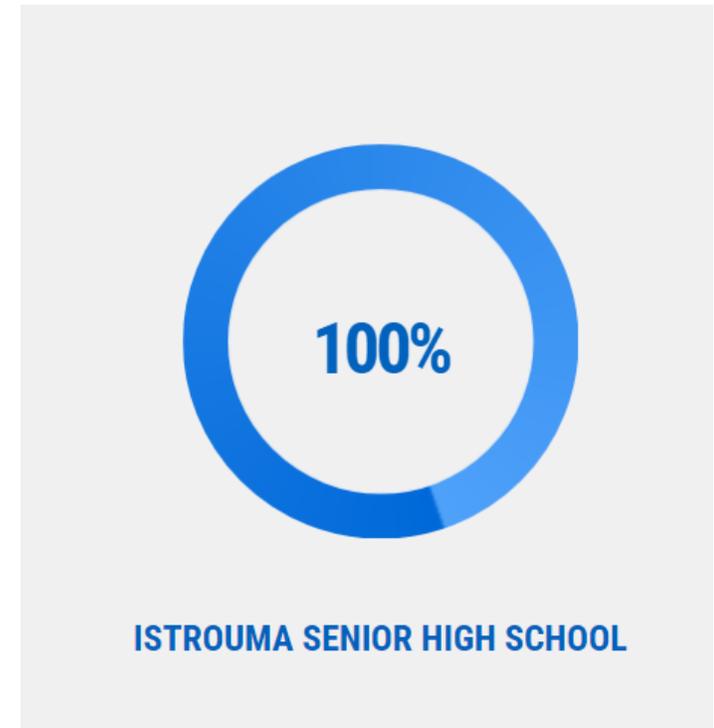
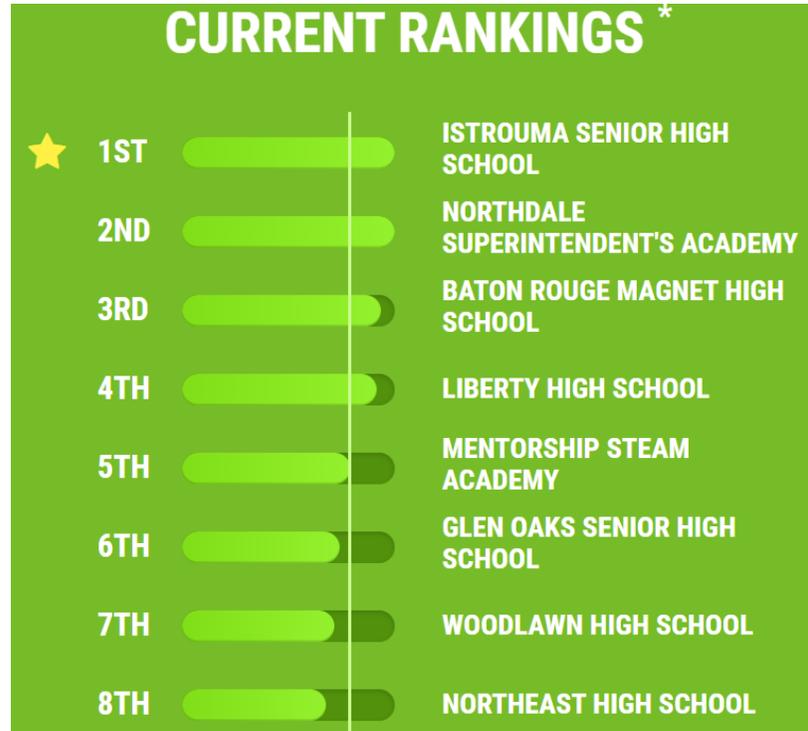


# COMPLETE TO COMPLETE PORTAL

- To keep up with the competition, students, parents, and school administrators could visit LOSFA's Compete to Complete website to see their school's FAFSA® completion progress.
- The Compete to Complete website now features FAFSA® completion rates for all schools and districts in Louisiana.
- To see the website, visit [www.competetocompletela.org](http://www.competetocompletela.org).



# COMPLETE TO COMPETE PORTAL



# FAFSA® AMBASSADORS PROGRAM

- LOSFA developed the FAFSA® Ambassadors Program, a near peer program that allowed high school students to serve as peer leaders in assisting their fellow classmates with completing the FAFSA®.
- Students were encouraged to complete the FAFSA® by the ambassadors who were more relatable and familiar with them.



# FAFSA® LAB

- The FAFSA® Lab is located in LOSFA's office and is essentially a computer lab set up to assist students and parents with FAFSA® completion.
- To access the lab, students and parents register online for a time to receive convenient and private FAFSA® completion assistance.

## Complete the FAFSA at the FAFSA LAB!



### WHEN?

Monday - Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM  
EVERY WEEK IN MAY

### WHERE?

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance  
602 North Fifth Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Visit [www.osfa.la.gov](http://www.osfa.la.gov) or call 1-800-259-5626 to  
**REGISTER!**  
(walk-ins are welcome)

Partners: LOSFA BOR LDOE LELA CCTC-BRCC Career Compass BRAC EBRPSS



# FAFSA® FRIDAYS

- FAFSA® Fridays were held every Friday in October where parents of students in East Baton Rouge Parish and surrounding areas had the opportunity to complete the parent portion of the FAFSA®, including obtaining their FSA ID.
- The sessions were held every Friday in October from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Louisiana Dept. of Education.
- Other locations for FAFSA® Fridays included local libraries and churches.

## FAFSA FRIDAYS

**COME COMPLETE THE PARENT  
PORTION OF THE FAFSA AND GET HELP  
WHILE DOING IT.**

### WHO?

All parents of high school seniors or  
college students

### WHEN?

Every Friday in October  
10 AM - 5 PM

### WHERE?

**Claiborne Conference Center Computer Lab**  
1st Floor, Room 1-147  
1201 North Third Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

To complete the FAFSA, visit: [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov) or [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)  
For more information, visit [www.osfa.la.gov](http://www.osfa.la.gov)  
Have questions? Email [customers@la.gov](mailto:customers@la.gov)

If your child goes to  
a public high school  
in East  
Baton Rouge  
Parish:

That's even better!  
Completing the  
FAFSA will not only  
benefit your child, but it  
will also  
benefit his or her school  
in the  
Compete to  
Complete FAFSA  
Challenge.

In the challenge, the  
school with the  
highest growth of  
FAFSA completions in a  
month will win  
awesome prizes.  
Students  
will also be competing  
for individual prizes such  
as graduation supply  
vouchers.



Partners: Louisiana Office of  
Student Financial Assistance,  
Career Compass, East Baton  
Rouge Parish School System,  
Louisiana Education Loan  
Authority, College to Career  
Transition Coordinator, Baton  
Rouge Community College, Baton  
Rouge Area Chamber, and the  
Board of Regents

# VARIOUS MODES OF COMMUNICATION

LOSFA used a variety of communication tools to promote FAFSA® completion events and initiatives.

- Text message reminders
- Social media posts
- Postcard invitations
- PSAs
- Videos
- High school principals used one-calls to reach parents about FAFSA® completion events, which were highly effective.



The background features a stylized, light blue graphic of a graduation cap on the left and a hand holding a pen on the right, set against a darker blue background.

# OVERVIEW

THE FAFSA<sup>®</sup> POLICY

# FINANCIAL AID WORKING GROUP



To provide even greater access to financial aid for Louisiana students in 2014, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) formed the Financial Aid Working Group (FAWG) to evaluate the state's financial aid application completion rates, identify deficiencies and solutions for communities with low completion rates, and provide a comprehensive list of recommendations to the LDOE on how to improve financial aid completion rates statewide.



The Financial Aid working group meets quarterly to analyze current trends and best practices in financial aid planning and create a network of resources for students around the state.

# FAWG TASKS

1

Develop a state action plan to track school-level financial aid form completion and make recommendations to the Department regarding changes in policy or funding opportunities deemed necessary to ensure that the new policy is implemented with fidelity;

2

Support the Department in the ongoing identification of services and programs available for schools and families; and

3

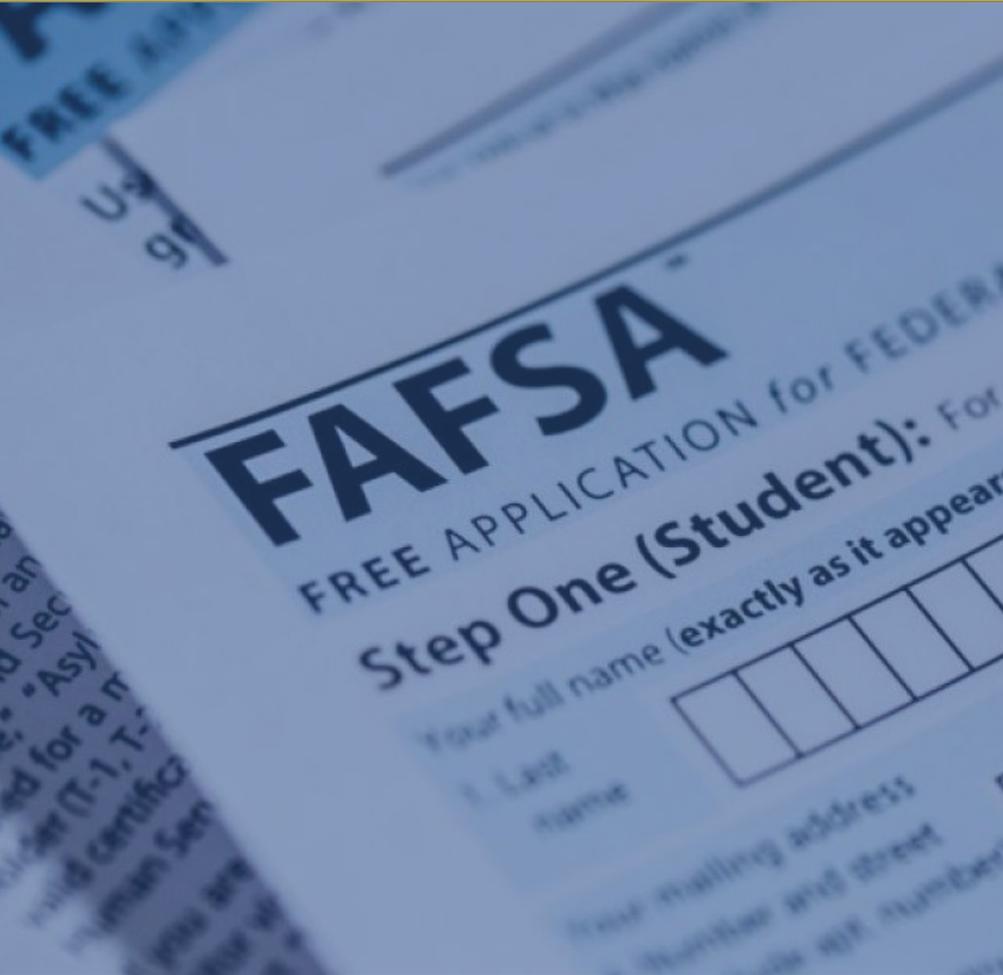
Assist in the development of partnerships and alliances with financial aid-related support programs, services, and stakeholders.

# THE POLICY

- In December 2015, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved a policy regarding postsecondary planning for graduating public high school seniors. The policy sought to increase student access to state and federal financial aid by requiring graduating seniors to either:
  - complete the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) application or the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®);
  - declare a hardship by waiver; or
  - submit a parental or student-of-age waiver to the local school system.

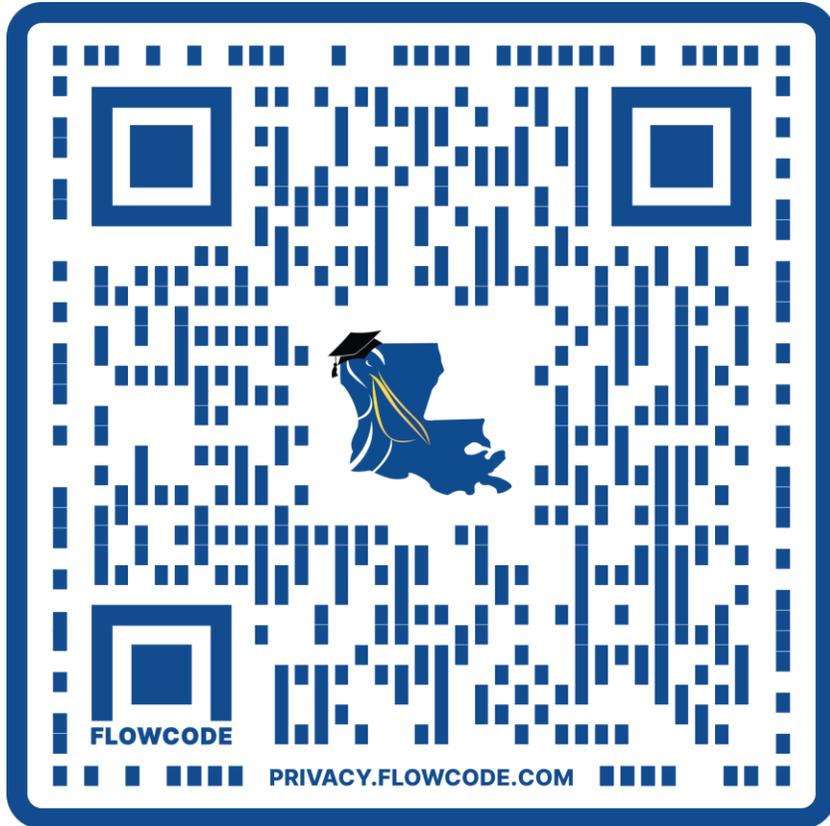


# THE POLICY



- These policies were made effective with the start of the 2017-2018 school year and applied to the graduating Class of 2018.
- The data is collected in LDOE's Student Transcript System (STS).

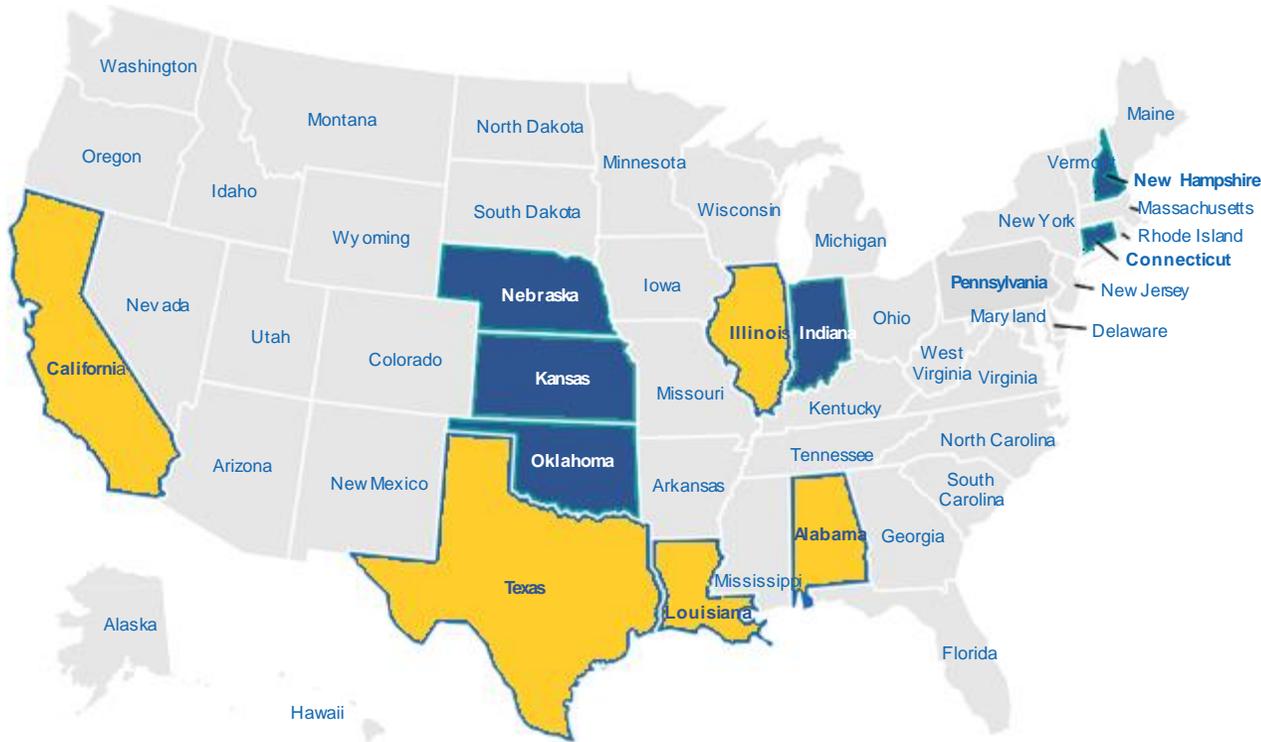
# THE STATE OF FINANCIAL AID IN LOUISIANA



*SCAN TO ACCESS THE REPORT*

- An additional charge of the FAWG was for the LDOE to create an annual report called the **State of Financial Aid in Louisiana**.
  - It details FAFSA® submission rates by school system and a breakdown of data by subgroup categories.
- LDOE also hired one full-time financial aid specialist and a part-time counselor to aid schools with FAFSA® submission.

# STATES WITH UNIVERSAL FAFSA



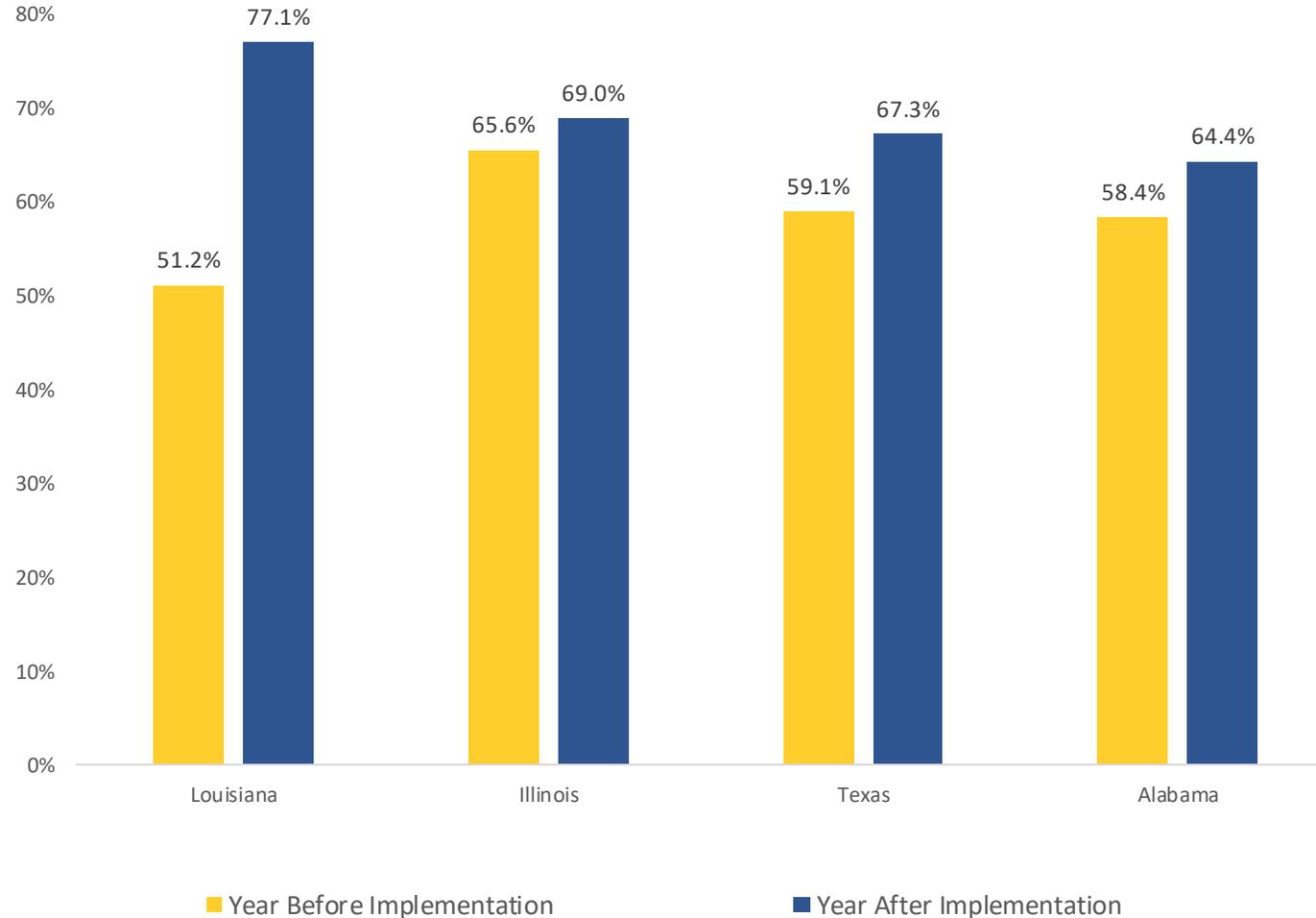
- Universal FAFSA Implemented
- Universal FAFSA Planned to be Implemented

State	Policy passed	Effective school year
Louisiana	December 2015	2017-2018
Illinois	August 2019	2020-2021
Texas	June 2019	2021-2022
Alabama	April 2021	2021-2022
California	July 2021	2022-2023
New Hampshire	August 2021	2023-2024
Kansas	November 2022	2027-2028
Indiana	May 2023	2023-2024
Oklahoma	May 2023	2024-2025
Nebraska	June 2023	2024-2025
Connecticut	June 2023	2023-2024



# OUTCOMES

# BEFORE AND AFTER IMPLEMENTATION

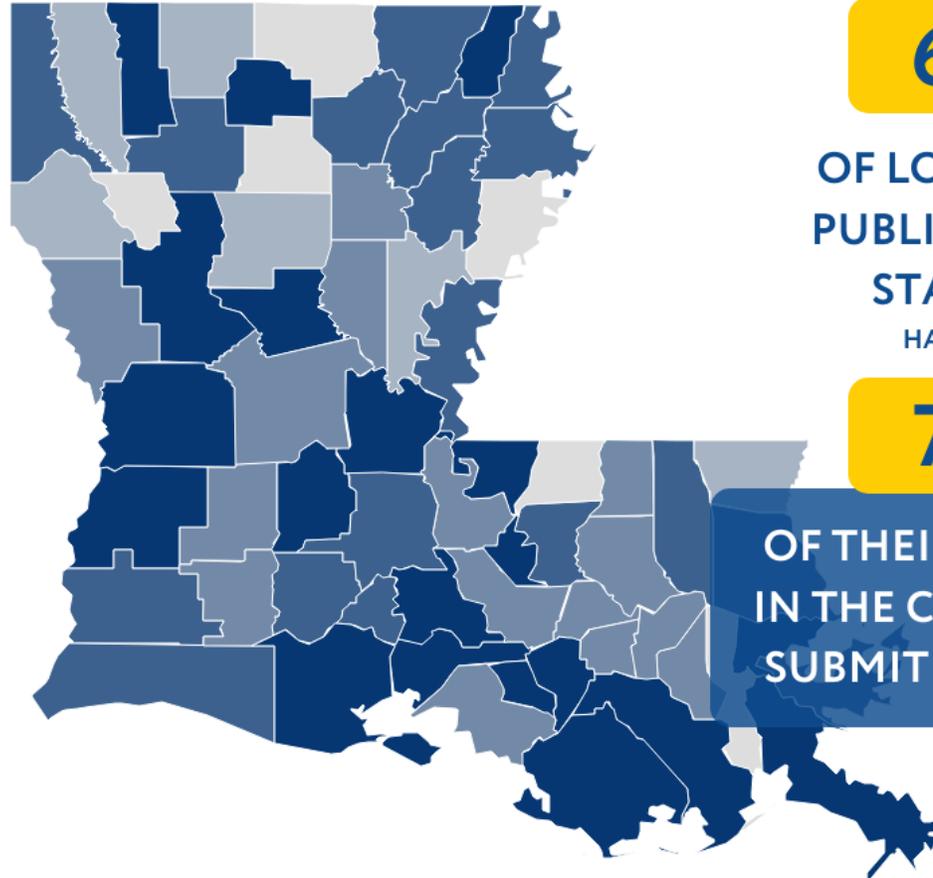


State	Year Before	Rank	Year After	Rank
<b>LA</b>	2016-17	12th	2017-18	2nd
<b>IL</b>	2019-20	13th	2020-21	6th
<b>TX</b>	2020-21	19th	2021-22	6th
<b>AL</b>	2020-21	21st	2021-22	9th

As of October 23, 2023

Source: <https://fomyourfuture.org/fafsa-tracker/>

# NATIONAL RANKING



**67%**

OF LOUISIANA'S  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
STATEWIDE  
HAD AT LEAST

**75%**

OF THEIR STUDENTS  
IN THE CLASS OF 2018  
SUBMIT THE FAFSA®

# POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT

## First Time Students by College Academic Year

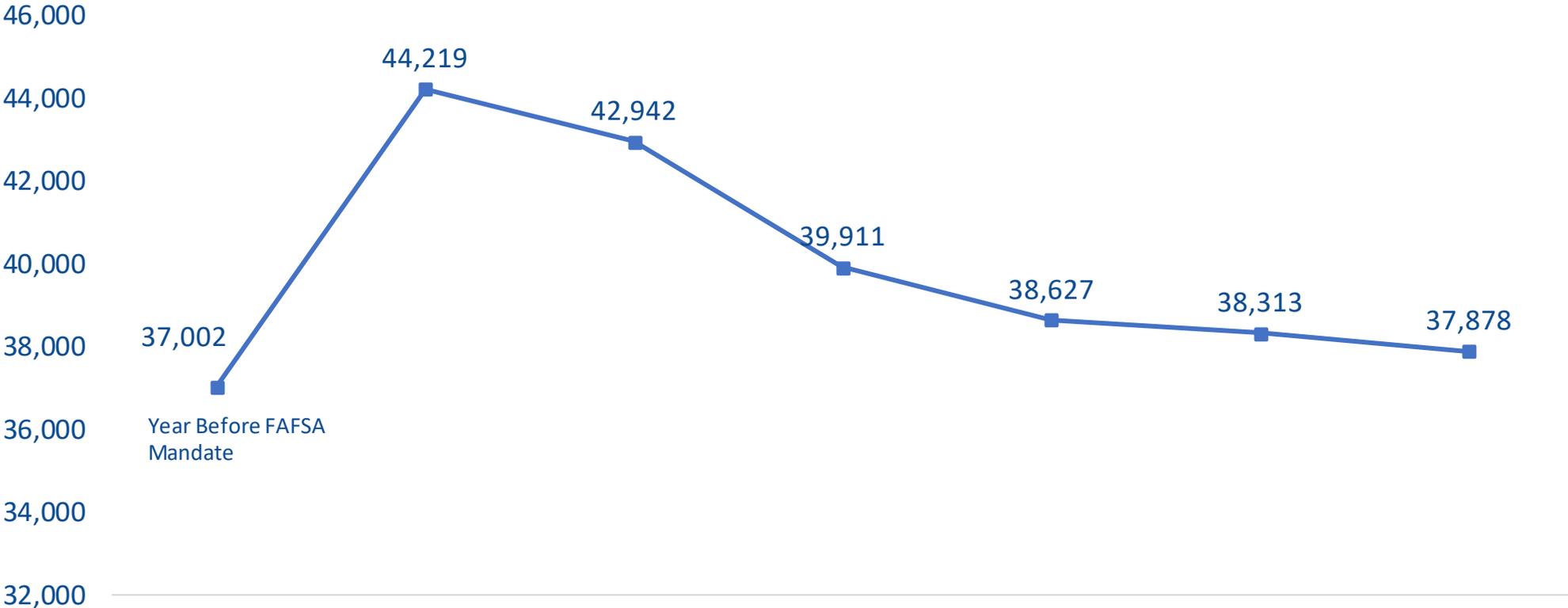


As of October 23, 2023

Source: LA Board of Regents Statewide Student Profile System Enrollment Records

# MERIT-BASED AID

## Graduates Processed for TOPS



The background features a stylized, light blue graphic of a graduation cap on the left and a hand holding a pen on the right, set against a darker blue background. A yellow rectangular border frames the central text.

# STRATEGIES

FOR SUCCESS

# FAFSA® NOW CAMPAIGN



# FAFSA

(FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID)

There is still time to complete your  
**FAFSA.**

The priority deadline for Louisiana students is

## FEBRUARY 1, 2023

to ensure any errors are corrected, and aid is processed in a timely manner.

COMPLETE YOUR FAFSA NOW AT  
**STUDENTAID.GOV**

- Pilot launched October 2020
- Urge high school seniors to complete their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) by February 1 each year.
- Use text messaging and social media outlets to get the word out to students about the importance of completing the FAFSA®.
- Encourage stakeholders to get involved by downloading our press kit, which contains FAFSA® NOW logos, graphic templates, and social media posts.

# FAFSA<sup>®</sup> NOW



# OUTREACH EFFORTS



## VIRTUAL FAFSA MARATHON

**Monday, May 15 -  
Thursday, May 18, 2023**

9AM - 7PM

Need help **completing your FAFSA?**

Whether it's your first time submitting a FAFSA or if you need to correct a current FAFSA, LOSFA is here to help you cross the finish line.

[mylosfa.la.gov](https://mylosfa.la.gov)

- FAFSA® Completion Events: assist students and parents in completing their respective portions of the FAFSA®.
- LOSFA FAFSA® Lab
- Virtual Office Hours: FAFSA® Assistance
- [GeauxFAFSA@la.gov](mailto:GeauxFAFSA@la.gov)
- Text 50056 (Signal Vine, texting platform) for assistance
- FAFSA® Error Reports
- Virtual FAFSA® Marathon
- Partnerships with other members of the college access community: FAA at postsecondary institutions, high school stakeholders, community partners, etc.

# OUTREACH EFFORTS

**FAFSA** *Now* ✓

## HOW CAN LOSFA HELP YOU?

**VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS**

You can schedule virtual office hours from **9 AM - 3 PM, Monday through Friday.**

**REQUEST LOSFA EVENT**

Events can be scheduled **Monday through Friday** beginning at **8 AM** and must end by **7 PM.**

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) provides several Outreach (group) Events, Seminars and Workshops for schools, institutions, and organizations. These events can be delivered virtually and in-person.

# OUTREACH EFFORTS



FIX YOUR FAFSA

June 29th • 10am-2pm

EBR Parish Library  
7711 Goodwood Blvd  
Baton Rouge, LA 70806  
*(Meet Us in the Teen Area)*

The graphic shows a notebook with the text 'FIX YOUR FAFSA' written in black marker, a keyboard, and some cash. Below the image is a blue banner with white and yellow text.

join us for

# FAFSA NIGHT

2022

EBR GRADUATION EXCELLENCE

START STRONG finish strong

OCTOBER 13TH • 6-8 PM

HELD AT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL  
MANDATORY FOR ALL SENIORS

The graphic features a blue and yellow color scheme with a graduation cap icon and the EBR logo. The text is arranged in a vertical flow from top to bottom.

# OUTREACH EFFORTS

A purple poster for LSU FAFSA NIGHT. At the top, 'LSU' is written in large yellow letters, and 'FAFSA NIGHT' is in large white letters. Below that, the date 'October 13th @ 6pm' and the Zoom link 'https://lsu.zoom.us/j/94865316541' are in yellow. A white-bordered box in the center contains the text: 'Join us as we discuss all things FAFSA and filing, as well as answering any questions you may have.' At the bottom, it says 'IN PARTNERSHIP WITH' in yellow. The background of the poster shows a desk with a laptop, a pen, and a coffee cup.

**LSU**  
**FAFSA NIGHT**

October 13th @ 6pm  
<https://lsu.zoom.us/j/94865316541>

*Join us as we discuss all things FAFSA and filing, as well as answering any questions you may have.*

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



# PROMISING PRACTICES



## Event Coupling

- College Application Events
- Senior Pictures
- Ring Ceremony
- Sporting Events
- Report Card/Other Meetings

## Incentives

- T-shirts
- Grad Supply Vouchers
- Grad Fee Reduction
- Grad/Prom Tickets
- Donated Gift Cards

# CELEBRATING OUR EFFORTS

- Virtual FAFSA® Ceremony
  - Schools of Excellence – 100% completion
  - Schools of Achievement – Exceeded the national completion average
- Recognition of Schools of Excellence and Schools of Achievement at our Advisory Board Meeting
- Recognition of Monthly FAFSA® Champions on social media
- Highlight student and counselor voices



# CELEBRATING OUR EFFORTS

**FAFSA**  
*Now*

**SCHOOLS OF  
EXCELLENCE**



The photograph shows two women standing in front of a purple backdrop with repeating logos. The woman on the left is wearing a patterned grey and white top, and the woman on the right is wearing a blue and white floral top. They are both smiling and holding a white award certificate. The certificate features the FAFSA Now logo and the text: "2020-2021", "This certificate is presented to", "Holden High School", and "Statewide School of Excellence".

**Holden High School**

**FAFSA**  
*Now*

**SCHOOLS OF  
EXCELLENCE**



The photograph shows two women standing in front of a purple backdrop with repeating logos. The woman on the left is wearing a white top, and the woman on the right is wearing a pink top and a patterned green and pink cardigan. They are both smiling and holding a white award certificate. The certificate features the FAFSA Now logo and the text: "2020-2021", "This certificate is presented to", "Patrick F. Taylor Science & Technology Academy", and "Statewide School of Excellence".

**Patrick F. Taylor Science & Technology Academy**

# FAFSA NOW: VIRTUAL CEREMONY



# SCHOOL COUNSELOR SUPPORT



- Involve in Planning
- Connect with Professional Development Opportunities (Continuing Education Units CEUs)
- Provide Additional Financial Aid Supports
- Celebrate Successes

# SCHOOL COUNSELOR SUPPORT

## Louisiana 2021 - 2022 FAFSA® Completion

Covid-19 has impacted efforts to complete the FAFSA® form nationwide. The state of Louisiana is being proactive in closing the gap to assist students and families.

**24,254**

As of March 5, 2021, an additional 3,179 FAFSA applications were completed for a total of 24,254 completed applications for the state of Louisiana.

## Louisiana Counselor FAFSA Line by Line Workshop

Do you have students with special circumstances? Are you getting questions about the FAFSA that you need tips on how to advise? Join me for a FAFSA Line by Line Workshop.

**March 17, 2021 | 4:00PM CST**

**March 24, 2021 | 4:00PM CST**

**Register Here**

**March 24, 2021  
FSA Webinar**

**How to Tackle  
Verification in  
the FAFSA®  
process**

**Click Here  
to Register**

### FSA Partner Email

Sign-up to receive tips for students, professional development and more.  
[outreach.fsapartners.ed.gov](mailto:outreach.fsapartners.ed.gov)

### Tanika Mangum

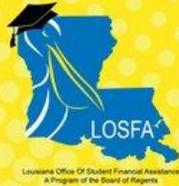
Outreach Specialist, FSA  
[tanika.mangum@ed.gov](mailto:tanika.mangum@ed.gov)

**Federal Student Aid**

*An OFFICE of the U.S. DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION*

# SCHOOL COUNSELOR SUPPORT



 **FAFSA**  
*Now*  
*Counselor Highlight*

## Strategies

*One thing I would do to motivate our students is provide incentives for everything. Students love to receive free things whether it's a shirt or food. I set [FAFSA] workshops throughout the year, and I pressured the students to participate in all the workshops. At these workshops, I fed the students and parents. The students also received a free senior t-shirt.*

*It feels really good to know that I'm a part of this ranking (Louisiana #1 in FAFSA completion) and to know that I was first in my district really make me feel great!!!!*

*Constance Clark-Wilson*  
GEAR UP Coordinator and Administrative Assistant  
Carroll High School

# SCHOOL COUNSELOR SUPPORT



The graphic features a yellow background with a white dotted pattern. In the top left corner is the LOSFA logo, which includes a graduation cap and the text 'LOSFA Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance A Program of the Board of Regents'. To the right of the logo, the word 'FAFSA' is written in large, white, block letters inside blue squares. Below this, the word 'Now' is written in a large, blue, cursive font, and 'Counselor Highlight' is written in a smaller, blue, cursive font. The bottom half of the graphic has a blue background with a white wavy border. On the left side of this blue section, the word 'Strategies' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below it is a white-bordered box containing a paragraph of text. On the right side of the graphic is a portrait of Dr. Sindy Barjon, a woman with short, styled white hair, wearing a white collared shirt and a pearl necklace. Below the portrait, her name 'Dr. Sindy Barjon' is written in a white, cursive font, and her title 'Senior Counselor (Fall Semester) Edna Karr High School' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

**Strategies**

*What worked well for me during COVID-19 was to set up appointments with families using an online calendar program and Eventbrite. I would post the Eventbrite dates for families to sign up. The days were every Monday and Wednesday of the month from 4:00-6:00 PM. Twice a month I would have a Tuesday during the school day between 9:00 AM-12:00 PM and on Saturday between 9:00 AM-1:00 PM. I started in October and work through December. During the Thanksgiving Break and Winter Break (December), I would also schedule meeting with families during this time providing two options for families to sign up. Usually, a weekday during the week of the break and a Saturday either before or after the holiday break. Parent who had a scheduling conflict I would meet when they were available. This plan worked well for me and the families. Next year, go back to posting the students that completed the FAFSA picture embedded in a \$100 bill and post the completion rate.*

*Dr. Sindy Barjon*  
Senior Counselor (Fall Semester)  
Edna Karr High School

# SCHOOL COUNSELOR SUPPORT

What resources do you need to ease the transition into the 2024-25 Better FAFSA?

Continued assistance  
Provide Updates Worksheets/Flyers  
Webinars Video tutorials  
**FAFSA Guides**  
**FAFSA Completion Assistance**  
Everything. Just help! Workshops  
Information for parents and students  
Parent outreach

# SCHOOL COUNSELOR SUPPORT



- Not being able to get FAFSAs completed prior to graduation.
- The spring is busy with testing.
- Students entering a parent's SSN to invite them to be contributors.
- Midyear graduates
- Resistance against providing consent.
- Delayed financial aid offers.
- Completing the FAFSA for the wrong academic year.
- Not enough time for students who may need to submit documentation once FAFSA is processed.

# FAFSA® COMPLETION PROJECT

Federal initiative to encourage all high school seniors to complete the FAFSA®. To participate, school boards, charter schools, and non-public schools must enter agreements with LOSFA to ensure all data exchanged is handled securely and will be used only as intended.

- Public school boards will enter the agreement on behalf of all public schools within the district, and charter and non-public schools will enter individual agreements.
- An authorized requestor is assigned to receive the FAFSA® data for the district. The authorized requestor then provides the data to each individual high school in the district.



# FAFSA<sup>®</sup> COMPLETION PROJECT

School boards/schools receive student-level data to know which students to follow up with.

- The only data that will transfer between the agency and the school boards/schools is the student's name and whether the student has completed the FAFSA<sup>®</sup>.
- These schools will still be able to receive aggregate data from the USDOE.

# STUDENT VOICES



**#FAFSACHAMPIONS**

“FAFSA is important for college students because it assists with providing federal student aid, based on eligibility. We are able to apply for grants and loans at a low cost. There are many students who desire a higher education but are unable to afford the college expenses; I was one of those students. With the FAFSA, I was eligible for a great amount of financial assistance and was able to continue my studies as an undergraduate student without worrying about a financial burden.”

*Jameshaulyn Fernandez*  
LA GEAR UP Alumna

**F A F S A**  
*Now*



**#FAFSACHAMPIONS**

“Being a first-generation college student, it was very confusing and difficult trying to figure out how I was going to pay for college. The process of getting financial aid isn’t as easy either, but by filling out the FAFSA I was able to get a jumpstart on funding my post-secondary education and attended the college of my choice. It gave me an opportunity to better myself and my future. Take control of your future by filling out the FAFSA. ”

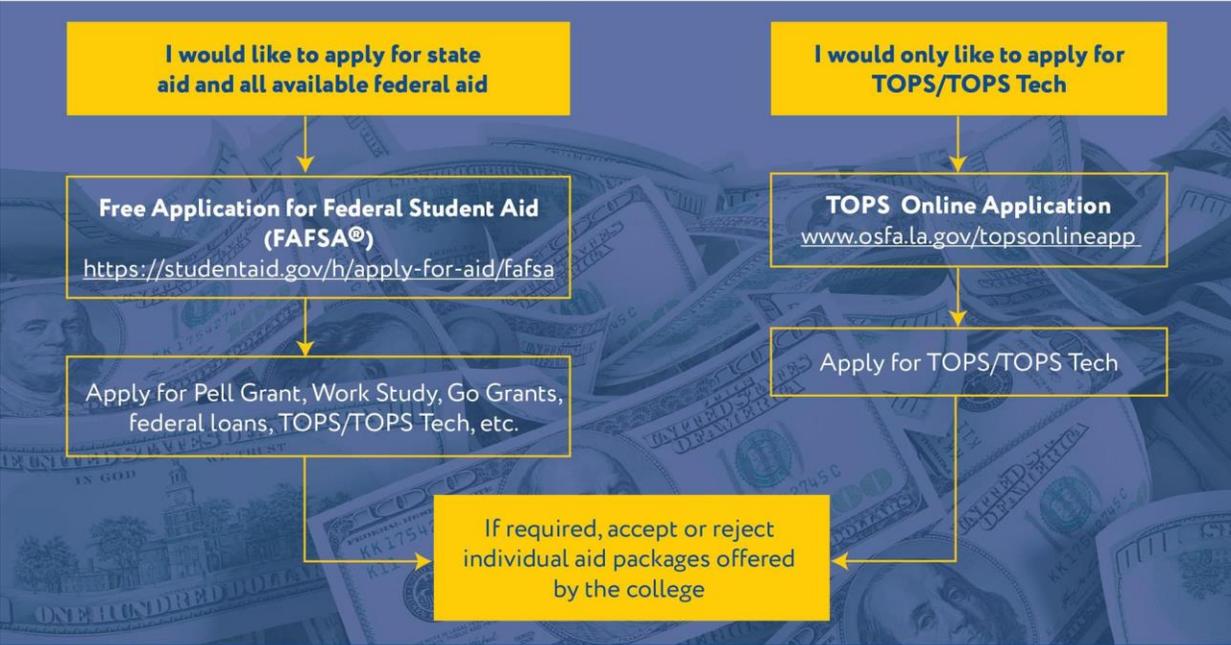
*Khalil Roy*  
LA GEAR UP Alumnus

**F A F S A**  
*Now*

# TAKE AWAYS

## NAVIGATING YOUR OPTIONS

EITHER of these options will fulfill the graduation requirement for FAFSA® submission.



### IMPORTANT NOTE:

Students must be enrolled full-time at an eligible institution to receive their TOPS Award; however, some institutions may require students to take additional steps to accept their financial aid package. Follow the directions included with your financial aid offer and contact the financial aid office at your institution if you have any questions.

# TAKE AWAYS



**Make friends:** Universal FAFSA® is a heavy lift. Partner with postsecondary institutions, college access organizations, high school counselors, and other stakeholders that can assist with FAFSA® completion events and efforts. Reach out to community-based organizations to see if there is an opportunity to provide FAFSA® completion assistance to their audiences.



**Be flexible:** Consider having an alternative to submitting the FAFSA® to graduate. More importantly, make sure families know their options and the consequences of not filing the FAFSA®.

**Be innovative:** Come up with unique and fun ways to host FAFSA® completion events.



**Empower your counselors:** Provide FAFSA® training, toolkits, and other materials to aid counselors with hosting FAFSA® events at their schools. Communicate any upcoming changes to the FAFSA® and connect your counselors with organizations that can assist with FAFSA® completion efforts. Having an agreement to share student-level data with your counselors will allow them to easily identify students who still need to complete the FAFSA® or make corrections.

# TAKE AWAYS

**Spread the word:** Use social media and traditional media to spread the word about upcoming FAFSA® events, campaigns, and any changes to the application. Make sure your colleges and high schools have access to up-to-date information that they can provide to their students. This includes handouts, posters, and other items to help disseminate information.



**Follow up:** Use your state's FAFSA® data to identify schools with low FAFSA® completion rates. Reach out to offer additional FAFSA® completion assistance or connect the schools to other organizations and resources to help with completion. Identify students with incomplete FAFSAs® and send customized communications offering assistance and specific tips to move their FAFSA® from submission to completion.



**Be proactive in collecting data:** Implementing Universal FAFSA® is just one piece of the puzzle. Be sure you're prepared to answer questions from stakeholders that may require data on postsecondary enrollment or FAFSA® completion rates. Think about the types of inquiries you may receive to determine what types of data you need to collect for a response. What metrics will you use to measure your success? Form Your Future (<https://formyourfuture.org>) is a wonderful resource for viewing state-level FAFSA® data.



# TAKE AWAYS

***Celebrate your successes:*** Be sure to recognize the efforts of your counselors, parents, students, postsecondary institutions, and other stakeholders that are involved in your state's FAFSA® efforts. This can be a social media post, a press release, a commercial – whatever you like! You can recognize schools with the highest completion rates, schools that exceed the state average, or schools that have shown the most improvement in their completion rates.



# CONNECT WITH **LOSFA**



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@losfa1000



@losfa001

# CONTACT **LOSFA**

ASK  
**LEX**



- LEX is LOSFA's virtual response assistant
- LEX is available on LOSFA's Website at [www.mylosfa.la.gov](http://www.mylosfa.la.gov)
- Available **24/7** to answer questions about TOPS

## ON THE **WEB**



[www.mylosfa.la.gov](http://www.mylosfa.la.gov)



[custserv@la.gov](mailto:custserv@la.gov)  
[GeauxFAFSA@la.gov](mailto:GeauxFAFSA@la.gov)

## VIRTUAL **OFFICE HOURS**

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
Monday – Friday



# QUESTIONS?

[Ebony.Holmes@la.gov](mailto:Ebony.Holmes@la.gov)