



Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education

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STATEMENT OF SUPPORT Alaska FAFSA Completion

The Commissioners of the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) affirm our commitment to increasing Alaska's completion rates of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA is the largest source of postsecondary education funding in the U.S., providing more than \$150 billion in student financial aid each year. Students and families who do not complete the FAFSA drastically limit opportunities to access education funding.

Alaska has historically low rates of FAFSA completion, meaning Alaska students miss out on millions of dollars in Federal and State aid each year. Lack of access to these funds results in Alaskans either not pursuing education and career training programs or taking out larger than necessary student loan debt to cover the cost of education. Resulting in challenges to building a stronger Alaska workforce and Alaskans carrying a higher burden of debt.

As such, the Commission supports and encourages statewide participation in Alaska FAFSA Completion Initiatives to increase FAFSA completion. Subsequent information provided with this Statement of Support, illustrate not only the importance of FAFSA completion, but the positive impact increasing completion will have on Alaskans and Alaska's workforce needs.

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FAFSA Completion: Why It Matters to Alaskans

Nearly 2 million high school graduates across the United States did not complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in 2021, as reported by the [National College Attainment Network](#) (NCAN). Without the FAFSA, students are severely limited in accessing sources of educational financial aid. FAFSA is the application students must complete to gain access to the largest education funding source in the US, Federal Student Aid (FSA). Overseen by the US Department of Education - **FSA provides more than \$110 BILLION in student financial aid annually.**

Why is FAFSA completion so important?

FAFSA is, or should be, the first step in a student's financial aid process. Part of the reason FAFSA completion is tied so closely to postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion is because FAFSA identifies pathways to education funding opportunities that would not otherwise be available. For many students, Alaska students especially, these identified pathways often mean the difference between our students pursuing their education and career goals or putting those goals on hold.

- Nationally, NCAN research shows 92% of seniors who complete the FAFSA enroll in some type of postsecondary education by the November following graduation vs. 51% who did not complete a FAFSA.
- For every additional \$1,000 in grant aid a student receives, data shows an increase in postsecondary persistence rates (the rate at which students return to postsecondary for their second year).

In recent years, numerous states have mandated FAFSA completion for high school seniors. While it is too early to show the longstanding impact of these mandates, preliminary data indicates that increases in FAFSA completion will continue to result in increases in postsecondary enrollment.

(It is also important to remember that postsecondary education includes 2- and 4-year degrees as well as career and technical training education programs.)

What does a low FAFSA completion rate mean for Alaskans and Alaska?

As of June 2022, the [National FAFSA Tracker](#) reflects Alaska's high school seniors are completing the FAFSA at the lowest rate in the US; with a completion rate of only 28%. While we acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to a decrease in FAFSA completion rates, we also recognize that historically, Alaska has low rates of FAFSA completion.

- Alaska High School Classes of 2021 and 2022 left over \$12 Million dollars in Pell Grant funding unused by not completing the FAFSA.
- Alaska students will not receive the Alaska Performance Scholarship, Alaska Education Grant, and many other Alaska institution-based financial aid awards without completing the FAFSA.
- Alaska will continue to have a workforce that does not meet the educational credentials needed to sustain the economy.
- Alaska's low-income students and families, who have the highest financial need, cannot access need-based funding without the FAFSA.

Are there initiatives in Alaska to improve FAFSA completion rates?

Yes! The Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) is committed to helping students and families complete the FAFSA to increase Alaskans' access to critically important sources of financial aid. ACPE works in partnership with school districts, non-profit organizations, Alaska Native organizations, and others to deliver free trainings and information sessions to high school classrooms and community mentors as well as one-on-one sessions with students and families to guide them through the FAFSA

completion process. ACPE also provides services and support to build awareness around financial aid literacy and works with families to share the critical tools needed to access financial aid for their student.

ACPE leads the Alaska FAFSA Completion Initiative (AFCI), which is a partnership with a variety of postsecondary institutions and organizations across Alaska. Through our cross-sector collaboration, Alaskans will gain awareness and access to the guidance needed to complete the FAFSA.

In January 2023, APCI launched its next phase of FAFSA Completion efforts through **ACPE's Master the FAFSA Training** with the goal of empowering education stakeholders and provide them with the knowledge and understanding of the FAFSA process to independently assist their students and families with successful FAFSA completion. Master the FAFSA occurred every Tuesday and Thursday, from 2:00 to 3:30pm, between January and March 2023.

For more information about how ACPE helps students and families meet their financial education needs, check out our resources below:

- **Funding Your Future Presentations (FYF):** School districts, teachers and counselors, and community organizations can schedule an FYF presentation with the ACPE Success Center staff by email at acpesuccesscenter@alaska.gov or phone (907)269-7980.
- **Alaska FAFSA Completion Initiatives:**
 - Visit acpe.alaska.gov/alaskafafsacompletion to learn more about ongoing events and resources across Alaska for students and families to connect and complete the FAFSA
 - **FAFSA Wednesdays:** Individual students and their families or small groups can drop in any Wednesday to our [FAFSA Wednesdays Series on Zoom](#):
 - **Youcanbook.me:** Students and parents can schedule an appointment with ACPE Success Center staff through our online booking platform, youcanbook.me
 - [FAFSA Materials & Rack Cards \(available for download and mailing\)](#)