Capacity Building & Communicating to Increase FAFSA Completion

NCAN FAFSA Institute #2

8/6/2020
TODAY’S PRESENTERS

Dr. Michael Garcia & Ben Fisher-Mesa Public Schools
Brittany Francis & Brittany Williams-LOSFA
Kelly Leon-Kresge Foundation
Building Capacity & College Going Culture
63,637 Students
2,474

Classroom Teachers

#cash4college
169 School Counselors
131 square miles

20 miles
6 High Schools

10 Junior High Schools

54 Elementary Schools
College Attainment Gap

\[ \% \text{College Attainment of Mesa Residents vs. US Average (2017)} \]

- Associate's Degree and/or Bachelor's: Mesa 23, US 41.89
- Bachelor's Degree: Mesa 14.8, US 31
- Graduate Degree or Higher: Mesa 7.2, US 14.9
2019 FAFSA Goals

- 38% Completion 2018
- 45% Completion 2019 (Goal)
- 47% Completion 2019 (Actual)
2020 FAFSA Goals

38% Completion 2018

47% Completion 2019

50% Completion 2020

AZ State Avg. = 46%

#strive455
Our Three-Pronged Strategy

High School Peer Coach Advisors

*Lead and support FAFSA Peer Coaches*

FAFSA Peer Coaches

*Work with peers to promote FAFSA and drive FAFSA completion*

Community Support

*Supports through funding, food, technology, resources.*
FAFSA Peer Coaches

- 4-6 FAFSA Peer Coaches at each high school.
- Supported by FAFSA Peer Coach Advisors and district staff.
- Recruited by each high school.
- Employed by district.

Credit where credit is due. We built our model off of a similar successful model from the Phoenix Union district.
FAFSA Peer Coach Profile

- High school junior or senior
- Must be planning on attending a two-or four-year college and filing a FAFSA
- Strong communicator
- Willingness to speak with students and parents about FAFSA
- Responsible and reliable
- Willingness to commit to the whole school year
- Willingness to attend training
- Willingness to attend large scale FAFSA events
- Ability to use digital technology and social media
- Representative of school population
- Multilingual is a PLUS
- Campus influencer
FAFSA Peer Coach Role

- Attend regular FAFSA training provided at the district level
- Act as direct outreach to peer groups
- Set evidence-based goals and create plans for implementation
- Host regular FAFSA events during lunch time and after school
FAFSA Peer Coach Compensation

- Gain professional knowledge and skills as a resume builder
- Provide an important service to the community
- Financial compensation of $900 base stipend upon completion of objectives
- $25 gift card incentives for meeting objectives
- #Cash4College Cup to winning high school

Meeting Objectives:
- Peer Coaches submit gift card requests with proof that they are meeting their objectives.
- Submissions are reviewed and gift cards are awarded at each training session.
**FAFSA Peer Coach Advisors**

- Designated campus advisor for Peer Coaches
- Assists peer coaches and holds them accountable to their objectives
- Paid an additional $1,000 stipend upon completion of Peer Coach Advisor objectives

**Funding.** Our funding was initially through NCAN grant funding. We applied to other local foundations for funding this year, prior to receiving the FAFSA NCAN prize.
FAFSA Peer Coach Training Outline

First Semester
- Peer Coach Role & FAFSA 101
- FAFSA 102 & Problem Solving
- Using Data & Problem Solving

Second Semester
- Using Data to Set Goals
- Data Review and Team Planning
- Motivating the “Unmotivated”
Community Support

- Food from local businesses for meetings
- Funding donations for additional food and gift cards at campus events and other campus resources from Ask Benji
- Technology support through Ask Benji
- Data dashboards and data support
- Universities/colleges
- Mesa Counts on College
- Be a Leader Foundation

Food! Donated by local businesses.
Data Collection

Use of data helped us:

- keep track of peer coach contacts.
- capture student college-going intentions and barriers.
- keep track of FAFSA milestones (FSA IDs, submission, completion).
Data Types

- Data Collected by Peer Coaches through Google Forms
- FAFSA Finish Line (Student Level)
- FAFSA Aggregate Data
  - From fafsa.ed.gov
- State FAFSA Dashboard
  - Sponsored by the state
- Top 50% of Class/No FAFSA
- Demographic Data
- Admissions Data
Additional Peer Coach Documents/Resources

- #cash4college Website
- Peer Coach Objectives
- Virtual Crosswalk
- Ask Benji- FAFSA bot
- Weekly Newsletter
#strive455 Competition Guidelines

- 40% overall percentage completion
- 30% overall growth
- 20% participation in Peer Coach program
- 10% cultural factors
Targeting Students Through A Tiered Intervention Approach

Semester 1:
- Reach out to peers to find out if they plan to attend college and why/why not.
- Get peers to complete a college application.
- Get peers and parents to create FSA ID.
- Get peers to submit the FAFSA.
- Get peers to complete the FAFSA.

Semester 2:
- Set goals based on disaggregated data and multi-tiered supports.

- Peer coaches and counselors collected data 1st semester while getting as many FAFSA completers as possible.
- We used our data to create targeted plans 2nd semester.
Peer Coaches Coaching Coaches

- Our former FAFSA Peer Coaches have been to our Peer Coach training to support current Peer Coaches.
- Former FAFSA Peer Coaches continue to support in many ways.
FAFSA Promotional Items: Creating a Brand
End of Year Celebration!
College Going Culture

- College/Career Going Culture
  - Education Career Action Plan (ECAP)
  - AVID
- Community Partners
Lessons Learned

1. We surpassed our goal
   ● Every high school improved

2. Data is critical
   ● FAFSA Finish Line
   ● Collecting our own data
   ● Regular data updates

3. Accountability
   ● Improve our supervisory structure
   ● Clarify objectives
   ● Baseline tasks more transparent

4. Peer Coach personal challenges
   ● Peer coaches will have to overcome their own FAFSA challenges

5. We are perfectly imperfect
   ● Must have a growth mindset
   ● Learn as you go

It worked!

#cash4college
THANK YOU

@MESASUCCEED
FAFSA Completion: Strategies for Communications

Brittani Williams, Financial Aid and Career Development Specialist
Brittany Francis, Public Information and Communications Director

Wednesday, August 5, 2020
Topics of Discussion

• FAFSA Results for Louisiana
• Creating a College-Going Community
• Strategic Messaging and Reach
• Examples of Activities and Support
#FormYourFuture FAFSA Tracker

Through July 17, what percent of your state's seniors had completed a FAFSA? What is your state's change year-over-year?

Choose Ranking Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
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LOSFA Programs created a community-wide college-going culture by reaching out to college presidents, senators/representatives, and community-based partners in Louisiana on the importance of securing financial aid for college.

Our efforts included:

• Requested videos from college presidents
• Informed senators/representatives of FAFSA errors in their district
• Encouraged social media sharing with community partners
• Contacted media for FAFSA awareness
VIDEOS OF COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

Dr. Chris Mogio, President of @NSULA shares a message on why completing/renewing the #AFSFA is important! Let’s all do our part to make sure that our students can secure money for college! #MainPoint3 #LAprosper #Here4Students #GeauxToCollege #AFSANOW

Dr. Walter Kimbrough, @HipHopPres, President of Dillard University shares why he feels #AFSFA completion is important to a student’s success. #AFSANOW #Here4Students #LAprosper #GeauxToCollege

Dr. Les Guice, President of @LATech has a message for high school seniors and continuing students. Be sure to complete your #AFSFA to secure money for college! #AFSANOW #Here4Students #LAprosper #GeauxToCollege

mylosfa.la.gov
INFORMED SENATORS & REPRESENTATIVES

Although the priority deadline of July 1 has passed, it is not too late for students to file the FAFSA. The fall semester is rapidly approaching, and students need to file their FAFSA as soon as possible to ensure financial aid is available at the beginning of the semester. The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance continues to encourage students to correct errors and they are available to assist those who still want to file.

What should I do if I am having difficulties with my FSA ID?

If you have issues such as:
- Being unable to access or remember the email used to create your FSA ID
- Your FSA ID account is locked
- You need to reset your password
- You believe your FSA ID may be lost or stolen
- Receiving an error message that the social security number does not match
- Any technical issues with the FSALO.ed.gov website or FAFSA.ed.gov

mylosfa.la.gov
COLLABORATED WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS
LOSFA Programs Public Information and Communications Division created strategic messages to distribute to our intended audience.

Our efforts included:

- Disseminated a digital ready-to-go press kit
- Distributed social media graphics to highlight our FAFSA monthly champions, and to provide guidance on how to avoid errors and successful completion
- Emailed students with assistance on how to correct their FAFSA errors
• Press Release
• FAFSA NOW Logo
• FSA ID worksheet
• FAFSA Compilation handout
• Instagram Story Templates
• Pre-Designed Social Media Graphics
• FAFSA Tutorial Video
• Social Media Captions
• Common Errors on the FAFSA
MONTHLY FAFSA CHAMPION HIGHLIGHT

• LOSFA utilized our social media platforms to engage with students, parents, teachers and counselors using polls and fun activities, such as our FAFSA Now Spirit Week.

• We also highlighted those districts that displayed the most growth during the campaign. Those districts included: InspireNola, Bossier Parish, Rapides Parish, and Ascension Parish.
FAFSA GUIDANCE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Important Steps to Avoid TOPS PROCESSING ERRORS

1. If you are a 2020 high school graduate, you must file a qualifying ACT, SAT or GED score prior to September 16, 2020.
2. If you are a public school student, you must turn your school over a signed Consent Form to the FAFSA office. If your school has an agreement with the FAFSA Office, your school will verify your FAFSA.
3. Make sure you complete your FAFSA application before the deadlines and the one that is most relevant to you. If you do not complete your FAFSA application within the deadlines, you will not receive any financial aid.
4. Make sure your FAFSA is filed by the deadlines and the one that is most relevant to you. If you do not file your FAFSA application within the deadlines, you will not receive any financial aid.
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6. Complete your FAFSA if you are a public school student. If you do not complete your FAFSA application within the deadlines, you will not receive any financial aid.
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Important Steps to COMPLETE NOW

1. Complete the FAFSA.
2. Set up a student aid account.
3. Avoid TOPS processing delays.
4. Check your award letter.
Identifying FAFSA Errors

• LOSFA staff began running error reports for the month of May. These reports identified any 2020 graduate who had errors on their FAFSA. As of June 22nd, 1,464 FAFSA errors had been found.

• LOSFA reached out to those students through email, social media, and phone calls to help students make corrections.

• Staff continue to check error reports and notify students who need to make corrections.
LOSFA Programs provide line-by-line assistance with FAFSA completion so students and their families know our staff remains committed to meeting their needs, even during these difficult times.

Our efforts included:

• **Before COVID-19**, communication and outreach staff partnered with high schools and community partners across the state to assist graduating senior classes

• **During COVID-19**, staff transitioned to provide FAFSA support remotely via Zoom, text messaging, social media, email, and phone calls
FAFSA COMPLETION ACTIVITIES

BEFORE COVID-19

• **One-On-One Engagement** - LOSFA provided line-by-line and face-to-face assistance to students and their families in order to complete their respective portions of the FAFSA application.

• **Event Registration** - High school professionals coordinated with LOSFA to host multiple events at their schools to ensure a full range of opportunities for students and families to understand the financial aid process.

• **Communication** - LOSFA used text messaging, postcard invitations, PSAs, videos, email, phone calls, and social media campaigns to spread the word about the FAFSA, financial aid opportunities, FAFSA completion events and initiatives, and other resources to provide college readiness support.

• **LOSFA’s FAFSA Lab** - LOSFA utilized an on-site FAFSA lab for families who needed additional assistance with completing their FAFSA outside of school or home.
FAFSA COMPLETION SUPPORT

DURING COVID-19

- **Virtual Office Hours** - Zoom appointments were available for students and their families to obtain one-on-one assistance for FAFSA completion support.

- **Text Messaging** - Through Signal Vine’s text messaging platform, students were able to ask questions, and request assistance, related to the FAFSA.

- **GEAUX FAFSA Email Support** - LOSFA widely publicizes our email address (GeauxFAFSA@la.gov) to families and students who have questions about the FAFSA. We regularly check and respond to all messages.

- **Phone Calls** - LOSFA conducted phone calls if families did not feel comfortable meeting face-to-face via Zoom sessions.
Brittani Williams, Financial Aid and Career Development Specialist
Brittani.Williams@la.gov

Brittany Francis, Public Information and Communications Director
Brittany.Francis@la.gov
Digital FAFSA Engagement

Kelly Leon, communications officer
The Kresge Foundation Education Program
@kresgedu
Our Commitment to FAFSA Completion

• 1 of 3 Focus Area: Urban Pathways to College
• FAFSA-completion is essential for boosting matriculation
• Grant partnerships with college access organizations nationwide, including the National College Attainment Network
• FAFSA Completion Challenge sought to boost completion rates by 5% in cities
• Administered challenge in 2016-2017 and 2018-2019
“When helping students and families complete the FAFSA, the most important thing to keep in mind is patience.”

Laura Weego - Baton Rouge, LA

“Understand the language of the application. Although it can be simple, some students have unique circumstances. It is important to be sensitive to students' situations.”

Jassadi Moore - Detroit, MI

“I'm grateful for the opportunity to work with the parents of my students because I understand exactly where they're coming from. I come from a similar place.”

Christina Fontenot - New Orleans, LA

“We established a sense of trust with our families which played a role in getting students and parents to follow through with the application.”

Andrea Wyatt - Denton, TX
Tactics from the Pros

• Financial aid guidebooks
• Completion “Halls of Fame”
• Dorm room essentials raffles
• Pizza parties
• FAFSA nights (with translators)
• Gas, doughnut and coffee gift cards
• Face-to-face communication
Mr. Sambat Kim
College Access Advisor, Hunter High School, West Valley City, UT

Pandemic constraints

• Less face-to-face time to walk students through applications
• Inability to access student info remotely
• Less [or no] space for FAFSA nights

Plans for Fall 2020

• More REMIND notifications
• Virtual appointments with screen sharing
• More FAFSA events with fewer students, parents to allow for distancing

Custom advising website!
Dear Hunter High students,

Even though school doesn’t open anytime soon. This website will serve as a resource to help you navigate college information includes ACT, College Applications, Scholarship Applications, FAFSA and various opportunities. I am here to assist and support you. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me at skimi@graniteschools.org

Best,
Mr. Kim
College Access Advisor

FAFSA
Free Application for Federal Student Aid

Checklist Items for FAFSA Completion:
- Complete one Application to consider for 5 OPPORTUNITIES
- General Scholarships, Housing Scholarships, Work Study, Grants, Loans

Class of 2021 W-2 Forms and other records of earned income

Questions to ask on your application:
- Parents’ Date of Birth
- Parents Social Security
- Parents’ Marriage/Separate Date

Stay Updated With More SCHOLARSHIPS Opportunities From Your PHONE!

1. Download the REMIND App from (Play Store or App Store)
2. Join your CLASS
Class of 2020
@ remind.com/join/hhs20p
Class of 2021
@ remind.com/join/hunter2021
Class of 2022
@ remind.com/join/hunter2022
Class of 2023
@ remind.com/join/hunter23
Ms. London Johnson
College Advisor, Detroit Cristo Rey High School, Detroit, MI

Pandemic constraints
• Distinguishing coursework expectations for students
• Reaching parents effectively
• Less one-on-one time to walk students through materials
• Less [or no] space for FAFSA nights

Plans for Fall 2020
• Increased student, parent virtual conferences with screen sharing
• Increased Facebook, TikTok, Instagram content
• More FAFSA events with fewer students, parents to allow for distancing
Maximizing Digital Platforms

- Create unique social media content
- Engage students in content creation
- Develop informational videos for YouTube
- Share content with local media
Michigan College Access Network Outreach Efforts

- Built on strong momentum with Governor Whitmer’s FAFSA Challenge
- Shaped integrated marketing of College Advising Hotline
- Utilizing Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok; Snapchat coming soon
- Read more in NCAN’s #FAFSABrightSpots story series
Stay in Touch

• Visit formyourfuture.org to read the stories

• Follow us on Twitter @kresgedu

• Sign up for our newsletter *Every Degree Matters* kresge.org/subscribe

• Contact me ksleon@kresge.org

Questions?
SELF-ASSESSMENT & TEMPLATES

- Document uploaded into handouts section of webinar and was sent to all who registered

Guiding questions:
- What is realistic given the school situation?
- What resources will you need—especially resources you’ve not needed previously?
- Who else will you need to involve?
- If you are going to meet people where they are, where are they now? How will you be able to reach parents and students to get them information and assist with FAFSA completion? What does that mean for partners you might want/need to engage in this work?
- What does your community need to do to prioritize FAFSA completion work in this current environment?
QUESTIONS??