NCAN's research documents the prevalence of “unaffordability” at public two-year and four-year institutions for students from low- and moderate-income families. The following charts demonstrate the affordability landscape of postsecondary education. When net price and emergency expenses are not covered by subsidized loans and student earnings from part-time employment, NCAN defines the remaining deficit as an “affordability gap.” In instances where the sum of loans and wages equals or surpasses the sum of net price and emergency costs, we refer to the surplus as “an affordability margin.”

The **Pell Grant** is a federal need-based aid award that helps millions of students annually.

*There are 175,800 Pell Grant recipients in North Carolina.*

North Carolina receives $759,232,620 in Pell Grant funding each year.

**State grant programs** are crucial for college access and success, and can be based on financial need, merit, or a variety of factors.

**Average Undergraduate Grant Aid (per FTE)**

Source: Federal Student Aid Pell Grant 2021-2022 End of Year Report.
College Access & Completion in North Carolina

The Financial Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) determines eligibility for many types of financial aid. FAFSA completion is strongly associated with college enrollment. Nationally, 59% of high school seniors completed the FAFSA for the 2023-2024 cycle.

Of high school seniors in North Carolina, 51% completed a FAFSA for the 2023-2024 cycle (as of 7/1/2023).

North Carolina ranks 27th in FAFSA Completion

The NORTH CAROLINA Class of 2023 left $113 million in Pell Grants unclaimed, by not completing a FAFSA.

The chart to the right reflects degree attainment (including an associate’s degree or higher,) for adults ages 25 and older.

Source: NCAN, Pell Dollars Left on the Table Report.