



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, November 23, 2021

Survey Shows Students Need Help Completing FAFSA

PIERRE, S.D. – Paying for college is challenging, but receiving some financial aid can ease the burden on students and families. South Dakota school counselors and administrators agree it is important for students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). However, a majority of those same school officials surveyed this fall report needing additional assistance to encourage students to fill out the FAFSA and enroll in postsecondary education.

The survey was conducted as part of a statewide FAFSA completion initiative, a project led by the South Dakota Board of Regents. Mapping Your Future, a non-profit providing college access assistance in South Dakota, joined with the South Dakota Department of Education and other higher education officials to conduct the survey.

FAFSA completion is a major goal of the Free College Application Campaign, where application fees at South Dakota colleges and universities will be waived for another week, through Nov. 30. Completion of the FAFSA, which is an indicator of postsecondary pursuit, has dropped nationally since the onset of the pandemic in spring 2020. South Dakota's FAFSA completion rate, which was increasing prior to the pandemic, has also decreased.

“These survey findings help us identify barriers that keep students from completing the FAFSA and pursuing postsecondary education, as well as obstacles that hamper school administrators and counselors as they try to help students and their families,” said Brian L. Maher, the regents’ executive director and CEO. “While some of the findings confirmed what we suspected about FAFSA completions, these results offer us important insights into what is needed by school administrators and counselors as they assist their students.”

The survey’s purpose was to identify student and parent barriers to FAFSA completion, the role administrators and counselors play in helping students complete the FAFSA, and new opportunities to provide FAFSA completion support to students, parents, administrators, and counselors. Survey respondents offered these suggestions to increase FAFSA completion:

- Access to FAFSA data to determine which students may need assistance,
- More FAFSA completion events to help students and parents,
- Enhanced instructions to prepare for and complete the FAFSA, and
- More communications about the benefits of completing the FAFSA.