FAFSA First: Requiring the FAFSA for High School Graduation

Exploring the Current Policy Landscape & The Louisiana Story
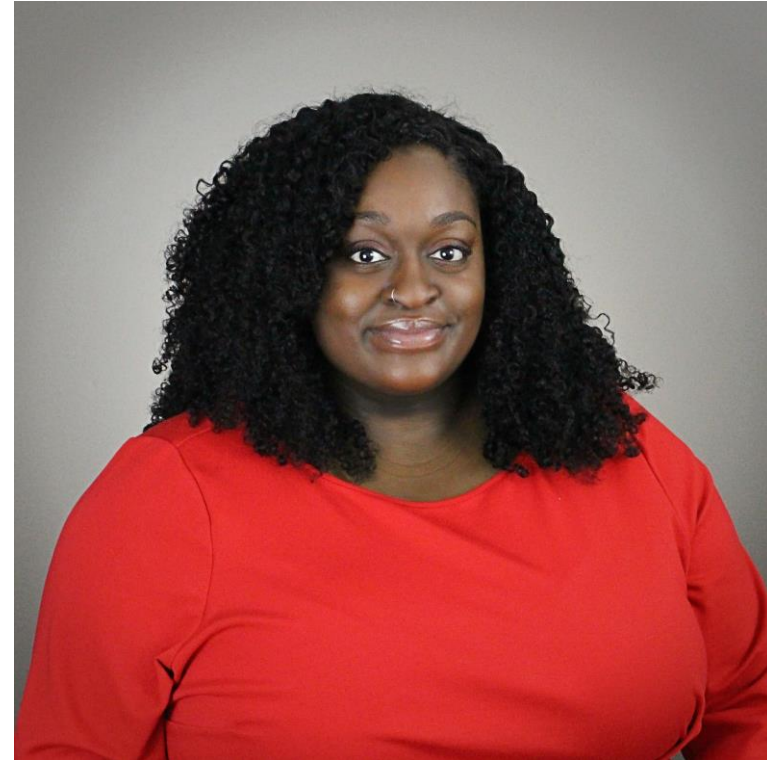
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Agenda

- Who is Education Commission of States
- Current landscape of pending policies and policy design trends
- The Louisiana Story
- Q&A

This webinar is being recorded and will be accessible electronically
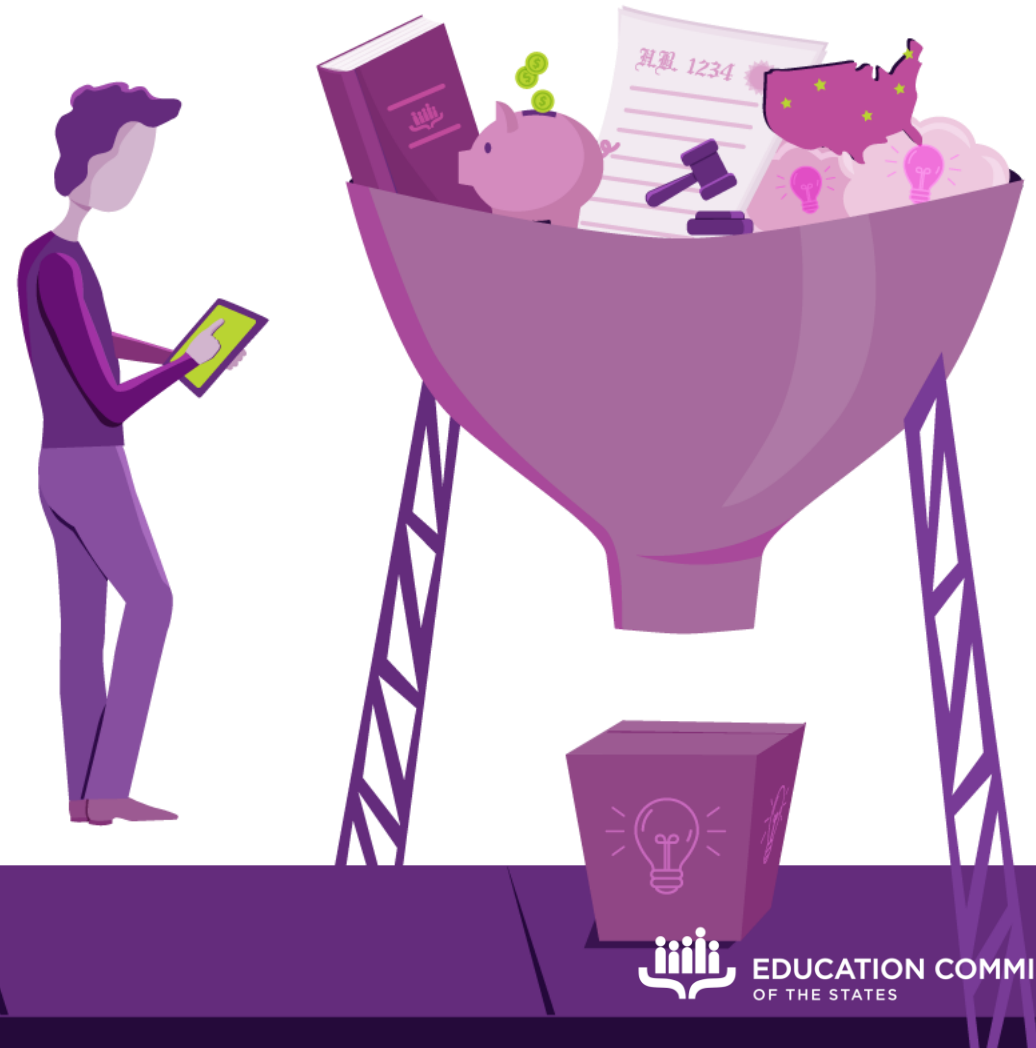
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Education Commission of the States Staff

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EDUCATION COMMISSION
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Who we are.

The essential, indispensable member of any team addressing education policy.

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What we do.

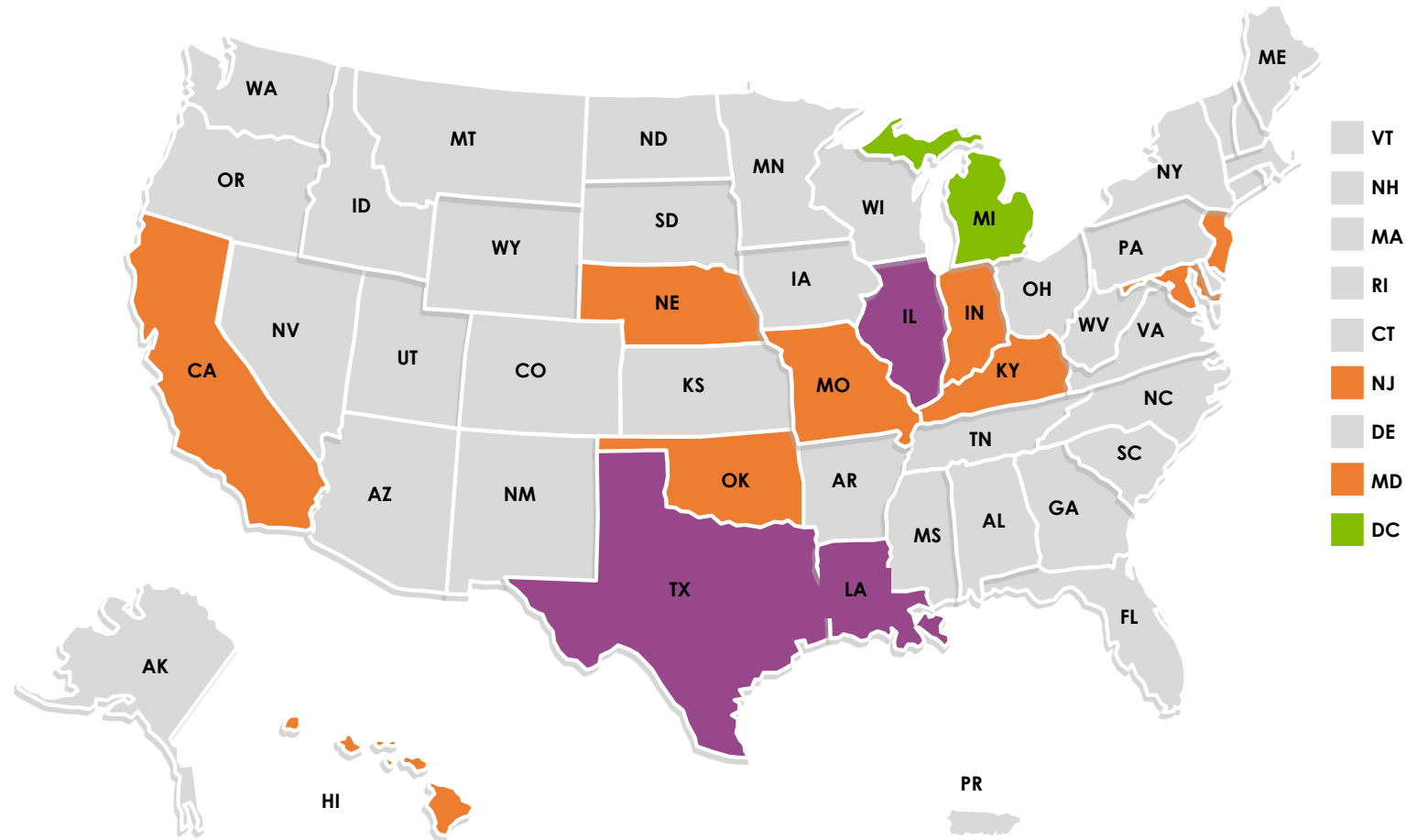We believe in the power of learning from experience and we know informed policymakers create better education policy.

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How we do it.

We research, report, convene and counsel.

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Landscape of State Policies as of 2/24/20

Policy Trends

- Governance
  - Should the requirement apply to all types of high schools?
  - Who has authority to write regulations, if anyone?
    - Who gets to decide what type(s) of students can opt out?
    - Who implements the waiver process?
  - Should data reporting be mandated? To whom? What data?

Policy Trends

- Waivers/Opt-outs
  - Who can waive the policy:
    - Parents
    - Students themselves if over 18
    - Students who are emancipated minors
    - Superintendents, School Boards, Districts, Principals, Counselors
  - Under what conditions can they waive the requirement?

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Considerations

- FAFSA Submission versus completion- how to define?
- Intersection with institution-level admissions and awarding processes
- Planning outreach and support for the policy
- How to support students that opt-out
- Providing equitable support to school districts
- Impacts on state financial aid programs
- Language matters

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FAFSA First: Requiring the FAFSA for High School Graduation

The Louisiana Story

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Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance

Dr. Sujuan Boutté – Executive Director

Dr. Tireka Cobb – Director of Field Outreach and Louisiana GEAR UP

Ebony Holmes – Public Information Officer

Brittani Williams – Financial Aid and Career Development Specialist

Stephanie Marcum – Manager of Extension Portfolio – *Office of Student Support Opportunities at the Louisiana Department of Education*

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The Louisiana Department of Education & Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance Presents

FAFSA Efforts in Louisiana

GOVERNANCE

Who leads the change?

In order to provide even greater access to financial aid for Louisiana's students, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) formed the financial aid working group 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 continues to meet quarterly to analyze current trends and best practices in financial aid planning and create a network of resources for students around the state.

How was Louisiana's financial aid access policy developed?

Financial Aid Working Group

- To ensure that parents, students, and school systems have a forum to provide feedback on financial aid access and supports, the Department organized the Financial Aid Working Group PDF – a diverse group of stakeholders with an interest in increasing access to postsecondary education for Louisiana students.

- The group developed a state action plan, recommended PDF policy changes, identified support services and programs, assisted the Department in the development of partnerships and alliances with various stakeholders, and presented a final report PDF. The group also publishes the annual State of Financial Aid in Louisiana PDF.

What's the overarching goal?

One Part of a Larger Plan

- Financial Aid Access
- Dual Enrollment Task Force
- Work-Based Learning Taskforce
- Jump Start

ACCESS

How do you fulfill the Louisiana Financial Aid Access Policy?

Louisiana requires public school students to take one of the following steps:

- **Submit the FAFSA**;
- Apply for **TOPS** with the TOPS online application;
- Submit an opt-out non-participation form PDF or **letter**; or
- Receive a **waiver PDF** through the school system.

How do you opt-out?

PARENTAL NONPARTICIPATION FORM
Financial Aid Application Completion Requirement

LEA Name:

Beginning with 2017-2018 school year, each graduating high school senior in a Louisiana public high school will be required, as part of his individual graduation plan, to complete either the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) online application, have a parent or legal custodian certify in waiver in writing to the student's local education agency (LEA) if he refuses to complete such an application, or the LEA may apply for a waiver of this requirement through the district hardship waiver process.

Please complete this form if you are the parent of a student attending a Louisiana public high school who will graduate in the spring of 2018 or beyond, and you wish to opt out of the requirement that your child complete either the FAFSA or TOPS online application as part of his individual graduation plan.

Student Name:	Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy):	
Parent/Legal Guardian Name:	Name of School/Parish:	
Home Address:		
City:	State:	ZIP:
Telephone Number:	Email:	

Rationale for Nonparticipation (optional):

I am the parent or legal guardian of the student referenced above, and I am electing to not have him complete either the FAFSA or TOPS online application as part of his individual graduation plan.

Print Parent/Legal Guardian Name:

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature:	Date:

Opt-out
Non-participation Form

Beginning with 2017-2018 school year, each graduating high school senior in a Louisiana public high school will be required, as part of his individual graduation plan, to either complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), apply for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) online application, **have a parent or legal custodian submit a written statement of nonparticipation to the local education agency (LEA)**, or receive a hardship waiver through the LEA.

How do you receive a waiver?

Receive a waiver PDF through the school system

Each graduating high school senior in a Louisiana public high school is required to plan for postsecondary education expenses. Per Bulletin 741, students must either submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), complete the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) online application, or have a parent or legal custodian submit a statement of nonparticipation to the local education agency (LEA). Per Bulletin 741, **if a graduating senior is not able to fulfill these requirements due to extenuating circumstances, the LEA may apply for a waiver to be approved by the state superintendent of education to waive the student of this requirement for graduation**
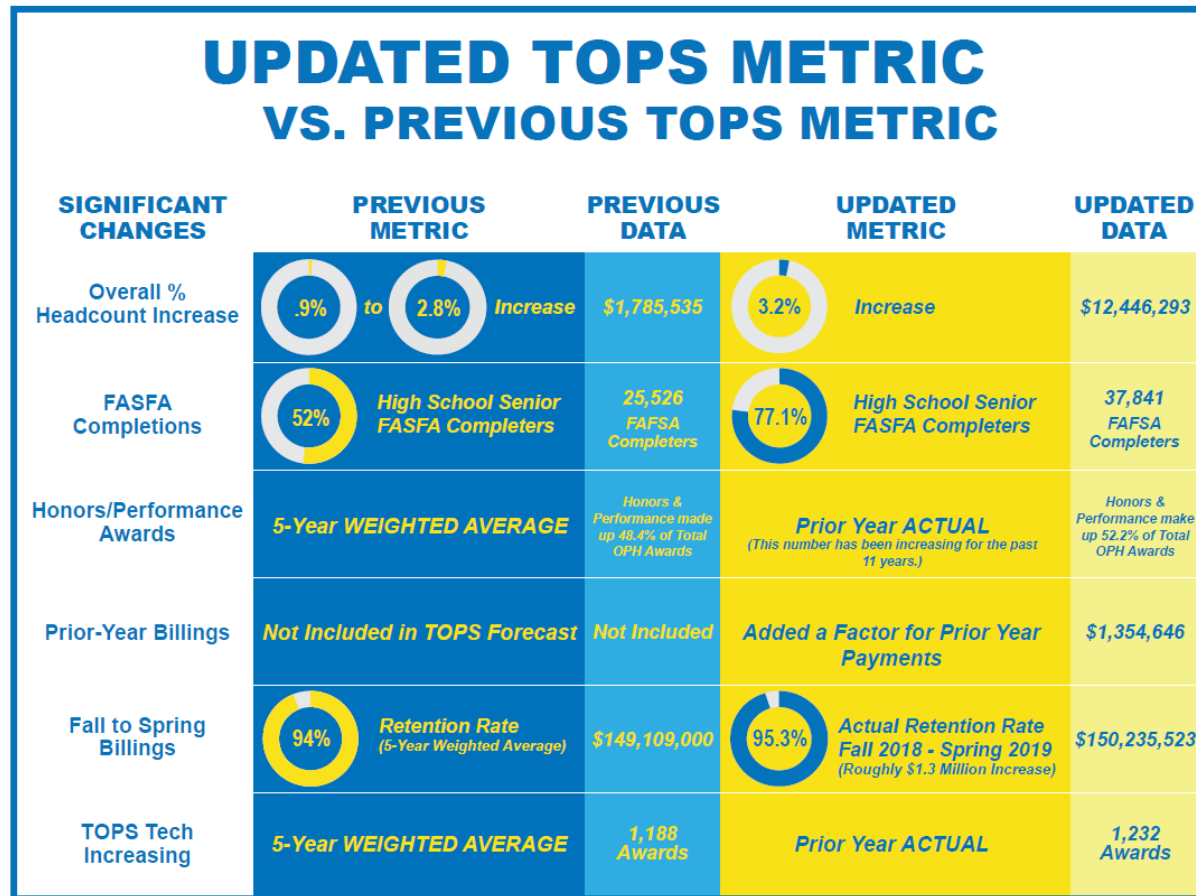
FINANCE

How do we communicate increased pressures on state financial aid programs?

UPDATED TOPS METRIC VS. PREVIOUS TOPS METRIC

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES	PREVIOUS METRIC	PREVIOUS DATA	UPDATED METRIC	UPDATED DATA
Overall % Headcount Increase	.9% to 2.8% Increase	$1,785,535	3.2% Increase	$12,446,293
FASFA Completions	52% High School Senior FASFA Completers	25,526 FAFSA Completers	77.1% High School Senior FASFA Completers	37,841 FAFSA Completers
Honors/Performance Awards	5-Year WEIGHTED AVERAGE	Honors & Performance made up 48.4% of Total OPH Awards	Prior Year ACTUAL (This number has been increasing for the past 11 years.)	Honors & Performance make up 52.2% of Total OPH Awards
Prior-Year Billings	Not Included in TOPS Forecast	Not Included	Added a Factor for Prior Year Payments	$1,354,646
Fall to Spring Billings	94% Retention Rate (5-Year Weighted Average)	$149,109,000	95.3% Actual Retention Rate Fall 2018 - Spring 2019 (Roughly $1.3 Million Increase)	$150,235,523
TOPS Tech Increasing	5-Year WEIGHTED AVERAGE	1,188 Awards	Prior Year ACTUAL	1,232 Awards

GO Grant Need for Increased Funding

Based on 2016-17 Campus Survey

Estimated Amount to Fund Packaging Policy	Funds Needed	Number of Students Eligible	**Average Award Range
LSU SYSTEM	$7,065,405	6,953	$1,500-$3,000
SU SYSTEM	$4,569,500	5,668	$1,000-$1,500
UL SYSTEM	$28,642,613	20,058	$1,200-$3,000
LCTC SYSTEM	$19,159,605	19,651	$300-$2,000
LAICU	$3,035,548	2,485	$1,000-$3,000
TOTALS	$62,472,671	54,815	$300-$3,000

Based on 2019-20 Campus Survey

Estimated Amount to Fund Packaging Policy	Funds Needed	Number of Students Eligible	**Average Award Range
LSU SYSTEM	$9,974,411	6,902	$1,500-$3,000
SU SYSTEM	$7,513,000	6,139	$1,000-$1,500
UL SYSTEM	$35,865,325	21,212	$1,200-$3,000
LCTC SYSTEM	$27,187,000	26,723	$300-$2,000
LAICU	$5,704,451	2,938	$1,000-$3,000
TOTALS	$86,244,187	63,914	$300-$3,000

Increased Need with More FAFSA Filers	Funds Needed	Number of Students Eligible
Difference between 2016-17 and 2019-20	$23,771,516	9,099

OUTCOMES

What did the increase in application activity look like after the policy was enacted?

LOSFA Data

- TOPS Online Applications (school year)
  - 2017- 2018: 334 applications
  - 2018-2019: 366 applications
  - 2019-2020: 302 applications (currently; numbers will continue to increase until June 30,2020)

- FAFSAs Completed (FAFSA cycle)
  - **2017-2018: 30,063 (51.2%) through June 28, 2017**
  - 2018-2019: 37,841 (77.1%) through June 29, 2018 – **year one of mandate**, 25.9 increase in completers
  - 2019-2020: 39,500 (82.6%) through August 23, 2019

What did the increase in application activity look like after the policy was enacted?

STATE SUBMISSION DATA ANALYSIS

The state additionally analyses submission data by subgroup. Below are the results from the two years of policy implementation.

Identifier	June 30, 2018	June 30, 2019
All Public School Students	84%	85%
Females	90%	90%
Males	79%	80%
TOPS University Diploma	91%	91%
Jump Start Career Diploma	66%	68%
Economically Disadvantaged	82%	83%
Non-Economically Disadvantaged	87%	88%
Special Education	64%	64%
English Language Learners	51%	50%
Homeless	data not available	82%
White	85%	85%
Black	86%	86%
HIspanic	67%	69%
American Indian	74%	n/a
Asian	91%	91%
Native Hawaii	78%	89%
Multi Race	86%	86%

NATIONAL COMPARISONS

The National College Access Network (NCAN) published the national completion rates and rank of all states by percent of growth since the previous year each week during the FAFSA cycle from October until the June 30, 2019 priority deadline. Since the implementation of the policy, Louisiana has finished at number one in the nation for FAFSA completions. NCAN reported that 79 percent of students in Louisiana completed the FAFSA by the June 30 priority deadline.[4]

Source: LDE Data
https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/course-choice/the-state-of-financial-aid-in-louisiana.pdf?sfvrsn=4
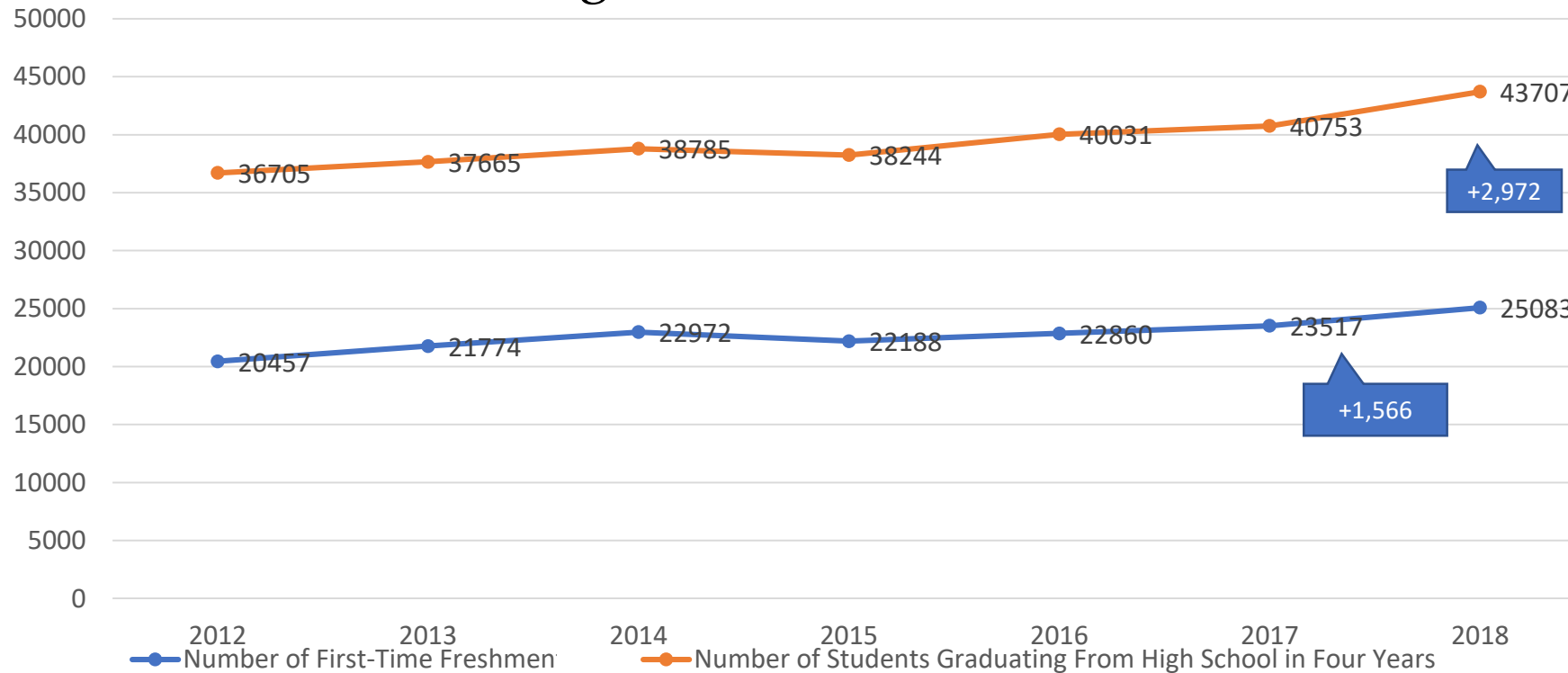
How many more students matriculated to postsecondary education?

College Enrollment in Louisiana

The number of graduates enrolled in the Fall semester immediately following graduation has increased over time, just as the number of students graduating from high school in four years has climbed.

How did the policy impact the work of LOSFA?

Number of statewide FAFSA events hosted

2017-2018 school year

11,464 Students and families attended 269 Financial Aid events

Data includes the following services:

- FAFSA Completion Workshops (4,499/151)
- TOPS, FAFSA, & General Financial Aid Seminars (5,391/101)
- TOPS Check/Retention Workshops (1,574/17)

2018-2019 school year

19,127 Students and families attended 385 financial aid events

Data includes the following services:

- FAFSA Completion Workshops (6,045/218)
- TOPS, FAFSA, & General Financial Aid Seminars (7,776/137)
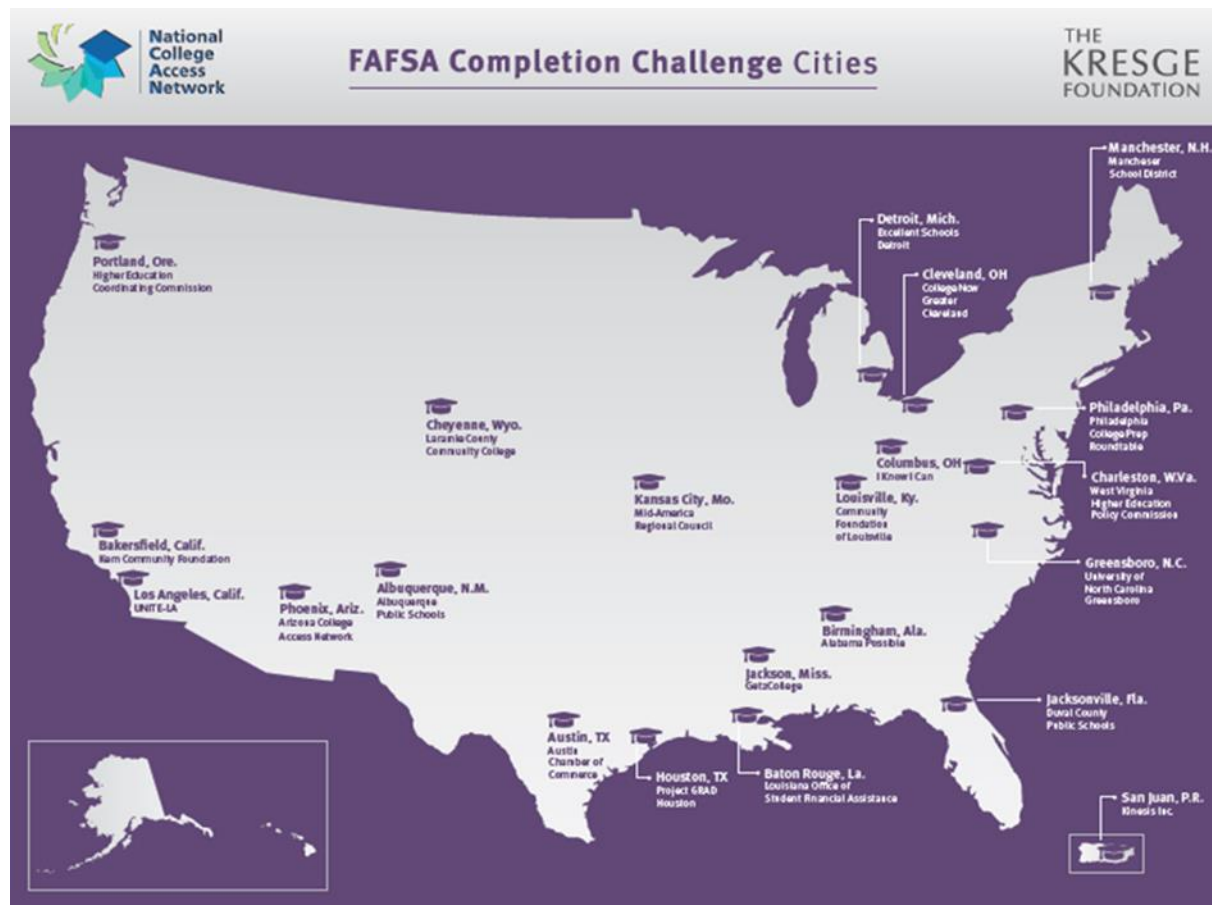- TOPS Check/Retention Workshops (5,306/30)

LOSFA'S OUTREACH PILOT

How was the pilot funded?

Compete To Complete Pilot

- The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) received a grant from the **National College Attainment Network (NCAN) and The Kresge Foundation** to increase completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by high school students in 11 East Baton Rouge Parish public schools during the 2016-17 academic year.

- The grant aimed to strengthen the urban postsecondary ecosystems by increasing FAFSA completion rates among high school seniors in East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS) by 10 % for the graduating class of 2017 in the "Compete to Complete" support services, sessions, and events.

- During the "Compete to Complete" campaign, LOSFA and its partners utilized creative and reaching promotion strategies, although some events and strategies were less successful due to the flood that affected Baton Rouge and surrounding areas in Louisiana.

- LOSFA and its partners reached their 10 % goal.

What outreach events did we facilitate?

FAFSA/Financial Aid Support Services/Sessions/Events

- Professional Development (PD)
  - FAFSA/Financial Aid PD Sessions

- Comprehensive Mentoring
  - FAFSA Trailblazer Support
  - FAFSA Ambassadors Support

- FAFSA/Financial Aid Workshops/ Events
  - FAFSA Office Hours Support
  - FAFSA/FSA ID One-on-One Support
  - FAFSA Concentration Events
  - FAFSA Lock-in Event
  - FAFSA Basketball Tournament Event
  - FAFSA Lab Sessions
  - FAFSA Block Party Event
  - FAFSA/Financial Aid Call Center Support
  - FAFSA Text Messaging/Social Media Support
  - Financial Literacy for You (FLY) Tour Events
  - FAFSA Data Dashboard Support (Compete to Complete Portal)

Who did we serve?

- **2016-17 Target Grade: 12th graders**

- **2016-17 Participants across 11 schools: 2,387**
  - Baton Rouge Magnet High School
  - McKinley Senior High School
  - Robert E. Lee High School
  - Belaire High School
  - Mentorship Academy
  - Tara High School
  - Broadmoor Senior High School
  - Northeast High School
  - Woodlawn High School
  - Glen Oaks Senior High School
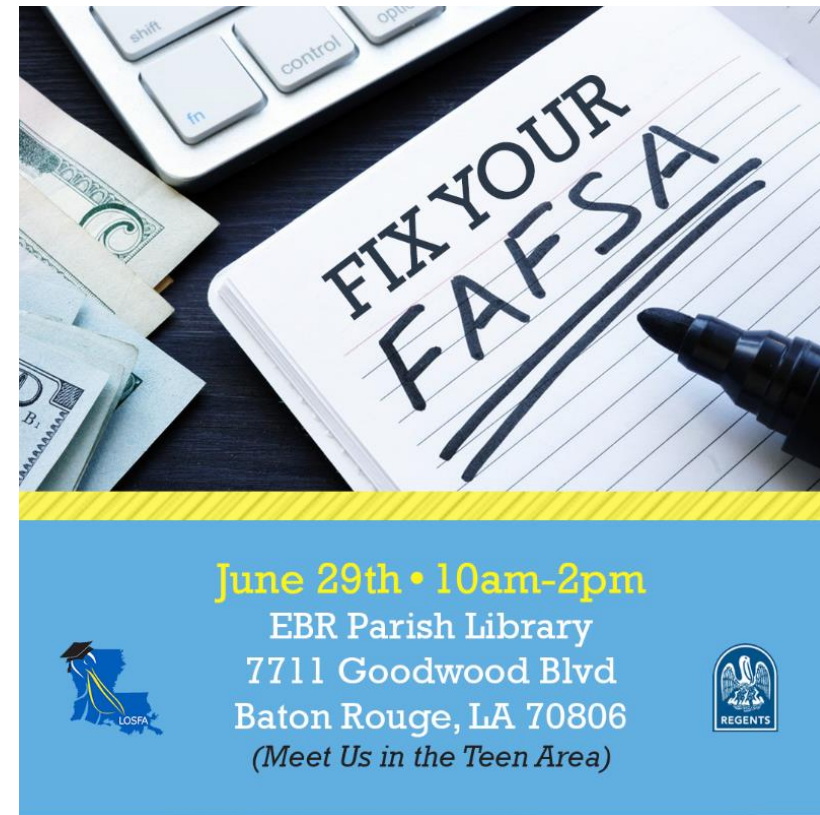 - Scotlandville Magnet High School

How did we track school performance?

Compete to Complete Portal

- The Office of Federal Student Aid offers data on FAFSA completion at the state, high school, and district levels.

- With that information, LOSFA made its own website portal – **Compete to Complete** – where stakeholders could see ranks, in terms of how many students had filled out the FAFSA.

- Louisiana school administrators checked this site often and got excited about their progress, creating friendly competition!

- For NCAN members who may not have the resources to create their own database and website, you can use NCAN's #FormYourFuture FAFSA Tracker. This tracker monitors FAFSA completion at the high school, city, and state levels.
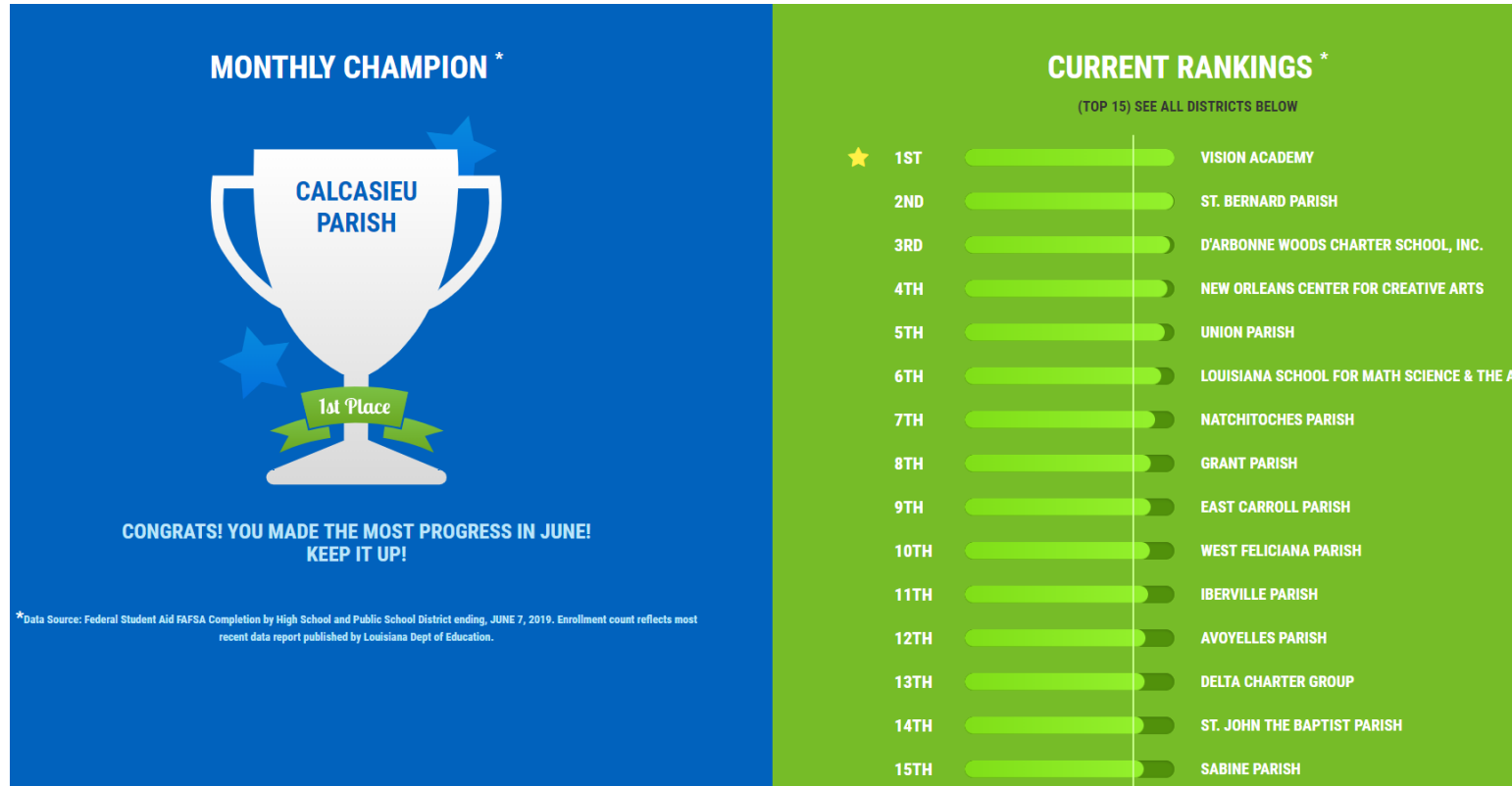
How did we reach the students?

Call Outs | Social Media | Signal Vine Text Messaging | Post Card Mailouts

How did we view school performance?

Compete to Complete Dashboard

http://competetocompletela.org/

Who were our pilot partners?

- Louisiana Board of Regents
- Louisiana College & Career Transitions Coordinator
- Louisiana Department of Education
- Louisiana Education Loan Authority
- East Baton Rouge Parish School System
- Career Compass
- Baton Rouge Area Chamber

How can you reach us?

GeauxFAFSA@la.gov (LOSFA)

LDEfinancialaid@la.gov (Department of Education)