

Your Question:

You asked for information on successful FAFSA completion strategies across the states. Additionally, you asked for any trending strategies introduced in current legislation.

Our Response:

There have been several initiatives at both the federal and state levels to boost the completion of the FAFSA in recent years. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education launched the [FAFSA Completion Initiative](#), which led several states to develop programs and initiatives to support FAFSA completion. **Minnesota's** [Office of Higher Education](#) (OHE) began participating in this federal initiative in the 2016-17 academic year, utilizing a web portal that allows participating schools and districts to review students' FAFSA completion progress. **Nebraska's** [Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education](#) also participated in the FAFSA Completion Initiative, allowing the commission to provide FAFSA completion information to school districts, high schools and other designated entities.

Below, please find information on state legislative trends related to FAFSA completion, some details on state initiatives and additional resources for your review.

FAFSA Completion 2021 Legislative Trends

Trends in current legislation show that many states ([MA](#), [MN](#), [NY](#), [SC](#) and [WV](#)) have introduced legislation that would require completion of the FAFSA for students to graduate high school.

- [Hawaii](#) introduced legislation requiring the department of education's FAFSA working group to create a state plan to complete the FAFSA or an opt-out waiver as a statewide graduation requirement for the 2023-24 school year.
- [Indiana](#) introduced legislation that would establish a FAFSA completion incentive pilot program that would provide specific requirements and a determination formula for a school corporation to receive a FAFSA completion incentive award.
- Lastly, [Maryland](#) enacted legislation that requires each county board of education to aid high school seniors as they complete and submit financial aid forms, including the FAFSA. In addition, each board must develop an outreach plan by October 1 of each subsequent year.
- Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, [Texas](#) enacted legislation requiring that all students submit a FAFSA or Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) before graduating from high school.

Current State FAFSA Completion Initiatives

State	Office/Initiative	Program Goals and Strategies
Tennessee	Tennessee Promise	Mandatory Completion for H.S. Graduation: The Tennessee Promise is a last-dollar scholarship program that allows recent high school graduates an opportunity to earn two years of college credit towards an associate degree or certificate without paying tuition or fees. To be eligible, students must complete the FAFSA by a specific date. Tennessee saw an increase in 1200 students that completed the FAFSA after the first year of implementation.
Louisiana	Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA)	Mandatory Completion for H.S. Graduation: Requires students to submit a FAFSA, complete the state aid application, submit an opt-out form or request a waiver from their school system to graduate high school. This took effect in the 2017-18 school year, and Louisiana saw a 25.9% increase in FAFSA completion for the state.
North Carolina	College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC)	Individualized Counseling: North Carolina requires students to submit a FAFSA to receive state aid, but not as a requirement to graduate high school. The CFNC collaborates with communities across the state to provide in-person and on-site support to students completing the FAFSA. Additionally, North Carolina State Employees Credit Union trains its staff to offer FAFSA filing support to the public. Additionally, CFNC offers local and personal (both in-person and virtual) assistance for FAFSA completion.
Texas	Texas Education Agency	Mandatory Completion for H.S. Graduation: In 2019, Gov. Greg Abbott enacted a bill requiring public high school students to complete the FAFSA to graduate. Students can receive an exemption if they apply for state financial aid programs or complete an opt-out form; this is scheduled to take effect in the 2021-22 school year.

Additional Resources

- This ECS [Policy Brief](#) identifies barriers to successful FAFSA completion by students from historically underserved backgrounds.

Education Commission of the States strives to respond to information requests within 24 hours. This document reflects our best efforts but it may not reflect exhaustive research. Please let us know if you would like a more comprehensive response. Our staff is also available to provide unbiased advice on policy plans, consult on proposed legislation and testify at legislative hearings as third-party experts.

- [Education North Carolina](#) offers six ways states can boost their FAFSA completion rates.
- National Conference of State Legislatures offers an article on [Promoting FAFSA to Get More Students Into Higher Education](#).
- Education Strategy Group's [press release](#) provides “state recommendations to dramatically increase FAFSA completion.”