



College Ready Florida

*Introduction to
Statewide Initiatives*

About Florida College Access Network

Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is a statewide network of leaders, organizations, educators, and individuals who are collectively committed to dramatically increasing postsecondary opportunities for all Florida students—especially students traditionally underrepresented in higher education, such as low income students and those who are the first in their families to go to college.

Our Mission

To create and strengthen a statewide network that catalyzes and supports communities to improve college and career readiness, access, and completion for all students.

Our Guiding Values

College is postsecondary education. Florida College Access Network uses the term “college” to refer to the attainment of high-quality postsecondary credentials beyond high school, including technical certificates and academic degrees.

College readiness is career readiness. All Florida students deserve to receive a high quality PreK-12 education which prepares them academically for success in college or a career.

College is for everyone. All Florida students deserve the opportunity to pursue a high quality postsecondary education that prepares them to effectively communicate, engage, and compete in the 21st century knowledge-based global economy.

Our Vision

At least 60% of working-age Floridians will hold a high-quality post-secondary degree or credential by the year 2025.

College is a public good. Postsecondary educational opportunity and attainment are critical to a just and equitable society, strong democracy, robust economy, and healthy communities.

Reaching Goal 2025 will require collective action. Accelerating high-quality degree production in Florida to meet Goal 2025 requires strategic partnerships and active involvement from all sectors

Connect with FCAN on Social Media

Follow FCAN @Goal2025Florida

Follow Amy Bolick @abolick_FCAN



Current Initiatives



College Application Week

Part of the American College Application Week Campaign (ACAC), a nationwide effort to increase college access for income and first generation college students

Held over one or more days in October or November, depending on the needs of the host site and its students
Endorsed by the Florida School Counselor Association (FSCA)

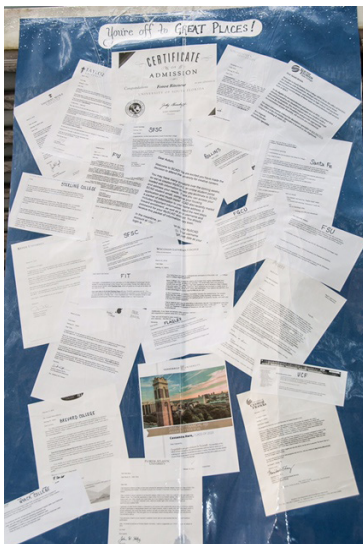
Gives students the opportunity to submit applications during the school day with the help of trained volunteers

The Florida FAFSA Challenge

Strives to boost the number of Florida students completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which helps students qualify for grants and loans to pay for college

Fosters friendly competition by challenging schools and districts to increase their FAFSA completion by 5% over the previous year

The challenge starts on October 1, and runs through March 31



Florida College Decision Day

Held on or around May 1, the day students must inform colleges of their plans to enroll

Celebrates high school seniors for their postsecondary plans, including university, college, technical school, and military

Encourages all students to begin thinking about college early, and helps build a college-going culture

Hosting Apply Yourself Florida



College Application Week Events What Else Can Host Sites Do? Should

- Be hosted during regular school hours
- Be open to all graduating seniors
- Give students the opportunity to apply to the school, college, or technical school of their choice

What Does a School Need to Host this Event?

- A computer lab for students to use during the event
- A designated site coordinator to serve as the point person and organize the event
- Volunteers to assist students during the event

Each Host Site Will

- Register online as a host site for Apply Yourself Florida and other College Ready Florida initiatives: <https://floridacan.wufoo.com/forms/s1mv9djw01t103m/>
- Designate a host site coordinator as the primary point of contact
- Reserve a computer lab for the event
- Promote the event to school population and local community
- Recruit Volunteers to assist students
- Collect data about the number of students attending the event, and the number of applications submitted
- Submit data and other feedback to Florida CAN

- Organize a planning committee to support implementation of Apply Yourself Florida
- Seek support from your area's Local College Access Network (LCAN) if you have one. If you're not sure whether your community has an LCAN, you can find more information here, or contact Florida CAN.
- Host other college-going culture activities during Apply Yourself Florida
- Follow up with students to ensure that their college applications are complete and their FAFSAs are filed
- Continue building a college going culture by registering for the Florida FAFSA Challenge and Florida College Decision Day

Helpful FCAN Resources

- The Apply Yourself Florida Site Coordinator Guide contains helpful resources like letter templates, timelines, checklists, and more
- The Apply Yourself Student Guide provides resources to help students explore schools and prepare for submitting applications
- Access both guides by visiting www.floridacollegeaccess.org and clicking on "Initiatives"



Share your school's Apply Yourself Florida Event using the hashtag **#ApplyYourselfFL**

Taking on the Florida FAFSA Challenge



How Can My School or Community Participate in the Challenge?

- Take on the goal of raising FAFSA completion by at least 5%, and make that goal public
- Note that schools are welcome to set more ambitious goals, or goals that fit their unique circumstances
- Register online as an official host site to receive free resources and technical assistance: <https://floridacan.wufoo.com/forms/s1mv9djw01t103m/>
- Track your school's progress by checking Florida CAN's online data dashboard for near real-time updates on your school's FAFSA completion

How Can We Boost FAFSA Completion?

- Host financial aid activities throughout the year to support parents and students in completing the FAFSA
- For instance, you can host a FAFSA Information Night with financial aid experts to answer questions, or host a FAFSA Lab where families can complete the FAFSA with assistance
- High schools, LCANs, local colleges, non-profits, and businesses can work together to host financial aid events at community locations

What Does Florida CAN provide?

- An online, interactive dashboard that is updated weekly between January and April
- The Florida FAFSA Challenge leaderboard, which is updated weekly and shows which schools are leading the challenge
- An online toolkit with resources and best practices for boosting FAFSA completion—including strategies successfully used by winning schools
- Press releases, e-blasts and blogs promoting the Florida FAFSA Challenge, including updates and stories from the field

Win a Cool Trophy!

- Winners in certain categories will be recognized with trophies at a special luncheon at FCAN's annual summit
- Winners' categories include most improved, and highest levels of FAFSA completion
- Schools that increase FAFSA completion by 5% over the previous year, or that achieve 55% total completion will receive a certificate of recognition
- Monitor your school's progress using the Florida FAFSA Finish Line dashboard at www.floridacollegeaccess.org



Tweet about your school's FAFSA progress using the hashtag **#FAFSAFL**

Celebrating College Decision Day



What is Florida College Decision Day?

- Florida College Decision Day recognizes high school seniors for their postsecondary plans and encourages younger students and families to prepare early for postsecondary education
- College Decision Day is inspired by the NCAA's National Signing Day to reinforce the idea that excellence in the classroom should be just as celebrated as excellence in athletics.

Why Host College Decision Day?

- To recognize all students for their postsecondary plans
- To influence younger students as they prepare for college
- To support a college-going culture and wrap up the school year with a celebration

The Role of Host Sites

While each school must decide for itself the best way to celebrate College Decision Day, we encourage host sites to create an event that, at a minimum, follows these guidelines:

- Recognize ALL students for their postsecondary plans (2-yr, 4-yr, military, postsecondary certificate)
- Hold recognition in front of the high school's entire student body
- Contact local media – encourage publicity beyond the high school community
- Have fun!

Event Ideas

- Host an assembly to celebrate the postsecondary accomplishments of each of your seniors and their families.
- Host a community-wide celebration. This may require a larger budget, but will involve more community members and students of all ages.
- Consider hosting a joint event with other schools
- Give prizes or "SWAG": Ideas might include a microwave, mini-fridge, tablet, computer, college survival kit, pencils, flags, t-shirts.
- Invite high school alumni, elected officials, local business leaders, parents etc. as guest speakers to congratulate the students on their decision to go to college
- Interview seniors about their college plans and write articles for local newspapers and the school newspaper
- Encourage students and school staff to wear college t-shirts on the day of your event and/ or a particular day of the week



Let us know how you're celebrating your students using the hashtag **#DecisionDayFL**

Want to Learn More?



Check Out Our Toolkits

- Access free site coordinator toolkits for Apply Yourself Florida, The Florida FAFSA Challenge, and Florida College Decision Day at www.floridacollegeaccess.org
- These toolkits contain checklists, sample event timelines, sample parent letters, and more.
- Distribute the Apply Yourself Student Guide to help prepare students for submitting college applications

More Online Resources

- Listen to the [College Ready Florida](#) podcast, a new resource that covers topics related to hosting our statewide initiatives
- Visit the [FAFSA Data Dashboard](#) to monitor your school's progress in FAFSA completion
- Encourage students to sign up for [UpNext](#), a texting campaign that is part of Michelle Obama's Reach Higher initiative. This campaign provides free college-related advising to students via text message. To enroll, students should text their first and last name to (240) 623-8319.

We Want to Hear from You!

FCAN loves to hear about the great work our host sites are doing. Here are some ways to keep us up to date:

- Share your College Ready Florida stories on social media, using the hashtag [#CollegeReadyFL](#)
- Reply to the [Apply Yourself Florida](#) survey when the link is sent in December. Let us know what's working well, and what resources could be improved.

Get Free Stuff!

Schools and organizations that register as host sites for College Ready Florida initiatives get free promotional materials like stickers and posters.

FCAN also raffles off prizes to help registered schools build a college-going culture for their students.

To learn more about what resources are available, contact Amy Bolick, FCAN's Statewide Programs Coordinator, at abolick@floridacollegeaccess.org.

To register for College Ready Florida, visit www.floridacollegeaccess.org and click on "Initiatives."

See Your School or Organization Featured on the FCAN Website!

Don't forget to share your College Ready Florida stories on social media using the hashtags [#CollegeReadyFL](#), [#ApplyYourselfFL](#), [#FAFSAFL](#), and [#DecisionDayFL](#). We'll share some of our favorite stories with the rest of our statewide network!