



Supporting PA Students Access to 2025-26 Financial Aid

Ali Caccavella, Special Advisor to Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education

Diona Brown, Director of PA School Services, PHEAA

Alejandra Zavala, College & Career Specialist, School District of Lancaster

Jamie Kosh, Senior Manager OSA Commonwealth Campus Office of Student Aid, Penn State

Candace Powell, Leadership Team, Philadelphia College Prep Roundtable



February 18, 2025



Pennsylvania
Department of Education

PA Financial Aid: Lunch & Learn Agenda

I. Financial Aid for Pennsylvania Students & Families

- PDE

II. 2025-26 FAFSA & PA State Grant updates & resources

- PHEAA

III. Insights & Resources from Practitioner Experts

- School District of Lancaster; Penn State University; Philadelphia College Prep Roundtable

IV. Group Discussion: Questions & Answers



Pennsylvania
Department of Education



25-26 Aid Year FAFSA Completion in PA



Pennsylvania
Department of Education

FAFSA Unlocks Dollars for Students in PA

Up to \$7,395 in Pell Grants

Up to \$5,750 in PA State Grants

PHEAA [Special Programs](#) such as Ready to Succeed and PA TIP

Federal and State Work Study Dollars

Many Scholarships and Institutional Aid Programs

Federal Student Loans: Best Rates & Repayment Options



Pennsylvania
Department of Education

FAFSA Unlocks Aid for Pennsylvania's Postsecondary Institutions

- PA Community Colleges
- PASSHE Universities
- Thaddeus Stevens and Rural Regional College
- State-Related Universities
- PA's Private Colleges & Universities
- Career and Technical Centers
- Postsecondary Proprietary Schools
 - Accredited to leverage Federal Student Aid dollars





Tracking Pennsylvania High School Seniors' FAFSA applications

Tracking FAFSA rates is crucial to target support and drive submissions

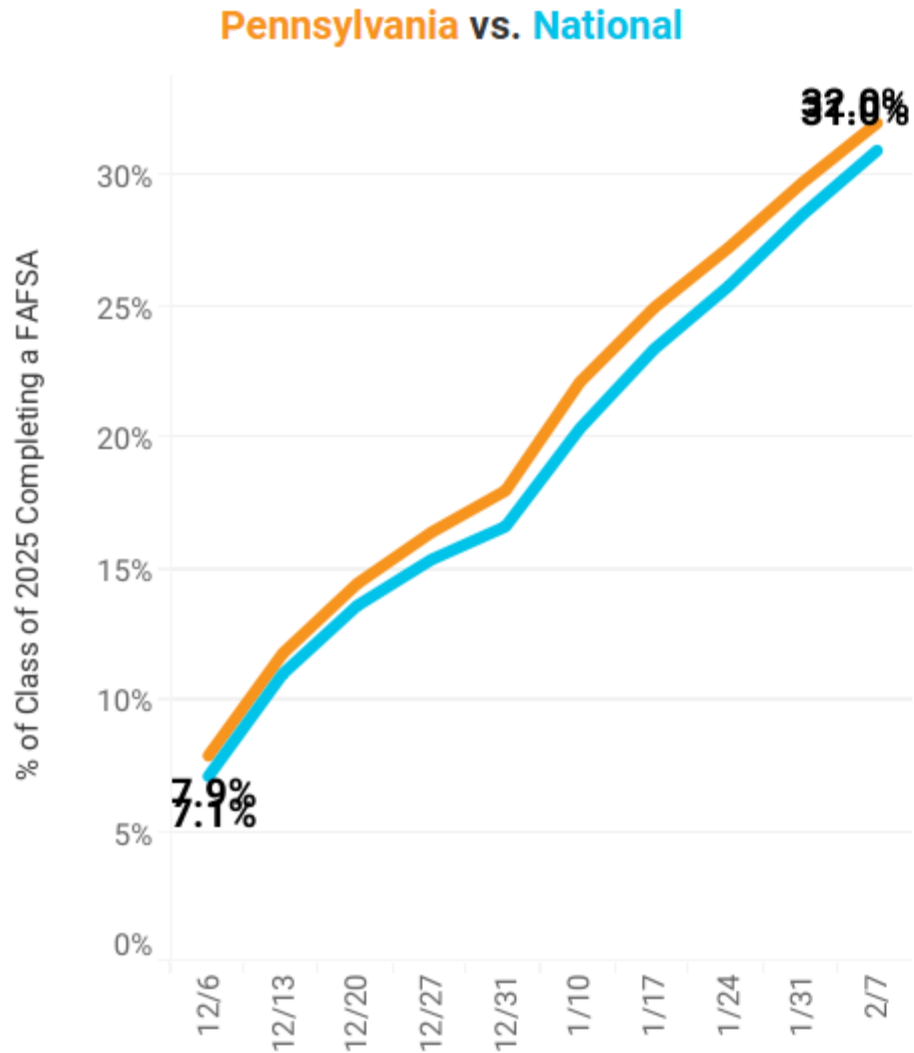
PA public district and high school FAFSA completion data is regularly available from Federal Student Aid [at the StudentAid.gov Data Center](#)

- *Student Level* data is available for PA districts via a [data share agreement with PHEAA](#)

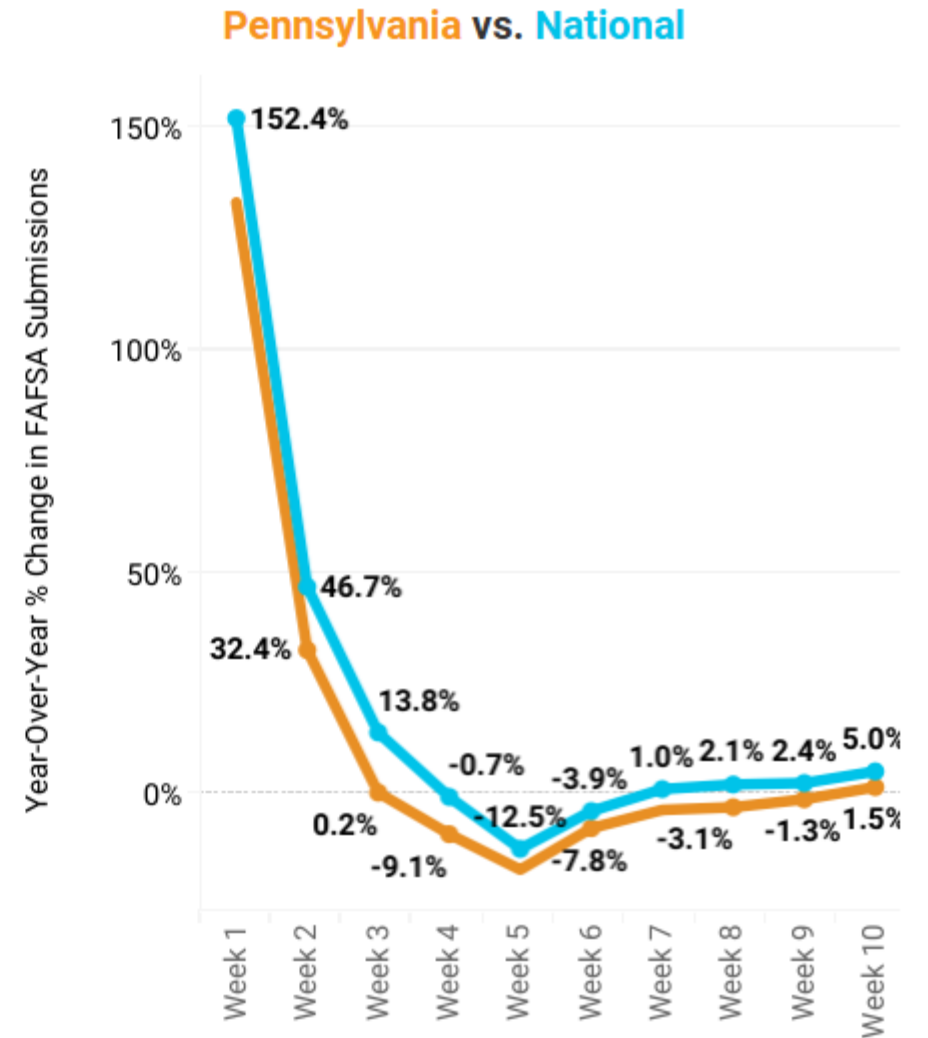
National College Attainment Network (NCAN) provides national comparative data along with state and district level FAFSA completion analysis on their [FAFSA Tracker](#)

Analysis shows Pennsylvania high school FAFSA submission rates are *up by 5.6% or 3,022 more applications compared to end of February 2024.*

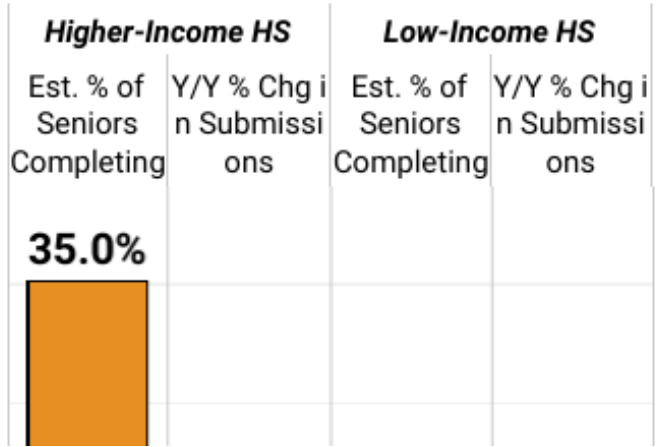
Estimated Percent of Seniors Completing a FAFSA



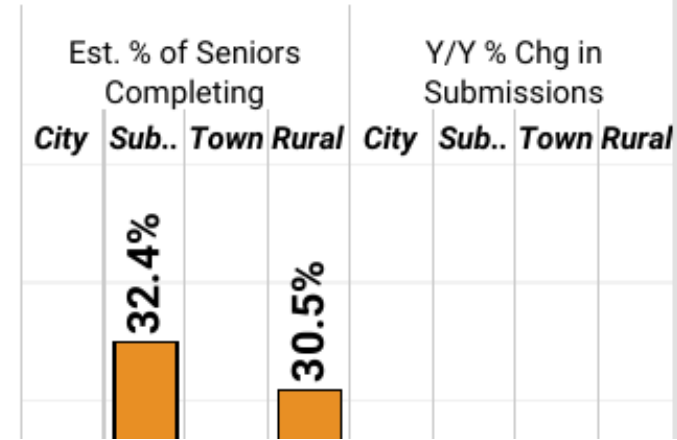
Year-Over-Year % Change in FAFSA Submissions



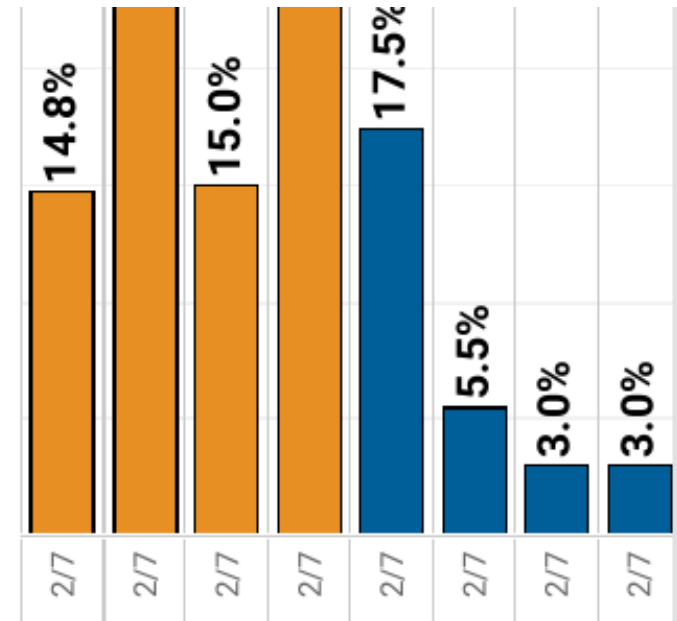
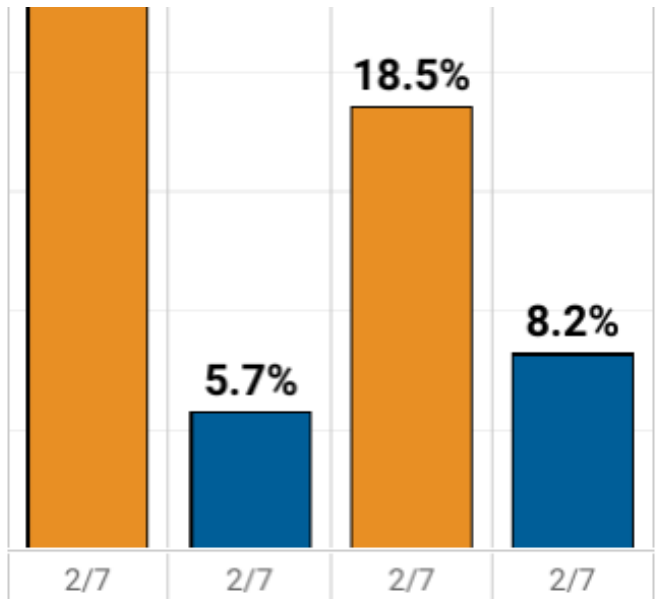
By School Income Level



By Geographic Locale

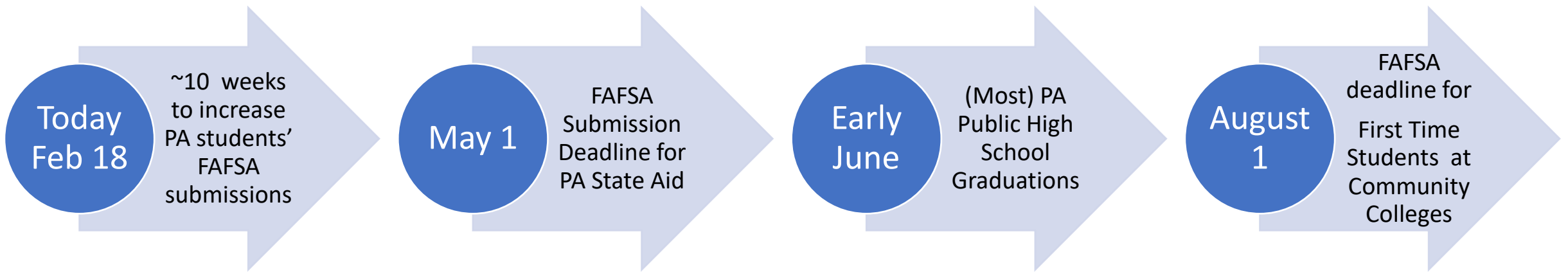


Est. % of Seniors Completing a FAFSA & Year-Over-Year % Change in FAFSA Completions by High School Characteristics (Pennsylvania)



Department of Education

Timeline to PA Students' Financial Aid



PA High School Practitioner

Diona Brown, Harrisburg PA

- Director PA School Services
- Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency

Insights from PHEAA Access Partner expertise:

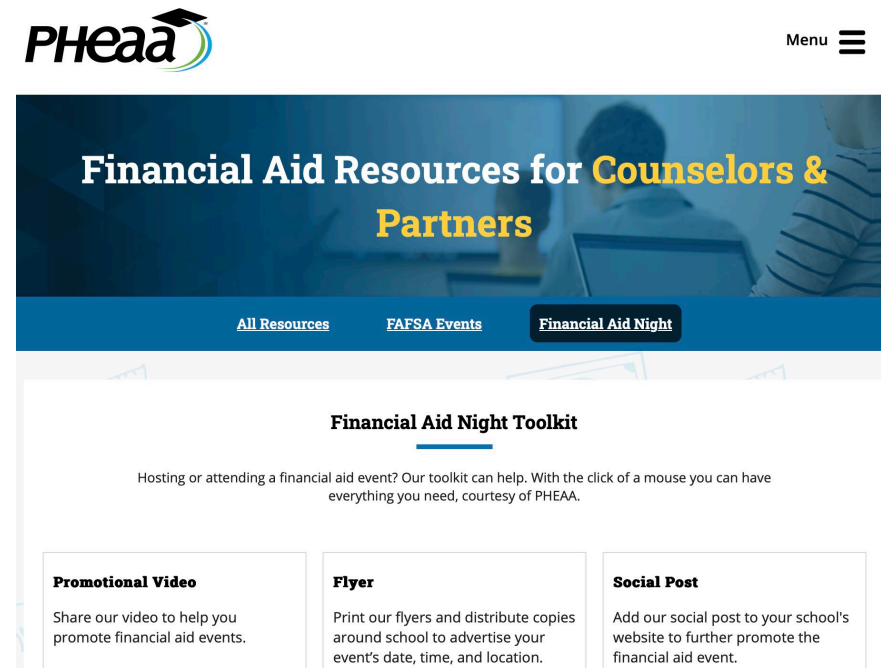
+ *Updates on FAFSA, federal and PA state financial aid*

2025-26 FAFSA

- Higher education access partners have conducted over 415 FAFSA completion sessions with over 5800 attendees.
- Families have reported easier completion and less technical issues.
- Language interpretation services have been expanded
- If you need assistance in English or Spanish, contact the [Federal Student Aid Information Center \(FSAIC\)](#) for help. Studentaid.gov is available in both English and Spanish.
- An updated [interpretation support page](#) provides written “Get Started” content in Mandarin, Cantonese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, French, Korean, German, Arabic, Russian, and Haitian Creole.
- Speakers of the above languages, plus +60 other languages, can call **833-610-2590 for assistance**. **They should press “7”** and they will reach an agent. At this point the caller (or person helping them) should say “Interpreter, and the name of the language they would like”.

PHEAA Toolkits

- [Financial Aid Night Toolkit](#)
- [FAFSA Toolkit](#)
 - Includes PDFs, flyers, ads for school publications, newspaper articles and planning information



PHEAA Menu

Financial Aid Resources for Counselors & Partners

[All Resources](#) [FAFSA Events](#) [Financial Aid Night](#)

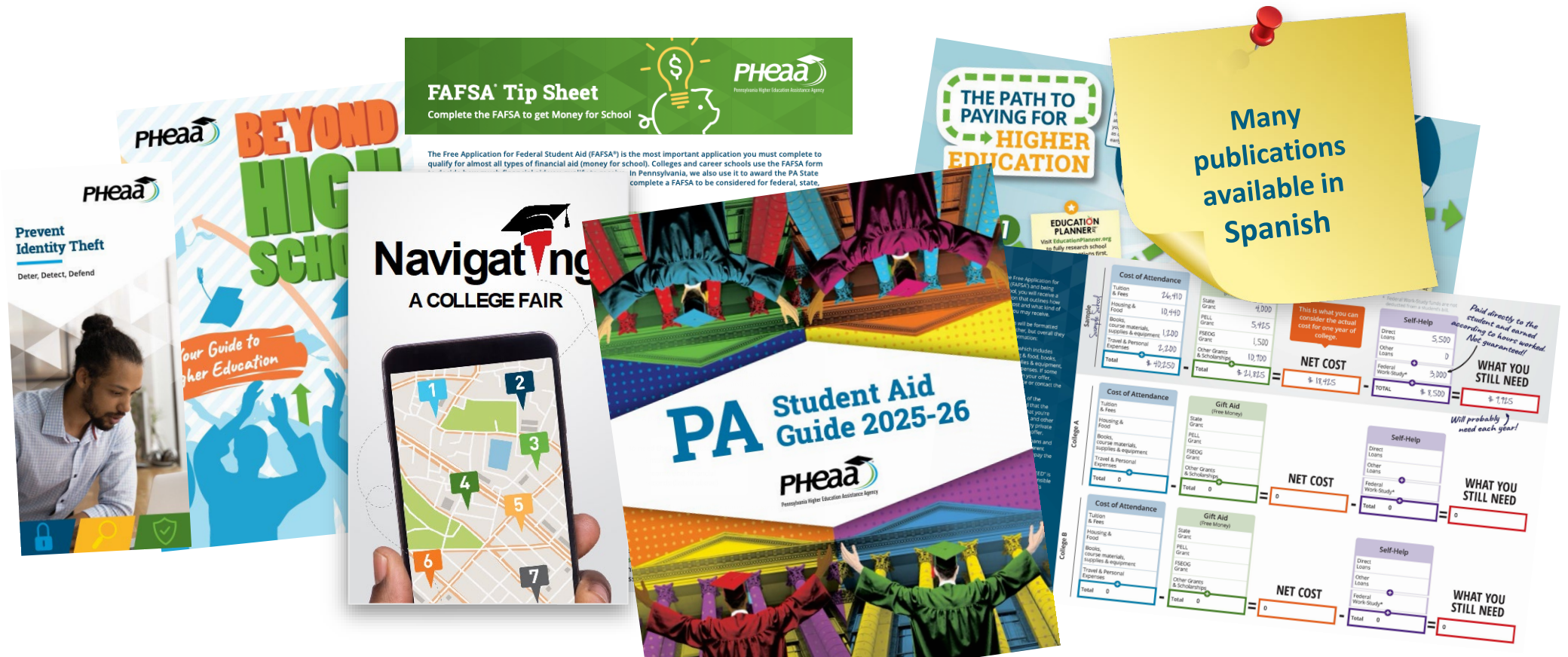
Financial Aid Night Toolkit

Hosting or attending a financial aid event? Our toolkit can help. With the click of a mouse you can have everything you need, courtesy of PHEAA.

Promotional Video Share our video to help you promote financial aid events.	Flyer Print our flyers and distribute copies around school to advertise your event's date, time, and location.	Social Post Add our social post to your school's website to further promote the financial aid event.
---	--	--

PHEAA Materials

PHEAA offers a large variety of materials that are **free** to order at PHEAA.org/order-online.



25-26 PA State Grant Application



- Students should be encouraged to complete the FAFSA. First time applicants will be sent an email to set up a PHEAA account within our PA State Grant System.
- Communications will be sent to schools prior to emails being sent.
- Announcements will also be made on our website and social media accounts prior to student emails going out.



PA Practitioner Insights

Expertise from financial aid practitioners serving PA students & families



Pennsylvania
Department of Education

PA High School Practitioner

Alejandra Zavala, Lancaster PA

- College and Career Specialist
- School District of Lancaster

Insights from K-12 practitioner expertise:

+ *Wins with state, federal and institutional/scholarship financial aid?*

- *Obstacles with state, federal and institutional financial aid?*

○ *Resources to offer, or that would help you and your students access aid?*



Pennsylvania
Department of Education

Helpful resource mentioned - from Center for New York City Affairs

[FAFSA - home | FAFSA: The How-To Guide for High School Students](#)

Understanding FAFSA.org



PA Financial Aid Officer

Jamie Kosh

- Senior Manager, Office of Student Aid
- Penn State University, OSA Commonwealth Campus

Insights from financial aid administrator expertise:

- + *Wins with state, federal and institutional/scholarship financial aid?*
- *Obstacles you're facing with state, federal and institutional financial aid?*
- o *Resources to offer or that would help your students access aid?*



Pennsylvania
Department of Education

•**Opportunities and wins w/ state, federal and institutional/scholarship financial aid?**

- State and federal aid seems to be remaining flat
- FAFSA release date of October 1st now codified: FAFSA improvement and simplification.
- COA information required on institutional websites.
- Institutional/scholarship financial aid is being reviewed: new process of awarding first-year students
- Penn State is being more strategic in the process
- Use and exploration of One-Stop and AI opportunities.

Obstacles with state, federal and institutional financial aid?

- Late release of FAFSA form impacts
- State PA State Grant system updates: hoping improved prior to 25-26 award disbursement.
- PA ACT 69 for PA Institutions.
- U.S. Department of Education challenges & opportunities
- Loan forgiveness programs in jeopardy.
- Additional funding opportunities for the graduate student population.



•**Obstacles cont...**

- International student opportunities in this new political landscape
- Student and parent debt continues to rise, along with campus cost
- Parent and Graduate PLUS loan interest rates and fees
- New regulations that are especially burdensome and hinder administration of aid

•**Resources to offer OR that would help you and your students access these sources of aid**

- Promotion of FAFSA through state and federal means.
- A universal timeline for all institutions to allow students time to review their aid offers.



Jamie Kosh, MA, MBA. (he/him/his)
Senior Manager, OSA Commonwealth Campus,
Graduate and Professional School Liaison
Office of Student Aid
Penn State
(814) 865-6301
jxk326@psu.edu
314 Shields Bldg, University Park, PA 16802
studentaid.psu.edu

PA College Access Practitioner

Candace Powell Kinard, Philadelphia PA

- Executive Consultant, EduDreamer Consulting
- Leadership Team, Philadelphia College Prep Roundtable

Insights from college access organization expertise:

+ Wins with state, federal and institutional/scholarship financial aid?

- Obstacles with state, federal and institutional financial aid?

o Resources to offer, or that would help you and your students access aid?



Pennsylvania
Department of Education

RESOURCES FOR COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS PROFESSIONALS

Philadelphia College Prep Roundtable

[Philadelphia College Prep Roundtable - Philadelphia College Prep Roundtable](#)

Federal Student Aid Financial Aid Tool Kit

<https://financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov/tk/announcement-detail.jsp?id=fafsa-updates>

The Institute on College Access and Success (TICAS)

<https://ticas.org/>

National Association for Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)

<https://www.nasfaa.org/home>

National College Attainment Network (NCAN)

<https://www.ncan.org/>





Discussion: Q&A

Consideration include:

- *What questions do you have on behalf of students/families?*
- *What resources would help your students to access financial aid?*
- *What assistance can you offer PA FAFSA Go! Colleagues supporting students?*



Pennsylvania
Department of Education

Thank you – please be in touch if you have questions or need additional information

Ali Caccavella, PDE Special Advisor
acaccavell@pa.gov

Diona Brown, Director of PA School Services, PHEAA
diona.brown@pheaa.org





Resources & Supports for PA Students Financial Aid Completion



Pennsylvania
Department of Education

Call to Action—School & College Access Counselors

1. Reach out to your [PHEAA Access Partners](#), community-based organizations, or local postsecondary institutions!
 - Host completion events virtually or on-line
2. Push FAFSA Messaging to Students
 - [NCAN FAFSA Communications Resource Library](#)
 - Reach out to students **individually** who haven't submitted
 - Encourage students to [opt-in](#) to communications from PHEAA and check emails regularly from Federal Student Aid and their colleges.
2. Review FAFSA completion for your high school on the [U.S. Department of Education's FAFSA completion site](#) to see where you stand.



Call to Action—Financial Aid Officers

1. Review FAFSA completion for your area high schools and strategically deploy your resources.
 - [Federal Student Aid's FAFSA completion data site](#)
2. Reach out to your local K–12 partners.
 - How can you help?
 - Partner with [PHEAA Access Partners](#) to conduct a FAFSA Completion on your campus.
 - Send email or text reminders to students to complete the FAFSA. [Find message toolkits from NCAN](#)
 - Provide FAFSA resources for in-class or evening support. [PHEAA FAFSA toolkits](#)



Call to Action—Community Based Organizations

1. Reach out to your Higher Education Financial Aid Officers and K-12 school counselors.
 - Where can you enhance their support?
 - What additional resources can you bring to the table? [PHEAA FAFSA toolkits](#)
 - **Stock your office with up-to-date FAFSA and financial aid information.**
 - [Get shareable materials here: Identify Yourself \(pheaa.org\)](#)



PA FAFSA Go! Call to Action Challenge

- ✓ **SIGN-UP to be connected with colleagues and assistance in your area.**
 - Volunteer to give or get help to increase FAFSA submissions wherever you serve students.
- ✓ **Keep communicating the FAFSA completion message broadly from your networks.**
 - Post or re-post on social media. [NCAN FAFSA Communications Resource Library](#)
 - Include FAFSA information in every newsletter or email you send.
 - Attend FAFSA webinars and meetings to stay up-to-date on developments.
- ✓ **Gather resources and share them with students and their families.**
 - ✓ [PHEAA FAFSA toolkits](#)
- ✓ **Keep up-to-date on FAFSA changes**—connect folks to the FAFSA experts within your network.
- ✓ **Be a PA FAFSA Go! Advocate**—certify your commitment so that every Pennsylvania learner has access to an affordable postsecondary education.