

FAFSA Completion Action Lab

March 8, 2022



Education
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Group

Welcome & Introduction



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Agenda

- Understanding the Importance of FAFSA Completion
- An Update from Federal Student Aid (FSA) and National College Attainment Network (NCAN)
- State Strategies for FAFSA Completion
- Panel and Q&A: Strategies in Action
- Summary



Understanding the Importance

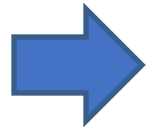


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The Importance of the FAFSA

Enrollment

90 percent of students who complete the FAFSA enroll directly in college after high school, compared to just 55 percent of non-completers.



Persistence

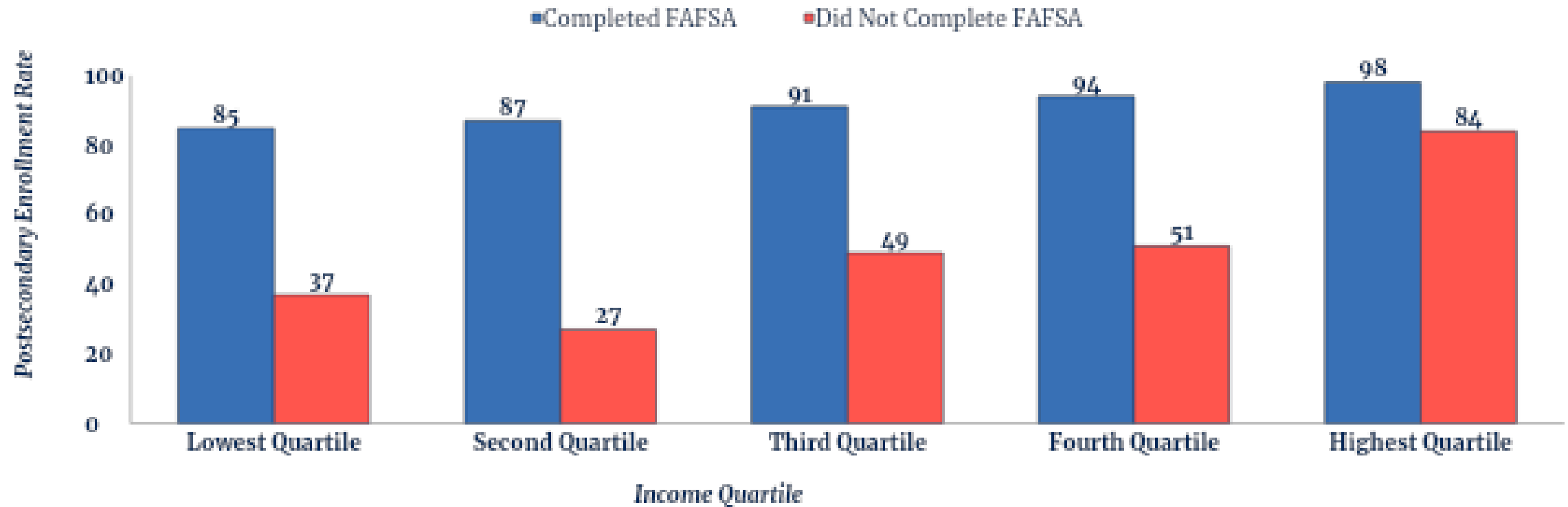
For every \$1,000 in financial aid a student receives, the rate at which they persist in their coursework increases, on average, by four percentage points.



Attainment

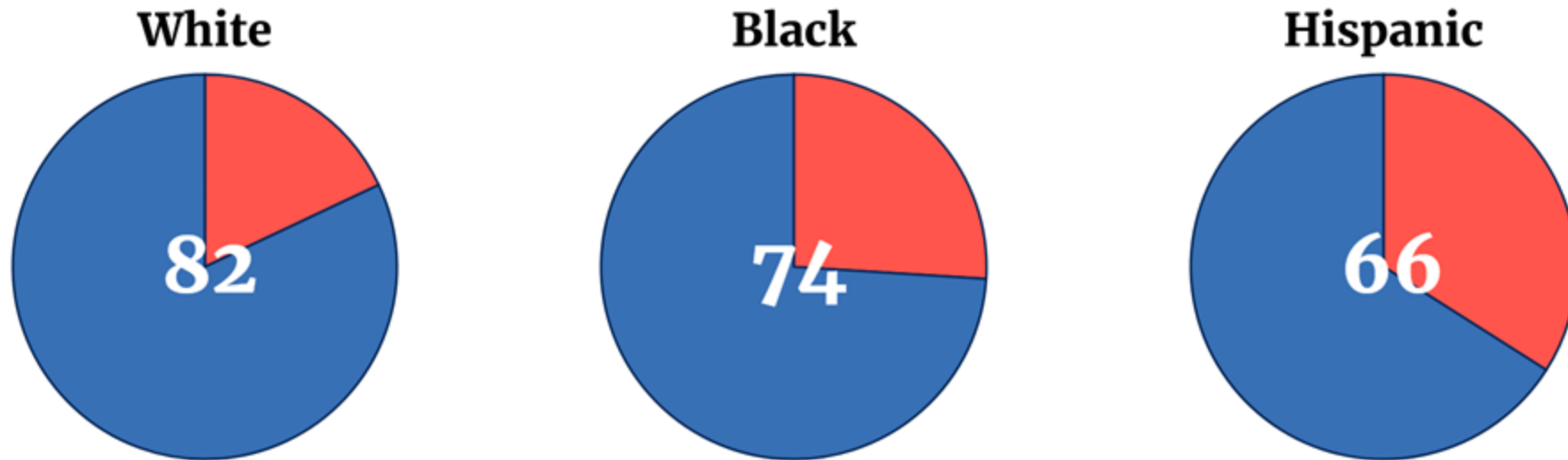
FAFSA Narrows Enrollment Gaps

Postsecondary Enrollment Rates by FAFSA Completion and Income Quartile



Source: High School Longitudinal Study, National Center for Education Statistics (2009)

FAFSA as an Equity Issue



Each year, over \$3.4 billion in aid is left on the table.
In North Carolina, over \$100 million in Pell grants went unclaimed.

Key Barriers to FAFSA Completion



Lack of Awareness



Complexity of the Form



**Parental Mistrust and
Misconceptions**

Resources on the FAFSA from ESG



Strategy Spotlight

EQUITY

How can FAFSA completion efforts be targeted to support traditionally underserved students and families? How can institutions ensure their practices are culturally responsive?

WHY THIS MATTERS

Students who complete the FAFSA are more likely to enroll in higher education, persist in their coursework, and obtain a degree. Despite this, over a third of high school seniors fail to complete the FAFSA each year. And the students who stand to benefit most, including low-income and first-generation students, are the least likely to complete the form. School districts see a three percent decrease in FAFSA completion rates, on average, for every one percentage point increase in the proportion of students from low-income families. Students of color are also less likely to complete the FAFSA, with 34 percent of Hispanic students and 26 percent of Black students failing to complete the FAFSA last year, compared to just 18 percent of White students. For this reason, increasing FAFSA completion is not simply a postsecondary success issue—it is an equity issue.

SPOTLIGHT DISTRICT

Puget Sound College & Career Network
King, Washington

PARTNERSHIPS

35 SCHOOL DISTRICTS SERVED BY PSCCN

DISTRICT RESULTS

76% SINGLE ACHIEVE 2020
PSCCN INCREASED REGIONAL FAFSA COMPLETION BY 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS

ACTION STEPS

While there is no silver bullet to address the glaring equity gaps in FAFSA completion, states and communities should leverage lessons learned from Washington, Utah, and Texas (highlighted below) to better support traditionally underserved students and their families. Specifically, they should:

- Target outreach efforts to meet students and families where they are
- Build partnerships to extend the reach of support provided to students and families
- Leverage students to provide near-peer support on completing the FAFSA
- Examine disaggregated and student-level data to target supports to the students who need it most

STRATEGIES

Below, we have highlighted high-impact strategies implemented by schools and districts across the country that support traditionally underserved students and their families with completing the FAFSA.

Engaging Students, Families, and Partners

Puget Sound College & Career Network (PSCCN) provides support to 35 school districts in King and Pierce counties, which serve 40 percent of students in the state of Washington. In developing ways to support students and families in completing the FAFSA, Angelica Alvarez, PSCCN's Manager of Postsecondary Readiness, Student, and Family



Wednesday, May 6, 2020

Accelerate Recovery: Double Down on FAFSA Completion

With families facing deep financial hardship due to the COVID-19 crisis, completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is more important than ever. We know that, particularly during an economic downturn, a postsecondary degree or credential is key...

[READ MORE](#)

An Update from Federal Student Aid (FSA)

Ashley Harrington, Senior Advisor, US Department of Education



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U.S. FAFSA Completion in 10 Charts

Presentation to the
FAFSA Completion Action Lab

March 8, 2022

HI!

I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE!



Bill DeBaun

*Senior Director of
Data and Strategic Initiatives*

NCAN

debaunb@ncan.org

NCAN: WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO

NCAN PURSUES ITS MISSION BY BUILDING NETWORK CAPACITY, ADVOCATING FOR POLICY SOLUTIONS, AND SUPPORTING SYSTEMS CHANGE

Build network capacity

Bolster the **skills and competencies** of college access and success leaders and practitioners through **professional development, news from the field, data, and tools.**

Advocate for policy solutions

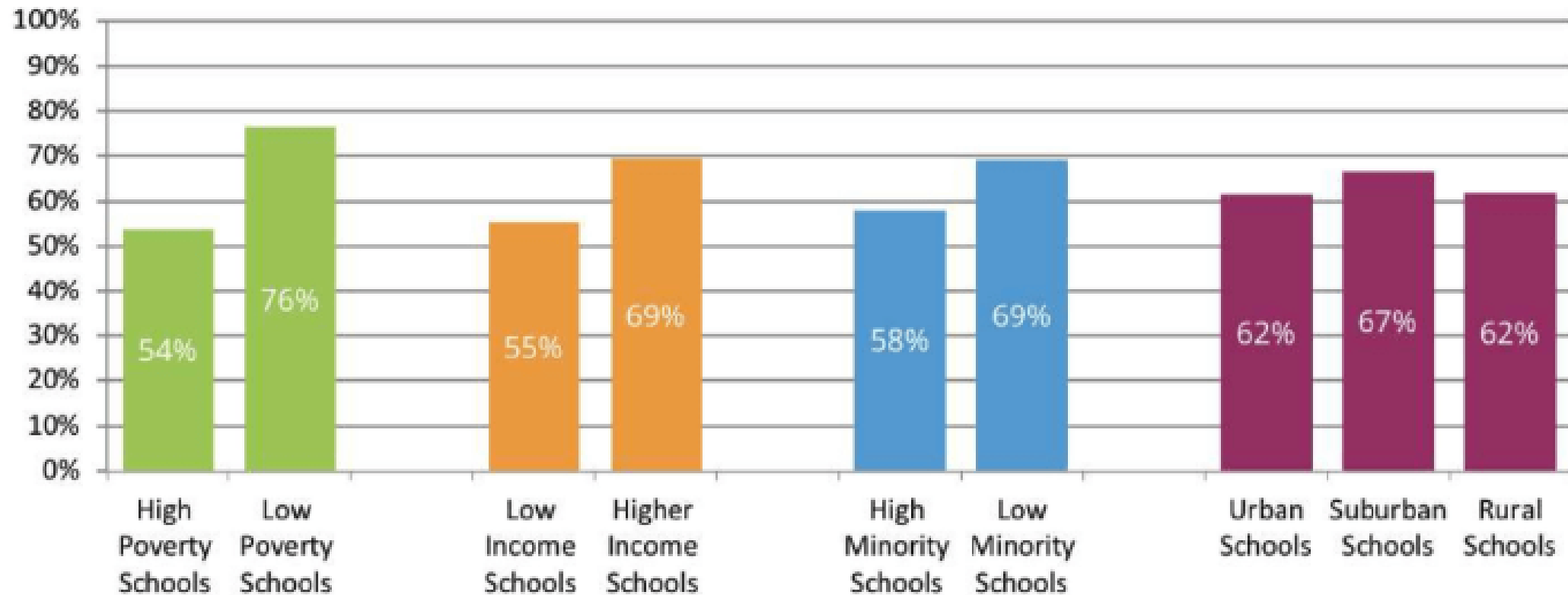
Advocate for equitable college completion rates by amplifying a range of **policy solutions, mobilizing members, and leveraging student voice.**

Support systems change

Help school districts, higher education institutions, and other community stakeholders to **adopt effective strategies for students.**

TALENT IS EVERYWHERE, BUT OPPORTUNITY IS NOT

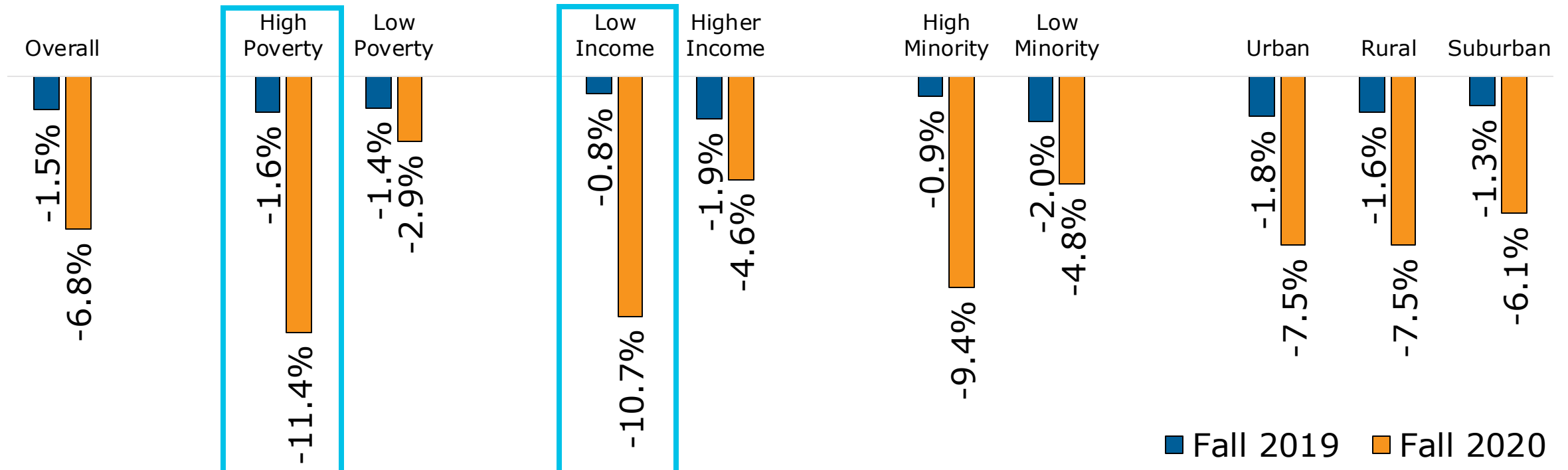
Figure A. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation, Class of 2018, Public Non-Charter Schools



THAT'S ESPECIALLY TRUE IN THE AGE OF COVID

The high school class of 2020's immediate **fall postsecondary enrollment fell nearly 7%**, but declines were inequitable. High schools with more students of color and students from low-income backgrounds saw larger decreases.

Percent Change in Immediate Fall Enrollments by High School Characteristics, Classes of 2019 and 2020

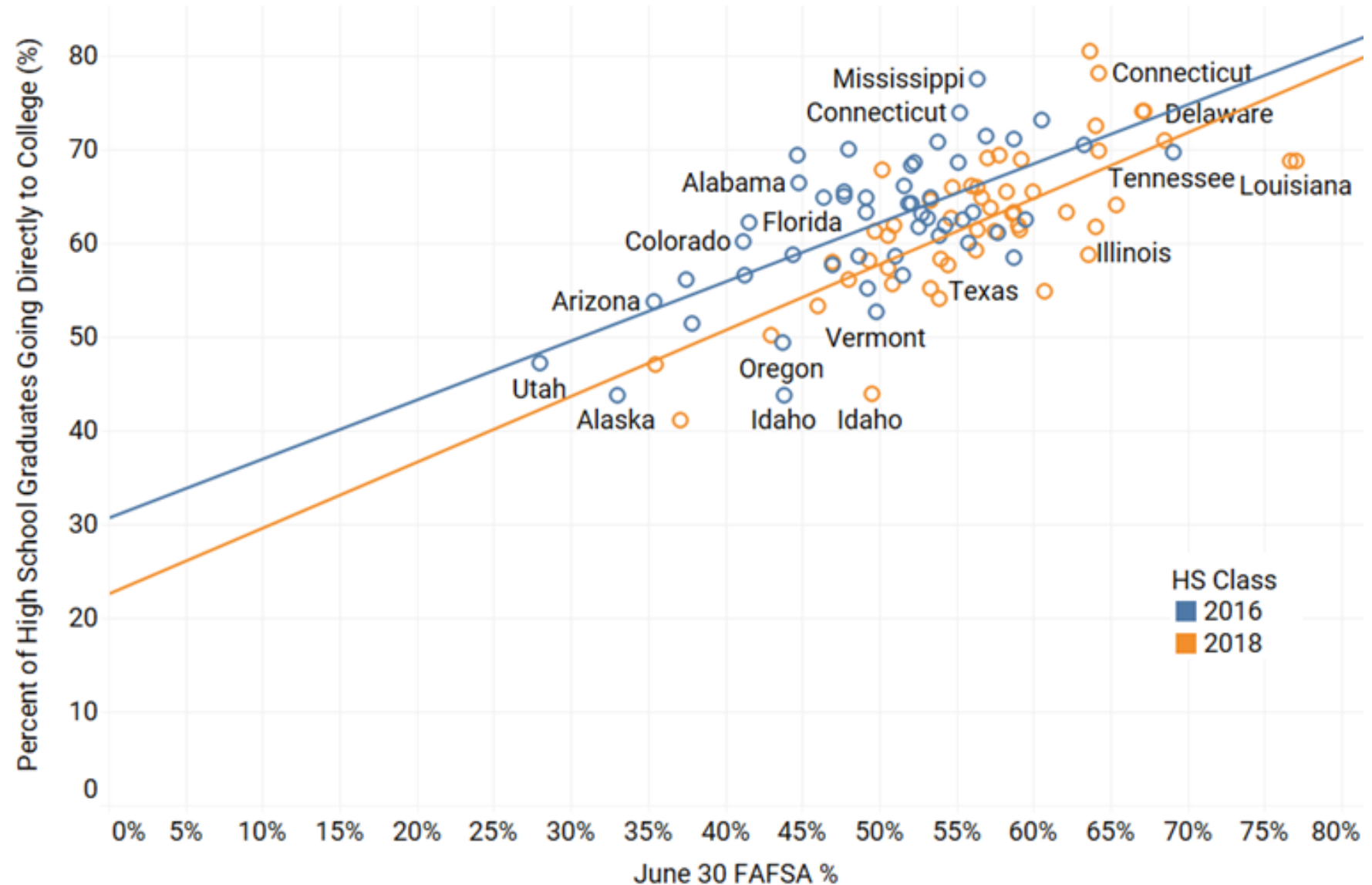




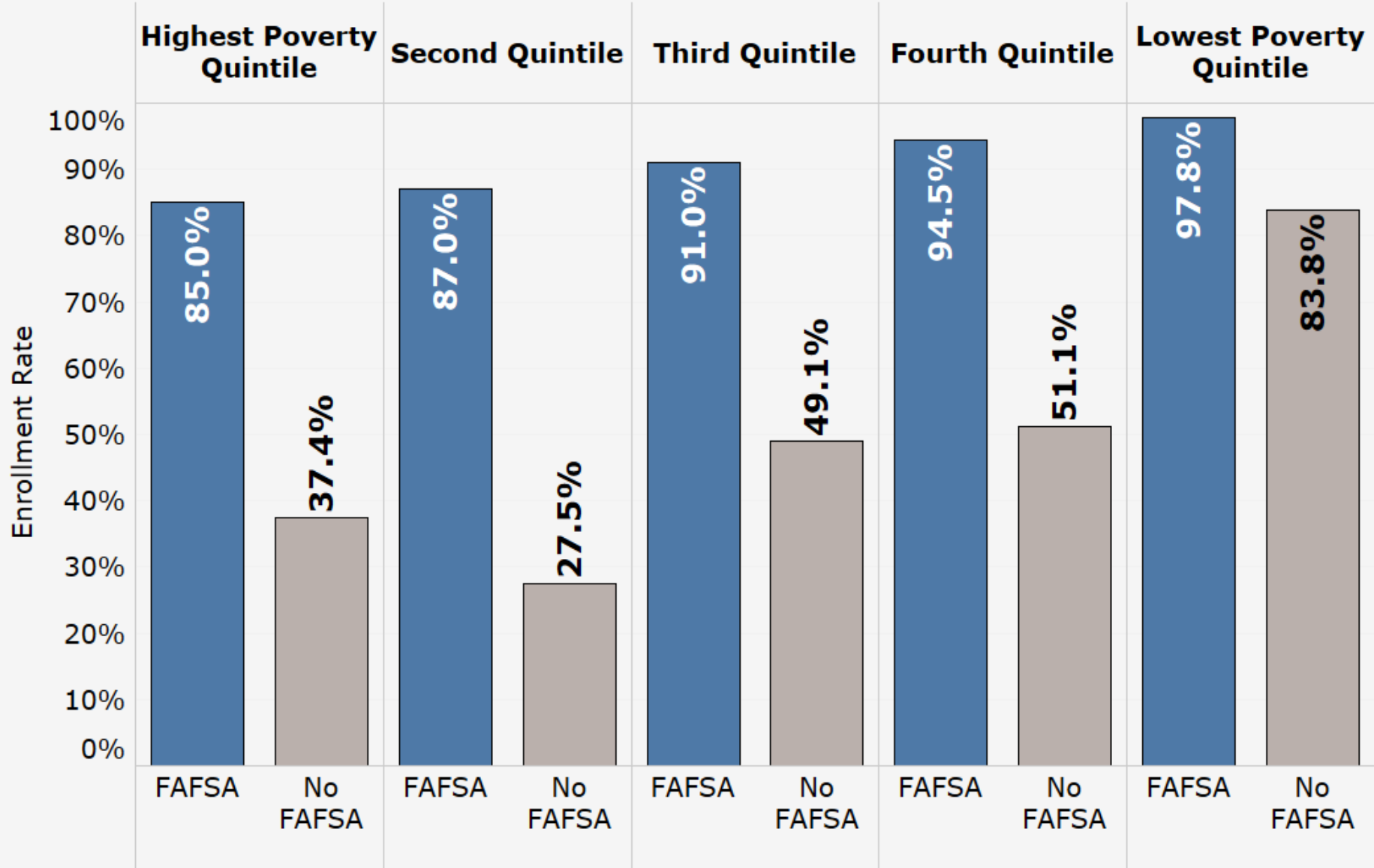
U.S. FAFSA COMPLETION IN **10** CHARTS

1. FAFSA COMPLETION AND IMMEDIATE COLLEGE ENROLLMENT ARE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED

FAFSA Completion by June and Immediate College Enrollment, High School Classes of 2016 and 2018

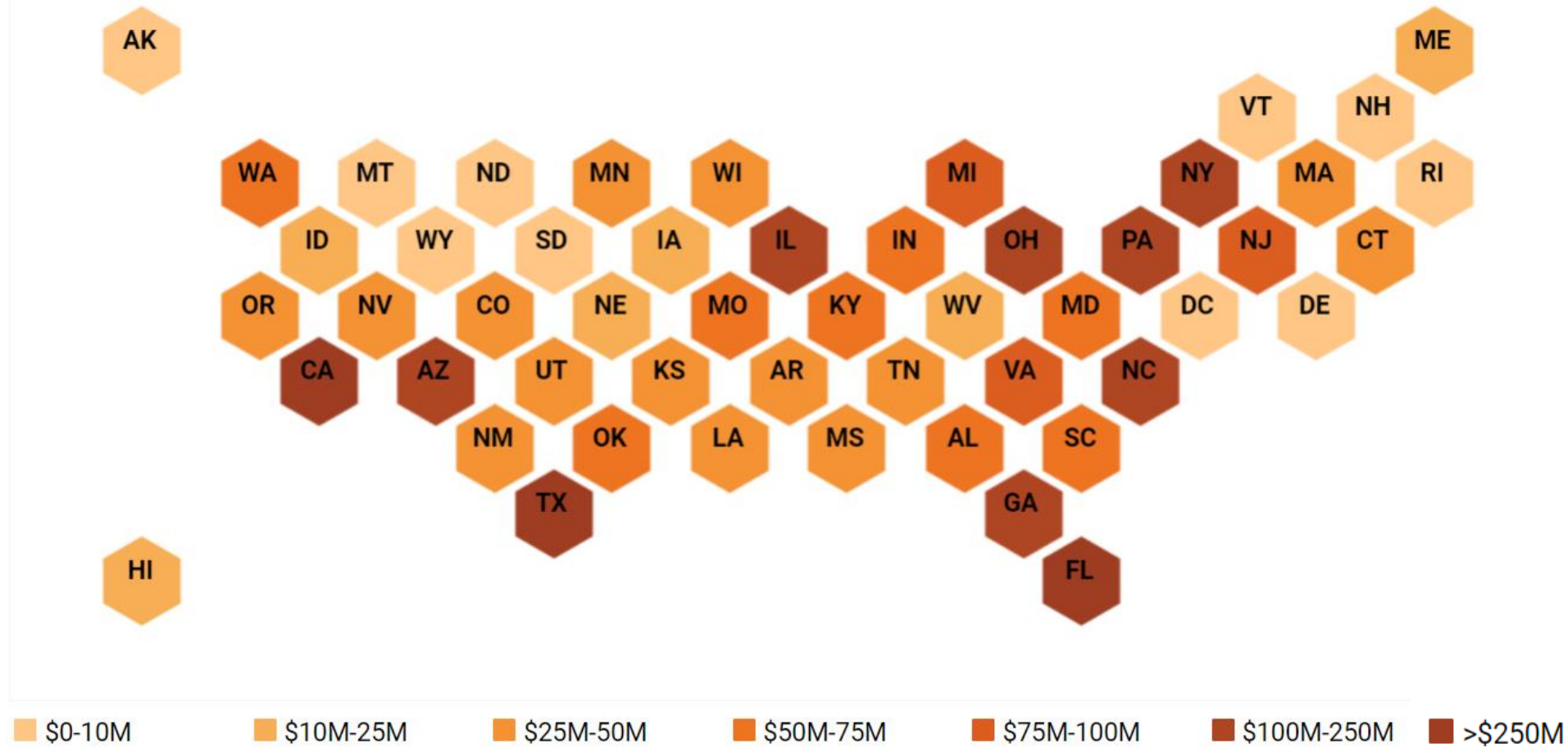


Immediate college enrollment following high school graduation, by percentile of district poverty and FAFSA completion status.

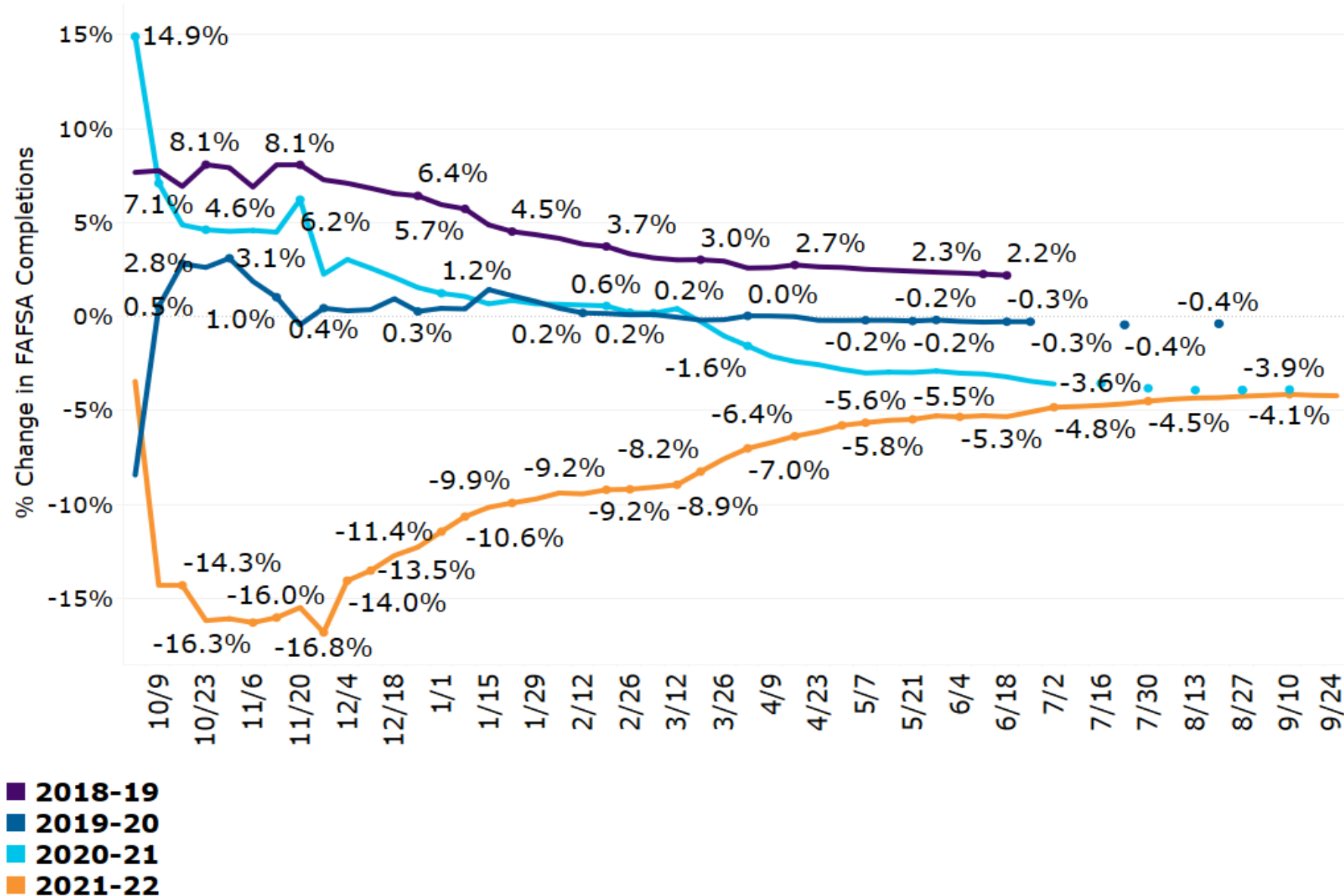


**2.
THIS
ASSOCIATION
IS STRONGER
AT LOWER
INCOME
LEVELS**

**3. NOT
COMPLETING
THE FAFSA
LEAVES
MONEY ON
THE TABLE.
THE CLASS
OF 2021 HAD
\$3.75
BILLION GO
UNCLAIMED.**

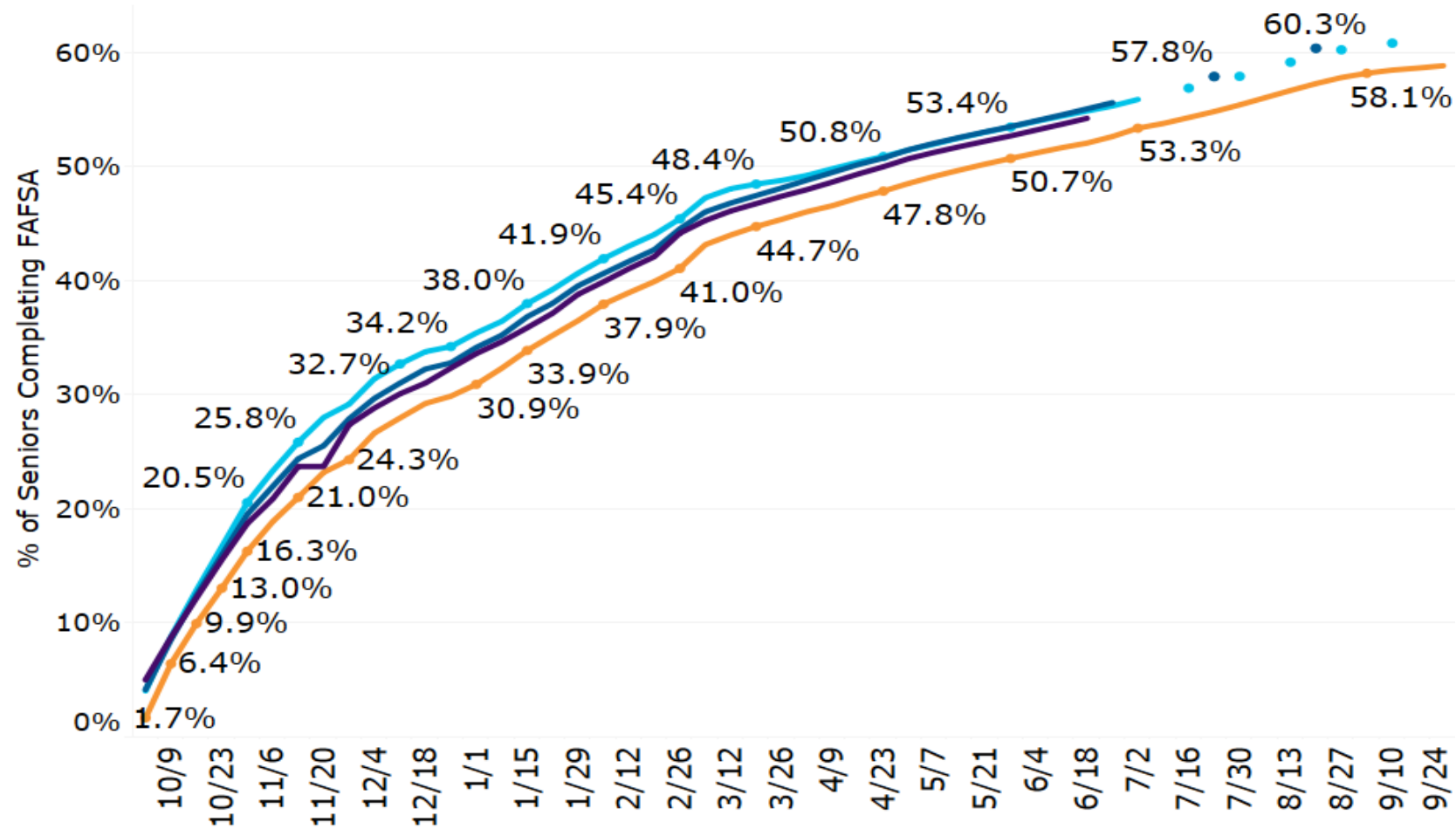


% Change in HS FAFSA Completions, United States, Through Week 52, 2018-19 through 2021-22 Cycles



4. THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES OF 2020 & 2021 CONVERGED, BUT BOTH LAGGED THE CLASSES OF 2018 & 2019

% of High School Seniors Completing a FAFSA, United States, Through Week 52, 2018-19 through 2021-22 Cycles

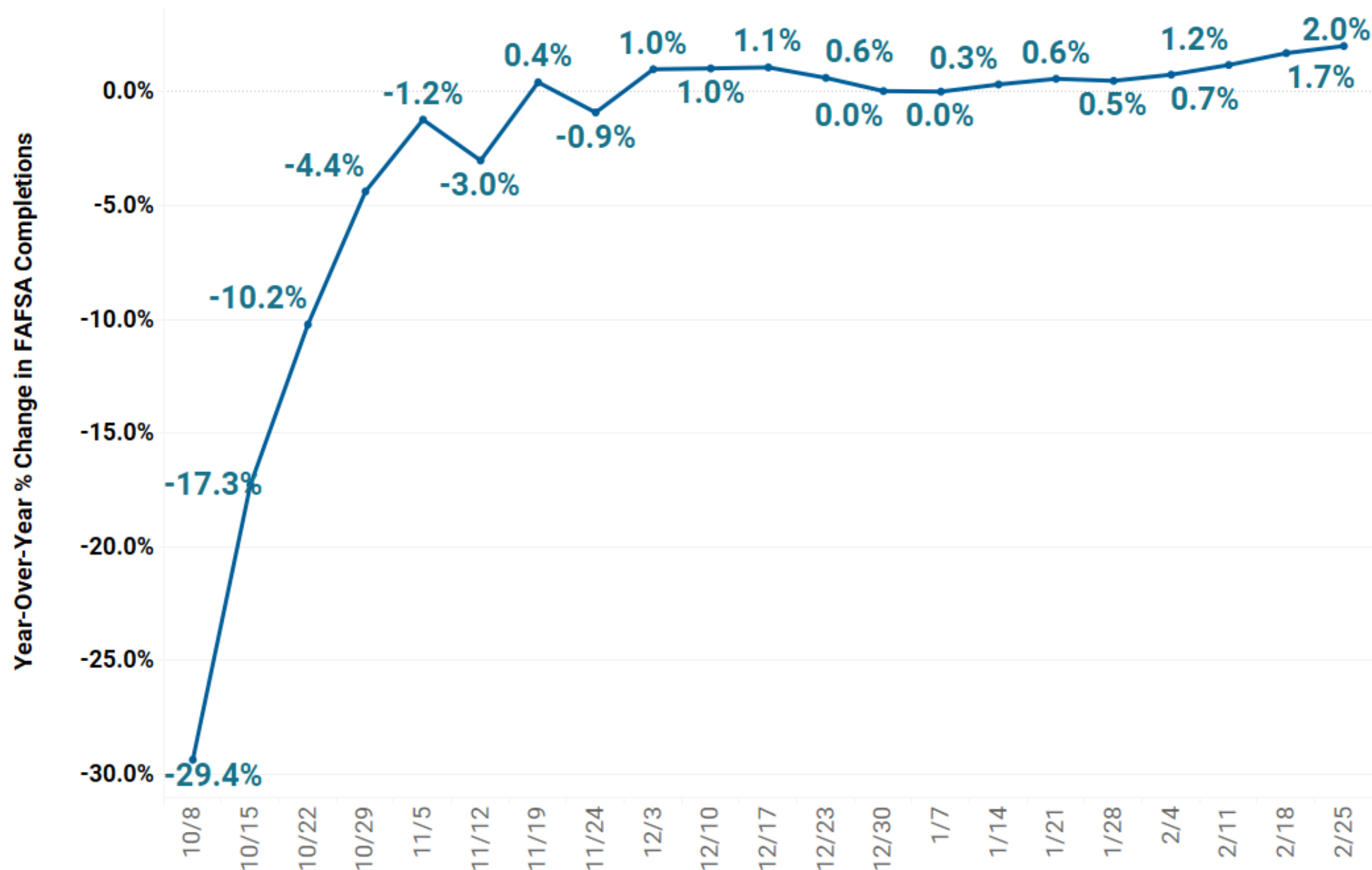


■ 2018-19
■ 2019-20
■ 2020-21
■ 2021-22

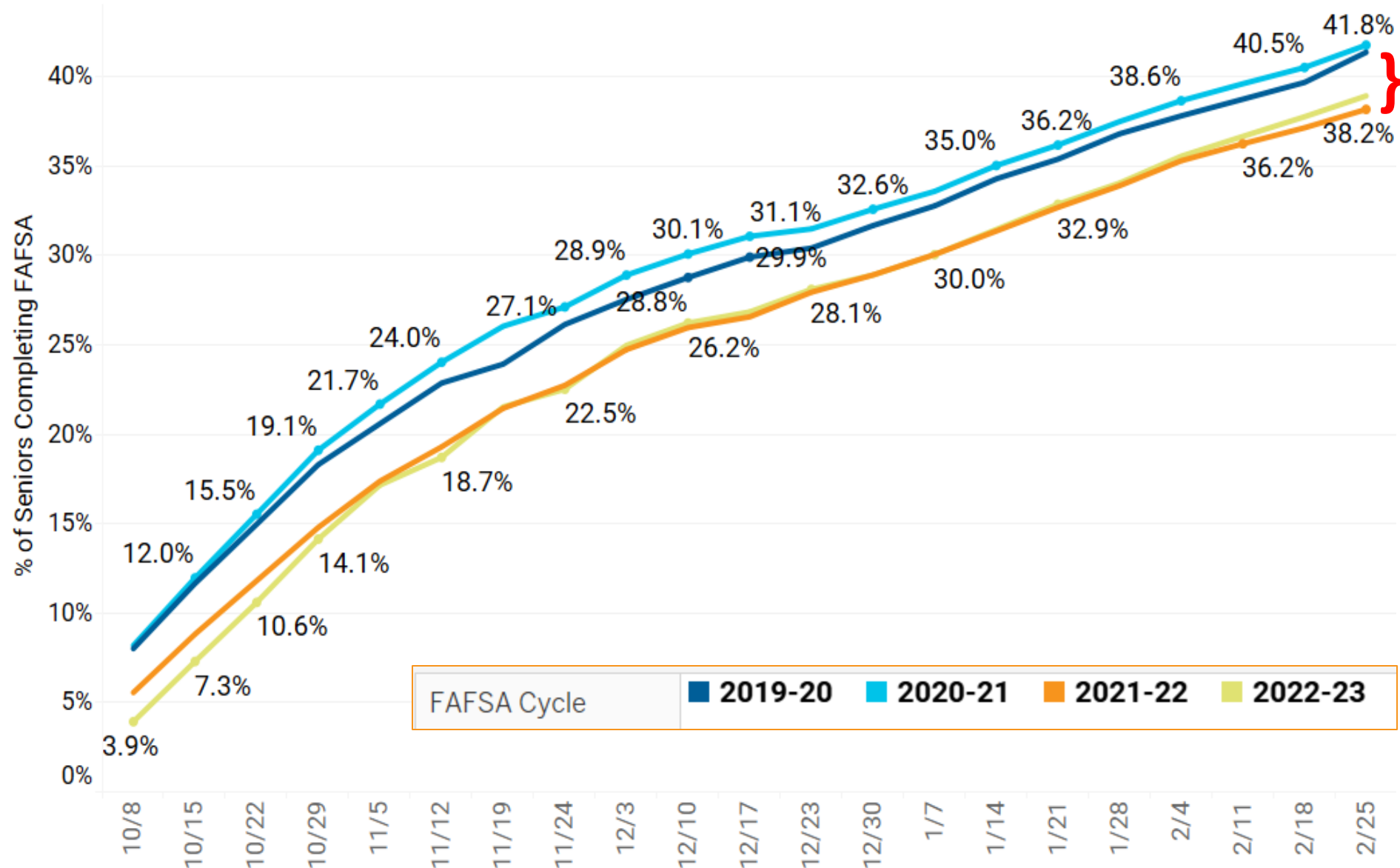
5. BY PERCENT OF SENIORS COMPLETING, THE CLASS OF 2021 CYCLE WAS ALSO A MAJOR DECLINE

6. THE CLASS OF 2022 CYCLE FALTERED, ROSE, STALLED, AND IS NOW RISING AGAIN.

% Change in FAFSA Completions, Class of 2022 over 2021, Through February 25, 2022



% of U.S. Seniors Completing a FAFSA, High School Classes of 2019-2022, Through Week 22 of Cycle



**7. THE CLASS
OF 2022 IS
STILL NOT
CLOSE TO
PRE-
PANDEMIC
FAFSA
COMPLETION
RATES**

8. AFTER A ROUGH CLASS OF 2021 CYCLE, HIGH SCHOOLS SERVING UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS ARE BOUNCING BACK THIS YEAR

By School Income Level

Low Income

Higher Income

6.3%

0.1%

2/25

2/25

% Change in FAFSA Completion

By Concentration of Students of Color

High Minority

Low Minority

5.7%

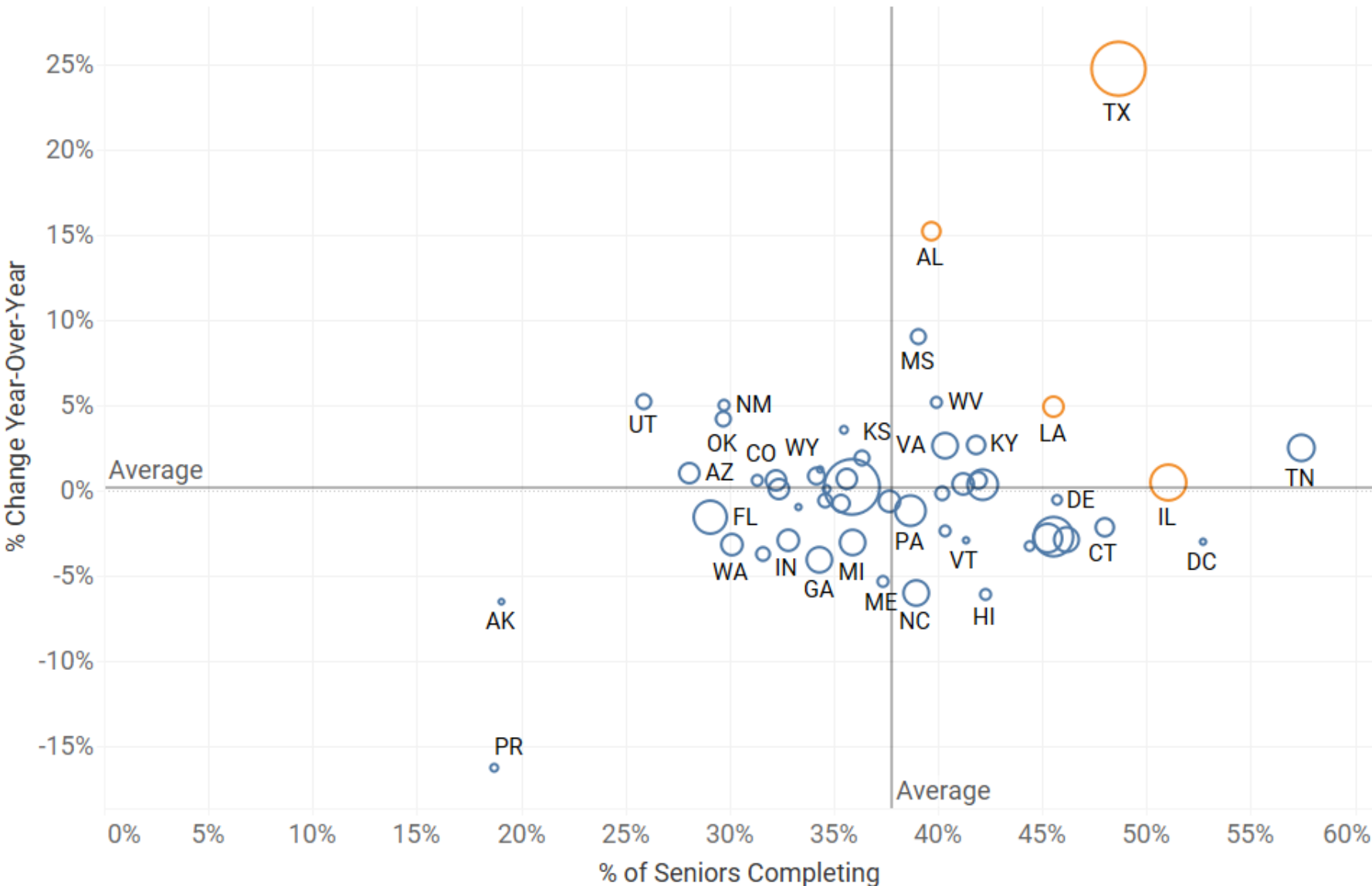
-0.3%

2/25

2/25

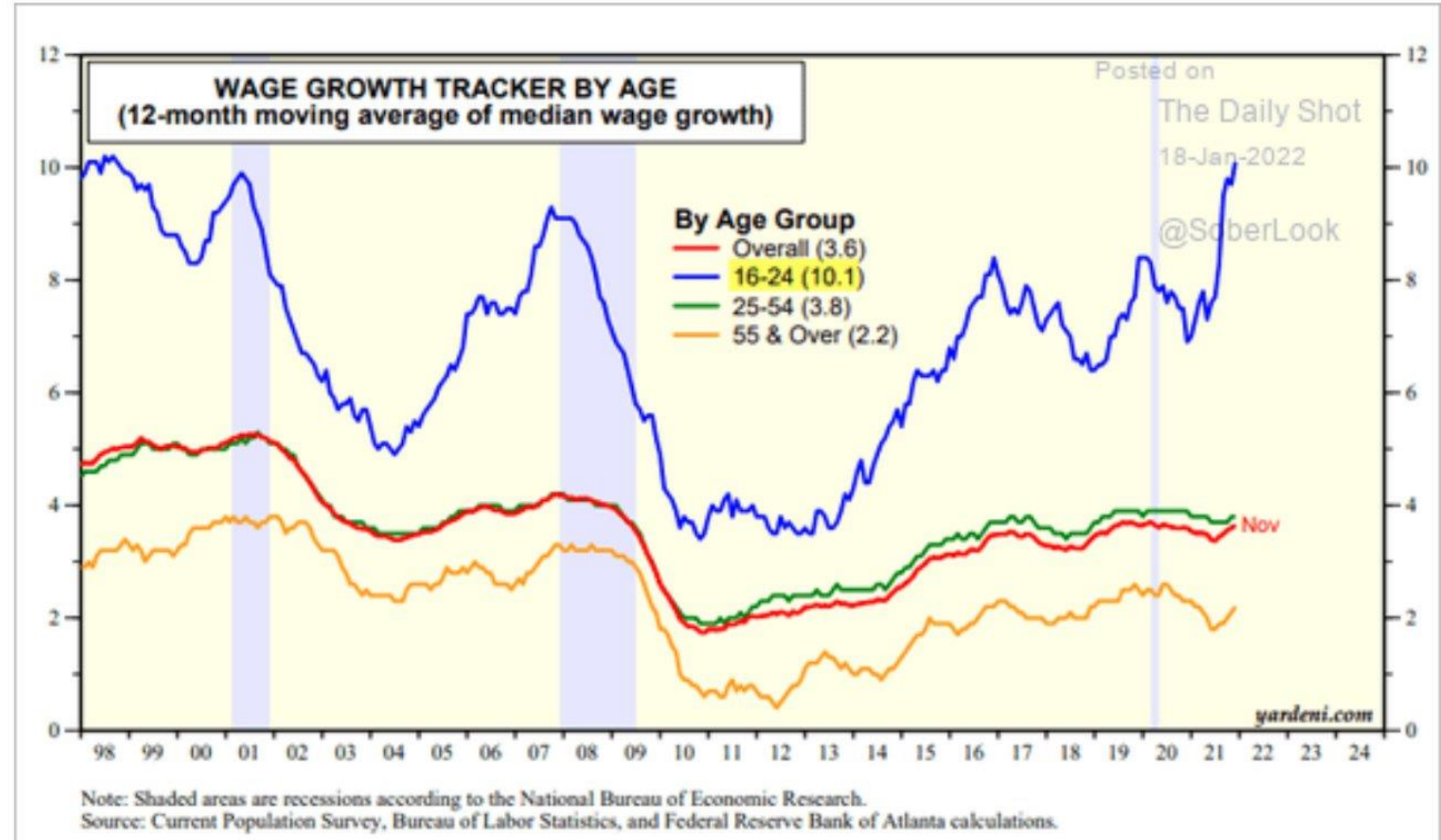
% Change in FAFSA Completion

HS Class of 2022 FAFSA Completion Through 2/25, By State, % Change in FAFSA Completions by % of Seniors Completing (Size Weight: # of FAFSAs Completed)



10. FAFSA
COMPLETION
DOESN'T
EXIST IN A
VACUUM.

ECONOMIC
CONDITIONS
MATTER.



Source: [Yardeni Research](#)

REACH OUT ANY TIME!



Bill DeBaun

*Senior Director of
Data and Strategic Initiatives*

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Questions?



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State Strategies for FAFSA Completion

Moderated by:

Rachel Hirsch, National Governors Association (NGA)



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Panelists



Cris Charbonneau
Director of Advocacy
and Engagement at
myFutureNC



Dr. Tireka Cobb
Field Outreach Services
Director, Louisiana Office of
Student Financial Assistance



Missy Ross
Associate Director
Communications and
Outreach at GEAR UP
Kentucky



Nick Moore
Director of Alabama
Governor's Office of
Education and Workforce
Transformation

Panel Agenda

Best Practices for Success

High School Requirement

- State Examples: AL and LA
- Q&A

Campaign/Challenge

- State Example: KY
- Q&A

Data as a Strategy

- State Example: NC
- Q&A

Moderated Discussion and Q&A

Establish Partnerships

Action Steps

- Expand **partnerships** across state agencies, districts, college access organizations, higher education institutions, and local community organizations to lend volunteers, resources, and support.
- Leverage **near-peer** and **parent-to-parent** mentor models.

Examples

- **Texas** has “Go Centers” at higher education institutions to provide peer mentors at local high schools.
- **Grand Prairie Independent School District (TX)** developed a parent ambassador program.

Build Shared Ownership

Action Steps

- Identify a **cross-sector working group** that will regularly meet to monitor progress, coordinate activities, and make any necessary refinements to the statewide strategy in the long-term after the goal is set.

Examples

- **Tennessee** convened a cross-functional team, with representatives from the TN Higher Education Commission, TN Department of Education, tnAchieves, and the TN Student Assistance Corporation, to develop a FAFSA strategy. A cross-sector working group then met biweekly to assess progress.

Set a Goal

Action Steps

- Set **equity targets by race and income** and be explicit about them when writing about the goal and reporting on progress.
- **Localize the goal** by providing opportunities for local leaders to review their data, set interim goals, and develop action plans with concrete strategies for meeting them.

Examples

- **Hawaii** set a goal for 70% of high school seniors to complete the FAFSA by 2018 and 90% by 2020.
- **Rhode Island** set a statewide goal of 85%, with every high school having at least 70% of seniors complete the FAFSA.
- **North Carolina** set a FAFSA completion goal of 80% by 2030.

High School Requirement



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High School Requirement

Action Steps

- Make completion of the FAFSA a **requirement** in order to graduate high school. Opting out is always an option, but different states have different **rules for opting out**.
- Create a **holistic strategy** where the requirement is a central piece of the overall approach.

Examples

- **Louisiana** became the first state to require FAFSA completion as a part of high school graduation. **Alabama's** state board of education approved a similar policy in 2021.
- **Colorado** implemented a hybrid model, in which state funds were available to support school districts that decided to make FAFSA completion a part of high school graduation requirements.

Alabama Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Completion Project



- Alabama high school graduates leave approximately \$47 million in federal grants on the table each year because they do not complete the FAFSA.
- 92 percent of students who complete the FAFSA enroll in postsecondary education the following fall term.
- On April 8, 2021, the Alabama State Board of Education, with the support of Governor Kay Ivey, approved a resolution requiring graduating seniors to complete the FAFSA, or opt out, effective with the May 2022 high school graduating class.
- The Alabama Workforce Council, the state's blue ribbon industry panel, and Alabama Possible, an Alabama non-profit dedicated to postsecondary access and success, were key partners in the adoption of the FAFSA completion policy.

Alabama Administrative Code Rule on FAFSA Completion—290-3-1-.02(21) Regulations Governing Public Schools.

(21) The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) – Access to Federal Student Aid.

(a) Effective with the 2021-2022 school year, the following requirements shall be fulfilled on behalf of the graduating senior as part of the graduating senior’s transition into postsecondary education, training, or the workforce:

1. Submit to the United States Department of Education a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); or
2. Certify a non-participation waiver, in writing, to the superintendent of the local education agency if the graduating senior chooses not to complete and submit FAFSA. Certification of the non-participation waiver may be completed by a parent, legal custodian, legal guardian, or a minor legally emancipated or of the legal age of majority.

(b) If a graduating senior is unable to fulfill the requirements of subsection (a), upon the recommendation of the school principal and school counselor, the superintendent of the local education agency may waive the graduating senior of the requirements of subsection (a).

(c) The local education agency shall provide students in Grades 11-12 and the students’ parents, legal custodians, or legal guardians reasonable support and assistance necessary to comply with subsection (a).

FAFSA Completion Portal

- In order to implement and optimize the impact of the State Board's FAFSA Completion Graduation Policy, extensive upgrades into how the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) assists students in this process were made.
- ACHE is a key partner because it is the only agency in the state authorized to connect to the federal FAFSA database and see individual data for all Alabama students.
- Governor Ivey dedicated Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds to develop the Alabama FAFSA Completion Portal.

URL: fafsa.ache.edu



Accessibility. Affordability. Coordination.

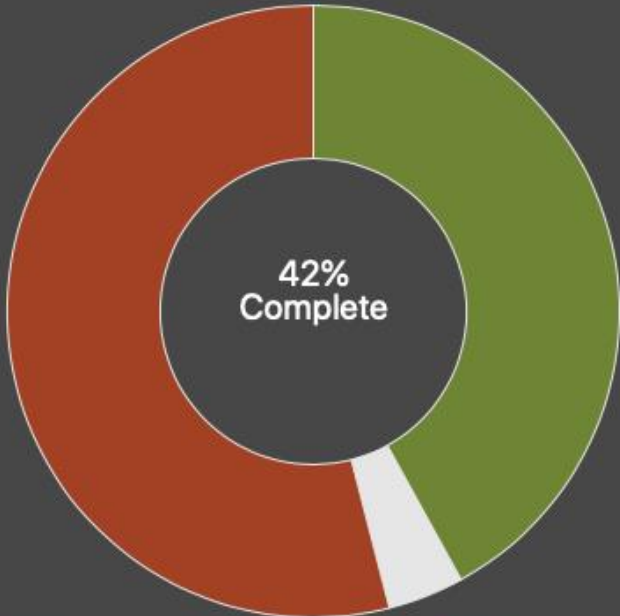


Students
& Families

Educators

2022 - 2023 Completion

Last Updated 3/5/2022



■ % Complete ■ % Incomplete ■ % Missing

Data
& Graphs

Cohort
49,329

Submitted
46%
Total: 22,448

Complete
42%
Total: 20,715

Incomplete
4%
Total: 1,733

Missing
54%
Total: 26,881

School Top 10 Achievers

Modify your results

Student Count:











All School Sizes

▼

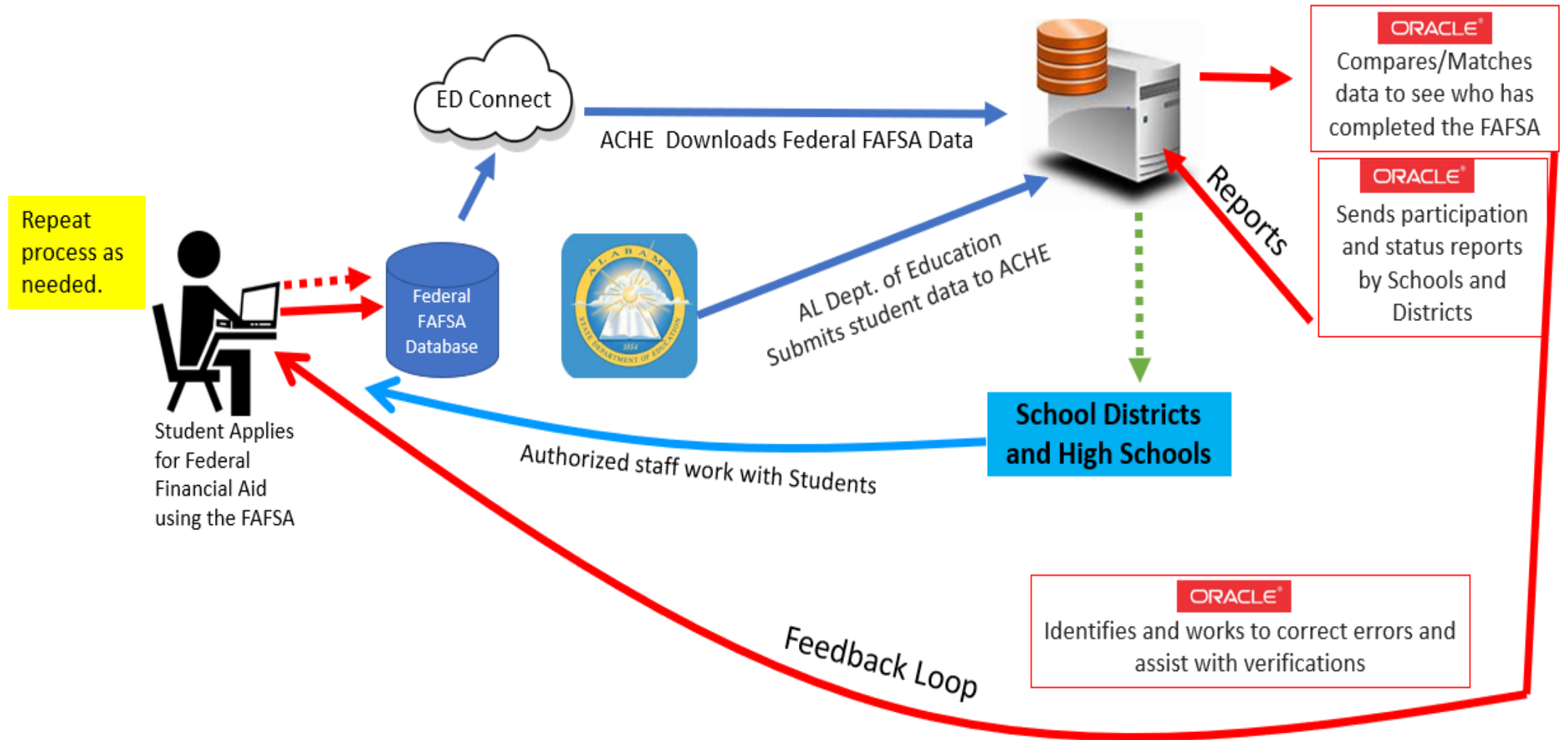
Academic Year:

2022-2023

▼

Achievements:				State Average:	
				42%	
Rank	School Name	Students	Completion Progress		
1	 Sulligent School 380060	42	98%		
2	 Ramsay 1140720	196	92%	2	
3	 Sweet Water 460090	39	90%		
4	 Marengo 460060	18	89%	6%	
5	 Geneva County 310020	54	87%		
6	 Hackleburg 470070	34	85%		
7	 Loveless Academic Magnet Program 510387	98	85%	3%	
8	 Georgiana School 70085	25	84%	4%	
9	 West Limestone 420140	97	83%	1	
10	 Amelia L. Johnson 460010	16	81%		

Process Flow Diagram



Alabama College and Career Exploration Tool (ACCET)

Key Features

- Career exploration and discovery for youth and adults
- Linked to Alabama Works! job portal
- Linked to the Credential Registry
- Linked to FAFSA application
- Prior learning assessments
- Digital resume
- Integrated WIOA case management system



Making FAFSA a Graduation Requirement: Louisiana's Recipe



Tireka Cobb, Ph.D.

Director, Field Outreach Services

Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance

A Program of the Board of Regents

FAFSA Completion Action Lab

March 8, 2022

Main Ingredients

1

Financial Aid
Workgroup

2

Policy
Implementation
w/opt-out

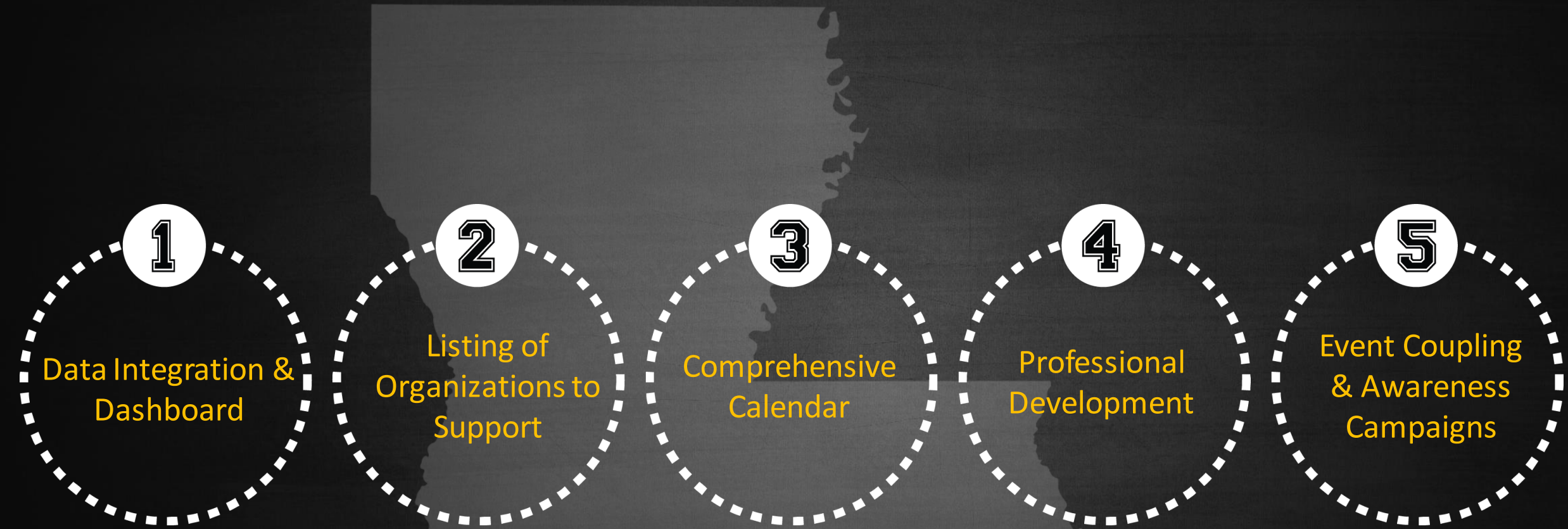
3

Awareness &
Support

Roux
NCAN FAFSA
CHALLENGE GRANT



Directions for a Holistic Strategy



Results

**In May 2021,
data from the
National College
Attainment
Network (NCAN)
FAFSA Tracker
ranked
Louisiana 1st in
FAFSA
completion for
the third time!**

Campaign/Challenge



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Spread Awareness

Action Steps

- Lead a **communications campaign** to spread awareness about the importance of the FAFSA, share key resources and deadlines, promote statewide goals and competitions, and address common misconceptions.
- Consider launching a **competition** to incentivize local action.

Examples

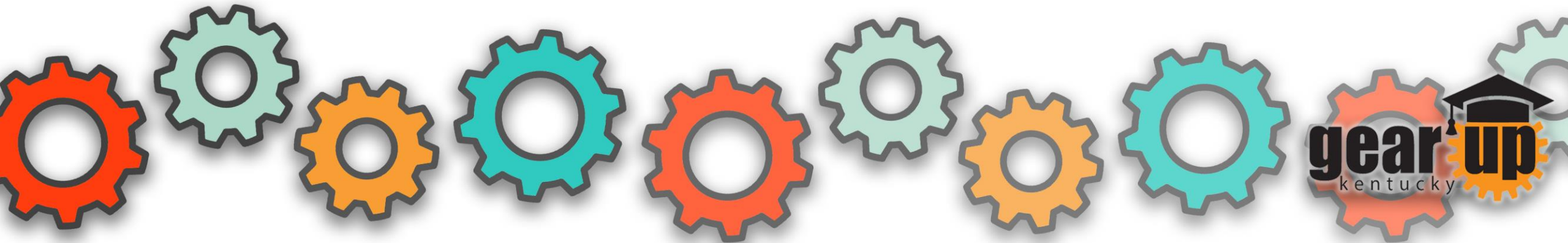
- **Michigan** College Access Network led a statewide “College Cash Campaign,” which was supported by Governor Whitmer, featured a public leaderboard, and provided tiered incentives for both students and counselors.
- **Colorado** encouraged students to “Get Your Piece of the Pie,” and **Ohio** promoted their “3 to Get Ready” campaign.

FAF\$A for the Future

Promotion & Family Engagement During a Pandemic

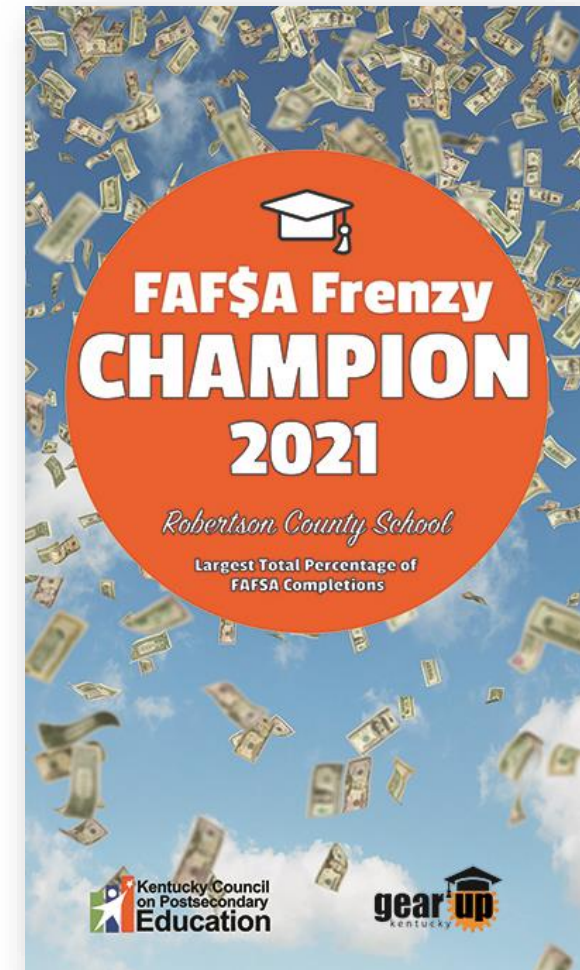
National Governors Association Action Lab | 3.8.22

Missy Brownson Ross, Assoc. Director, Communications & Outreach



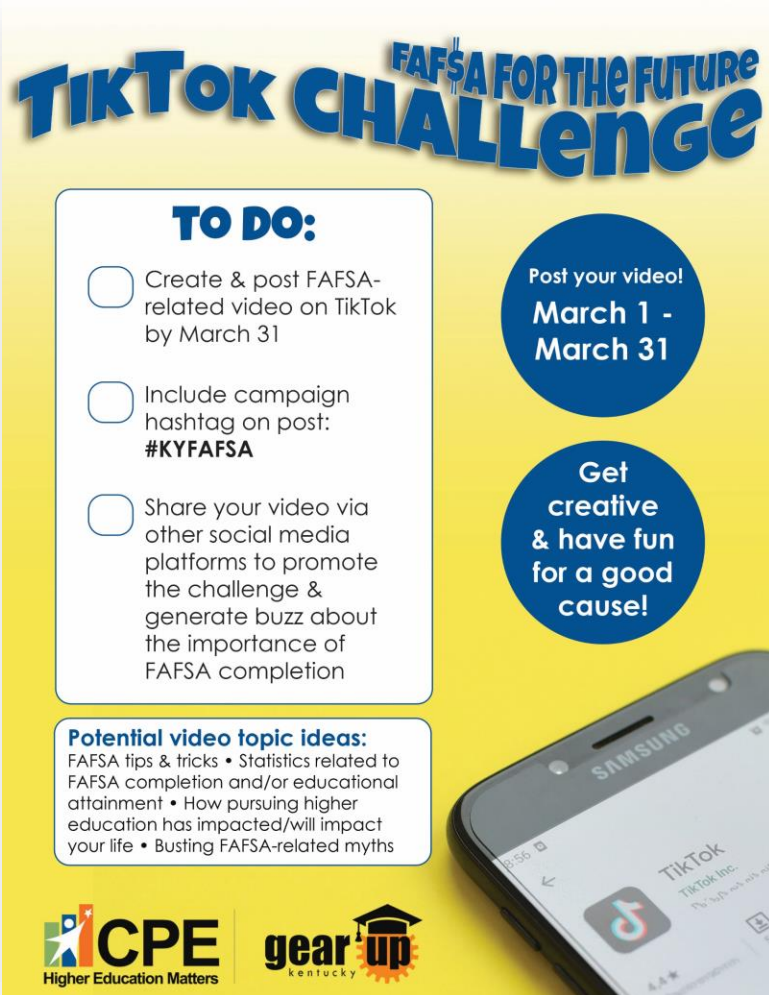
Overview | GEAR UP Kentucky

- 7-year federal grant program
- Administered by CPE
- 12 school districts (+ 9 partner PSE institutions)
- High % of F/RPL
- Hybrid model
- VISION: Every student prepared for postsecondary education.
- Objective: Improve FAFSA completion rate.
 - % of 12th graders who complete and submit the FAFSA will increase cohort to cohort by 3 ppt.



New Challenges | New Solutions

- Sent email requesting participation to partners & statewide influencers
- Asked them to become champions
- Offered to:
 - Post TikToks from GUK account
 - Provide topic & content ideas
 - Assist with video editing



FAFSA FOR THE FUTURE
TIKTOK CHALLENGE

TO DO:

- ☐ Create & post FAFSA-related video on TikTok by March 31
- ☐ Include campaign hashtag on post: **#KYFAFSA**
- ☐ Share your video via other social media platforms to promote the challenge & generate buzz about the importance of FAFSA completion


Post your video!
March 1 - March 31

Get creative & have fun for a good cause!

Potential video topic ideas:
FAFSA tips & tricks • Statistics related to FAFSA completion and/or educational attainment • How pursuing higher education has impacted/will impact your life • Busting FAFSA-related myths

CPE
Higher Education Matters

gear up
kentucky



New Challenges | New Solutions

- Kicked off campaign with TikTok featuring Dr. Aaron Thompson, president of CPE
- Included link to video in participation requests

@gearupkentucky



New Challenges | New Solutions

- 24 TikToks created by champions, including:
 - Lt. Governor
 - Secretary of State
 - State representative
 - Multiple postsecondary institutions (inc. presidents)
 - Leaders of educational organizations



New Challenges | New Solutions

- Results:
 - TikTok: 8,062 views, 530 likes
 - Twitter: 64,250 impressions, 1,215 engagements
 - Media coverage
 - Increased awareness & buy-in from key statewide influencers
 - Videos that can be used for years to come



Old Challenge | New Solutions

- Text campaigns
- Virtual events
 - Engaged multiple partners
 - FB ads
 - Total registrants = 265
 - Total attendees = 118
 - Recordings in English & Spanish

Paying for College 101

A free, virtual workshop for
parents and caregivers

Wednesday, Nov. 17
7-8 p.m. ET



Preparing for someone in your care to attend college? If so, you won't want to miss this special event, during which KHEAA outreach counselors will share information and answer your questions about paying for college. Topics include:

FAFSA ★ Grants, Scholarships, Work Study & Loans
State & Federal Financial Aid ★ KEES ★ AND MORE!

**MORE INFO &
REGISTRATION:**

cpe.ky.gov/events/parentnight

Event
brought to
you by:



Let's Chat!



Missy Brownson Ross
missy.ross@ky.gov



Data as a Strategy



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Use Data

Action Steps

- Prioritize **outreach and training** to schools and districts to expand access and use of **student-level data**.
- **Increase visibility** of aggregate data by school and district to drive competition.
- **Disaggregate by student subgroup** to analyze equity gaps.

Examples

- **Get2College (MS)** manages a statewide data tracker, sends a monthly newsletter with aggregate data to counselors, and holds regular trainings with school leaders on how to leverage the data to target student supports.

NORTH CAROLINA

First in



FAFSA

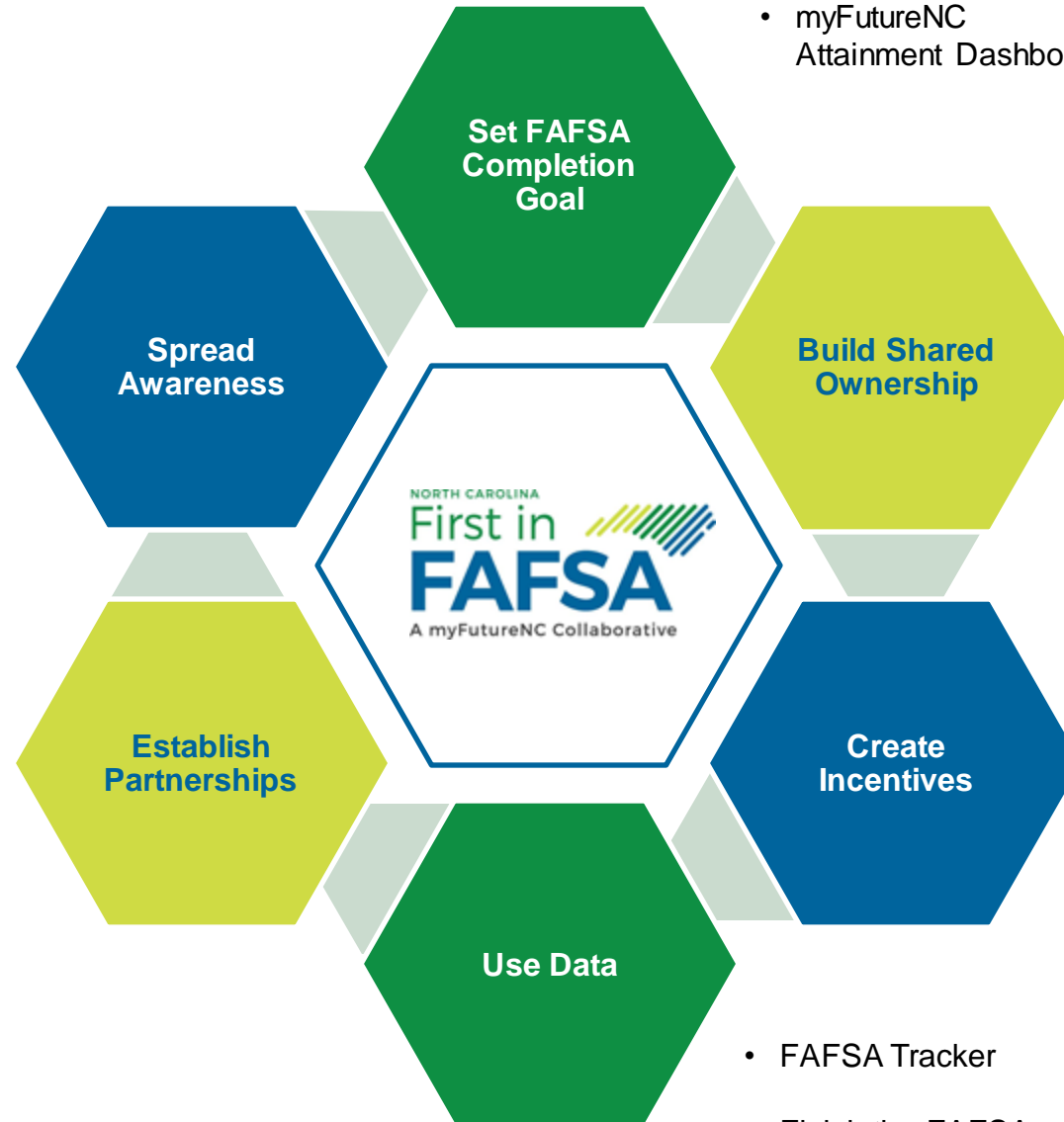
A myFutureNC Collaborative

Strategies



- FAFSA Completion Resources
- Latinx & Spanish Language Outreach
- FAFSA Drive into Your Future Events

- FAFSA Priority Districts
- Training & Dissemination Partners



- myFutureNC Attainment Dashboard

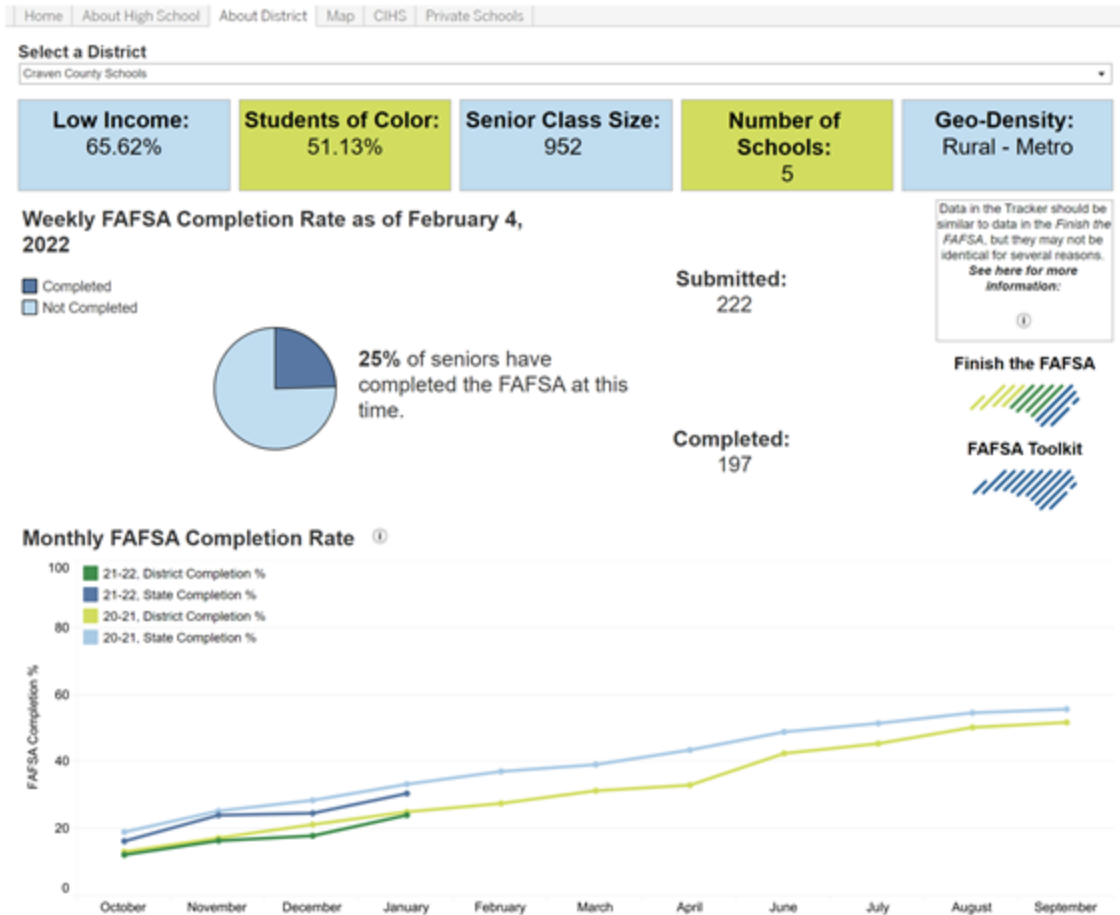
- NC First in FAFSA Collaborative

- NC First in FAFSA Challenge
- NC First in FAFSA Cash for College

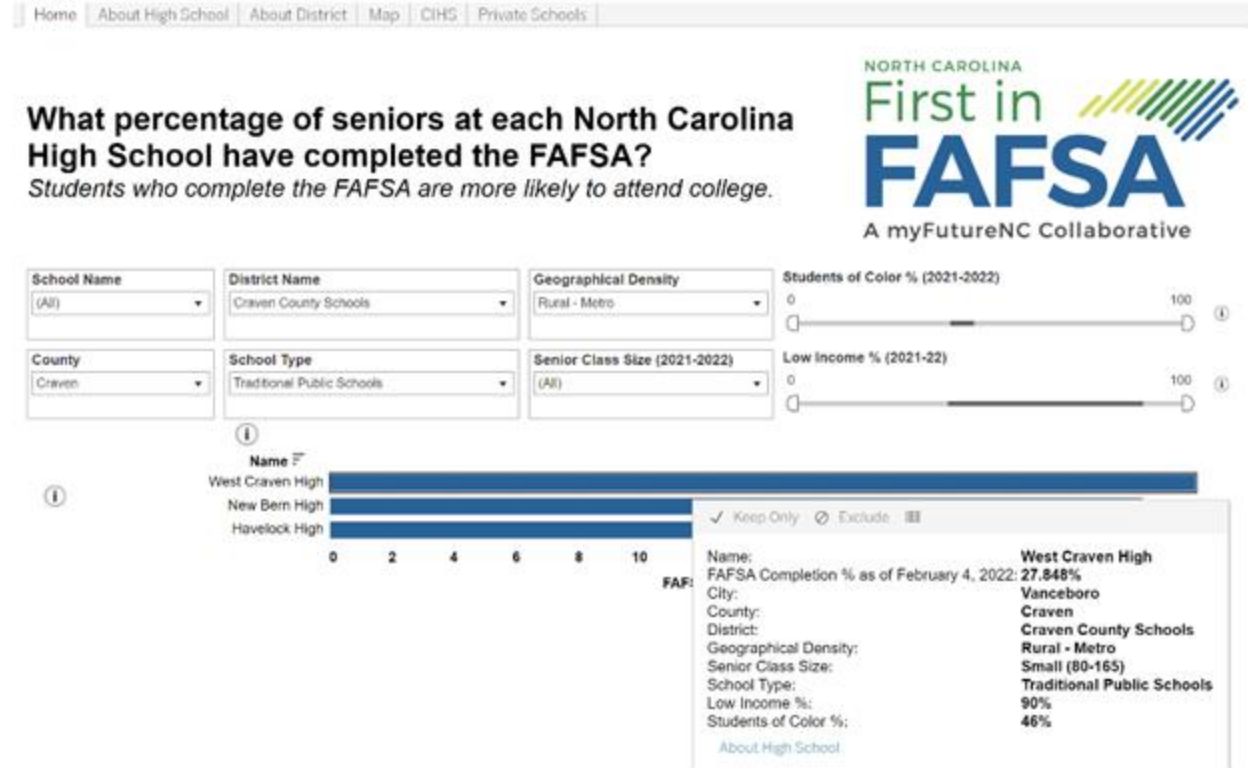
- FAFSA Tracker
- Finish the FAFSA Data Use Agreements

FAFSA Comparisons - Example

2021-22 FAFSA Tracker

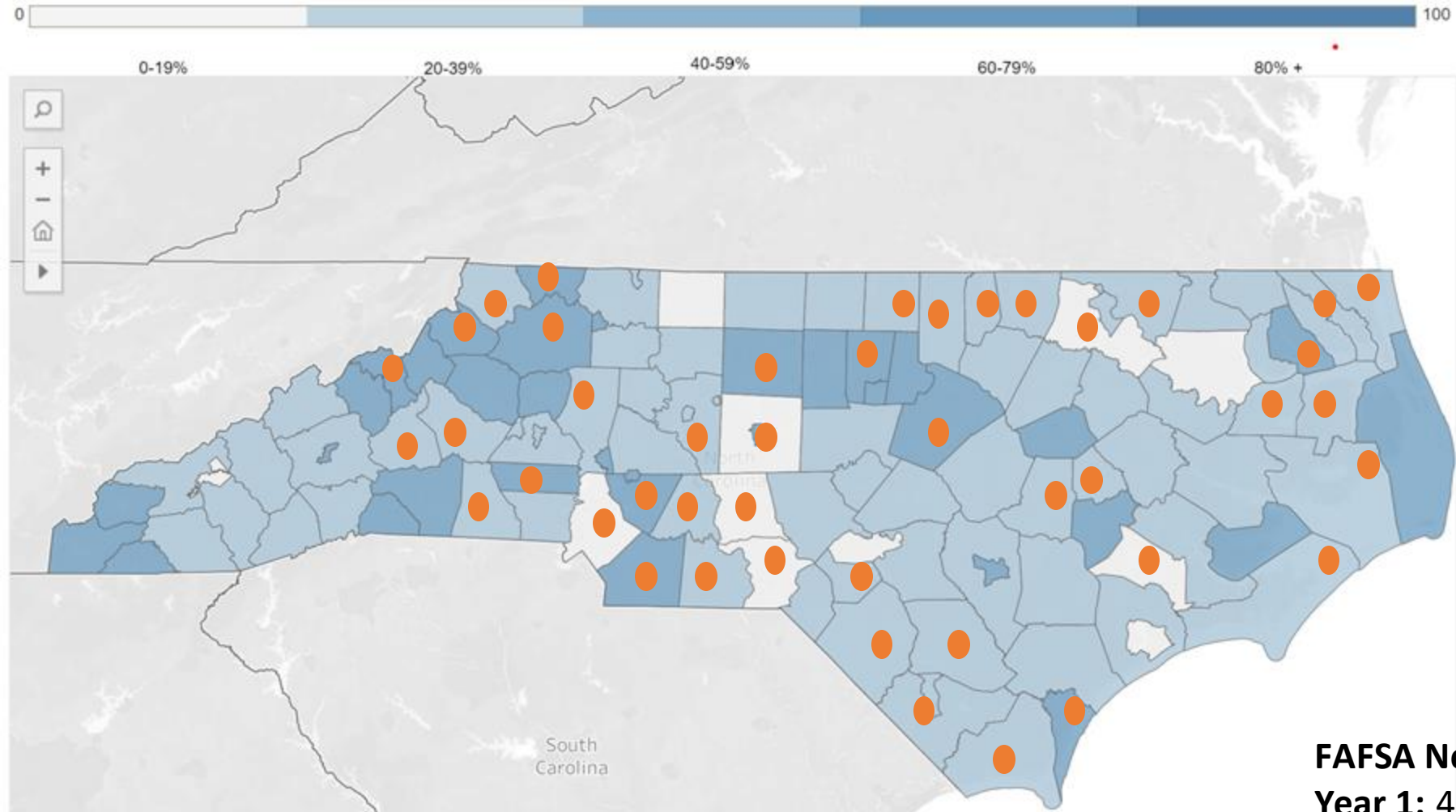


2021-22 FAFSA Tracker



FAFSA Comparisons - Tracker

FAFSA Completion Rate By School District (2/25/22)



[2020-21 FAFSA Tracker](#)

[2021-22 FAFSA Tracker](#)

FAFSA Network
Year 1: 42 districts
Year 2: 49 districts

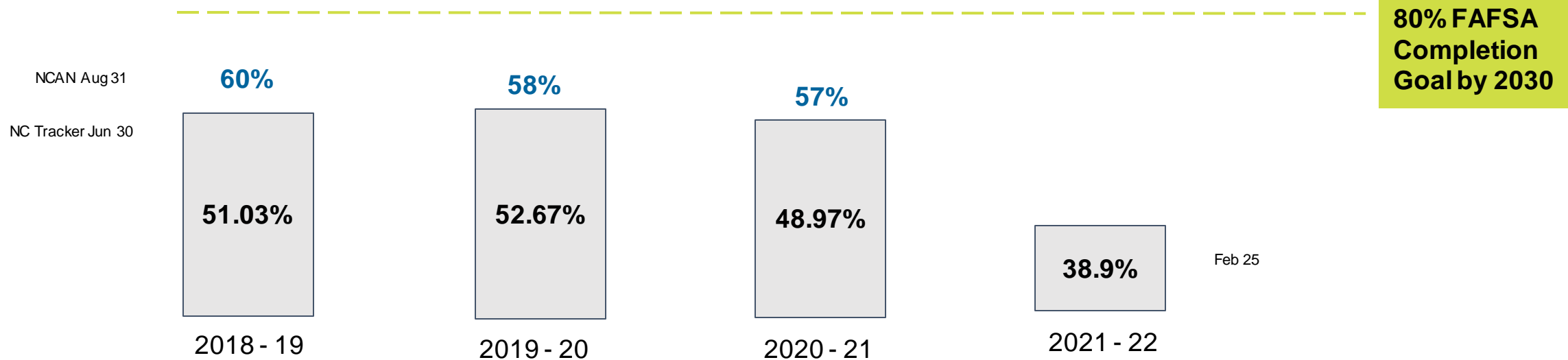


FAFSA Completions

Year-over-Year Comparisons through June 30

NC FAFSA Tracker Data (Carolina Demography) differs from NCAN Tracker

- Public high school data only vs. all students
- Enrollment is based on PMR month 2 data (NCDPI) vs. projections
- Schools <5 completions are not captured and contribute a 0 to the numerator



Questions to Consider

?

SHARED OWNERSHIP: How can you take advantage of the assets? What resources and tools can you share? Who might you connect with for thought leadership and advice? How might you collaborate on a joint effort?

?

DATA: Does everyone who needs access to the data have it? What additional training or support might be needed to best leverage the data? What equity gaps might exist, and how can you begin to address them?

?

OUTREACH AND SUPPORT: What are the biggest barriers your students face in completing the FAFSA? How has the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated those challenges? How can you expand your outreach and communications? How can you expand your virtual supports?

?

PARTNERSHIPS: What partnerships do you currently have? What additional partnerships might you establish to fill in any gaps in capacity? How might you leverage parents and students? How can you build upon and tailor the state's FAFSA Frenzy efforts?

Moderated Discussion and Q&A



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Summary