

Florida College and Career Readiness Initiative

Lessons Learned from the 2015 Summer College Readiness Professional Development Forum Series

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Approved by:

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stacey Jordan', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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Executive Summary

CNA Education is evaluating the Florida College and Career Readiness Initiative (FCCRI) through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The FCCRI is a statewide policy that has required college readiness testing in 11th grade, and then participation in college readiness and success courses in 12th grade for students who did not test as “college-ready.”

Through the formative component of this evaluation (including surveys, focus groups, and interviews during school years 2012/13 and 2013/14), CNA learned about several needs expressed by schools and districts with respect to improving implementation of the FCCRI. To meet those needs, CNA produced professional development forums in three counties (Miami-Dade, Leon, and Duval) during summer 2015. The aim was to help teachers, counselors, and administrators improve students’ college and career readiness, particularly those who test below college-ready on the Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT).

These forums may serve as a model for other districts interested in bringing together secondary and postsecondary educators to improve college readiness.

At the forum’s conclusion, attendees were asked to provide feedback via a web-based survey. A total of 155 surveys from K-12, postsecondary, and district staff respondents were submitted.

Overall, participants found all of the sessions presented at the forums to be very useful and relevant to their teaching and counseling responsibilities. Survey respondents also identified factors they believe contribute to and impede students’ college readiness. They also provided their opinions about which existing and possible new collaborations among educators could improve college readiness for students.

Key Findings

Among the findings from the surveys were the following:

- The majority of students targeted by the FCCRI need additional academic support in 12th grade to be ready for college-level work.

- Math teachers believe about 40 percent of their students are college-ready.
- English teachers believe about 50 percent of their students are college-ready.
- Respondents of all types believe that about 50 percent of their students have developed a realistic post-high school plan.

Throughout several open-ended survey questions, respondents repeatedly identified factors contributing to students' low rates of college readiness and their inability to develop realistic post-high school plans:

1. Lack of student engagement, driven by the inability of students to see a clear connection between academic and career plans.
2. Lack of student awareness of postsecondary financial aid programs.
3. Lack of parental/community support in fostering a college-going culture.

Regarding what forms of collaboration would be most useful in increasing their students' college readiness, survey respondents:

- Strongly desire to see more collaboration between high schools and state colleges and universities, between teachers and counselors within a high school, and between high schools and parents.
- Believe collaboration around college and career readiness should happen earlier, by 9th grade or even middle school.

Recommendations

The feedback provided by K-12 and postsecondary educators and district staff at the forums generated the following recommendations for the Florida Department of Education and other districts:

1. Sponsor or co-sponsor more events that involve the interaction of college staff with both high school staff and students.
2. Provide students with additional support in developing post-high school plans, such as distributing information on local high-wage and high-demand jobs.
3. Work with local colleges to communicate scholarship and other financial aid opportunities to students and schools.
4. Provide students with information to assist them in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
5. Support districts and schools in engaging communities to encourage a college-going culture.

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Acronyms

CPSP	Citi Postsecondary Success Program
CRS	college readiness and success
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FCAT	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test
FCCRI	Florida College and Career Readiness Initiative
HACER	Hispanic Access to College Education Resources
PD	professional development
PERT	Postsecondary Education Readiness Test
TCC	Tallahassee Community College

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Introduction

The Florida College and Career Readiness Initiative (FCCRI) is a statewide policy that has required college readiness testing in 11th grade, and then participation in college readiness and success (CRS) courses in 12th grade for students who did not test as “college-ready.” CNA Education is evaluating the FCCRI through a five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The evaluation includes formative and summative components to understand both implementation and student outcomes associated with the initiative.

As part of the formative evaluation, CNA Education conducted surveys, site visits, and interviews with district and school personnel during the 2012/13 and 2013/14 school years to identify impediments to implementing the FCCRI (Mokher & Jacobson, 2014; Mokher, Jacobson, Rosenbaum, & LaLonde, 2013).

This work led to collaboration between researchers and practitioners to produce a series of professional development (PD) forums on college readiness for K-12 and postsecondary educators across Florida in summer 2015.

This memo describes that professional development forum series and new findings from participant surveys about students’ college readiness conducted as part of the series.

About the forums

In summer 2015, CNA Education held PD forums in three Florida counties (Miami-Dade, Leon, and Duval) with the aim of helping teachers improve students’ college and career readiness, particularly for students testing below college-ready on the Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT) in 11th grade.

Researchers collaborated with educators in each county’s school district to individualize the common needs identified from the ongoing FCCRI evaluation. This resulted in an agenda for each forum that was based on local contexts. While the topics and activities varied across locations, sessions generally addressed college-level expectations for math and English courses, college-planning practices, and pathways to various careers. Partners for these events included the local school districts, local Florida state colleges, and nonprofit organizations. Copies of all

presentations and handouts from the forums can be downloaded from the FCCRI Edmodo site.¹ See Table 1 for more details about each forum.

The forums in Miami-Dade and Leon were each half a day in length, while the Duval forum was part of a larger PD event hosted by the school district. Presenters at the forums included community college staff and instructors, state personnel, and researchers. All three districts provided teachers with PD credit and compensation for attending (\$100 stipends for attending in Miami and Leon; regular salary as part of a teacher in-service day in Duval).

Table 1. Details about the three summer 2015 FCCRI professional development forums

District	Date	Partners	Topics
Miami-Dade	June 8, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Fund • Miami-Dade College • Miami-Dade County Public Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers and Bridges for the Forgotten Half • What Does It Mean to Be College-Ready (for English and Math)? • Planning for College • College Readiness Asset Mapping
Leon	August 4, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tallahassee Community College • Division of Florida Colleges • Leon County Public Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration and Preparing Students for Success • FCCRI Legislative Changes • TCC Scholarship Opportunities • Pathways to Well-Paying Careers • Initial Course Progression and Skills • Student Support Services at TCC
Duval	August 19, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florida State College at Jacksonville • Duval County Public Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Math College Readiness • English/Language Arts College Readiness • State College Options

About the surveys

At the forum’s conclusion, attendees were asked to provide feedback via a web-based survey in Miami-Dade and Leon counties, or a shorter paper-and-pencil survey in Duval. The survey asked participants about their attitudes on K-12/postsecondary collaboration and for their opinions of students’ college readiness and college readiness planning.

¹ To access the materials, register for a free account at www.edmodo.com. Once logged in to the Edmodo site, follow this link to request to join the FCCRI group: <https://edmo.do/j/ufvvtx>.

In total, 155 surveys were received, primarily from high school teachers, including those who teach math and English college readiness and success (CRS) courses. Other educators who completed surveys included: K-8 teachers, high school counselors, and high school administrators, district administrators, and college staff.

Are Florida's Students College-Ready?

Students who were in 11th grade in 2011/12 were the first cohort required to take the PERT assessment if they had scored in the mid-range of performance on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in 10th grade. Students with higher or lower scores on the FCAT also had the option to take the PERT in most districts.

About half (56 percent) of 11th graders took the PERT in math, and 39 percent took the PERT in reading.

According to their PERT scores, only 27 percent of these students were college-ready in math and 46 percent were college-ready in reading in grade 11 (Figure 1). This suggests that **the majority of students targeted by the FCCRI need additional academic support in 12th grade to be ready for college-level work.**

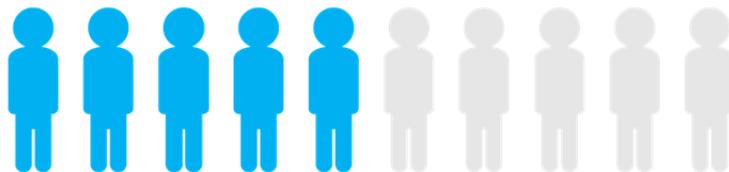
- Figure 1. Florida PERT takers who met college readiness benchmarks as 11th graders in 2012

Of the students who took PERT in grade 11 in 2011/12:

About 3 out of 10 were college-ready in math.



About 5 out of 10 were college-ready in reading.



Information gathered from surveys at two of the summer professional development forums (Miami-Dade and Leon) also indicates there is a need for improvement in college readiness,² in both math and reading.

That is, on average, **math teachers surveyed believe that about 40 percent of students they worked with in the previous semester were “ready for college, or would be college-ready when they left high school”**; reading teachers surveyed believe this of 50 percent of their students (Figure 2).

In addition, respondents of all types believe that, on average, about 50 percent of the students they worked with during the previous semester had realistic post-high school plans.

- Figure 2. Average of teachers' estimates of the percent of their students who are college-ready when they leave high school

The average teacher believed that among their students in Spring 2015:

About 4 out of 10 were college-ready in math.



About 5 out of 10 were college-ready in reading.



Impediments to college readiness

To gain further insight into the low rates of college readiness, the surveys asked about the barriers students face in becoming college-ready. Respondents were given a list of six potential impediments to college readiness and asked which impediments they believe are the most limiting in preventing students they worked

² Duval respondents were not asked to estimate the college readiness of their students, due to time constraints for completing the survey as part of the previously scheduled inservice.

with from being or becoming college-ready or from developing realistic post-high school plans (Table 2 Table 2).³

On average, **respondents rated a lack of student engagement as the most important impediment to college readiness, followed by weak organizational and other “soft” skills, and insufficient support from parents/mentors.** However, the other four—lack of time to provide guidance and counseling to students, lack of time to ensure students master core subject matter, and overemphasis on teaching to the test—were all rated as at least moderately important.

Table 2. Distribution and average of respondents' ratings of the importance of impediments to their students' college readiness

Category	Not important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)	Most important (5)	Average rating
Lack of engagement	0%	3%	23%	38%	36%	4.06
Weak organizational and other “soft” skills	0%	2%	33%	36%	30%	3.94
Insufficient support from parents/mentors	3%	9%	23%	38%	27%	3.83
Lack of time to provide guidance and counseling to students	8%	13%	21%	23%	34%	3.78
Lack of time to ensure students master core subject matter	0%	13%	22%	41%	25%	3.75
Overemphasis on teaching to the test	3%	11%	20%	31%	34%	3.62

Note: Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each impediment using a 5-point scale ranging from Not important=1 to Most important=5.

Respondents also were asked to name additional impediments not included in the offered list. As shown in Table 3, most short-answer responses involved students' home or community and student social and emotional issues. Regarding the problems faced in students' home lives, many respondents stated that students lack parental support in becoming college-ready or in developing realistic post-high school plans.

³ Duval respondents were not asked to rate college readiness impediments, due to time constraints for completing the survey.

Table 3. Additional impediments to college readiness most commonly reported by respondents (N>5)

Category	Number of responses
Home/community issues	18
Student motivation and other socio/emotional issues	18
Lack of academic preparation	14
Financial issues	13
Lack of knowledge about postsecondary plans other than traditional four-year degree	13
Lack of information about college/college planning	7

Several respondents also mentioned students coming from communities where languages other than English are spoken primarily, parents not wanting to see their children move away to college, and other cultural/community norms not supportive of college going. Regarding student social and emotional issues, respondents listed student motivation as a key factor, with one respondent stating, “Some students have lost engagement in their studies and have lost the feeling of relevancy to their future.”

Factors important to increasing college readiness

To inform thinking about how to address the low rates of students who are college-ready, the survey asked respondents to rate factors important to increasing college readiness.

On average, **respondents rated understanding the connection between college and careers, developing a realistic plan for college, and understanding the costs of college as the three factors most important to increasing college readiness** (Table 4). These results match with the findings reported above, as respondents identified lack of student engagement as the most important impediment to students’ college readiness.

Table 4. Distribution and average of respondents' ratings of the importance of various factors to increasing their students' college readiness

Category	Not important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)	Most important (5)	Average rating
Understanding the connection between college and careers	0%	1%	7%	49%	44%	4.35
Developing a realistic plan for college	0%	3%	7%	51%	39%	4.26
Understanding the costs of college and how to cover those costs with financial aid	0%	2%	10%	49%	39%	4.25
Identifying career interests	0%	1%	10%	61%	28%	4.16
Increasing academic skills	0%	3%	15%	50%	32%	4.11
Understanding the full array of programs at state colleges and universities	0%	3%	20%	49%	29%	4.03
Understanding the differences between requirements for success in college versus high school	0%	2%	23%	53%	22%	3.95
Increasing soft skills	0%	4%	19%	56%	21%	3.94
Gaining exposure to colleges through visits and outside speakers	2%	4%	33%	46%	16%	3.69

Note: Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each factor using a 5-point scale ranging from Not important=1 to Most important=5.

Impediments to creating realistic post-high school plans

Respondents mentioned that about half of the students they worked with struggled to develop realistic post-high school plans.

The surveys asked about impediments preventing the students they worked with from creating realistic post-high school plans. On average, **respondents rated as most important the lack of student engagement in the planning process, insufficient support from parents/mentors, and lack of integrating planning into the high school program** (Table 5).

Table 5. Distribution and average of respondents' ratings of the importance of impediments to their students developing realistic post-high school plans

Category	Not important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)	Most important (5)	Average rating
Lack of student engagement in the planning process	3%	8%	16%	38%	36%	3.95
Insufficient support from parents/mentors	2%	16%	17%	32%	33%	3.79
Lack of planning integrating into the high school program	3%	17%	23%	34%	22%	3.55
Lack of accurate information about programs available at postsecondary institutions	5%	22%	20%	30%	23%	3.45
Lack of accurate information about sources of financial aid	8%	20%	25%	27%	20%	3.31

Note: Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each impediment using a 5-point scale ranging from Not important=1 to Most important=5.

Collaboration to Improve College Readiness

The task of improving students' college readiness will require more than individual high school teachers working alone. Providing the information required to promote academic achievement, to connect high school curricula to post-high school planning, and to inform students of postsecondary opportunities and financial aid resources necessitates cooperation across different roles and levels within the education system.

It is therefore not surprising that, when the surveys asked which types of collaboration they would like more of, respondents agreed or strongly agreed that every form of collaboration the survey listed was needed.⁴ **Respondents most strongly agreed that they would like to see more collaboration between high schools and state colleges and universities and between teachers and counselors within a high school** (Table 6). Respondents also agreed that they would like to see more collaboration among teachers within a high school, between high schools and the district, and across teachers in different high schools.

Table 6. Distribution and average of respondents' ratings of the desire to see collaboration types to improve college readiness

Category	Strongly Disagree(1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree(4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Average rating
Between high schools and state colleges	0%	0%	7%	29%	64%	4.56
Between high schools and state universities	0%	0%	7%	35%	58%	4.51
Between teachers and counselors with a high school	0%	2%	9%	36%	53%	4.40

⁴ Duval respondents were not asked any of the collaboration questions, due to time constraints.

Category	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Average rating
Among teachers within a high school	0%	2%	13%	42%	44%	4.27
Between high schools and the district	0%	4%	15%	42%	40%	4.18
Across teachers in different high schools	0%	5%	16%	40%	38%	4.11

Note: Respondents were asked to rate how strongly they agreed that they would like to see each form of collaboration using a 5-point scale ranging from Strongly disagree=1 to Strongly Agree=5.

Existing collaborations

A short-answer section of the survey asked respondents to name what existing collaborations were effective in improving students' college readiness and success. The types of collaborations respondents most often listed were **third-party college or career preparation programs, other college readiness PD forums, and college visits** (Table 7).

Respondents named collaborations with a variety of third-party college or career preparation programs including College Summit,⁵ GEAR UP,⁶ the Citi Postsecondary Success Program (CPSP),⁷ and the National Writing Project.⁸ Some of the college preparatory programs listed, such as the Hispanic Access to College Education Resources (HACER)⁹ and the Pantoja Scholars,¹⁰ are aimed at increasing college readiness among Hispanic students specifically.

⁵ College Summit: <http://www.collegesummit.org>

⁶ GEAR UP (at Miami-Dade College): <http://www.mdc.edu/gearup>

⁷ Citi Postsecondary Success Program: <https://www.educationfund.org/uploads/docs/Programs/CPSP/CPSP%20brochure%20showcase%20copy.pdf>

⁸ National Writing Project: <http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/doc/about.csp>

⁹ Hispanic Access to College Education Resources: <http://hacermiami.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/HACER-one-page.pdf>

¹⁰ Pantoja Scholars program: <https://studentgroups.fsu.edu/organization/hispaniclatinostudentunion/calendar/details/340669>

Table 7. Existing collaborations respondents had participated in between K-12 and postsecondary educators that improve college readiness and success

Category	Number of responses
Third-party college or career prep program	9
Other college readiness PD forums	8
College visits	6
Collaboration with local colleges	4
Collaboration between schools in district	3
Collaboration through dual enrollment with other colleges	3
Collaboration through other high school College Assistance Program (CAP) Advisors	2
Other	3

New forms of collaboration

The surveys also asked respondents to describe what *new* forms of collaboration they believed would do the most to improve students' college readiness and success. Respondents suggested new forms of collaboration that involved local colleges, other teachers, and parents (Table 8).

Many respondents used this space to mention that they would like to see collaboration about college readiness happen *earlier* than it is currently—that is, starting in 9th grade or even middle school.

Table 8. New collaborations respondents believe would be most effective in improving students' college readiness and success

Category	Number of responses
Collaboration with local colleges	24
Collaboration with other teachers	5
Collaboration with parents	5
Earlier collaboration	5
Full spectrum of collaboration of teachers, counselors, district staff and postsecondary staff	3
Collaboration between counselors and teachers	2

Of the respondents who would like to see new collaborations with local colleges, many had specific recommendations for this collaboration. Several mentioned they would appreciate local postsecondary educators and counselors coming to discuss

with students what is needed to succeed in college and what various post-high school plans students can develop.

Others recommended regular forums between postsecondary and high school faculty and staff to discuss college readiness skills for students. Respondents who mentioned the need for increased collaboration with parents highlighted the need to create a “college-going culture” within local communities.

Educators' Plans for Using Forum Information

In general, feedback from Miami-Dade and Leon about the professional development forums overall was highly positive. In Duval, CNA presented only a subsection of the larger forum presented in the other two sites. Therefore, Duval respondents were not asked to rate the forum overall.

More than 80 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of the forum they attended and that they would be likely to attend similar forums in the future (Table 9). Large percentages of respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that the forum was relevant to their professional duties, and they would use the information while teaching or counseling.

At least 90 percent of respondents at each forum noted that they expected to share the information they learned with their colleagues. In addition, respondents praised the attended forum for its usefulness, thoroughness, and structure.

Table 9. Percentages of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with statements addressing the quality of the forums overall

Category	District	
	Miami-Dade	Leon
I am satisfied with the overall quality of this forum	90%	93%
If offered, I would be likely to attend a similar forum in the future	82%	89%
The forum was relevant to my professional duties	100%	93%
I am likely to use information from this forum in my teaching	72%	82%
I am likely to use information from this forum in formal or informal counseling students about college	90%	100%
I expect to share the information I learned with my colleagues	90%	100%

Asked to consider the individual presentations at their forum, respondents listed how they would use information from the presentations they found most useful.

Many respondents noted plans to:

- Share postsecondary opportunities other than traditional four-year baccalaureate degree programs with students
- Share information on the earnings potential for multiple types of college credentials with students
- Share scholarship and financial aid opportunities with students
- Work with school staff to develop action strategies that can be implemented to improve college and career readiness

Recommendations

The FCCRI professional development forums may serve as a model for other districts interested in bringing together K-12 and postsecondary educators to improve students' college readiness.

Overall, participants at the summer 2015 events found all of the sessions presented at the forums to be very useful and relevant to their teaching and counseling responsibilities. In their open-ended survey responses, participants also noted numerous specific examples of how they plan to use information acquired from the sessions that they found most useful.

Participants also provided feedback on additional ways that the state, districts, and schools can improve college and career readiness for high school students. Below are five primary recommendations generated by the K-12, postsecondary, and district staff who attended the forums:

1. Sponsor or co-sponsor more events that involve the interaction of college staff with both high school staff and students.

Respondents consistently listed collaboration with state colleges and universities as the form of collaboration they would most like to see more of in increasing college readiness. Given that many respondents also noted that they would attend similar forums in the future, a Florida Department of Education- and/or district-sponsored forum that brought together high school and state postsecondary instructors, counselors, and other staff would likely be of benefit to both groups.

Such a forum could focus on the topics of curriculum alignment between high school college readiness courses and postsecondary courses, and the connection between careers and high school/college curriculum. For additional examples of the type of material that could be presented, copies of all presentations and handouts from the FCCRI summer 2015 forums can be downloaded from the FCCRI Edmodo site. Webinars, rather than in-person events, also may be an option, though webinars often lack interaction and the collaborative nature that respondents desire.

Several respondents also mentioned the need for college instructors and counselors to speak to students. K-12 educators and administrators can work with local college staff to organize discussions with students about what academic preparation and soft skills are required for success in college. They also could describe what alternatives to a traditional four-year degree are available to students and what careers these degrees would prepare them for. According to one respondent, having postsecondary staff speak to the students directly would “let students know it’s all serious.”

Having postsecondary staff connect careers and options other than a traditional four-year degree may be particularly helpful in reaching students who traditionally are not the focus of postsecondary interventions intended for students pursuing baccalaureate degree programs.

2. Provide students with additional support in developing post-high school plans, such as distributing information on local high-wage and high-demand jobs.

Such information would focus on jobs that are predicted to have positive growth over time, offer a high wage, and require various postsecondary credentials—especially associate’s degrees or vocational training, in addition to the traditional four-year degree. Several forum attendees requested this information, with one respondent particularly requesting “a brochure or flier of some sort about the various careers, degrees, and certificates and related salaries.”

CNA Education released such a report in October 2015 (Mokher, Sun, & Pearson, 2015). *The CTE Equation in Florida* provides information about high-wage, high-demand jobs for all 24 of Florida’s workforce regions, along with the education requirements for these jobs. Distributing this type of information in high schools would make the importance of education and college readiness more concrete to students.

Teachers can also integrate more activities into their classes to help students develop realistic post-high school plans. For example, as part of the evaluation of the FCCRI, teachers in several districts collaborated with the research team to conduct a student essay contest in Spring 2014 (Mokher & Jacobson, 2014). Students in CRS courses were asked to describe their post-high school plans, their perspective on how their high school helped shape those plans, and their views on how their high

school could have been even more helpful. Approximately 90 percent of teachers who participated said that they would “definitely” or “probably” use the student essay assignment again next year in the CRS course, regardless of whether there was a contest. These teachers indicated that the essay assignment helped to engage students in thinking about their post-high school plans.

3. Work with local colleges to communicate scholarship and other financial aid opportunities to students and schools.

Financial issues appeared as a common impediment to college readiness and realistic post-high school plans in the surveys, in addition to being an area where educators would like more information for students. Many survey respondents noted that coming from a low-income family prevents a significant number of students from planning to attend college. Research also has shown that applying for financial aid is an important factor in students attending college (e.g. Tierney et al., 2009).

State colleges and universities can be encouraged to better communicate scholarships and other financial aid opportunities to districts, high schools, students, and communities. Such information could include requirements for receiving aid and deadlines throughout the application process. Several of the attendees noted that they plan to share scholarship information from the forums with colleagues and students.

4. Provide students with information to assist them in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

In 2014, some 53 percent of Florida high school seniors completed a FAFSA form (Phillips, 2014). While on par with many states around the country, there is room for improvement. Unfortunately, the FAFSA process is considered by many to be frustrating and complex, especially for non-English speaking households and low-income students, who already may be pessimistic about their ability to pay for college (Dynarski & Scott-Clayton, 2006).

Assisting students with FAFSA forms increases their likelihood of attending and persisting in college (Bettinger et al., 2012). In addition, a rigorous study showed that a program that sent community college students text messages notifying them about FAFSA resources and

deadlines produced large and positive effects in terms of college students persisting to a second year (Castleman & Page, 2014). For example, a FAFSA flyer could note important deadlines, list sources of FAFSA assistance, and identify common FAFSA mistakes. Additional in-person FAFSA counseling support could be provided to students as well..

5. Support districts and schools in engaging communities to encourage a college-going culture.

Respondents mentioned that many students come from families and communities that may not see the value of postsecondary education. Additional support should be provided to encourage students to take the time to visit colleges; or if possible, districts could dedicate time within the school year and transportation for students to visit local colleges. Parents also should be encouraged to attend these events, so they can learn about postsecondary opportunities for their child. If time and resources are limited, a virtual college visit such as that available from the University of Florida¹¹ is an alternative.

Many Florida students come from predominantly Spanish-speaking households, which can pose special challenges in learning about college preparation and college and career pathways (Auerbach, 2004). A parent-partnership program called Futures and Families sought to overcome this hurdle by providing college counseling, panel discussions, and study groups to parents, starting when students entered elementary school. Interaction was both in person and online and also in both Spanish and English. It was successful in getting most of its students to enroll in college (although the study used no comparison group).

To support students from such English learner backgrounds, additional efforts could be undertaken to increase awareness of programs such as these at an early age; or if possible, offer bilingual counseling events at local schools.

¹¹ See: <http://virtualtour.ufl.edu/>.

References

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