



PRESS RELEASE

From the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LOSFA Receives FAFSA Completion Challenge Grant

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) has received a \$54,000.00 Grant from the National College Access Network (NCAN) and The Kresge Foundation to increase completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by high school students in East Baton Rouge Parish public schools during the 2016-17 academic year.

College Access organizations in 118 cities across America were invited to submit grant applications. Only 22 cities were awarded nationwide.

The grant challenges awarded cities to increase FAFSA completion rates by a minimum of 5 percent for the high school graduating class of 2017. FAFSA is the primary application required for most student financial assistance programs including Federal Pell Grants, Federal on-campus Work Study programs, and low interest Federal Student Loans. FAFSA is also the primary application for the Louisiana TOPS (Taylor Opportunity Program for Students) program and the Louisiana Go Grant.

LOSFA has long been a proponent of FAFSA completion by all graduating high school seniors, having partnered with the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) to sponsor College Goal Sunday FAFSA completion events for the past nine years. LOSFA representatives also routinely assist students and parents one-on-one with FAFSA completion in their respective high schools, as well as providing assistance via LOSFA's customer service hotline (800-259-5626) and with Email help at custserv@la.gov.

"LOSFA is dedicated to ensuring equity of access. This involves informing all students of the opportunities available and actively assisting students with all facets of the college application and access process. The FAFSA is one of the most important college access opportunities available to students and families since completion of this one form allows students access to both federal and state aid based upon need as well as merit, said LOSFA Executive Director Dr. Sujuan Boutté. "This grant presents a tremendous opportunity for multiple entities to work together towards the goal of helping our students maximize gift aid and minimize loan debt," Boutté added.

Partnering with LOSFA in the Baton Rouge FAFSA Completion Challenge are the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), The East Baton Rouge Parish School System, the Louisiana Education Loan Authority (LELA), and Career Compass of Louisiana.

"This grant will invigorate Louisiana's efforts to help our students transition to a college education and be better prepared to compete for high-wage jobs," said State Superintendent of Education John White. "We need to make sure we do everything possible to help our kids use that money to achieve all of their dreams."

In addition to the 22 city grants, NCAN will also award three to five additional monetary prizes totaling \$300,000 in September 2017 among the 22 grant-funded cities. Prizes will go to:

- The city demonstrating greatest percentage point growth in high school FAFSA completions for the Class of 2017, compared to the Class of 2015
- The city demonstrating the highest high school FAFSA completion rate for the Class of 2017
- The city demonstrating the most innovative or collaborative FAFSA completion strategy and/or partnership with postsecondary institutions

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