



HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMISSION REQUEST TO PARTNERS

A Joint Message from the State of Oregon's
Higher Education Coordinating Commission and
the Oregon Department of Education
For Immediate Release

February 24, 2021

REQUEST TO PARTNERS

REQUEST TO PARTNERS: Please join us in encouraging all Oregonians considering postsecondary education to apply for financial aid today.

[Go to the key financial aid forms for state and federal aid here.](#)

Do you know or work with Oregonians who are considering college or additional workforce training?

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) and Oregon Department of Education (ODE) request your partnership in encouraging Oregonians to turn in the key financial aid forms that are used for most public and much private aid: the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) or the [Oregon Student Aid Application \(ORSAA\)](#).



Financial assistance can make your education affordable.

There is still time to apply and take advantage of financial assistance that can make postsecondary dreams possible and affordable. **Completion of the [FAFSA or ORSAA](#) is free and keeps options open for accessing and using aid at any point in the upcoming academic year.**

This time has brought many challenges and uncertainties for students and families, potentially delaying key steps in their postsecondary education or career training plans. **Oregon is seeing a [15 percent decrease in Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\) forms](#)** filed by high school seniors compared to February of last year in federal data. The data also demonstrates a need to focus strategic efforts on increasing FAFSA or ORSAA completion for students experiencing poverty, students of color, and students residing in rural areas. Oregon's decrease in the [completion of the FAFSA and ORSAA combined](#) is 13 percent for high school seniors, and two percent overall when compared to last year.* This decline means that many high

school seniors, continuing college students, and adults seeking to continue their education or workforce training could miss out on financial assistance that can make education more affordable.

The information provided on the FAFSA or the ORSAA will determine students' eligibility for public grant aid and numerous scholarships. The ORSAA is Oregon's alternative to the FAFSA for students with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and/or undocumented status. While these applications can be submitted throughout the academic year, **it is important to file the FAFSA or ORSAA as soon as possible.** Numerous Oregon programs that use information from these forms for determining financial aid eligibility have spring deadlines, including private scholarships and some institutional aid. The deadline for more than 600 scholarships administered by the HECC Office of Student Access and Completion is March 1, 2021. In addition, some grants have limited funding and may run out of funds, so filing late could mean missing out on some forms of aid.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data shows that students who complete the FAFSA are **84 percent more likely** to enroll in postsecondary education. Please join us in spreading the word far and wide about completing financial aid forms as soon as possible.

Below are some tips and tools to help you to encourage FAFSA or ORSAA completion across your communities:

- Explore Federal Student Aid resources on [Filling out the FAFSA](#) including [How Financial Aid Works](#) and [Finding FAFSA help](#).
- If you are a high school partner, find out if your high school is participating in Oregon's state-wide [FAFSA/ORSAA Challenge](#) and learn how you can help or provide support at events. [First launched in 2019](#), the Challenge is a partnership between HECC, ODE, and college access partners.
- In January 2021, Oregon's FAFSA/ORSAA Challenge spotlighted 4 high schools that achieved outstanding completion rates: Neah-kah-nie High School, Parkrose High School, Silverton High School, and Wilson High School. Here are the [strategies they say contribute to their success in helping high school seniors complete the FAFSA/ORSAA](#).
- Look up [data on the FAFSA/ORSAA rates for your local high school here](#).
- Highlight for your audiences the many [ways to pay for college or workforce training](#).
- Explore the outreach resources from the HECC [Office of Student Access and Completion](#), including an introductory presentation on [Finding Funds](#) for college, as well as links to flyers, posters, and video trainings.
- Explore [financial aid opportunities available to DACA undocumented students in Oregon](#). Learn more about [the ORSAA including tip sheets and data privacy](#). Data provided by students on the ORSAA is not shared with other agencies, state or federal.
- Learn more about Oregon's state-administered grants and scholarships at [OregonStudentAid.gov](#). Some programs require applications in addition to the FAFSA or ORSAA, including the Oregon

Promise ([find your deadline here](#)) and the 600 scholarships offered through the [OSAC scholarship application](#) (deadline March 1).

If you have any questions, please reach out to:

- HECC: Office of Student Access and Completion, FafsaPlus@hecc.oregon.gov
- ODE: ODE.FAFSACompletion@state.or.us

*Sources: FAFSA data: [Form Your Future FAFSA Tracker, National College Attainment Network](#), based on data from Federal Student Aid: [US Department of Education Student Aid](#). February 12, 2021. FAFSA/ORSAA data: HECC-Office of Student Access and Completion, February 21, 2021.

Additional resources for college and career planning:

- Feel free to use this new [toolkit of outreach resources to reach adult learners](#).
- Provide time to discuss the wide variety of education options after completion of a High School diploma or GED®. Visit the [College Navigator](#) to search for and compare education and training options nation-wide.
- Find [links to Oregon colleges, universities, and programs here](#).
- Discuss [career options](#) that require additional education or career training.
- Discuss the [many benefits of a earning a postsecondary credential](#).
- Explore [Oregon ASPIRE resources](#). ASPIRE is the State of Oregon's mentoring program to help students access education and training beyond high school.
- Explore [FAFSA-ORSAA Challenge](#) partner websites:
 - [Oregon Department of Education](#)
 - [Oregon Goes to College](#) - Oregon GEAR UP
 - [ECMC The College Place](#)
 - [Oregon Association of Financial Aid Administrators](#)

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The State of Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) envisions a future in which all Oregonians—and especially those whom our systems have underserved and marginalized—benefit from the transformational power of high-quality postsecondary education and training. For more information, go to www.Oregon.gov/HigherEd