

# THE STATE OF **FINANCIAL AID** IN LOUISIANA



A REPORT OF THE LOUISIANA  
FINANCIAL AID WORKING GROUP



**FINANCIAL AID**  
FUNDING MY FUTURE

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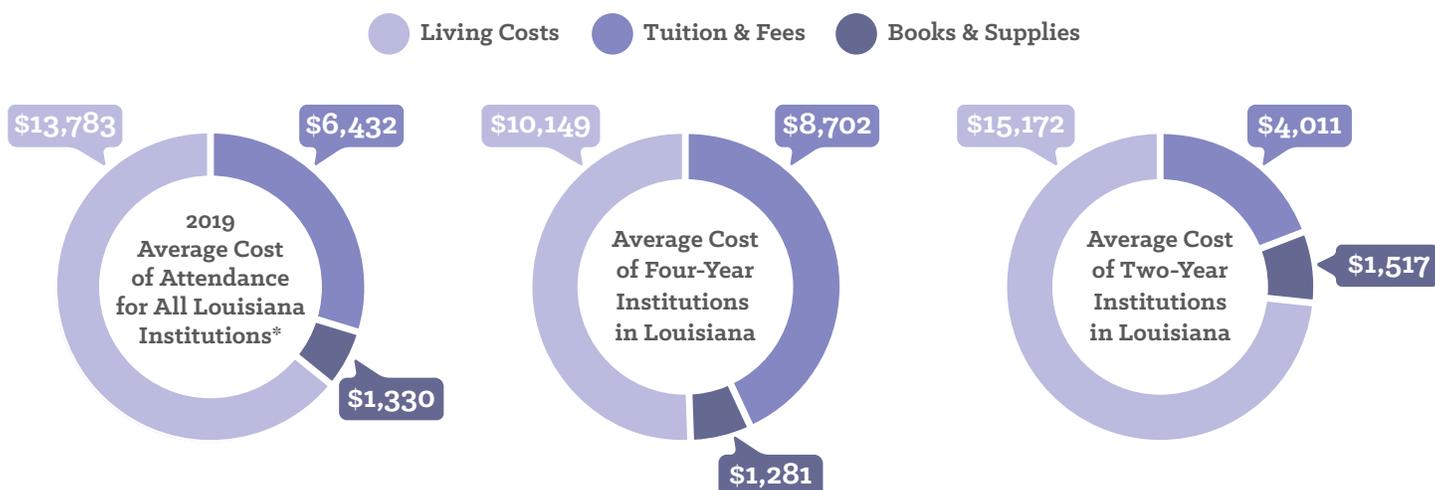
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# POSTSECONDARY ACCESS IN LOUISIANA

65 percent of the nation's jobs will require postsecondary education by 2020.<sup>1</sup> While Louisiana has made great progress, there still remain gaps in access to and completing college by socio-economic status, even amongst higher-achieving economically disadvantaged students. Some students who are eligible for aid still fail to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). FAFSA submission rates can be raised by providing education and personal assistance to students. Louisiana has created a policy and increased awareness about the importance of applying for financial aid to further postsecondary education. The second year of full implementation has continued to show increased FAFSA submissions and the closing of some gaps that impede access to underserved sub-groups statewide.

## POSTSECONDARY COSTS

One of the most prominent barriers to postsecondary education or training in Louisiana is cost. Too few students and families have the money to fund a four-year degree or industry training program without assistance.



\*Source: [College Tuition Compare](#)

## POSTSECONDARY FUNDING SOURCES

Louisiana students are afforded many state and federal financial aid options such as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students to help combat the costs of postsecondary education and training.

### **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**

The FAFSA is a form prepared annually by current and prospective postsecondary students to determine their eligibility for student financial aid such as Pell grants, work study programs, and federal student loans. Students complete the FAFSA during their senior year of high school and again each year they are in a postsecondary institution to continue qualifying for aid. Early completion is encouraged since students may qualify for additional state or institutional aid.

### **Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)**

TOPS is a scholarship program for Louisiana residents who attend any of the following institutions:

- Louisiana public college or university;
- school in the Louisiana Community and Technical College System;
- approved proprietary and cosmetology schools;
- institutions in the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

TOPS Opportunity, Performance, Honors, and Tech awards are based on a student's coursework, GPA and ACT score.<sup>2</sup>

1 Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and Workforce analysis of occupation data and workforce trends

2 Source: [TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors \(OPH\) and TOPS Tech 2017-18 Award Amounts by Institution](#), Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance.

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# LOUISIANA'S PLAN FOR INCREASING POSTSECONDARY ACCESS

By not completing the FAFSA, Louisiana students forego millions each year in federal grants, state opportunities, and other postsecondary funding. Additionally, students who are awarded TOPS or other state scholarships still seek additional assistance with living expenses, textbooks, and academic fees.

## IMPROVING STATE POLICY

These student financial aid gaps call for a comprehensive and sustainable approach to financial aid planning that will benefit all students equitably and preserve the attainment of postsecondary education for future generations.

In December of 2015 the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved a policy regarding postsecondary planning for graduating public high school seniors. The policy sought to increase student access to state and federal financial aid by requiring graduating seniors to either

- complete the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) application or the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA);
- declare a hardship; or
- submit a waiver to the local school system.

These policies were made effective with the start of the 2017-2018 school year and applied to the Class of 2018.

## IMPROVING STATEWIDE FINANCIAL AID PLANNING

In order to provide even greater access to financial aid for Louisiana's students, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) formed the Financial Aid Working Group to evaluate the state's financial aid application completion rates, identify deficiencies and solutions for communities with low completion rates, and provide a comprehensive list of recommendations to the LDOE on how to improve financial aid completion rates statewide. The Financial Aid working group continues to meet quarterly to analyze current trends and best practices in financial aid planning and create a network of resources for students around the state.

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### Specifically, the working group was charged with three tasks:

- 1 **Develop a state action plan to track school-level financial aid form completion and make recommendations to the Department regarding changes in policy or funding opportunities deemed necessary to ensure that the new policy is implemented with fidelity;**
  - 2 **Support the Department in the ongoing identification of services and programs available for schools and families; and**
  - 3 **Assist in the development of partnerships and alliances with financial aid-related support programs, services, and stakeholders.**
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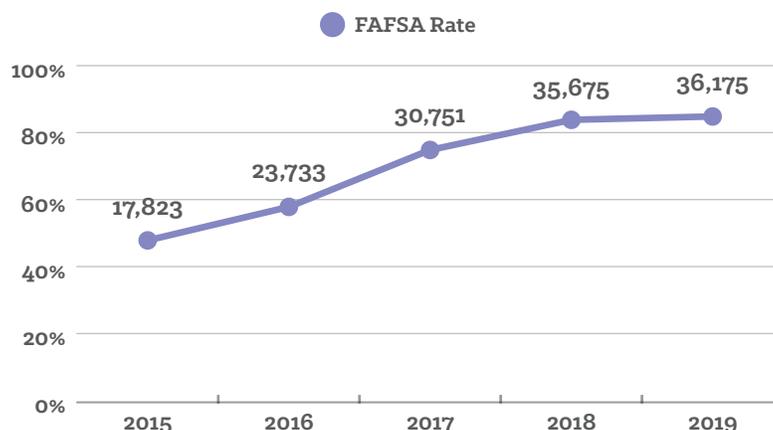
Additionally, the working group recommended that the LDOE publish an annual report, *The State of Financial Aid in Louisiana*, to report financial aid completion rates amongst high school seniors, and highlight those school systems and schools with the highest submission rates.

## IMPROVING STATEWIDE FAFSA APPLICATION RATES<sup>3</sup>

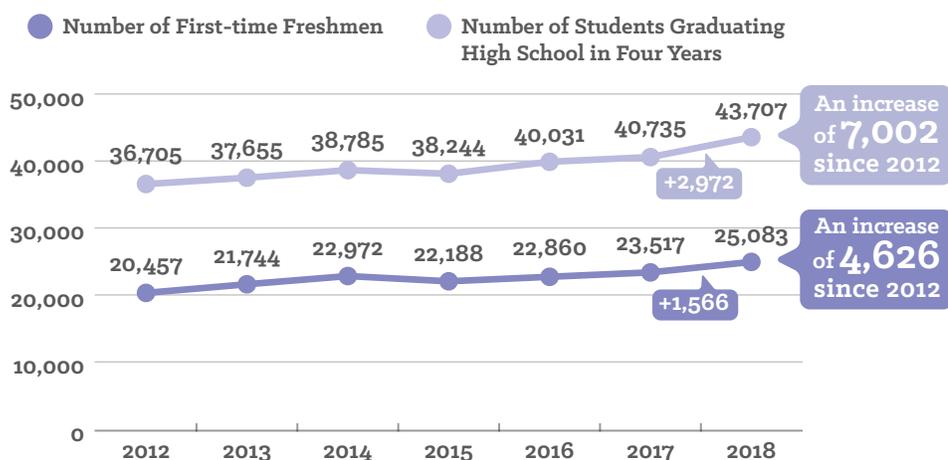
### STATE/NATIONAL COMPARISONS

In 2019, the national average for FAFSA completion by the June 30 priority deadline was 61 percent, decreasing by 10,000 applications nationally from 2018. Louisiana continued to show growth with a completion rate of 79 percent which was number one in the nation, surpassing the state's all-time high and the national average. Additionally, Louisiana calculates submission rates for all public school applications as submission meets the requirement for graduation. The public school submission rate was 85 percent.

### FAFSA SUBMISSION RATES FOR LOUISIANA PUBLIC SCHOOLS



### COLLEGE ENROLLMENT IN LOUISIANA



### COLLEGE ENROLLMENT IN LOUISIANA

The number of graduates enrolled in the Fall semester immediately following graduation, known as the number of first-time freshmen (FTF), has increased over time, just as the number of students graduating high school in four years has climbed.

<sup>3</sup> The policy requiring students to complete a FAFSA or have a waiver is satisfied by having a legitimate submission. The vast majority of FAFSA submissions are ruled complete; however, there are some submissions with errors that students do not go back in to correct as their plans for higher education may have changed.

## STATE SUBMISSION DATA ANALYSIS

The state additionally analyses submission data by subgroup. Below are the results from the two years of policy implementation.

Identifier	June 30, 2018	June 30, 2019
All Public School Students	84%	85%
Females	90%	90%
Males	79%	80%
TOPS University Diploma	91%	91%
Jump Start Career Diploma	66%	68%
Economically Disadvantaged	82%	83%
Non-Economically Disadvantaged	87%	88%
Special Education	64%	64%
English Language Learners	51%	50%
Homeless	data not available	82%
White	85%	85%
Black	86%	86%
Hispanic	67%	69%
American Indian	74%	n/a
Asian	91%	91%
Native Hawaii	78%	89%
Multi Race	86%	86%

## NATIONAL COMPARISONS

The [National College Access Network \(NCAN\) published](#) the national completion rates and rank of all states by percent of growth since the previous year each week during the FAFSA cycle from October until the June 30, 2019 priority deadline. Since the implementation of the policy, Louisiana has finished at number one in the nation for FAFSA completions. NCAN reported that 79 percent of students in Louisiana completed the FAFSA by the June 30 priority deadline.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> NCAN combines both private and public school students in its FAFSA submission rate count.

## SCHOOL SYSTEM COMPARISONS

School System	Percent Submitted 2018-2019 Cycle	Percent Submitted 2019-2020 Cycle
Acadia Parish	72%	73%
Allen Parish	81%	96%
Ascension Parish	82%	82%
Assumption Parish	84%	87%
Avoyelles Parish	92%	92%
Beauregard Parish	82%	74%
Bienville Parish	92%	96%
Bossier Parish	81%	77%
Caddo Parish	86%	84%
Calcasieu Parish	72%	66%
Caldwell Parish	83%	86%
Cameron Parish	80%	78%
Catahoula Parish	100%	100%
Central Community School District	80%	77%
City of Baker School District	92%	91%
City of Bogalusa School District	81%	98%
City of Monroe School District	90%	97%
Claiborne Parish	65%	62%
Concordia Parish	76%	85%
DeSoto Parish	76%	85%
East Baton Rouge Parish	92%	94%
East Carroll Parish	100%	100%
East Feliciana Parish	93%	100%
Evangeline Parish	88%	94%
Franklin Parish	89%	87%
Grant Parish	86%	80%
Iberia Parish	69%	75%
Iberville Parish	98%	99%
Jackson Parish	99%	99%
Jefferson Davis Parish	75%	83%
Jefferson Parish	83%	83%
Lafayette Parish	85%	85%
Lafourche Parish	80%	74%
LaSalle Parish	81%	85%
Lincoln Parish	80%	88%
Livingston Parish	91%	98%
Madison Parish	99%	99%
Morehouse Parish	86%	84%
Natchitoches Parish	93%	88%
Orleans Parish	97%	94%
Ouachita Parish	81%	75%
Plaquemines Parish	94%	93%
Pointe Coupee Parish	88%	68%

School System	Percent Submitted 2018-2019 Cycle	Percent Submitted 2019-2020 Cycle
Rapides Parish	93%	93%
Red River Parish	93%	94%
Richland Parish	74%	86%
Sabine Parish	87%	88%
St. Bernard Parish	74%	90%
St. Charles Parish	94%	94%
St. Helena Parish	96%	100%
St. James Parish	89%	82%
St. John the Baptist Parish	96%	98%
St. Landry Parish	86%	91%
St. Martin Parish	73%	72%
St. Mary Parish	83%	82%
St. Tammany Parish	89%	85%
Tangipahoa Parish	85%	89%
Tensas Parish	79%	74%
Terrebonne Parish	64%	68%
Union Parish	73%	94%
Vermilion Parish	69%	64%
Vernon Parish	82%	89%
Washington Parish	93%	96%
Webster Parish	83%	78%
West Baton Rouge Parish	98%	95%
West Carroll Parish	94%	73%
West Feliciana Parish	83%	96%
Winn Parish	86%	87%
Zachary Community School District	90%	85%

**HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS**

School Name	Percent Submitted
Arcadia High School	100%
Arlington Preparatory Academy	100%
Block High School	100%
D'Arbonne Woods Charter School	100%
Downsville Community Charter School	100%
Dr. Martin Luther King Charter School for Sci Tech	100%
East Feliciana High School	100%
East Iberville Elementary/High School	100%
Elton High School	100%
Fairview High School	100%
French Settlement High School	100%
General Trass High School	100%
Harrisonburg High School	100%
Hathaway High School	100%
Haynes Academy School for Advanced Studies	100%
Holden High School	100%
Jewel M. Sumner High School	100%
John Martyn Community School	100%
Jonesboro-Hodge High School	100%
KIPP Renaissance	100%
Lincoln Preparatory School	100%
Live Oak High School	100%
Lord Beaconsfield Landry-Oliver Perry Walker High	100%
Louisiana School for Math Science & the Arts	100%
Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired	100%
Madison Preparatory Academy	100%
Mamou High School	100%
Marksville High School	100%
Maurepas School	100%
McDonogh #35 College Preparatory School	100%
New Orleans Charter Science and Mathematics HS	100%
Northeast Claiborne Charter	100%
Northeast High School	100%
Northwood High School	100%
Oak Hill High School	100%
Patrick F. Taylor Science & Technology Academy	100%
Pitkin High School	100%
Plainview High School	100%
Quitman High School	100%
Reeves High School	100%
Riverside Alternative High School	100%
Saline High School	100%
Sicily Island High School	100%

School Name	Percent Submitted
Slaughter Community Charter School	100%
Southside Alternative High School	100%
Springfield High School	100%
St. Helena College and Career Academy	100%
Vision Academy	100%
West St. John High School	100%
Scotlandville Magnet High School	100%
Peabody Magnet High School	99%
Edna Karr High School	99%
Plaquemine Senior High School	99%
Carroll High School	99%
Neville High School	99%
Caddo Parish Magnet High School	99%
Rosepine High School	99%
Madison High School	99%
Avoyelles Public Charter School	98%
Beekman Charter School	98%
Albany High School	98%
New Orleans Center for Creative Arts	98%
Capitol High School	98%
Walter L. Cohen College Prep	98%
Benjamin Franklin High School	98%
Mentorship STEAM Academy	98%
Glen Oaks Senior High School	98%
Sophie B. Wright Institute of Academic Excellence	98%
East St. John High School	98%
Bogalusa High School	98%
Pine Prairie High School	98%
Lake Charles College Prep	98%
Natchitoches Central High School	98%
Weston High School	98%
Lee High School	98%
Welsh High School	98%
Montgomery High School	97%
Loreauville High School	97%
Thomas Jefferson High School for Advanced Studies	97%
Baton Rouge Magnet High School	97%
Franklinton High School	97%
Beau Chene High School	97%
Louisiana Virtual Charter Academy	97%
Oakdale High School	97%
Doyle High School	97%
Port Allen High School	97%
Denham Springs High School	97%

School Name	Percent Submitted
Abramson Sci Academy	97%
Ebarb School	97%
Early College Academy	96%
White Castle High School	96%
Belle Chasse High School	96%
Pearl River High School	96%
Doyline High School	96%
Evans High School	96%
Southern University Lab School	96%
Pine School	96%
Huntington High School	96%
West Feliciana High School	96%
Rayville High School	96%
Monterey High School	96%
Ringgold High School	96%
Walker High School	96%
Alexandria Senior High School	96%
David Thibodaux STEM Magnet Academy	95%
Caddo Virtual Academy	95%
Georgetown High School	95%
Hornbeck High School	95%
Kinder High School	95%
Castor High School	95%
Lusher Charter School	95%
McKinley Senior High School	95%
Eleanor McMain Secondary School	95%
Pickering High School	95%
International High School of New Orleans	95%
Buckeye High School	94%
Converse High School	94%
Brusly High School	94%
Magnet Academy for Cultural Arts	94%
Lakeview Jr./Sr. High School	94%
Destrehan High School	94%
Basile High School	94%
Varnado High School	94%
Red River High School	94%
Lafayette High School	94%
Thrive Academy	94%
Tioga High School	94%
Warren Easton Senior High School	94%
Wossman High School	93%
Woodlawn High School	93%
Atlanta High School	93%

School Name	Percent Submitted
Elizabeth High School	93%
Hahnville High School	93%
Donaldsonville High School	93%
South Cameron High School	93%
Chalmette High School	93%
Tara High School	93%
Dodson High School	93%
Union Parish High School	92%
Eunice High School	92%
Fontainebleau High School	92%
LSU Laboratory School	92%
Jeanerette Senior High School	92%
Lutcher High School	92%
North DeSoto High School	92%
Amite High Magnet	91%
G W Carver High School	91%
Northshore High School	91%
Mt. Hermon School	91%
Baker High School	91%
Glenmora High School	91%
Delhi Charter School	91%
Opelousas Senior High School	91%
Sterlington High School	91%
Oberlin High School	91%
Simsboro High School	91%
Northside High School	91%
Bolton High School	90%
Northdale Superintendent's Academy	90%
Zwolle High School	90%
L.W. Higgins High School	90%
Ponchatoula High School	90%
Choudrant High School	90%
Green Oaks Performing Arts Academy	90%
Northwest High School	90%
Ferriday High School	90%

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## APPENDIX: FAFSA DATA COLLECTION

Currently the only source for public school only FAFSA data besides self-reporting is on the USDOE website. Weekly/bi-weekly USDOE data can be found at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/about/data-center/student/application-volume/fafsa-completion-high-school>.

While USDOE data is informative, it does have some limitations. Some of the limitations of USDOE data include

- Students can submit multiple applications using different identifying information
- Students who are overage fall within the current definition of a senior (beginning in January, first-time submitters up to 19 years old were present in data)
- School can have a change in the official count of seniors during the current school year
- School is listed more than one time in the data with name variations
- School has less than 10 seniors and are therefore not included in reporting
- School has 5 or fewer applications on file and not included in school reporting but included in district reporting

Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, USDOE submitted applications were matched with official state data in the Student Transcript System to indicate that students have met graduation requirements.

The LDOE uses USDOE data to calculate FAFSA data for Louisiana public schools. The data included in this report reflects the number of FAFSAs submitted among first-time filing applicants at the cutoff date who will have received their high school diploma by the start of the school year for which they are applying for aid.

The LDOE data uses USDOE reported numbers and school system self reporting and calculates based on the number of actual graduates in the Student Transcript System (STS). This data is reported by numbers submitted, divided by the number of graduates. Final district and school year percentages are calculated on the state/national priority deadline for FAFSA submission as of June 30. The Department communicates data to the field through network teams each week.

FAFSA data on public and nonpublic school completions can be found at the National College Access Network's (NCAN) Form Your Future FAFSA Tracker (<https://formyourfuture.org/fafsa-tracker/>).