

# FAFSA National Scan

*Presented to California Student Aid Commission*

December 1, 2021

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UC DAVIS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

DRSP Committee

December 1, 2021  
Distributed on 11/30/21

# Background

- CA recently passed AB469, which requires that a local education agency confirm that each pupil submits a FAFSA or a CADAA (unless exempt).
- CA bill is modeled after other States' prior legislation to require FAFSA for graduating seniors.
- CSAC wanted to know more about prior efforts to assist in the rollout:
  - Effectiveness, outreach/marketing, implementation differences, expected increases in submission rates, expected increases in college going rates
- Environmental Scan performed by CA Education Lab @ UC Davis

# Financial Concerns Impede College Enrollment & Completion

- **Financial concerns cited as the primary reason for not attending college** (Bozick et al., 2015; Hahn & Price, 2008; Hemlet & Marcotte, 2016; St. John, 2006)
- **Students often unable to accurately predict college prices** (Grotsky & Jones, 2004; Hu & Hossler, 2000; Luna De La Rosa, 2006)
- **Lack accurate information on financial aid**
- **Challenges in completing the FAFSA** (Grotsky & Jones, 2007; Horn et al., 2003; Perna & Steele, 2011)

# Too Few Students Submit a FAFSA

- **Most frequently cited reasons for not submitting the FAFSA:**
  - Students' belief that they will not qualify for aid
  - Insufficient or (mis) information about process in general (Snyder et al., 2018)
  - Students often unable to accurately predict college prices (Grotsky & Jones, 2004; Hu & Hossler, 2000; Luna De La Rosa, 2006)
- **Among those who submit FAFSA, many incomplete applications and failure to complete FAFSA verification process** (Granville, 2020)
- **Incomplete applications are more common in school districts with more racially minoritized and low-income students**

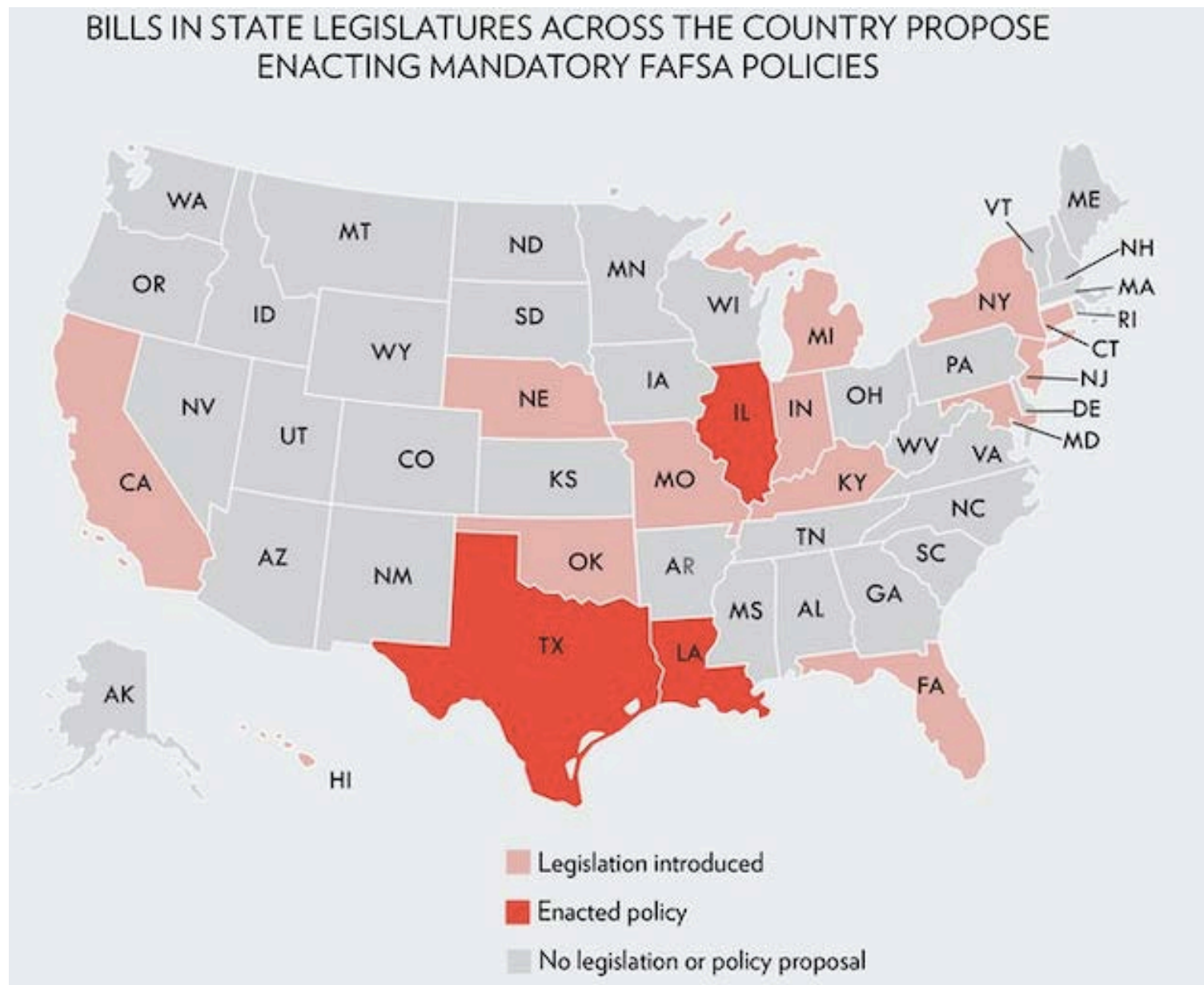
# Efforts to Improve FAFSA Submission & Completion Rates

- Providing information about the cost of college and financial aid application to students at an earlier age
- Assisting families with the application process
- Requiring FAFSA submission as a condition to receive state financial aid
- Requiring FAFSA submission prior to high school graduation

# **Review of State Policies Requiring FAFSA Submission Prior to High School Graduation**

- **30 states have introduced legislation**
- **5 states have already implemented policies:**
  - Alabama, California, Illinois, Louisiana, and Texas
- **1 School District in California – Val Verde Unified School District**

Since 2019, 17 additional states introduced legislation mandating FAFSA completion for high school seniors



Five states have implemented mandatory FAFSA:

- Alabama
- California
- Illinois
- Louisiana
- Texas

SOURCE: The Century Foundation (2020)

# Key Features of State Policies Requiring FAFSA Submission Prior to High School Graduation

- **Require FAFSA submission during senior year**
- **Include training high school counselors**
- **Include assistance for students & families completing the FAFSA**
- **Though details on the nature of counselor training and family assistance programs often unclear**




# Key Features of State Policies Requiring FAFSA Submission Prior to High School Graduation

- “Opt-out” provisions:
  - Schools or students with extenuating circumstances
  - Requirements often do not keep students from graduating
  - In Utah, students can opt-out if they believe they won’t be eligible for aid, if they have data privacy concerns, or if their financial aid advisor directs them not to apply.

# Non-mandatory Interventions

- **Efforts to improve FAFSA submission, but not required for high school graduation**
  - Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, and Washington
  - Events that provide seniors and their families with free support to complete the FAFSA
  - Submitting the FAFSA for eligibility for state financial aid

# Super FAFSA Project Virginia



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## Super FAFSA Project Virginia

For several years, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and the Educational Credit Management Corp. (ECMC) have partnered with Virginia high schools to host events at which high school seniors and their parents receive free, professional assistance with completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

The project, Super FAFSA Project Virginia, is an annual statewide initiative designed to increase FAFSA completion throughout the Commonwealth with a special focus on schools that serve a student population where 50 percent or more are eligible to participate in the National School Lunch Program for free and reduced-priced lunches – the population in greatest need of guidance and resources to conquer the financial-aid process. Many of the students who qualify for free and reduced-priced lunches will be eligible for free need-based financial aid including the federal Pell Grant. Completion of the FAFSA is the first step to receiving grants and other financial aid. [Your school's FAFSA completion data can be found here.](#)



**Financial Aid 101 Webinars**  
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- [Register here](#)  
November 16, 2021  
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# Tennessee's FAFSA Frenzy



## TN PATH TO COLLEGE EVENTS

# TN FAFSA FRENZY

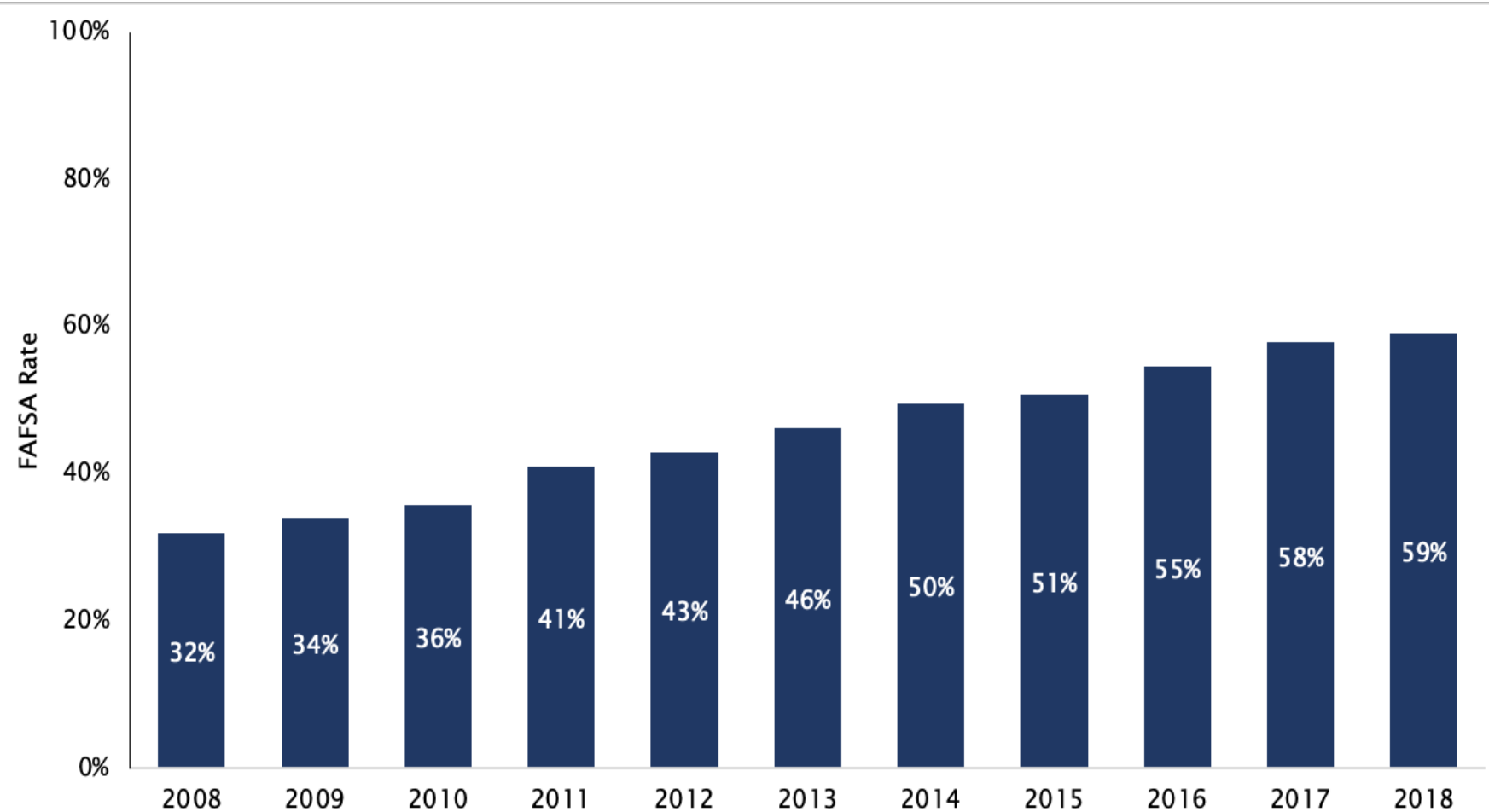
TN FAFSA Frenzy is the State of Tennessee's FAFSA submission initiative, designed to provide educators and students with resources to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and take an important step in the college-going process.



## OVERVIEW

Created with the goal of increasing statewide [FAFSA](#)-filing rates, TN FAFSA Frenzy is a statewide campaign to encourage and support seniors filing their Free Applications for Federal Student Aid. While elementary and middle school students might not be ready to file a FAFSA, TN FAFSA Frenzy is an excellent time to teach students about the basics of financial aid and financial literacy.

## California Context



SOURCE: Authors' calculations using data from the California Student Aid Commission and California Department of Education

# Effectiveness of Mandatory FAFSA Submission Policies

- **Louisiana implemented FAFSA submission requirement in 2017-18**
  - *FAFSA submission rates* increased from 51.2% to 77.1% in the first year of the mandate (Cameron & Lacey, 2020)
  - *FAFSA completion rates* increased by an average of 19 percentage points, reaching 72%
  - Schools with lower FAFSA submission rates prior to the new policy demonstrated larger increases (Deneault, 2021)
  - Suggestive evidence that Black student enrollment shifted from community college to four-year institutions (Putz, 2021)

# Effectiveness of Mandatory FAFSA Submission Policies

- **Val Verde Unified School District, California implemented FAFSA submission requirement in 2018-19**
  - 198 more students received a Cal Grant in the first year
  - 328 more students received a Cal Grant in the second year (Granville, 2020)
- **Caution in interpretation**
  - Both also provided student supports and counselor training
  - Cannot attribute to FAFSA requirement alone

# Conclusion & Recommendations

- Resource Coordination (CSAC, CDE, LEA's)
- Data Matching, Evaluation, CRM
- Messaging: statewide campaign?
- Race to Submit
- Beyond FAFSA/CADAA: college application, enrollment
- Paid Rate likely to get lower, but volume higher



The research presented here was supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305A180227 to the Regents of the University of California, and by the College Futures Foundation. The findings and conclusions here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the funders.



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