

# Item 7

## (Information Item)

### Presentation on National FAFSA Completion Rates for high school graduates (“Pell Money Left on the Table” Report)

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#### **SUMMARY:**

A recent study conducted by Bill DeBaun and NCAN (National College Attainment Network) estimated that the high school class of 2021 left \$3.75b in Pell grants unclaimed by not completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, FAFSA completion rates nationally fell from the prior high of 61% in 2017 to 54% in 2021. In the 2020-21 academic year, more than 1.7 million high school graduates nationally, did not fill out the FAFSA. Just under half of those graduates – approximately 813,000 students – were Pell Grant-eligible, according to data from the Office of Federal Student Aid. California had the largest estimated sum of unclaimed Pell at ~\$561 million.

This report from the author of the study will detail this national trend, its likely effects, and contemplates issues and actions for California to address to attempt to bounce back.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

This is an information item; no action is required.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

While CSAC tracks all FAFSA and CADAA submissions annually (new and returning students of all ages), NCAN and the author primarily focus on the FAFSA submission patterns of successive high school graduating classes nationally. Their “Form Your Future” FAFSA tracking dashboard (<https://formyourfuture.org/fafsa-tracker/>) is used by CSAC to benchmark California’s annual progress on high school FAFSA submissions.

The author of the study and “Form Your Future” dashboard (Bill DeBaun) is a nationally recognized expert in tracking FAFSA submission patterns and trends. (Bio: <https://www.ncan.org/page/BioBillDeBaun>)

#### **RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S):**

Bill DeBaun  
Director of Data and Evaluation, National College Attainment Network

Patrick Perry, Deputy Director  
Data, Analysis, and Research Team

# California Student Aid Commission

## ATTACHMENT(S):

NCAN Pell on the Table Brief

Pell Money on the Table – Sources and Method

High School FAFSA Completions: Trends and Implications Presentation