

March 2016

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Legislative Session

The 2016 Florida legislative session is winding down to the last two weeks. The last remaining bills will be voted on during the legislative session ending March 11.

The Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) provides information requested by legislators and closely tracks bills that affect state scholarships and grants.

Once bills that will impact Florida scholarship & grant programs have been passed and signed into law, OSFA will distribute additional information. In the interim, you may track 2016 Florida legislative bills via Online Sunshine at www.leg.state.fl.us/Welcome/.

We appreciate all that you do to keep students on track and families informed of Florida student scholarship and grant program requirements.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS



FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA) COMPLETION INFORMATION

There is increasing focus on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion at the state level. Students are leaving millions of unclaimed financial aid dollars on the table, so states have a mission to increase FAFSA completion — especially for low-income, first-generation students who may qualify but overlook this important source of funding.

Schools can monitor progress with FAFSA completion by using these three options:



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The US Department of Education offers a [FAFSA Completion Tool](#) which provides an overview of each school's data in all 50 states.

A statewide site created by the Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is called the [Florida FAFSA Finish Line](#). This application features detailed data to help schools and districts monitor FAFSA completion. Schools can examine the data using the map view, list view, and even view historical trends.



NEW FOR 2016: The Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) now provides student data to school districts (that apply and are approved) which can assist counselors in determining if a student has completed the FAFSA and/or the Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA). Personal identifying information is protected and schools will only see completion results for the applications.

Reach out to your district-level staff to see if they have completed the data sharing agreement for your county. For additional information, district-level staff can contact Lori Auxier at 561-389-6346 or Lori.Auxier@fldoe.org regarding the data sharing agreement application and approval process.

Bright Futures Early Evaluation



All students whose transcripts are submitted electronically to FDOE for an official early evaluation (based on academic progress in the middle of the last year of high school and test scores for tests taken by January 31) will receive an eligibility or ineligibility determination, with the award status notification posted to their online account. FINAL evaluations are posted to students' online accounts in late summer.

Students cannot lose an award based on early evaluation unless they fail to earn a standard Florida high school diploma from a Florida public or FDOE-registered private high school.

NOTE: Students awarded the IB or AICE Diplomas will receive notifications of eligibility determination in early fall after a list of IB and AICE Diploma recipients has been received from these respective organizations.

The award (or ineligibility) determination will be posted to a student's online Financial Aid Recipient History (FARH) screen, which is viewable by the student. Login credentials will be sent to the student after the FFAA is submitted and enable a student to:

- View award status (eligibility determination)
- View/update demographic information
- View/update postsecondary institution
- View the amount disbursed each semester
- View the spring renewal GPA
- Monitor hours remaining for the year and for the scholarship
- View all correspondence posted and/or sent from the FDOE



New Format for the SAT

As your students finalize their testing dates to meet test score requirements for the Bright Futures Scholarship Program, please remember that the new SAT format begins this month. The College Board has partnered with Khan Academy to provide free test preparation. This innovative website explains sample test questions using short video lessons and students will need to set up a free account to access the lessons. To view the test prep offerings, visit www.KhanAcademy.org.

Students have through June 30 of the senior year to earn qualifying college entrance exam scores for a Florida Bright Futures Scholarship.

You may contact the BF office toll-free at 888-827-2004 or email program specialists:

- Public Schools** – Timberly Johnson - Timberly.Johnson@fldoe.org
- Private Schools** - Hortensia Campbell - Hortensia.Campbell@fldoe.org

Local Scholarships

Local employers often contact schools with information about scholarships for students in their county. Many counselors post this information on the school's website and/or have a place in their office for students to get information about local scholarships.



Parents may not realize this gold mine of information is provided by your school. Send a special announcement advertising local scholarships and how students can apply specifically to the parents at your school.

Public Service Loan Forgiveness

If you have student loan debt and work full-time in a government or not-for-profit organization, you may qualify for [Public Service Loan Forgiveness](#) (PSLF) through the US Department of Education.



Counselors may qualify for this program! The main topics discussed on the PSLF website explain the following requirements:

- Qualifying monthly payments (120)
- Qualifying repayment plan
- Qualifying full-time employment

All student loans must be consolidated into the Direct Lending program with an income-based repayment plan selected.

Resources to help you learn more about PSFL:

- [PSLF Fact Sheet](#)
- [PSLF Q & A](#)
- [Employer Certification Form](#)



COLLEGE

Monthly E-News for Students

The March issue of the monthly E-News for Students is now available.

Print, download or e-mail this financial well-being newsletter monthly as an additional resource for your students.

The E-News provides important information pertaining to preparing for college access:

- Scholarship Searches
- State Scholarships and Grants
- Money Management Tips

Visit www.NavigatingYourFuture.org and select the **RESOURCES** tab to locate online publications available for you.



Upcoming Events in March/April

- March 1 - 31: Early evaluation in progress for the Bright Futures Scholarship Program
- April 1 - 30: Financial Literacy MONTH (see February’s issue of the News to Know for Counselors for ideas to promote financial literacy at your school)
- April 1: Florida financial aid deadline for filing the Florida Financial Aid Application for José Martí, Rosewood Family Scholarship and Children and Spouses of Deceased or Disabled Veterans
- April 13 - 15: Financial Education Conference
Caribe Royale Hotel
Orlando, FL
1-800-823-8300

OSFA’S OUTREACH TEAM CONTACT INFORMATION

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THE OSFA PHILOSOPHY



The Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) has the ability to offer its partners and customers something few public agencies can, the ability to shape OSFA programs and services based on their specific needs and concerns. OSFA provides financial aid workshops, publications, prompt services for participants, and helps fund scholarship and grant programs. If a participant has a problem or suggestion, the OSFA management team listens and makes every effort to implement a solution that meets their needs. Public dollars deserve the kind of accountability OSFA provides in financing education.

The News to Know for Counselors is now available on the Counselors page of the website www.FloridaStudentFinancialAid.org. Previous editions may be viewed on the [Archives](#) page.

Contact OSFA

Tallahassee, FL

Toll-free State Programs: **1-888-827-2004**

E-mail: OSFA@fldoe.org

Toll-free Federal Loans: **1-800-366-3475**

Locally: **850-410-5200**

E-mail: OSFAStudentLoans@fldoe.org

Visit our website at: www.FloridaStudentFinancialAid.org