# "Helping Students Pay for Unmet Need: Partnering with State-Based Nonprofits"

# **Panelists**

- Alex Ricci, Vice President of Government Affairs & Communications, Education Finance Council
- Sana Efird, Executive Director, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
- Julie Shields-Rutyna, Senior Director of College Planning, Education, and Training, Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority (MEFA)
- William "Bill" Wozniak, Vice President of Communications and Student Services, INvestEd

# **About EFC**

- The national trade association of state-based, nonprofit higher education finance organizations.
- EFC members perform a variety of functions in their state including:
  - Manage 529 Plans
  - College access programing
  - FAFSA completion
  - · Administer state grant aid
  - Nonprofit loan programs
  - Servicing and repayment support



Nonprofits Empowering Student Success

# Research Brief - Financing Unmet Need





Link to full report

- Set out to understand factors fueling the college cost crisis.
- Research questions:
  - How do students and families make sense of their higher education financing options and future career trajectory?
  - How many students have unmet need?
  - What do these students do to get the funding they need to attend college?

# Research Brief – Finding #1

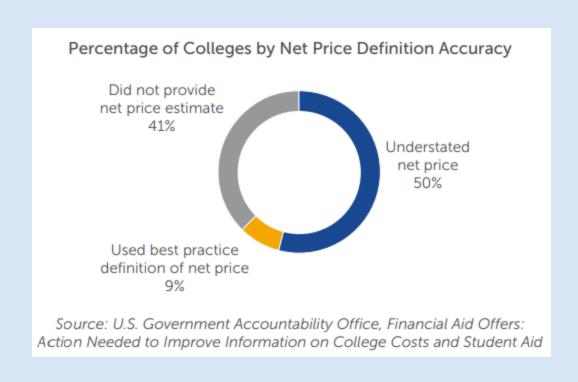
 Student outcomes vary greatly by program of study.

 Debt-to-earnings data can help students understand the longterm cost of college. (College Scorecard)

Examples of Outcomes by Program of Study and Degree Level from College Scorecard

Degree Level	Debt <sup>s</sup>	Earnings Four Years After Graduation <sup>4</sup>	Debt to Earnings Ratio
Associate Degree	\$20,355	\$50,538	.40
Bachelor's Degree	\$22,358	\$43,788	.51
Associate Degree	\$20,266	\$50,425	.40
Bachelor's Degree	\$30,048	\$60,112	.50
Associate Degree	\$18,833	\$67,605	.28
Bachelor's Degree	\$27,901	\$66,358	.42
	Associate Degree  Bachelor's Degree  Associate Degree  Bachelor's Degree  Associate Degree	Associate Degree \$20,355  Bachelor's Degree \$22,358  Associate Degree \$20,266  Bachelor's Degree \$30,048  Associate Degree \$18,833	Degree Level         Debt³         Years After Graduation⁴           Associate Degree         \$20,355         \$50,538           Bachelor's Degree         \$22,358         \$43,788           Associate Degree         \$20,266         \$50,425           Bachelor's Degree         \$30,048         \$60,112           Associate Degree         \$18,833         \$67,605

# Research Brief – Finding #2

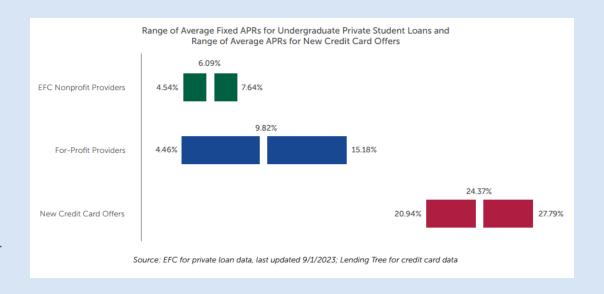


Financial aid offers frequently obscure true cost of college

# Research Brief – Finding #3

How students finance unmet need according to a survey of students who graduated in 2020:

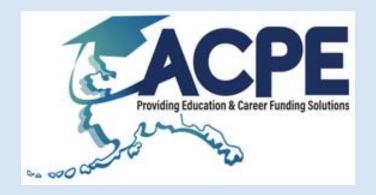
- Over 50% use savings or current employment
- 55% borrowed a student loan
- 10% of undergraduates' guardian borrowed a Parent PLUS Loan
- 6% borrowed a private student loan
- 30% used their credit card



# How State-Based Nonprofits Are Making A Difference

# Case Study #1: Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education

Sana Efird
Executive Director



# Bridging the Gap: Supporting Alaska's Education & Workforce Needs

**Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education** 

Sana Efird

Executive Director





# **ACPE: About Us**

**STRATEGIC PLAN** Alaska **Commission on Postsecondary Education** 



Alaskans are **educated and skilled contributors** to our vibrant communities and economy.

# **■ Mission:**

ACPE provides sustainable solutions for college, career and technical training.

We champion individuals and families through **broad access to federal and state programs, grants, scholarships, and loans** together with the **tools and resources** that allow them to make informed decisions about funding their education.

As the *Higher Education Agency for the State of Alaska*, we advance policy and foster collaboration to build a skilled workforce that meets the needs of communities and employers, supporting economic development across the state.





# **ACPE: Strategic Priorities**



We operate with integrity in everything we do.
Every decision we make is based on *compliance*, *balancing fairness and responsibility to our customers* with our obligation to manage our financial resources to meet future needs.

Looking Ahead: 2024-2026 **Strategic Priorities** 

- Become the education lender of choice in Alaska and for Alaskans.
- Operate a sustainable organization responsive to students, customers, stakeholders, and employees.
- Increase access to, and utilization of, federal and state education funding sources.
- Position ACPE to help bridge the education gap in Alaska's current and future workforce needs.

Providing Education & Career Funding Solutions



acpe.alaska.gov





# **ACPE: Who We Serve**

Providing sustainable solutions for college, career and technical training.



**Students:** From school-aged youth to working-aged adults



**Postsecondary Institutions:** Delivering Institutional Authorization, financial aid guidance, and education lending solutions



**Alaska's Workforce:** Through policy and legislative initiatives, education & funding resources, and strategic partnerships





# **Outreach Resources**





Delivering postsecondary planning and financial literacy resources in support of ACPE's mission.



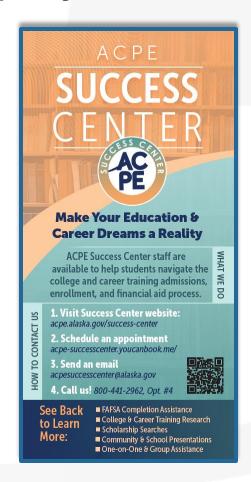
### Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS 360)

- Online personal learning and career planning system FREE to Alaskans
- Used in 90% of Alaska School Districts, all Alaska Job Centers, and by WIOA Grantees
- 96% of active user School Districts report AKCIS is their dedicated Personal Learning & Career Plan tool of choice
- Students assess their interests and explore of all National Career Clusters and over 570 occupations
- Relevant for grades 7 through 12, and for adult populations looking to expand their educational and career opportunities
- Localized for Alaska workforce information in partnership with Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development
- Delivers variety of financial resources including: scholarships, grants, and State Financial Aid opportunities

akcis.org



Delivering postsecondary planning and financial literacy resources in support of ACPE's mission.



### **Success Center**

- Offering postsecondary education resources to students, families, and a wide variety of organizations and institutions across Alaska and beyond.
- Financial Aid Support FAFSA completion, loan application submissions, scholarship research
- Group Presentations Schools, organizations, community groups.
- FundingYour Future, Filling out the FAFSA, Alaska Performance Scholarship

acpe.alaska.gov/success-center





Delivering postsecondary planning and financial literacy resources in support of ACPE's mission.



# Alaska College & Career Advising Consortium (ACAC) Alaska FAFSA Completion Initiative

- Increase Alaska's FAFSA Completion rates by collaborating with education stakeholders across the state to inform, promote, and support FAFSA Completion
- Delivers responsive FAFSA completion resources to education stakeholders, students, and families across Alaska
- One-stop Alaska FAFSA Completion Initiative website:
  - Step-by-step video tutorials: FAFSA ID & FAFSA
  - What's New? 2024-25 FAFSA Cycle
  - Mythbusters
  - FAFSA At-A-Glance

acpe.alaska.gov/alaskafafsacompletion





Delivering postsecondary planning and financial literacy resources in support of ACPE's mission.



### Kids2Careers

- Offering resources for educators, students, families, and partners to support students in grades 5 through 12
- 6-Lesson Curriculum (grades 5-7)
- Teacher Guides & Trainings
- Postsecondary & Career Prep Panels
- Postsecondary Pathway Presentations/Trainings
- Campus Events/Virtual Campus Tours

acpe.alaska.gov/Kids2Careers



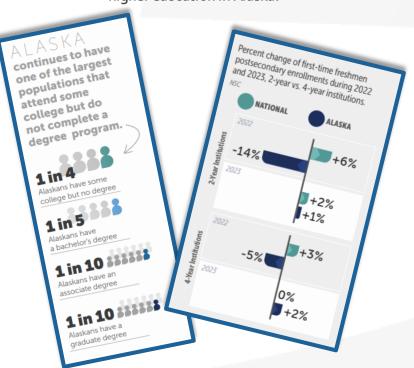


# **Statewide Policy Coordination**

Advancing policy & fostering collaboration across Alaska's postsecondary institutions, policymakers, and employers.

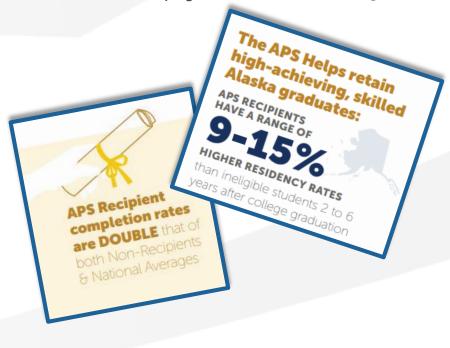
### **Alaska Higher Education Almanac**

In its 7<sup>th</sup> year, ACPE's Almanac continues to offer Alaska's higher education stakeholders and policy-makers a source of relevant data and content about the landscape of higher education in Alaska.



### Alaska Performance Scholarship Outcomes Report

The Annual APS Outcomes Report covers the high school, postsecondary, Alaska residency, and workforce outcomes of the APS program between Fall 2011 – 2023.







# **Alaska Education Funding Solutions**





# Alaska Education Grant Alaska Performance Scholarship



### **Alaska Education Grant**

Alaska Performance Scholarship



- Alaska's need-based grant awarded to eligible Alaska students attending a qualified postsecondary institution in state
- Award amounts range from \$500 \$4,000 per academic year, receiving a lifetime maximum of \$16,000
- Funded through the Higher Education Investment Fund (HEIF), eligible recipients must meet the following award criteria:
  - Identified financial need based on determination by FAFSA
  - Prior academic year award recipient
  - Data of FAFSA filing
  - Enrollment level

acpe.alaska.gov/Kids2Careers

- Alaska's merit-based scholarship offered to Alaska students who meet specific eligibility criteria during high school
- APS is offered in 3 award levels, ranging from \$3,000 \$7,000 per academic year
- To gain APS eligibility a student must:
  - Successfully complete a specified curriculum
  - Earn a minimum GPA <u>OR</u> Earn qualifying scores on ACT, SAT, or WorkKeys
- To receive the APS, the student must also complete the FAFSA

aps.alaska.gov





# **ACPE Education Loans**

- ACPE offers 3 primary education loan solutions
  - Supplemental (Student); Family; Refinance
  - Goal is to bridge the remaining educational financial need
  - Safeguards from over-borrowing
  - Savings and protections for students



Students pay \$3,300 -\$15,400 more with other private lenders





# Focus on FAFSA





# Focus On FAFSA

Alaska has ranked last or close to last in national FAFSA Completion rates for over a decade.

- By not completing the FAFSA, Alaska's students lose access to State:
  - APS (up to \$7,000/year); AEG (up to \$4,000/year)
  - Federal Pell Grant (up to \$7,395/year)
  - \$7,000 + \$4,000 + \$7,395 = \$18,395/year lost by not completing the FAFSA
- Without FAFSA, Alaska's students often follow one of two pathways:
  - Borrow larger sums of money in education loans, at a higher interest rate from private for-profit lenders
  - Do not pursue any kind of postsecondary education and career training





# Focus On FAFSA

Alaska FAFSA Completion Initiative's Purpose: Connecting Alaskans – students, families, schools, counselors, etc. with resources and information necessary to make informed decisions about postsecondary education planning and financing.

# Master the FAFSA Training:

ACPE's train-the-trainer style approach teaches partners how to guide students & families through FAFSA Completion. Master the FAFSA is offered every Monday and Thursday from 2-3:30 via Zoom.

Alaska FAFSA Completion One-Stop Website:

ACPE's comprehensive site offers Alaskan students, families, educators, and stakeholders FAFSA completion resources including guides, quick sheets, video tutorials, and more.

One-on-one FAFSA Appointments: Schedule appointments with ACPE's Success Center staff for assistance with FAFSA Completion, postsecondary application & scholarship research, and much more.





# Focus On FAFSA

FAFSA Completion Resources: <a href="acpe.alaska.gov/alaskafafsacompletion">acpe.alaska.gov/alaskafafsacompletion</a>



acpe.alaska.gov

# **ACPE Resources**

AKCIS: ACPE Education Loans

akcis.org acpe.alaska.gov/loans

ACAC: Alaska Education Grant

acpe.alaska.gov/acac acpe.alaska.gov/aeg

Kids2Careers Alaska Performance Scholarship

acpe.alaska.gov/Kids2Careers aps.alaska.gov

Alaska FAFSA Completion: ACPE Reports

acpe.alaska.gov/alaskafafsacompletion acpe.alaska.gov/reports

Success Center: ACPE Strategic Plan

acpe.alaska.gov/success-center acpe.alaska.gov/strategicplan





# Case Study #2: Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority

Julie Shields-Rutyna Senior Director of College Planning, Education, and Training



### MEFA



MEFA's mission of college affordability since our founding has been to help students and families access and afford higher education and reach financial goals. We work collaboratively with community organizations, high schools, and colleges to bring an integrated collegeplanning program to students and families.

# MEFA Helps Students and Families Make a Plan



## **Elementary School & Earlier**

- College Savings Programs
- College Planning Tool
- Early College Planning Programs

MEFA meets families where they are in the college planning process and provides tools, resources, and expert guidance to help families understand the importance of having a plan to pay for college and postsecondary training.



## Middle School

- MEFA Pathway
- College Savings Programs
- Learn about High School Academics
- Learn about College Admissions



# **High School**

- MEFA Pathway
- College Admissions
- Applying for Financial Aid
- Paying the College Bill



## **College & Graduate School**

- Paying the College Bill
- Loan Repayment Tips
- Refinancing
- Comparing Loan Options

### MEFA's Guidance



The MEFA Podcast
Conversations with experts
on a range of topics



Virtual Live and On-Demand Events
Informative and timely <u>webinars</u> and seminars







### **Active Social Media Network**

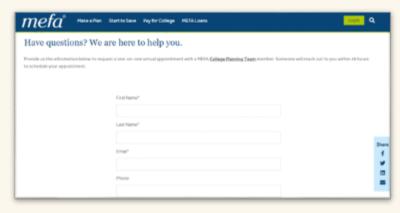
Posts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn





### mefa.org

Dedicated landing pages about <u>FAFSA Completion</u> and <u>Paying the College Bill</u> to help students and families through the process.



### **Specialized Appointments**

Experts available offering one-on-one guidance





### **Videos**

An extensive <u>content library</u> for school counselors and college access professionals about helping your students complete the FAFSA and pay the college bill.

### **Community Ambassadors**



- MEFA Ambassadors are experts in the financial aid industry across the Commonwealth who present on a volunteer basis
- Ambassadors have been trained in their areas of expertise and come equipped to give a onehour in-person or virtual presentation on Financial Aid 101, College Admissions, or College Savings.

### Events



### **Getting First-Generation** Students to the End



Assistant Director of Financial Aid for Student Employment





Moderated by Julie Shields-Rutyna, MEFA's Director of College Planning, Education, and Training



Thursday, May 23

(L) 3:00 PM

mefa\*

### **Financial Aid 101**

Wednesday, March 13 6:30 PM

PRESENTED BY

Julie Shields-Rutyna MEFA's Director of College Planning, Education, and Training



### **Comparing College Loan Options**

Wednesday, July 10 6:30 PM

PRESENTED BY

Jonathan Hughes MEFA's Associate Director of College Planning and Content Creation



mefa

# mefa\* WEBINAR

mefa

### **Saving for College**

Tuesday, May 28 12:00 PM

PRESENTED BY

Jonathan Hughes MEFA's Associate Director of College Planning and Content Creation



### mefa<sup>®</sup> WEBINAR

## Paying the **College Bill**

Tuesday, July 23 12:00 PM

Presented By

Julie Shields-Rutyna MEFA's Director of College Planning, Education, and Training



# WEBINAR

### **College Options** for This Fall











### Learn about MassTransfer



**Arthur Esposito** MA Department of Higher Education



Moderated by Jennifer Bento-Pinyoun Director, K-12 Services







### The MEFA Institute

The MEFA Institute provides a series of free professional development opportunities developed for school counselors, college access professionals, and college administrators with a focus on planning, saving, and paying for college, planning for a career, and reaching financial goals.

- Each MEFA Institute lesson includes a live webinar as well as an on-demand recording
- Over 30 webinars are available on demand for educators to access anytime and earn Professional Development Points (PDPs)



# MEFA Pathway

# FREE college and career planning tool Resources include:

- Skills and interest assessments
- Career exploration
- College search
- Financial aid and scholarship information
- Personalized digital portfolio

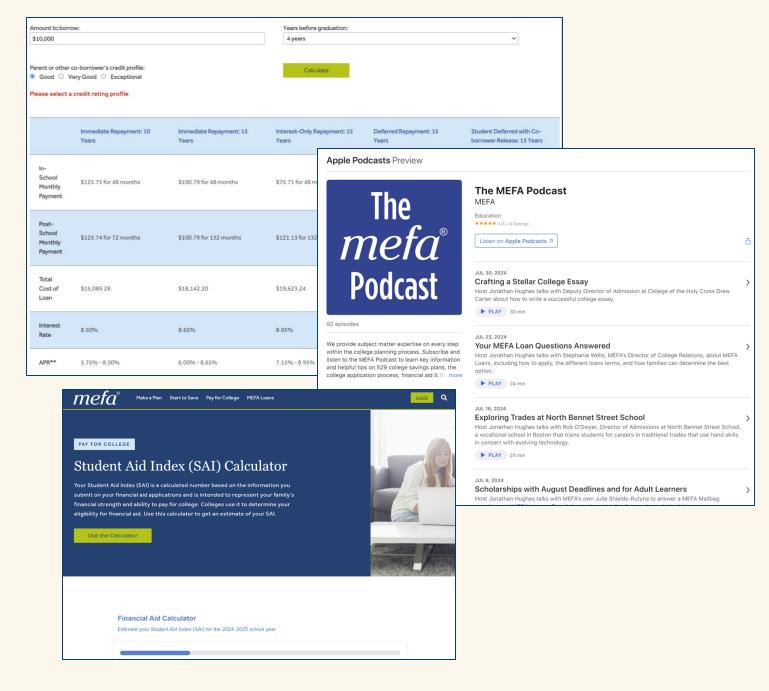
Visit mefapathway.org to get started





### MEFA Tools & Resources

- SAI Calculator
- Compare College Costs with College Cost Calculator
- Student Loan Payment Calculator
- MEFA Podcast



#### MEFA Loan Rates 2024-2025

#### **Undergraduate Loans**

FIXED INTEREST RATES
5.75% - 8.95% APR\*

**Graduate Loans** 

**7.15% - 8.95% APR\*** 



# Case Study #3: INvestEd

William "Bill" Wozniak

Vice President of Communications and Student Services





## **INvestEd**

A partner with CHE





2024 Higher Education Policy Conference



#### Indiana based nonprofit established in 1980 with the mission:

 Provide students the tools they need to put education beyond high school within reach

#### Offer FREE education planning assistance

- Over 950 events across the state
- Over 65,000 attendees at events
- Over 20,000 individuals helped
- Over 1,500 FAFSAs filed





#### **FAFSA Simplification Act:**

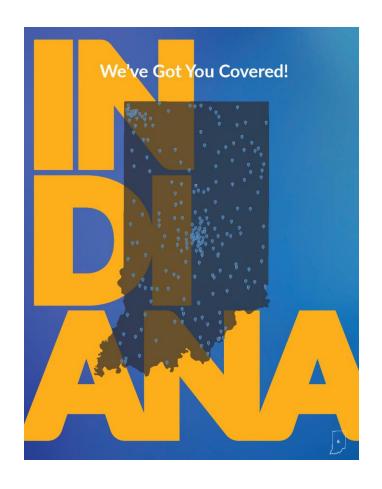
• Significant changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) implemented this year

#### IN - SEA 167-2023:

- FAFSA Requirement for Indiana seniors
  - Opt-out option

#### IN - HEA 1497-2023:

• Auto-enrollment of 21st Century Scholars





#### **Survey Data:**

- 88% of Hoosiers personally see value in higher education¹
- **52%** of adults in the US indicated they were more likely to pursue 4-year degrees after learning about net price compared to sticker price<sup>2</sup>
- 88% of Hoosiers say it's important to have access to free and transparent financial aid literacy and advising resources<sup>1</sup>
- College-bound families want education regarding postsecondary financial topics<sup>3</sup>:
  - 74% want an education on how to pay for college
  - 68% want an education on student loans
  - 66% want on education on how much college costs
- 83% of Hoosiers say it's important to have access to a nonprofit student loan provider<sup>1</sup>
- 61% of Hoosiers say it isn't easy to understand the process of paying for education beyond high school<sup>1</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> INvestEd Annual Survey

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Lumina-Gallup: Cost of College: The Price Tag of Higher Education and Its Effect on Enrollment

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Sallie Mae: College Confidence: What America Knows about Paying for College

#### **Postsecondary Ed Planning**

- Interest Inventory
- Career Research
- 529 Plans



#### **Financial Aid Night**

- Senior Year Items
- Deadlines
- ROI Concept

#### **Accelerate Indiana**

#### **FAFSA Completion**

• Student & Contributor

#### **Finalizing Financial Aid**

- Net Price
- Understanding Debt Load

#### **Postsecondary Education**

**Before** 

**During** 

**After** 

#### **Student Loan Marketplace**

Shop actual rates not ranges

#### **Student Loan Checkup**

- Assess all student loan debt
- Offer better options

#### **Tuition Loan**

Refi Loan

#### **Academic Merit Loan**

Loan option leveraging academics





#### Record Year for INvestEd

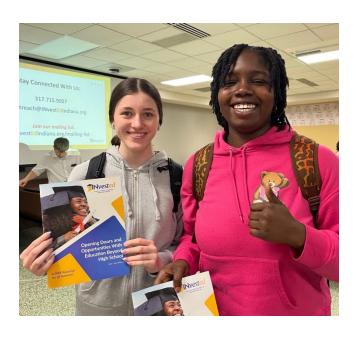
- Events: 959 events in FY24
  - +121 from FY 23 (14.4% increase)
- Attendees: 69,481 FY24 Attendees
  - Increase of 19,317 (38.5%) over FY23
- <u>Individuals Helped</u>: 20,645 Individuals Helped in FY24
  - Up 8,318 (67.4%) from FY23 totals

#### **Survey Responses**

- <u>Attendees</u>: 98.41% responded that INvestEd is "helpful in answering my questions"
- <u>Counselors</u>: Post event feedback continues to be over 98% of possible points awarded

#### Additional Info.

- INvestEd presented at 297 high schools and 65 other locations in FY24
- 45,475 copies of our funding education guide distributed at 236 schools

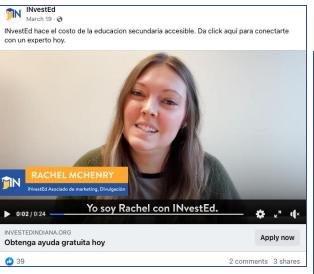


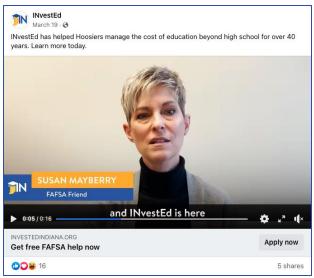
#### **INvestEd FAFSA Completion Campaign**



- Low-income, low FAFSA completion county focused campaign
- Earned more than 3.9 million impressions and more than 37,500 clicks
- Click-through rate of 0.94%
- Bilingual campaign

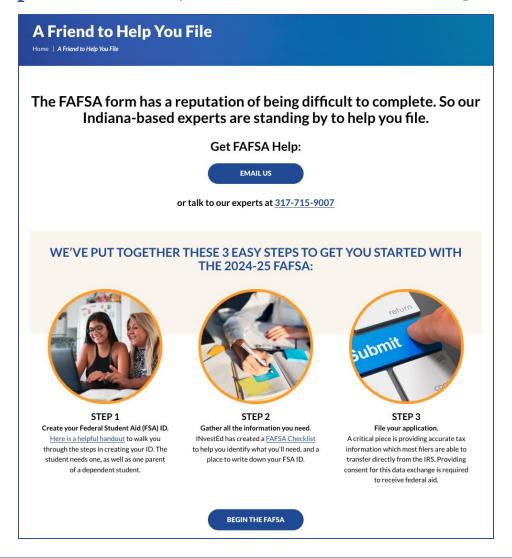








• A Friend to Help You File: <a href="https://www.investedindiana.org/FAFSA-Friend/">https://www.investedindiana.org/FAFSA-Friend/</a>





### Free Informational Materials

- Annually-updated 'Planning Guide'
- FAQ's & thematic one-pagers
- Pre-event FAFSA checklist
- College cost comparison tools

#### **Online Tools**

College Planning Toolbox







#### Spanish-Language Outreach

- Presentations
- Materials in Spanish









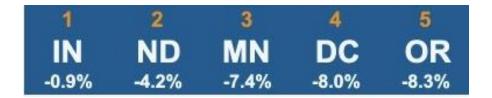




"Indiana ranks first in the country for the least amount of year-over-year change in FAFSA submissions. As of June 14, the <u>National College</u>

<u>Attainment Network, or NCAN, tracker</u> showed 39,800 FAFSA completions in the Hoosier State, down just 1.1% from 2023."

https://www.chalkbeat.org/indiana/2024/06/21/indiana-students-fill-out-fafsa-despite-rough-year/







## Takeaways and Recommendations for SHEEOs

- 1. Leverage College Scorecard data, career exploration tools, and the infrastructure of state-based, nonprofit higher education finance organizations to help students plan their education-to-career pathway.
- 2. Work with institutions to improve financial aid offers especially regarding how the offers characterize state aid programs.
- 3. FAFSA completion is an all-hands-on-deck proposition to improve college affordability; use all state-based nonprofits at your disposal.
- 4. Consider public awareness campaign of in-state nonprofit student loan programs.

## Audience Q&A