



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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To: District Superintendents  
Administrators  
Building Principals

From: MaryEllen Elia, Commissioner

Subject: Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

The Department wanted to bring to your attention that we are currently partnering with SUNY in an effort to have all high school students complete their FAFSA forms. Completing FAFSA forms on time enables students to be eligible for federal financial aid. Currently, over 300,000 students attending public high school and considering college do not complete a FAFSA form. Many times, students and families may not be fully informed on the process and therefore do not complete the form necessary to obtain federal financial aid. This outreach is intended to help students and families more easily navigate the financial aid process.

SUNY is already engaged in several financial aid support efforts including:

- SUNY Financial Aid Day events for students and their parents to attend;
- An effort called SUNY Smart Track which is a collection of resources to help students and families that can be found at: <https://www.suny.edu/smartrack/about/>; and
- Monthly information sessions about financial aid at the SUNY Welcome Center in NYC.

To aid us in this outreach, we ask that you inform school counselors and others of these efforts so that they can assist students considering college to complete the FAFSA form in a timely manner. It is so important that school counselors be more aware of the outreach events in progress through SUNY and can help students and their parents navigate the process.

In addition, we are very interested in any suggestions on how to continue encouraging students to complete their FAFSA form and aid in this effort. In the coming months, we hope to share some additional collaborative interventions and new approaches, in partnership with SUNY, to help increase the completion rates of FAFSA forms across New York State.

Thank you, and we look forward to hearing from you.