TENNESSEE'S FAFSA FRENZY: DATA, COMMUNICATIONS, AND STATEWIDE PARTNERSHIP
Free Application for Federal Student Aid

- The FAFSA is required for Tennessee state aid, including TN Promise, the Hope Scholarship, and TSAA.
- In Tennessee, FAFSA submission “season” is tied to the TN Promise deadline.
- TN Promise Checklist for HS Graduating Class of 2019:
  - Application Due – November 1st, 2018
  - FAFSA Filing Deadline - February 1, 2019
FAFSA and College Access

• College aspirations and enrollment are influenced by financial aid knowledge and availability of resources

• Information about financial aid is a barrier to higher education (Scott-Clayton, 2012)

• Costs for college are often misunderstood (Page & Scott-Clayton, 2015; Horn, Chen, & Chapman, 2003)

• Grant aid is important for enrollment in higher education (Dynarski & Scott-Clayton, 2013)

• The FAFSA is challenging to complete (Page & Scott-Clayton, 2015; Dynarski & Wiederspan, 2012)

• In a randomized study, individuals receiving assistance in completing their FAFSA and information about aid eligibility were eight percentage points more likely to attend college than the control group (Bettinger et al., 2009, p.16-17)
Steps to Completing the FAFSA

Best case scenario:

Student and parent come to a TN FAFSA Frenzy Event

Student and parent create FSA IDs, use the IRS DRT, and electronically sign the FAFSA

3-5 days later, a student receives their SAR with an EFC number

Student chooses which school they will attend, double checks that the school received their FAFSA, and updates the TSAC student portal

Student completes orientation, registers for classes, and all financial aid is processed on time.
Steps to Completing the FAFSA

A scenario too many first generation students face:

Student attends TN FAFSA Frenzy event, parent is unable to come but sends tax information

Student creates FSA ID

Student tries to use IRS DRT, but their address has changed, so they must manually enter all tax information

Student signs with FSA ID, prints confirmation page for parent to sign and mail

2 weeks later, student receives SAR, but there's an asterisk by the EFC

Student works with counselor, fills out 4506T

Student signs with FSA ID, prints confirmation page for parent to sign and mail

4506T is rejected due to one line being illegible

Student works with counselor, fills out 4506T

Student signs with FSA ID, prints confirmation page for parent to sign and mail

Student is purged from classes

Student wonders: Am I supposed to be here?

Student resubmits 4506T, attends orientation, registers for classes

Student misses priority deadline for submitting verification worksheet
What is TN FAFSA Frenzy?

A strategic, data-driven campaign to encourage as many students as possible to submit the FAFSA, with a special emphasis on submitting the FAFSA in time to remain eligible for the TN Promise scholarship.

- Started in 2016
- **Collaboration** – Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, Tennessee Department of Education, the Ayers Foundation, REDI, and tnAchieves
- **Resources** – Toolkit
- **Communications** – FAFSA tutorials, frequent email communications, etc.
- **TSAC Outreach Team** – statewide FAFSA events, support, and outreach
- **Data** – bi-weekly high school by high school updates on FAFSA submission
TN FAFSA Frenzy Toolkit

- 70 pages of FAFSA and Financial Aid!
- Event planning support including templates and best practices
- TN Financial Aid Overview
- FAFSA specific resources for completing the form

www.TNFAFSAFrenzy.gov
TN FAFSA Frenzy Toolkit

Resources include:
- Step by Step FSA ID guide with screenshots
- Updated volunteer recruitment and training materials
- FAFSA worksheet previewing all questions asked on the FAFSA
- More communications resources (robocall scripts, social media ideas)
Communications

- Emphasis on data and capacity building at the local level
- FAFSA Friday webinars with TSAC team
- Emails to counselors, principals, and directors of schools. Sample messages:
  - Celebrate success of over 70% submission rates
  - Reminder of TN Promise deadline
• Leveraged “expert volunteers” and deployed over 150 professionals into schools across the state
  - THEC and TSAC
  - Financial Aid professionals
  - TN Promise Partner Organizations
  - Governor Haslam’s office produced a video, a proclamation and assisted in media outreach
TSAC Outreach Team

Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation Outreach Specialist Map

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Success by the Numbers

• Over 400 FAFSA workshops and events were hosted prior to the TN Promise FAFSA deadline in the 2017-18 school year
  ▫ This includes TSAC Outreach workshops, FAFSA presentations, and FAFSA Frenzy Day events supported by volunteers from state agencies and partnering organizations

• Already, for the 2018-19 academic year, 374 high schools have registered to receive FASFA Frenzy materials

• In 2017-18, 144 high schools completed a post-event survey
  ▫ From these surveys, counselors indicated that 12,708 students had been assisted with filing the FAFSA as a result of their FAFSA filing initiatives
Success From Past Events

“This was the first year we did this, but it will not be the last. I felt this was very beneficial to students with no internet and my migrant population. Often times they are fearful going somewhere outside the school to receive help.”
- Jo Byrns High School

“I also had every parent thank us for having the night to assist them in completing the application. When I left that evening I felt like a lot of good had been accomplished! ...I am thankful to be apart of such a wonderful experience.”
- Eagleville School

“Partnering with different colleges and TSAC representatives is one of the best things that we do. They bring a different perspective to the students and parents and actually open a dialog between the parents and college financial aid representatives before the seniors even begin college.”
- Monterey High School

“These resources were instrumental in answering questions and helping us help our students get the FAFSA completed.”
- Sevier County High School
FAFSA FILING RATE

2014: 60.4%
2015: 69.5%
2016: 77.6%
2017: 80.3%
2018: 81.7%
THEC TSAC

HOW TN USES DATA TO DRIVE INCREASED FAFSA FILING AND REFINE INTERVENTIONS
Data Sources and Methods

• US Department of Federal Student Aid (FSA)
  ▫ FSA Filing Rate:
    – The number of FAFSAs submitted (per FSA) divided by the number of HS seniors (TDOE)
    – Updated weekly

• Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC) ISIR
  ▫ TN Promise Filing Rate:
    – The number of TN Promise FAFSAs submitted (per TSAC) divided by the number of TN Promise Applicants (per TSAC)
    – Updated weekly

• Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), Membership Files, as of October 1st
By County

16-17 FAFSA Filing Rate, FSA and TN Promise

THEC TSAC
By High School

16-17 FAFSA Filing by High School

- Antioch High School
- Cane Ridge High School
- East Nashville High School
- Glendiff High School
- Hillsboro High School
- Hillwood High School
- Hume - Fogg High School
- Hunters Lane High School
- John Overton High School
- Lead Academy
- Maplewood High School

Filing Rates:
- FSA Filing Rate - 2017
- TN Promise Filing Rate...
## 2015 – 2016 Graduating Class

### Ethnicity

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<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>% Non-filers</th>
<th>Total Graduates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>15.99%</td>
<td>42,559</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander/Hawaiian</td>
<td>30.77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>42.73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>13.78%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>19.41%</td>
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<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>23.32%</td>
<td>1,059</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan</td>
<td>18.26%</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>18.31%</td>
<td>62,326</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>% Non-filers</th>
<th>Total Graduates</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13.59%</td>
<td>31,274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23.06%</td>
<td>31,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>18.31%</td>
<td>62,326</td>
</tr>
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Percent of HS Grad Non-FAFSA Filers
**FAFSA Filing Gaps**

- Tennessee has a **high** FAFSA filing rate amongst high school seniors (81.7% in 2017-18)

- However, disparities in FAFSA filing exist amongst student groups:
  - Hispanic students file the FAFSA at lower rates than their Black and White peers
    - 67.4% and 60.3% filing rates for Hispanic females and males, respectively
  - Male students file the FAFSA at lower rates than their female peers and this holds across all subgroups analyzed
  - Students with low (<16 Composite) and missing ACT scores file the FAFSA at lower rates than their more academically prepared peers
FAFSA Verification

• Some student groups are more likely to be selected for verification
  ▫ Students of color – Black, Hispanic, and Other student groups (as compared to their white peers)
  ▫ First Generation applicants
  ▫ Applicants with children (a distinction for independent status)
  ▫ Students who are less academically prepared (ACT and self-reported HS GPA)

• Selection for verification does have a negative impact on college-going (approximately 3.6%). This is exacerbated for certain groups of students:
  ▫ Hispanic and Other student groups
  ▫ Students with lower academic preparation (ACT and self-reported GPA quartile)
  ▫ Students who file the FAFSA later in the cycle
Going Forward: 2018 – 2019 Focus

- FAFSA Completion vs. Submission
- Resources: new information about adult learners and FAFSA verification
- Two week FAFSA Frenzy emphasis immediately before TN Promise deadline
- Adult FAFSA completion emphasis
- Focus on equity: race, gender, and economic status
  - 15 potential partner high schools
  - Identify new strategies to close equity gaps
FAFSA Completion and Verification

• Sample Verification Worksheets from TN institutions
• Sample form 4506T and instructions for requesting a tax transcript
• Best practices for collaborating with local institutions during the Spring to support Verification
FAFSA Completion and Verification Support

- This year’s toolkit will include an entire section on verification, with screenshots of sample SARs, instructions on making FAFSA corrections, and best practices for supporting verification during the school year.
- We are also working to build skills around what verification means vs. FAFSA completion.
  - Verification: Asterisk by EFC
  - Completion: Blank EFC and comment codes about missing information (i.e. signatures)
Finish the Frenzy: Jan. 21-Feb. 1st 2019

- Aligns with the final two weeks before the TN Promise FAFSA submission deadline
- TSAC Outreach Team has these two weeks blocked off for target schools
  - In December, the TSAC Outreach Team will use current FAFSA submission rates to develop a list of target schools who have the lowest rates
  - In these final two weeks, they will have the availability to go where there’s the greatest need
- Statewide communications campaign that will emphasize the funding that is at stake for filling out the FAFSA
Adult Learner, TN Reconnect Resources

- Reconnect Timeline
- FAQs for adults filling out the FAFSA
- Contact information for the TN Reconnect Communities
Equity and FAFSA

- In Tennessee, we celebrate our high FAFSA submission rates, but we are increasingly aware that one number doesn’t tell the whole story and that equity gaps exist across the state.
TN FAFSA Frenzy Pilot

• Identified 15 high schools that have disparity gaps across three metrics: gender, race, and socioeconomic status
• Outreach and Intervention Plans for 2018-19:
  ▫ Outreach to target high schools with an invitation to partner with THEC/TSAC in closing gaps
  ▫ Calls to discuss gaps and partnership opportunities
  ▫ Development of intervention plan to reduce disparities amongst FAFSA filing
  ▫ Regular measurement of FAFSA filing status and events
• Identification of best practices that we can scale statewide
Reflections and Questions

• How can we better support you in engaging in the FAFSA Frenzy? Or in supporting students to refile their FAFSA?

• Other Questions or Comments?
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