College Crusade will offer FAFSA help to all R.I. seniors

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (April 21, 2020): The College Crusade of Rhode Island is expanding its role to help more graduating high school seniors apply for federal financial aid during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, is the first step in applying for financial aid. Eligible students can receive up to $6,345 per year in federal Pell grants during the 2020-21 cycle. Students also must complete the form to qualify for state and institutional funding, as well as some scholarships.

The College Crusade, whose mission is to prepare and inspire young people to become the first in their families to attend and complete college, is well positioned to help more Rhode Island seniors complete the form and become eligible for aid. Each year, the nonprofit organization helps nearly 400 seniors enrolled in its program complete their FAFSA form.

Starting April 27, College Crusade staff will begin assisting seniors who are not enrolled in its program but who attend its partner high schools in Providence, Central Falls, Pawtucket and Woonsocket, as well as Cranston High School East and William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School.

In mid-May, the organization will open its FAFSA completion assistance to any high school senior in the state. All appointments will take place virtually.

“The biggest barrier to students attending college is cost and, during this time of economic uncertainty, it’s more important than ever that every student who qualifies for college aid receives it,” said Andrew Bramson, president and CEO of the College Crusade. “Our advisers have expertise in FAFSA completion, so it is a natural fit for us to serve more of our state’s students and help them get the funding they need.”

The expansion of services also will help the state meet its goal for FAFSA completion. Rhode Island is ranked first in the nation for year-over-year improvement in FAFSA completion rates and has set a goal of 70 percent completion at every public high school. In 2019, 66 percent of seniors completed the FAFSA.

“The College Crusade is providing a valuable service to students across the state – putting them one step closer to their dream to attend college affordably and stay on a path to career success,” said Angélica Infante-Green, commissioner of elementary and secondary education. “During this time of unprecedented challenges for Rhode Island students, I am extremely grateful that we will keep many of our most qualified and motivated students moving forward. I encourage every senior to complete their FAFSA form and keep as many doors open as possible.”
“School staff and students are being pulled in many different directions during this unprecedented time, and it’s understandable that FAFSA completion might not be top of mind, but last year $4 million was left on the table in federal Pell Grants. We know that missing out on free financial aid means students could be taking on more college debt or maybe not going to college at all,” Bramson said.

To schedule an appointment with a College Crusade adviser, email fafsa@thecollegecrusade.org or text the word FAFSA to 95577.

For more information on the Rhode Island FAFSA Initiative, including a toolkit with screenshots to help families complete the form and a dashboard showing completion rates at high schools across the state, visit www.prepare-ri.org/fafsa.

The College Crusade supports more than 4,000 students in middle school, high school and college each year with one-on-one advising and year-round programs that focus on academic enrichment, social and emotional development, career education, and postsecondary preparation to help them become the first in their families to earn a college degree. Sixth-graders who attend traditional public schools and select public charter schools and independent schools in Providence, Cranston, Pawtucket, Central Falls, Woonsocket and West Warwick are eligible to enroll in the College Crusade.

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