

# Manchester to Launch Citywide Effort to Help Students Seek College Financial Aid

Wednesday, June 8, 2016



The National College Access Network (NCAN) has announced that it will award Manchester a [FAFSA Completion Challenge grant](#). Manchester is one of 22 cities across the U.S., and the only one in New England, selected to receive the award.

School district superintendent Dr. Debra Livingston and Kathleen Mullin, vice provost for partnerships and strategic initiatives at the University of New Hampshire, said the \$48,590 grant will be used to support efforts to raise the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rates among the class of 2017 by at least 5% over the class of 2015.

FAFSA completion is strongly associated with postsecondary enrollment and successful postsecondary student outcomes — 90% of high school seniors who complete the FAFSA attend college directly from high school, compared to just 55% of FAFSA non-completers. Millions of students who are eligible for aid fail to file the FAFSA each year, leaving billions of unclaimed dollars that could support their postsecondary education. Fewer than 47% of Manchester's 2014-15 seniors completed their FAFSA.

## 90%

OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS WHO COMPLETE THE

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## FAFSA ATTEND COLLEGE DIRECTLY FROM HIGH SCHOOL

“When students choose to stay in school to reach their educational goals in any field or career, they become valuable citizens and members of our workforce,” Mullin said.

“Manchester’s social and economic health will benefit.”

NCAN established the [FAFSA Completion Challenge](#) to leverage the two changes that President Obama announced last September, which makes applying for aid in the fall of 2016 easier and better timed for low-income students.

The first change is that FAFSA will begin accepting tax data from the most recently filed return, rather than the current requirement of tax forms from the calendar year of application. This will alleviate much of the confusion and the resulting delays that currently occur, as most families will have already completed their tax forms prior to starting the FAFSA and will not rely on estimated, and possibly inaccurate, information.

The second change moves the FAFSA completion date up from January 1 to October 1. The earlier deadline will enable high school seniors to complete the FAFSA and receive their federal financial aid eligibility before college applications are due. This shift should encourage more low-income students to complete college applications, because they will know that a Pell Grant is available to help fund their education.

The NCAN grant will allow Manchester to staff a UNH student access team at all four district high schools to support students with FAFSA and college applications, as well as conduct training for guidance counselors on FAFSA changes and tracking student data. A portion of the funds will pay for transportation to allow high school students to attend college access activities at UNH

Manchester's campus.

The city also will use the grant to establish a website for FAFSA information, and conduct a contest for Manchester School District middle and high school students to design a logo for the site.

Manchester students who submit a completed FAFSA will have their college application fee waived at UNH Manchester and Manchester Community College.

Manchester's success in the challenge could result in additional funding to support this initiative. In September 2017, NCAN will make three to five awards totaling \$300,000 to the grant-funded city that demonstrates the:

- greatest percentage growth in high school FAFSA completions for the Class of 2017, compared to the Class of 2015.
- highest high school FAFSA completion rate for the Class of 2017.
- most innovative or collaborative FAFSA completion strategy and/or partnership with postsecondary institutions.

"We look forward to working with our community partners to increase the FAFSA completion rate in Manchester," Livingston said. "It's an exciting way to make sure all of our students have every opportunity for success in post-secondary education."

As a result of this city-wide effort, educators also expect to see a rise in the district's high school graduation rate, which ultimately helps to makes a positive impact on the community.

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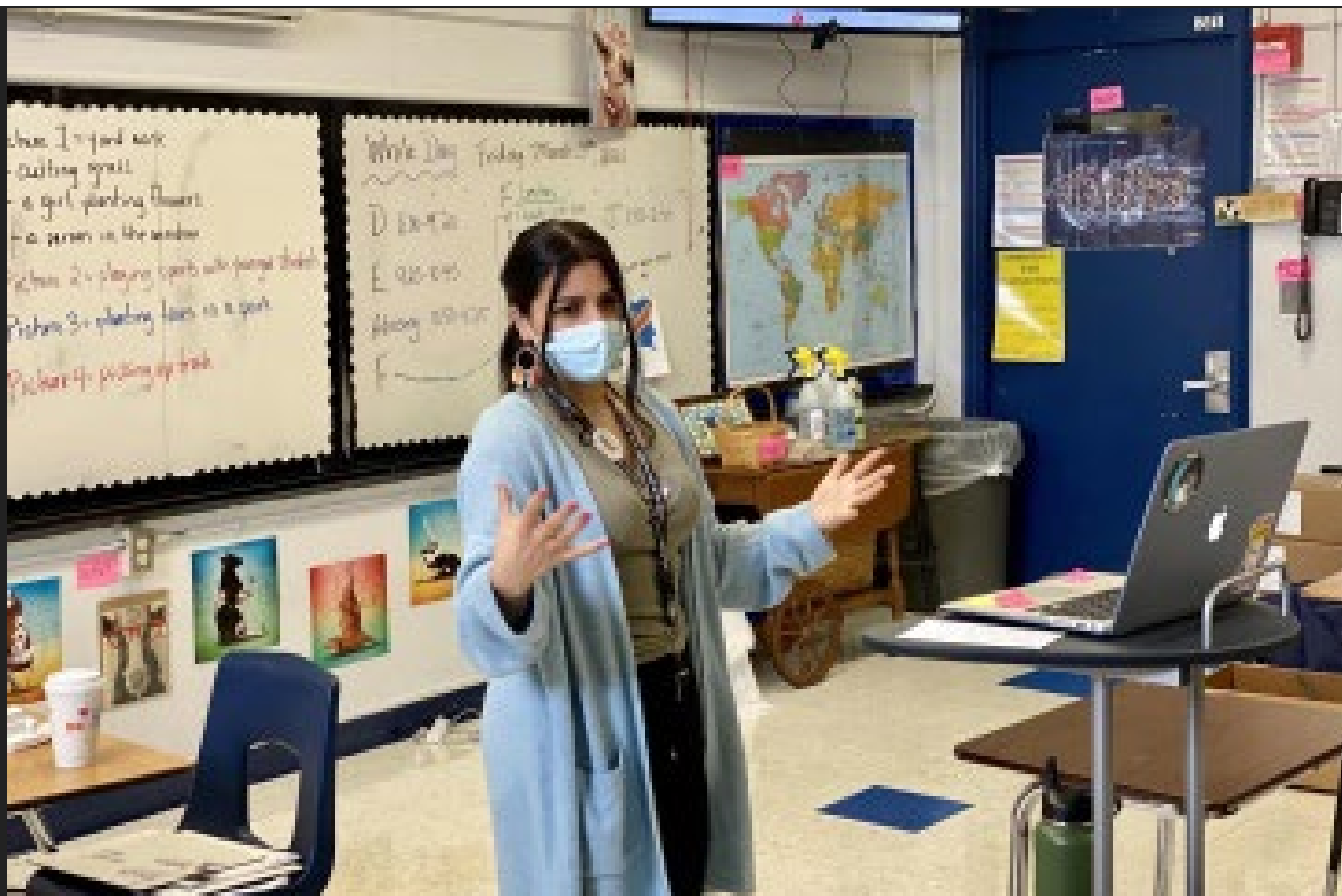
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