



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**N.C. High Schools Prioritize 2021 FAFSA Completion to Pave Way
for Free or Affordable College for Students**

myFutureNC announces winners of its inaugural FAFSA Challenge

RALEIGH, N.C. – Despite the challenges of the pandemic and remote learning, schools across North Carolina prioritized completion of the 2021 Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, to help students pave a path to a free or affordable college education. myFutureNC, which is leading the state’s educational attainment efforts to encourage schools, students and families to prioritize completion of the financial aid application. By completing the FAFSA, students become eligible for federal PELL grants, state need-based grants, scholarships, low-cost loans and work-study programs.

“FAFSA completion is a leading predictor of whether or not a student will attend college and graduate,” said Cecilia Holden, myFutureNC’s president and CEO. “The 2020-2021 school year was difficult for students and teachers, but schools across the state stepped up to the challenge by not only encouraging students and families to complete the application but also assisting them with what can sometimes be a difficult process. We are so proud of these schools’ efforts, and those of our local community college partners who assisted as well.”

Winners will receive a \$500 grant to support college access outreach and engagement efforts. myFutureNC has been lifting up schools’ FAFSA completion efforts to create a college-going culture with a goal of moving the needle on college enrollment and completion.

For the FAFSA Challenge, the 499 participating high schools competed among similar schools by senior class size and location, in two categories. The 2021 FAFSA Challenge winners are:

Traditional Schools

Category: Extra Small

FAFSA Completion:

- Ocracoke High School/Hyde County Schools
100% Completion

FAFSA Completion Growth:

- Highlands School/Macon County Schools
21.7% Growth

Category: Small

FAFSA Completion:

- Weaver Academy/Guilford County Schools
89.2% Completion

FAFSA Completion Growth:

- North Wilkes High School/Wilkes County Schools
19% Growth

Category: Medium

FAFSA Completion:

- Central Academy of Technology and Arts/Union County Public Schools
74.3% Completion

FAFSA Completion Growth:

- North Surry High School/Surry County Schools
14.1 Growth

Category: Large

FAFSA Completion:

- Marvin Ridge High School/Union County Public Schools
71% Completion

FAFSA Completion Growth:

- Person High School/Person County Schools
16% Growth

Rural Schools

FAFSA Completion:

- Nantahala School/Macon County Schools
83.3% Completion

FAFSA Completion Growth:

- Hiwassee Dam High School/Cherokee County Schools
28% Growth
(Hiwassee also achieved 87.5% FAFSA completion)

Cooperative Innovative High Schools (CIHS)

FAFSA Completion:

- Cabarrus-Kannapolis Early College High School/Cabarrus County Schools
100% Completion

FAFSA Completion Growth:

- Greene Early College High/Greene County Schools
29.7% Growth

Learn more about the [2021 FAFSA Challenge winners](#).

In the coming days, myFutureNC will launch the 2022 FAFSA Challenge. All North Carolina public high schools will be automatically entered into the challenge with the opportunity to win a \$500 grant to support future FAFSA completion programs.

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ABOUT NC FIRST IN FAFSA

NC First in FAFSA is a myFutureNC Collaborative that focuses on increasing the number of high school seniors who complete the FAFSA application. Increasing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, completion rate is a fundamental step in North Carolina's efforts to meet our state's 2 million by 2030 postsecondary educational attainment goal. Students who complete the FAFSA are more likely to enroll in higher education, persist in their college coursework, and obtain a degree.

Partners include Carolina Demography, College Foundation of North Carolina, College Advising Corps, the Hunt Institute, and the John M. Belk Endowment.

For more information on NC First in FAFSA, visit myfuturenc.org/first-in-fafsa/.

To provide financial support for this FAFSA initiative or myFutureNC, email David@myFutureNC.org.

About myFutureNC

myFutureNC is a statewide nonprofit organization focused on educational attainment, which is led by some of North Carolina's most influential education, business and civic leaders. The organization was formed with the goal to create a stronger, more competitive North Carolina. myFutureNC is working across sectors and in communities throughout the state to close gaps in

the education pathway, to promote alignment between educational programming and business/industry needs and, ultimately, to improve educational opportunities for all North Carolinians.

Visit www.myfuturenc.org.