

Ms. Lubby Navarro, Board Member

SUBJECT: THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, AUTHORIZE THE SUPERINTENDENT TO INFORM PARENTS AND STUDENTS OF CHANGES TO THE FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA) PROCESS

COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: INFORMED, ENGAGED & EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS

A postsecondary education is one of the most important investments individuals can make in their future. However, there are growing concerns about the accessibility and affordability of higher education. Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the gateway to accessing funds for college for approximately 20 million students each year.

The FAFSA is the application that college or career school students must complete to apply for federal student aid, which includes Pell Grants, federal student loans, and work-study opportunities. In addition to determining eligibility for federal student aid, FAFSA information is used by many states, colleges, career schools, and private organizations to determine eligibility for nonfederal student aid.

On September 14, 2015, President Obama announced significant changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process that will impact millions of students. The 2017–18 FAFSA will now be available for students to submit beginning October 1, 2016, rather than on January 1, 2017. Students will also be able to apply for financial aid a few months after they and their parents file their 2015 tax returns with reliable information retrieved electronically from the Internal Revenue Service, rather than waiting until the next year's tax season to finalize their FAFSA.

Currently, an estimated 2 million students who are enrolled in college and would be eligible for a federal grant never applied for aid, and an unknown number failed to enroll in college because they did not know that aid is available. Annually, in Florida, over 100 million dollars in Pell grant money is left behind and Eighteen million dollars is left behind in Miami-Dade County. Unfortunately, the various aid that is not accessed by our students results in an opportunity gap for low-income students in the District.

Having a post-secondary plan, graduating, and successfully entering higher education arena and/or the workforce are priorities for Miami-Dade County Public Schools. This item seeks to promote the new changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process in order to encourage students to apply for and claim the aid for which they are eligible. Learning about aid eligibility options much earlier in the college application and decision process will allow students and families to determine the true cost of attending college.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

LUBBY NAVARRO: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent of Schools to promote changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process in order to encourage parents and students to apply.