

Accelerating FAFSA Completion through School/Community Partnerships

February 20, 2020



Learning Agenda

Understand Milwaukee's community-wide approach to FAFSA completion, including successes and challenges.

Learn from the experience of MPS staff about working with a wide variety of cross-sector partners.

Consider new strategies to increase FAFSA completion rates in partnership with community stakeholders.





Introductions

Milwaukee Public Schools

Ericca Pollack

College & Career Center Coordinator

Provide oversight for 20 school-based College and Career Centers and Advisors. Manage grants related to FAFSA.

Karolyn Taylor

Scholarship Coordinator

Lead district-wide scholarship efforts in School Counseling area, including Ca\$h for College programs.



Ascendium Education Group

Carolynn Lee

Program Officer - Streamlining Transitions

Ascendium's philanthropic mission is to elevate opportunities and outcomes for learners from low-income backgrounds so they can better achieve postsecondary educational and career success. Our grantmaking focuses on increasing equity for low-income populations, especially those in historically underrepresented groups: first-generation students, incarcerated adults, rural community members, students of color and veterans.



The NCAN FAFSA Completion Challenge



National College Access Network

2018-2019 FAFSA Completion Challenge

Goal: Increase community-wide FAFSA completion rate by 5%

- 25 Cities Selected
- School districts, postsecondary institutions, community-based organizations, and foundations
- Supported by Kresge Foundation and Ascendium



Participating Cities



Challenge Objectives

Access and use student-level FAFSA completion data to identify students who need assistance completing the FAFSA

Engage and coordinate cross-sector partnerships to reach target populations and optimize resources, facilities, and staff time

Strategic outreach through targeted communications to inform and engage students and their families

Build capacity to equip staff with the skills and knowledge to implement and continue FAFSA completion assistance



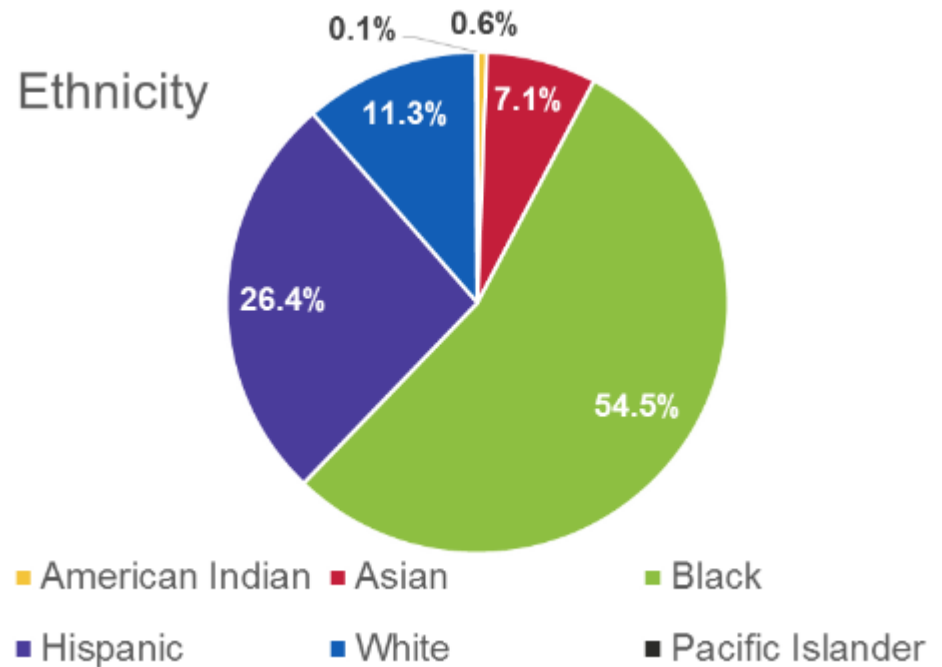


The Power of Partnerships

The Milwaukee Context

Diversity is our greatest strength

- 75,657 Students*
- 162 Schools
- 11.1% English Language Learners
- 20.0% Special Education
- 77.5% Economically Disadvantaged**



Key Strategies

1. Establish city-wide NCAN FAFSA Grant oversight team and city-wide Kick-Off Event/Marketing.
2. Create and execute pilot FAFSA curriculum in Economics courses in 10 high schools.
3. By the end of year one, school-based FAFSA teams will have three professional development opportunities to develop a plan, evaluate the success of the plan, and discuss strategies or changes needed to reach or exceed FAFSA goals. Create and implement an incentive-based system for Principals and Counselors.
4. Implement a school-based model of student incentives for FAFSA completion and celebration (includes a Refer-A-Friend peer program).



Benefits of Partnerships

- Staff Time
- Expertise
- Access
- Resources
- Ideas
- Awareness

COMPLETED FAFSA* =
Free \$\$ for college!



mpsmke.com/fafsa

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid*



Strategic Partnerships in Milwaukee

Usual Suspects

- School leadership (principals, APs, school counselors, CACC Advisors, parent coordinators)
- Local Higher Education Partners (two-year, four-year and private colleges)

Unusual Suspects

- Other school-based partners (i.e., safety, teachers, nutrition staff)
- Mayor's office
- Community-based partners (College Possible, Boys and Girls Club)
- Peer leaders
- Free tax services/United Way
- Places of worship
- Scholarship Providers/ Foundations
- Media outlets

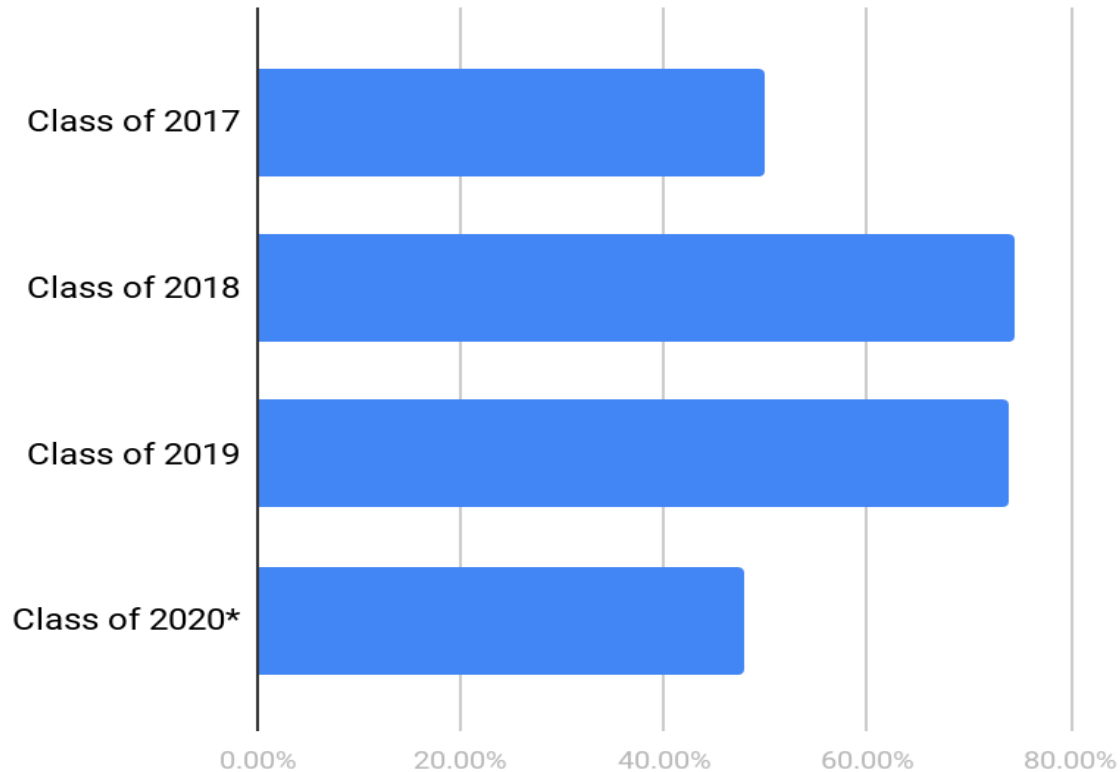




I ♥ FAFSA Workshops

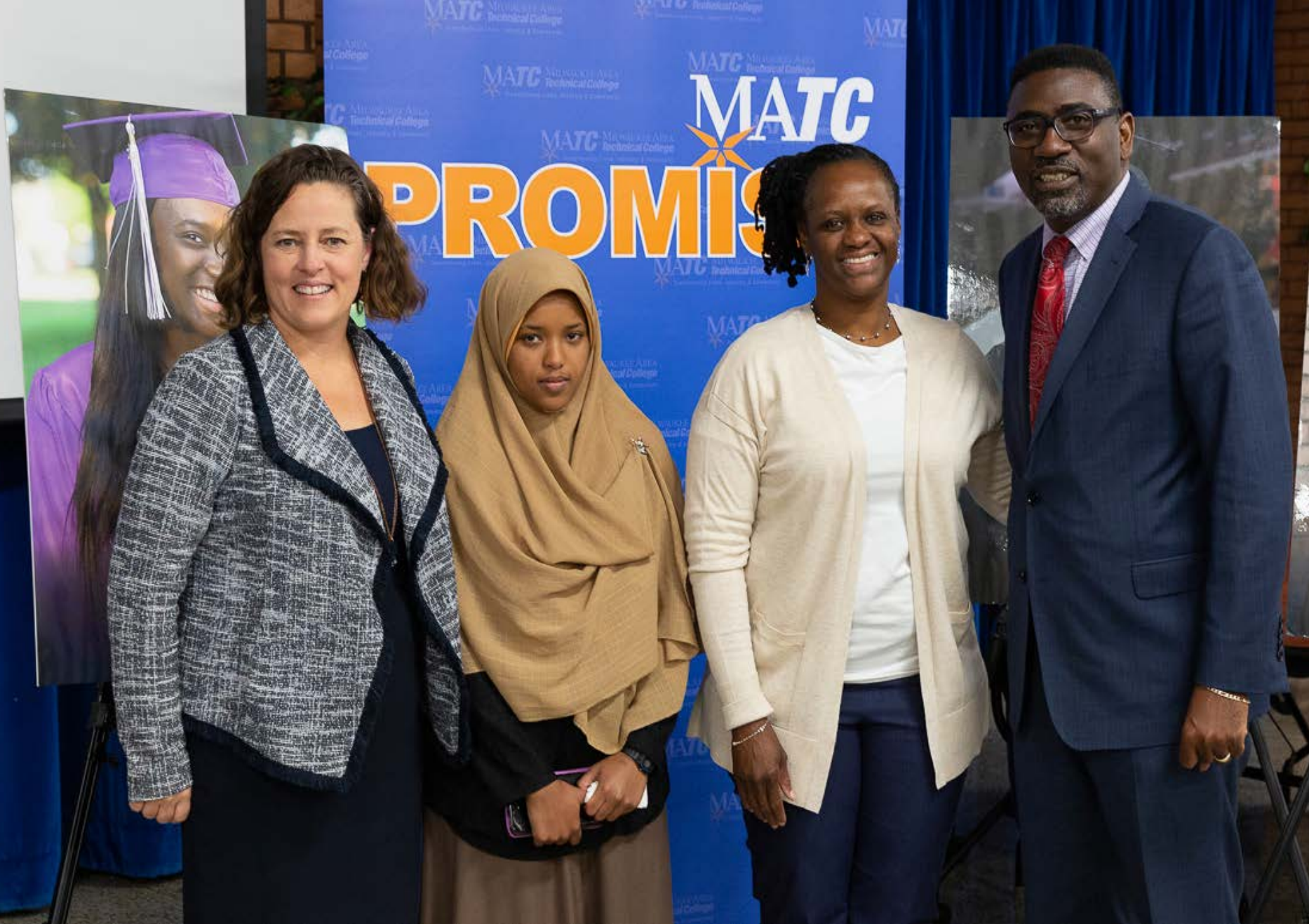


MPS FAFSA Completion Rates



* as of 1/24/2019, compared to 46.1% on 1/24/2018.





Partnership Successes & Challenges

- Creating a consistent FAFSA structure while allowing for autonomy, based on individual school needs.
- Developing a large-group of FAFSA gatekeepers/cheerleaders, but containing actual FAFSA completion to a smaller group of experts, to minimize errors.
- Accessing and utilizing student-level FAFSA data in WISEDash.
- Creating time and space for FAFSA partners to meet outside of the school.
- Finding sustainable funding sources for FAFSA work, specifically student incentives.
- Addressing any policy opportunities at the district level.
- Developing data-sharing agreements and MOUs with higher education partners and community-based partners.
- Continuing to find new financial support and avenues for undocumented students.



Questions?





Contact Us

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Thank You

