

Summary Sheet

**Concerning Increasing Completion Rates of Applications For
Student Financial Aid for Higher Education**

Representatives: James Coleman

Senators: Jeff Bridges

Problem

Across the United States, the high school class of 2017 left as much as \$2.3 billion in *FREE* federal grant money for college on the table due to not completing or submitting the Federal Application for Free Student Aid (FAFSA), which included over \$50 million annually for students in Colorado. Completing the FAFSA allows students to understand the financial aid package they are entitled to in the form of grants, loans, and work-study programs. Colorado has one of the lowest FAFSA completion rates in the entire country.

Bill Purpose

For three consecutive years starting in 2019-2020, the general assembly will appropriate \$250,000 to the Colorado Department of Education. The Colorado Department of Education will then distribute those funds to school districts who participate in the School Counselor Grant Program (SCGP). This money can be used for:

- 1) Developing and/or distributing information to students and families regarding the benefits of FAFSA completion and the steps that are required to complete the FAFSA.
- 2) Training school counselors on the best way to support students filling out the FAFSA.
- 3) Organizing and hosting opportunities for students and families to fill out the FAFSA.

During the three years of the grant cycle, schools must report FAFSA completion rates and compare those to the completion rates prior to the grant to demonstrate success. If FAFSA completion rates do not increase, the extra funding will go away.

The SCGP became part of the Colorado Revised Statute in 2008 (HB 08-1370) to increase effective school-based counseling for high schools. The purpose of SCGP is to increase the graduation rate within the state and increase the percentage of students who are appropriately prepared for, apply to, and continue into postsecondary education. SCGP allocates funding for a four-year grant cycle from the Colorado General Assembly.

Support