

# COLLEGE BOUND MI IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE



2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

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## INTRODUCTION

The Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) coordinates statewide initiatives designed to support high schools in helping students navigate the milestones in the college-going process and break down the barriers students often encounter during this process. These barriers include:

- Social Capital
- Academic Preparation
- College Knowledge – Navigating the Process
- Affordability

Since 2011, MCAN has supported an increasing number of statewide initiatives to fully encompass all of these milestones: Michigan College Month in the fall, the College Cash Campaign in the fall/winter, and College Decision Day in the spring. These statewide initiatives are designed to be implemented during the school day, giving students the opportunity to complete college applications, file the FAFSA, and decide on a college with support from school counselors, administrators, teachers, college advisers, and volunteers.

## ABOUT MCAN

As the leader in the state's college access movement, MCAN has a mission to increase college readiness, participation and completion rates in Michigan, particularly among low-income students, first-generation college going students, and students of color.

## WE BELIEVE:

- **College is *postsecondary education***

We use the term college to refer to attainment of education beyond high school, including postsecondary certificates and academic degrees.

- **College is *a necessity***

Postsecondary attainment dramatically increases an individual's economic independence in a knowledge-based economy.

- **College is *for everyone***

We work toward changing the systems that perpetuate inequities in postsecondary attainment.

- **College is *a public good***

Postsecondary attainment is critical to a just and equitable society, strong economy, thriving democracy, and healthy communities.

For more information, visit [micollegeaccess.org](http://micollegeaccess.org).

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## WHAT IS COLLEGE BOUND MICHIGAN?

College Bound Michigan (CBMI) is the joining of all three of our statewide initiatives: Michigan College Month, College Cash Campaign, and Decision Day into one comprehensive campaign for postsecondary attainment. While each of these events were signed up for and held separately in the past, MCAN has decided to bring them together under a single sign up registration. We've done this because the college going process doesn't happen in a vacuum. People and institutions are acting all the time and we want our initiatives to reflect this and be as flexible as possible. What MCAN will do to offer support and guidance around helping your individual efforts will not change, simply the structure of how we operate logistically.

## COLLEGE BOUND MICHIGAN COMPONENTS

**Michigan College Month (October)** - Michigan College Month is part of a national initiative with the goal to provide every graduating high school senior the opportunity to apply to college and for financial aid. Special focus is placed on assisting students who would be the first in their families to attend college and students who may not have otherwise seriously considered applying to college.

**College Cash Campaign (November 1 to March 1)** - Focused on encouraging a school-wide rally around FAFSA and scholarship completion to help students find cash for college.

**Decision Day (Around May 1)** - Focused on recognizing high school seniors for their postsecondary educational plans and encouraging younger students and families to prepare early for postsecondary education. College Decision Day is held annually on or around May 1 and is designed to coincide with the date that most seniors must inform a college of their plans to enroll.

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## UNDERSTANDING THE NEED FOR COLLEGE IN MICHIGAN

At least 70 percent of all jobs in Michigan will require a college education, and Michigan needs tens of thousands more college graduates to build our economy. Most workforce developers and education leaders use the word “college” to include any type of postsecondary education or training beyond high school. As stated above, MCAN uses the term “college” to refer to the attainment of education beyond high school, including postsecondary certificates and academic degrees. It is important that your events highlight and promote:

- **Certificate Programs:** Certificate programs are specialized plans of study that are usually intended for students planning to pursue a skilled trade. Most of these programs can be completed in a matter of months, and Michigan’s public community and technical colleges offer several certificate programs throughout the year. Additionally, some employers and/or trade groups offer such programs. MCAN defines a quality certificate as being accredited, transferable, being recognized by employers as having value in the labor market.
- **Associate Degrees:** Associate degrees are typically awarded to students who complete a two-year period of study at a college. These degrees are often required for technical fields, but students can also pursue two-year degrees in business or other professional careers. Students can earn an associate degree at any of Michigan’s community college and technical colleges..
- **Bachelor’s Degrees:** Bachelor’s degrees (or baccalaureate degrees) are typically awarded to students who complete a four-year period of study at a college or university. Students pursuing a bachelor’s degree take classes in their career field and in general education subject areas.

It also is important to keep the value of a college degree as a focus for events and discussions with students, to help combat common myths and negative media coverage on student loans and the value of a degree or certificate:

- **Greater Wealth:** Individuals with a college degree earn an average of \$30,000 more in annual earnings between a bachelor’s degree and a high school diploma (Federal Reserve Bank of New York Liberty Street Economics).
- **More Security:** Those with a college degree are less likely to be effected by economic downturn. In fact, there are 8.1 million more jobs for Americans with a bachelor’s degree or above than existed when the 2007-08 recession began (Lumina Foundation’s A Stronger Nation).
- **Better Health:** Individuals with a 4-year college degree are 70% more likely to engage in vigorous exercise and 70% less likely to be obese than those with only a high school diploma (Lumina Foundation).



# SECTION 1: MICHIGAN COLLEGE MONTH

## WHAT IS MICHIGAN COLLEGE MONTH?

Michigan College Month begins October 1 and is part of a national initiative to provide every graduating high school senior the opportunity to apply to college and for financial aid. Special focus is placed on assisting students who would be the first in their families to attend college and students who may not have otherwise seriously considered applying to college. Michigan College Month can open the door for students by encouraging them to take the most significant steps toward college in their senior year. Michigan College Month emphasizes the relationship between applying to and paying for college, and helps break down some of the most complex and commonly cited barriers to attending college.

### WHY ONE MONTH?

During Michigan College Month, schools will have all of October to plan and implement events to support students as they apply to college and begin to file the FAFSA. The month-long structure gives schools the flexibility to schedule these events based on their local needs and challenges in order to best serve their students and families. Our hope is that by kicking-off this work in October, counselors and college advisers will be able to use the following months to help those students who require additional support. The goal of Michigan College Month is that by the conclusion of October, every graduating senior will have applied to at least one college and filed the FAFSA. Schools can accomplish this goal in a variety of ways, including:

- Setting aside time and space during the school day to help students submit college applications, create the FSA ID, and begin filling out the FAFSA.
- Hosting financial aid nights to engage parents in the FAFSA process.
- Tracking their college application and FAFSA data throughout the month and doing targeted outreach and follow-up with the students who still need to complete these tasks.
- Hosting school-wide events and celebrations to build college-going culture and get students excited about college.

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## IMPLEMENTING A COLLEGE APPLICATION CAMPAIGN

### STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE YOUR CAMPAIGN

- Direct seniors to the College Application Checklist in the Senior Resource Guide to fill out any additional information.
- Contact seniors eligible for a fee waiver. Usually those students who are eligible for fee waivers on college entrance exams or for free/reduced lunch are also eligible for college application fee waivers.
- Remind students to prepare early for their admission essay(s) and encourage teachers to include classroom activities geared toward writing essays.

### COMPLETING COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

- Remind students that information about their addresses and parents will be used to determine tuition and residency.
- Students may question information they are asked to supply. This private information, such as their SSN, will only be reported to the college(s) where they apply.
- A credit card will be required for colleges or universities with application fees. Alternatively, students may need to print the application and mail in with a check.
- Print the confirmation page after submitting the application.

### UPLOADING ESSAYS AND PERSONAL STATEMENTS

- Note that some applications will require an admission essay or a personal statement. Please have students bring their completed essay(s) with them. Some applications will allow the file to be uploaded. Others may require that the student copy and paste from an existing document (which they may have stored on an external device or emailed to themselves).
- Most essay questions are open-ended, but some may have word minimum and/or maximum limits. If there is a word limit, it will be specified within the essay question.

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## TRANSCRIPTS

- Transcripts can be requested through Docufide by [Parchment](#). The student will have to create an account in Parchment before a request can be made.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

- Please assure parents and students that all information submitted for online applications is confidential.

## SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS

The puzzle pieces of going to college are almost together for your students! Read the following information to learn more about the “Now What?” pieces of paying the application fee, keeping confirmation pages, when students should expect schools to contact them, and information on transcripts, test scores, essays, financial aid, and more!

### PAYING THE APPLICATION FEE

When a student submits an application online, they may be required to pay an application fee (unless it is a college/university that has a free application for admission). If a payment is required, they can pay their application fee the following ways:

- 1) Pay via credit or debit card online. Some colleges require a credit card to apply online. Help students do research prior to the event to see if the college they want to apply to requires one! If they chose this option, they will need the following information: Credit card type (Visa, MasterCard, etc.), credit card number, security code (typically found on the back of the credit card), name on credit card, date credit card was issued, and expiration date.
- 2) Submit the application online and pay via check in the mail (if the school allows this form of payment). They will need to include a copy of their confirmation page with their check.
- 3) Some students may qualify for an application fee waiver. When you identify these students, check in with them about this option. They will need to include a copy of their confirmation page with the fee waiver.
- 4) Students may be able to save their application, print it, and mail it in with their payment (varies by institution).

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## APPLICATION FEE WAIVERS BASED ON FINANCIAL NEED

Waivers of admission application fees for students with a demonstrated financial need and for whom an application fee would create an undue burden are provided at ALL of Michigan’s public and private colleges and universities. Application fee waivers due to financial hardship are provided to ensure that no student is deprived of the opportunity to pursue admission to the institution(s) of their choice. The two primary fee waivers that students should use during Michigan College Month are the NACAC fee waiver and the College Board fee waiver.

## NACAC FEE WAIVER FORM

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) provides a form called the Request for Application Fee Waiver to be completed by students with the help of their high school counselor. This document, which you can download from the NACAC site, is updated annually. Download and print the NACAC Request for Admission Application Fee Waiver. Suggested annual family income guidelines for this waiver are included on the website. However, income is not the only determining factor in application fee waivers; many are based on the counselor’s personal knowledge of family circumstances.

Students are eligible to use the NACAC fee waiver form if:

- Student has received or is eligible to receive an ACT or SAT testing fee waiver.
- Student is enrolled in or eligible to participate in the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch program (FRPL).
- Student’s annual family income falls within the Income Eligibility Guidelines set by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.
- Student is enrolled in a federal, state or local program that aids student from low- income families (e.g., TRIO programs such as Upward Bound).
- Student’s family receives public assistance
- Student lives in federally subsidized public housing, a foster home, or is homeless.

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- Student is a ward of the state or an orphan.

Gap year students, transfer students, or individuals choosing to defer applying to college rather than immediately transitioning after high school graduation are not eligible to use NACAC's Request for Application Fee Waiver Form. NACAC recommends that prospective students in these categories contact the admission office of the institution(s) to which they are seeking admission regarding an institutional fee waiver.

Requirements for completing the form:

- Students must complete the student section in its entirety.
- The student's secondary school counselor, independent counselor or TRIO representative must verify that the student is eligible to use the form.
- The high school's raised seal or stamp must be included on the form.
- The form must be mailed directly to the admission office of the college or university to which the student is seeking admission.

## COLLEGE BOARD FEE WAIVER FORM

Because Michigan is now an SAT state, students are encouraged to use the College Board fee waiver as well. The College Board has college application fee waivers online to make the college application process more affordable and accessible for eligible students. If a student previously registered and took the SAT or one of the SAT Subject Tests using a fee waiver, they are automatically eligible to receive four college application fee waivers. Now that all Michigan students take the SAT for free, the College Board will put fee waivers for students in their online portal that they created for the SAT when their scores come in.

Students eligible for fee waivers can also apply to any Common App college without a fee. For more information about this process and the College Board fee waiver process as a whole, visit <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/applying-101/college-application-fee-waivers>.

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## FOLLOWING UP WITH TRANSCRIPTS, TEST SCORES, AND ESSAYS

Many admission offices require students to submit additional information in order to complete the application process. It is important for students to find out what other information is required and send it to their prospective colleges and universities ASAP. The more quickly they submit all the necessary forms, the sooner they will receive a response from the admission office. Some common additional requirements may include:

- Official transcripts (mandatory)
  - Transcripts submitted through a [parchment.com](https://parchment.com) account or through the high school by request. To make an account, students should do the following steps:
    1. Go to the main page and select the “sign up” option
    2. Complete the registration page
    3. Request their transcripts from their high school
    4. Click ‘deliver’ and choose the colleges/universities where they want their transcripts to be sent. For scholarships, they can request their transcript to be sent to their email.
- SAT score
- Essays
- Letters of recommendation
  - These letters can be from a teacher, counselor, principal, coach, supervisor, pastor, employer, etc.

## DON'T FORGET THE CONFIRMATION PAGE

Students should not leave the computer lab without a hardcopy printout of their confirmation page! Also, some schools may require this page to be signed and mailed to the admission office to complete the application process. Whether the school requires this form or not, students should still keep a printed copy for their records. You may want a copy as well to track students' next steps toward acceptance and enrollment into the colleges to which they applied.

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## EXAMPLES OF COLLEGE MONTH ACTIVITIES & CELEBRATIONS

### HOST A COLLEGE APPLICATION EVENT

During the school day, student go to a media center, computer lab, or classroom with the intent and focus of completing their College Applications.

- Groups of 20-13
- One adult volunteer per 10 students is recommended
- Goal to complete one application during that time

### COLLEGE SPIRIT WEEK

To build up to submitting college applications, celebrate college with a spirit week! Ideas include:

- College t-shirt/hat/sweat pants day
- Get up and go day – you're late to class!
- Dress like your future career day
- Rivalry day

### COLLEGE TAILGATE

Staff/volunteers decorate their cars and provide information about their alma mater or another college. Students visit different tailgates to learn more about the college. Students could also complete a trivia activity as they visit different colleges and submit their completed trivia form for a raffle prize. This can be a great way to get the entire school involved and celebrate together!

### COLLEGE FAIR

During the month of October, host a college or college and career fair. Be sure to coordinate with MACRAO before planning your event.

### COLLEGE ADMISSION REPRESENTATIVE CLASSROOM VISITS AND TOURS

Invite college admissions representatives to visit your school and talk more specifically about their program. You can also organize and facilitate college tours during October before students complete applications. If in-person visits are not an option, check out virtual college tour options and this [YouTube Playlist](#) curated by MCAN.

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## PEP RALLY

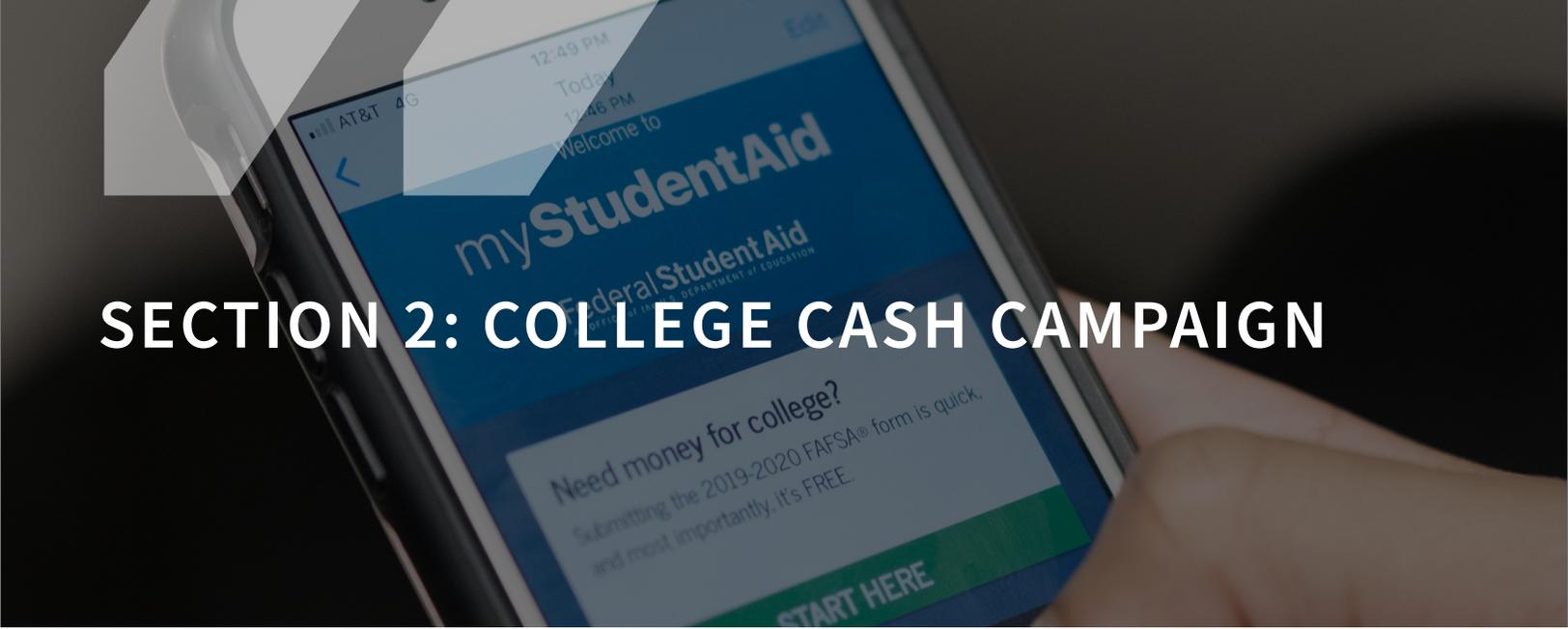
Have a school-wide pep rally or assembly launching college month and celebrating the college application season. Use this time to provide students with details about how they can prepare for applications, and introduce college month events.

## ADVISORY OR CLASSROOM COMPETITIONS

Host a competition between senior classes. Every time a student submits an application, they get one point. The class with the most points will get a breakfast party, pizza party, or some other reward at the end of the month.

## INCENTIVES

- Candy bar when you file the FAFSA
- Pizza party, cider & doughnuts, breakfast, ice cream, pep rally for all students who participate
- Raffle homecoming tickets, homework passes, pie-a-teacher opportunities, etc.



# SECTION 2: COLLEGE CASH CAMPAIGN

## WHAT IS THE COLLEGE CASH CAMPAIGN?

The College Cash Campaign (CCC) can be considered the second stage of College Bound Michigan. This phase officially begins on November 1 and lasts until the priority deadline for filing the FAFSA, March 1. During these five months students are focused on finishing college applications, submitting their FAFSA, applying for scholarships and determining how they will pay for college. It is imperative that students be provided time to work on their FAFSA and scholarship applications during the school day. As well once financial aid packages are received by students, someone must be available to walk through what it means with them.

## TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE

Pell Grants	Pell Grants provide need-based grants to low-income undergraduates. These funds do not need to be repaid by the student unless they withdraw from or stop attending classes within an enrollment period. Grant amounts are dependent on the student's expected family contribution. Filing the FAFSA is the only way to access Pell Grants.
State aid	State aid may be available to students who attend a college in their state of residence. Some examples of state aid in Michigan are the Tuition Incentive Program (TIP), the Michigan Competitive Scholarship, and the Michigan Tuition Grant. State aid typically requires the FAFSA and does not need to be repaid.
Institutional aid	Institutional aid may be provided by public and private colleges and universities to help their students pay for tuition and fees. Institutional aid does not need to be repaid, and aid amounts can vary based on many factors such as school selectivity, institutional endowments, and individual need of students. Institutional aid typically requires a filed FAFSA.

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## TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE

Federal Work-Study Programs	Federal Work-Study Programs are offered by colleges to help some students pay for college by working part-time. Students may be employed by: the institution itself; a federal, state, or local public agency; a private nonprofit organization; or a private for-profit organization. Students must file the FAFSA as part of the Federal Work-Study application process and are required to show a certain amount of financial need to be eligible.
Federal Perkins Loans	Federal Perkins Loans are for undergraduate and graduate students with exceptional financial need (however, not all colleges participate in this program. Check with individual schools if students believe they are eligible). These loans will need to be repaid. Funds for Perkins Loans are limited, so not everyone who applies will receive this type of aid – the earlier a student files their FAFSA (which is required to receive a Perkins Loan), the more likely they are to receive this type of aid.
Federal Direct Stafford Loans	Federal Direct Stafford Loans (subsidized and unsubsidized) are available to undergraduate and graduate students attending college at least half-time. These loans will need to be repaid. To apply for a Federal Direct Loan, a student will need to file the FAFSA. All students with a valid FAFSA on file are eligible for unsubsidized student loans (within yearly and overall loan limits), no matter their family income.
PLUS Loans	PLUS Loans are federal loans that parents of dependent undergraduate students can use to help pay their student’s education expenses. These credit-based loans require the FAFSA and an application and will need to be repaid.
Scholarships	Scholarships are awarded based on varying criteria and do not need to be repaid. Filling out the FAFSA does not automatically act as a scholarship application, but many scholarships require an EFC calculated from the FAFSA in the application.

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## EXAMPLES OF COLLEGE CASH CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES AND CELEBRATIONS

### THE BASICS

Publicly track progress toward your FAFSA goal somewhere highly visible in the school. Keep track of your increasing percentages and/or track your students individually.

- Use the name by name FAFSA lookups to track your students' FAFSA completion. You can also request that students bring in a copy of their confirmation page to prove that they have completed the FAFSA (you will want them to black out any personal information, such as social security number, before you store it in your office).
- Measure your progress creatively! For example, use a prominent bulletin board and put dollar sign stickers next to each student's name once they complete the FAFSA.
- Use prizes and competition as incentive. Students will encourage each other to complete the FAFSA and provide reminders so that they are more likely to receive the prize.

### STEPS:

1. Determine how to make different groups of students. You can either do a random drawing of names, make groups from a required class, or use homeroom groups. The more evenly balanced the group, the more likely students will feel like they have a chance of winning.
2. Once you have your groups, keep track of who has completed the FAFSA. We recommend using well-placed bulletin boards. List the names of each person in the group and have a way to mark who has completed the FAFSA in each group so students can keep track.
3. Determine how you want students to let you know they have completed the FAFSA. You can have them turn in the confirmation page (make sure they black out their SSN), and you can check via the name-by-name FAFSA lookups.
4. Announce the groupings to all students and explain the rules, how to win, and what the prize will be (make sure this stays in the announcements too so students remember).
5. Update the bulletin board continually, either daily or weekly so students can see their progress and know who is in the lead. The more exciting it is for them to have completed the FAFSA, the better.
6. Announce the winning group and give the prize at the end of the campaign.

### PRO-TIP:

Create a competition between groups of seniors to have the highest FAFSA completion rate by a given deadline.

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## FINANCIAL AID PRESENTATIONS

- It's best to give presentations during the school day. Try coordinating with a teacher to do a presentation during class time. If you cannot find time during the school day, have something right after school.
- Local colleges often are willing to send a financial aid officer to give a presentation to students. If you do not already have a relationship with a local financial aid office, try to contact the local community college or a nearby four year college to see if they are willing to come to your school.
- You can choose to do an overall financial aid presentation, one specific to the FAFSA, or a mixture of the two. If someone external is coming, make sure to mention what you would like included – they will likely have something already prepared for such presentations.
  - You can also choose to have multiple presentations, focusing on different portions.
- Make sure to advertise this well ahead of time:
  - Provide fliers with other papers being sent home.
  - Post information on your website and in your college related material.
  - Give out flyers at home sports games.
  - Put event info in school announcements and have automated calls sent home.
  - It is important that the message reaches the parents as much as possible because they will in most cases need to be involved in the process.

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## PARENT INFORMATION/FAFSA NIGHTS

To remove barriers students sometimes face (work, after-school clubs and sports, babysitting, transportation issues), the majority of your FAFSA campaign should take place during the school day. However, parent information is essential to completing the FAFSA, so you might want to engage parents directly as well. Do this in the evening to try and avoid work conflicts.

- Invite local financial aid officers to come in and provide assistance on an evening or weekend.
- Providing as much incentive and convenience as possible for parents is essential for this activity.
  - Consider raffling gas cards or providing food, like pizza, to parents who attend.
  - If at all possible, provide activities for smaller children or childcare so the parents can bring their younger children and still be able to focus on the FAFSA.

## STEPS FOR HOSTING A FAFSA NIGHT:

1. Contact financial aid experts from your local community college or university to determine their availability to come to assist with one or multiple FAFSA nights.
2. After you determine their availability, set a date and get a computer lab for the event.
3. Find other volunteers to assist with sign in, food, and general FAFSA help.
4. Advertise the event to students and their parents a least a few weeks before the event, with an extra push a few days before the event.
  - Letters home, mass calls home, posters in the hallways, handouts at sporting events, and in person announcements are good options.
5. Order food for the event if you're providing it.
6. Prepare volunteers if they will be assisting with the FAFSA by having a quick volunteer orientation/meeting or sending out the information ahead of time.
7. Provide handouts a week or so ahead of time to parents and students interested in attending outlining what information they should bring with them. Make sure to update them about Prior-Prior-Year (PPY).
8. Do a final push of announcements to encourage families to show up.

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## FAFSA FRIDAYS

Set aside time during the school day each Friday (or another day of your choosing) throughout the campaign to help support students as they fill out the FAFSA online.

- Reserve a computer lab and call students down in groups by last name or by English class.
- Bring in volunteers to help support your students as they fill out the FAFSA.
  - Financial aid officers at local colleges
  - Parents/PTO members
- Have volunteers complete a quick tutorial so they are prepared to help
  - Nonprofit organizations
  - The Student Scholarships and Grants office
  - Teachers and other school staff
- Set at least one computer to the FAFSA FAQs page and make sure volunteers know this is available:  
<https://studentaid.gov/help-center/answers/landing>
- Advertise these events in your announcements, by making posters, posting on social media, and sending letters home to parents.

## TREATS AND GIVEAWAYS

**One college adviser's strategy is, "If you complete you get a treat!"**

- Students who schedule an appointment to meet with her and work on the FAFSA or bring in their confirmation page from a successfully completed FAFSA get a candy bar, Skittles, etc.
- Three seniors' names will also be drawn from a raffle for a gift card.
- To help students prepare, she went into each senior English class to present the campaign idea and hand out FAFSA packets and worksheets outlining all the information students would need in order to complete their FAFSA.

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## Another counselor's theme is, "FAFSA is sweet!"

- FAFSA season coincides with Halloween so use this theme when promoting your events.
- She uses incentives such as fast food gift cards, gas cards, college apparel, and huge candy bouquets – hence the sweet!
- A local credit union sponsors the events and purchases items.

## FREE GIVEAWAYS

- Many of these giveaways depend on a budget or donations but you can also give away prizes that do not cost you a penny. Here are some examples:
  - Get out of detention free card
  - Get out of one homework assignment (this might take some coordination with teachers)
  - Front of the lunch line pass
  - Tickets into a sporting event or dance

## RAFFLES

- Offer a raffle for prizes for students who complete the FAFSA by a certain date.
- Prizes can include college t-shirts, gift certificates, college supplies and technology like an e-reader or iPad. One or two large prizes can be very helpful.
- Advertising the raffle is essential. Make sure students know of resources to complete the FAFSA in time and make sure they are excited about the raffle.

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## STEPS TO START A RAFFLE:

1. Start to secure prizes. You should start this as early as possible so you can have a confirmed list of prizes before you start the campaign.
  - Contact college admissions staff, explain the event, and ask if they would be willing to send college gear.
  - Contact local businesses to explain your idea and the importance of the FAFSA to your students. Ask that they donate gift certificates or other prizes to the cause.
  - Work with your high school to see if there is funding or donors you could contact about securing a larger prize.
2. Determine an end date for the raffle.
3. Determine how students will notify you of completing the FAFSA.
  - They can turn in the confirmation page or you can use the name by name look up, or both.
4. Advertise the raffle.
  - Make sure students know the types of prizes they could possibly win.
  - Going to classrooms to talk about the raffle, class announcements, flyers or letters sent home are options for advertising.
5. Keep track of who has completed the FAFSA by the deadline.
6. If possible, do the drawing in public or announce the winners publicly after the end of the campaign.



## SECTION 3: DECISION DAY

### WHAT IS DECISION DAY?

The goal of College Decision Day is to recognize high school seniors for their postsecondary educational plans and encourage younger students and families to prepare early for postsecondary education. College Decision Day is held annually on or around May 1 and is designed to coincide with the date that most seniors must inform a college of their plans to enroll.

College Decision Day is inspired by the NCAA’s National Signing Day to reinforce that excellence in the classroom should be given as much pomp and circumstance as athletic excellence. NCAA’s National Signing Day is when high school seniors sign a letter of intent to play sports at a specific college. Our goal is to mimic this excitement for ALL students going to college. College Decision Day is Michigan’s adaptation of National College Signing Day, a program of former First Lady Michelle Obama’s, Reach Higher initiative. Please plug into this initiative by using the #ReachHigher hashtag in your social media Decision Day posts! The goals of National College Signing Day are:

- To encourage community leaders, schools, celebrities, and nonprofit and advocacy groups to host a “Reach Higher College Signing Day” to support students planning to attend and graduate from college; and
- To celebrate ALL students and their commitment to complete their education beyond high school.

Michigan’s College Decision Day was launched in 2014. Previously, high schools were hosting College Decision Day activities in isolation. MCAN launched an official statewide campaign and provided training and technical assistance as well as the resources needed to help other schools quickly and easily host Decision Day. College Decision Day addresses the gap between college application rates and enrollment rates among our students, and the complicated process for officially enrolling in college.

# COLLEGE BOUND MI IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

## DECISION DAY EXPECTATIONS:

While each school must decide for itself the benefit of hosting Decision Day and organize an event that meets the needs of the school, it is our goal to see host sites create an event that fulfills the following:

- Recognizes all students for their postsecondary plans (two-year, four-year, military, postsecondary certificate);
- Recognition takes place in front of the entire student body;
- Effort to contact local media – to encourage publicity beyond the high school building;
- Register their event with MCAN and with Reach Higher; and
- Have fun!

## EXAMPLES OF DECISION DAY CELEBRATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

College Decision Day will look different at each high school. Plan an event that fits the needs of your students and community. During the planning and implementation stages of your College Decision Day event, it is very important to keep your school staff apprised of the event schedule. Work with members of your staff to identify the most effective schedule possible for your specific high school.

### CELEBRATE YOUR SENIORS AND THEIR FAMILIES & ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR DECISION TO ENROLL IN COLLEGE.

#### ■ Create a “College Wall”

Seniors write the names of the college where they plan to attend on banners or strips of construction paper to hang in a main hallway. Utilize art teachers (if available) for additional promotional materials to create a “college-going culture” on the walls of your school.

#### ■ Announcements

Make announcements over the school audio/video system to acknowledge students who decided to enroll and share where they will be going to college.

#### ■ Assembly

Host an all-school assembly to celebrate the postsecondary accomplishments of each of your seniors and their families. This could be an add-on to an already established school event or a stand-alone assembly. Make sure to invite all grade-levels to participate.

- Suggested prizes: Microwave, mini-fridge, tablets, computer, college survival kit, pencils, flags, t-shirts.

# COLLEGE BOUND MI IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

- **Community picnic or fair**

Host an afterschool community-wide picnic or celebration. This may require a larger budget, but will engage more community members and students of all ages.

- **Guest speakers**

Whether you host a school assembly or a community event, invite high school alumni, elected officials, college admissions and financial aid representatives, local business leaders and parents to elaborate from personal experience on the importance of college.

- **Interviews**

Interview seniors about their college plans and send the articles to local newspapers, as public service announcements on local radio, as intercom/homeroom announcements, as ads in the school newspaper; or create a special section in the school newspaper that gives the names of seniors and their selected college.

- **College gear**

Encourage students and school staff to wear college t-shirts on a particular day of the week.

- **Social media**

As students bring in evidence of their postsecondary plans in the form of a college acceptance letter, military orders, or a similar offer letter, take pictures of the students with those letters/forms and post it to the school's social media channels using the hashtags #MIDecisionDay and #IDecided.

- **Involve teachers and staff**

During College Decision Day, ask teachers to share their college experience, wear their alma mater gear and post signs on classroom doors advertising where they went to school. Promote the idea of college, not a specific school.

# COLLEGE BOUND MI IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

## PROVIDE EARLY AWARENESS OF THE STEPS NEEDED TO ENROLL IN COLLEGE FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS & FAMILIES.

### ■ Workshops

Provide workshops to younger students and their families.

- Possible topics: decision making, learning styles, study habits, the importance of GPA and high school course selection, college test prep, how to get help with grades and test prep, essay writing, applying to college, college admission criteria, paying for college, “I’m admitted – now what?”, etc.

### ■ College spotlight

In the weeks leading up to Decision Day, choose a different college or university to feature in each morning’s announcements. Play the school’s fight song. Ask trivia questions and award prizes for correct answers.

### ■ Adopt-a-College

Each classroom can “adopt” a college to represent for the rest of year. This can be the teacher’s alma mater or the class may select a college/university. Students can decorate the classroom door with the college/university colors and logo.

### ■ Classroom visits

Conduct one-on-one or classroom visits with seniors and ask students if they have:

- Applied to college?
- Been admitted to college?
- Officially notified the college or university that they will enroll?
- Completed the FAFSA?

### ■ Organization

Gather students’ college choices in advance. Some schools require seniors to bring evidence of their postsecondary plans in the form of a college acceptance letter, military orders, or similar offer letter.

- Day of: The simplest and quickest way to ensure you have the college decision for each student is by handing the student a blank note card a few minutes before the event begins. Ask each student to write down their name and selected college. This method is sometimes used during graduation ceremonies.
- Week(s) prior: Survey the seniors or schedule one-on-one visits. Ask the seniors to provide basic information of where they plan to go to college, where they are in the enrollment process, questions they have, and how you can assist them.

# COLLEGE BOUND MI IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

## NEXT STEPS FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVEN'T OFFICIALLY ENROLLED IN COLLEGE

### SCENARIO 1

#### **Student has not yet applied to college or may have an incomplete application.**

- a. Meet with student to explore postsecondary options and financial aid information.
- b. Connect student with a community college application or a four year university that has a late application deadline.
- c. If application(s) are not complete, follow up with the official letter/email from the university to see what exactly is needed to complete the application. Reach out to the college directly to have a conversation.
- d. Invite admissions reps to your Decision Day event and provide time and space for students to do on-site admissions if they have not already enrolled into another college.

### SCENARIO 2

#### **Student applied to college, but has not yet been admitted.**

- a. Meet with student to explore other postsecondary options and financial aid information.
- b. Encourage student to follow up with college if they haven't already.
- c. Connect student with a community college.

### SCENARIO 3

#### **Student has been admitted to college, but has not yet decided or officially enrolled.**

- a. Encourage student to talk to trusted adults and share feelings, questions and concerns.
- b. Connect student with an admissions officer, financial aid representative, or other expert at the college.
- c. Research the college's steps to enroll and assist student in completing all that are required.
- d. Assist student in connecting with financial aid assistance (particularly for help paying enrollment fees and deposits).
- e. Help student complete a FAFSA and/or interpret any financial aid information that is received – ask the campus financial aid officer for help.