



Washington Completes FAFSA Campaign Advisory Board

June 2, 2026



Advisory Board Overview

- Convened by the Governor's Office, led by WSAC.
- Align and coordinate statewide FAFSA/WASFA completion efforts.
- Strengthen implementation by sharing data, tools, and practices.
- Identify barriers and recommend strategies to improve equitable access to financial aid.



Governors Executive Order 2025
<https://dub.link/EO2025>



Objectives + June Focus

Objectives

- Share progress since last meeting
- Review Advisory Board themes and recommendations
- Recognize Advisory Board members

June Agenda

- Financial Aid Data
- Advisory Board Themes and Recommendations
- Board Discussion
- Public Comment
- Next Steps
- Governor's Office Remarks
- Advisory Board Member Recognition
- Lunch



Advisory Board Members

Collin Bannister

- WSU - Pullman
- WA Student Assoc. President

**Geraldine
Donovan**

- Seattle Preparatory School
- Sophomore

Sienna Jarrard

- UW-Bothell
- WA Student Assoc. Member

Railey Lamb

- Kennewick High School
- Junior

Nashua Johnley

- Toppenish High School
- Senior

Sarah Everitt

- Gonzaga University
- Dean of Student Financial Services

Carol Garza

- College Success Foundation
- Executive Director- Yakima

Lilia Hueso

- Moses Lake High School
- School Counselor

**Damien
Pattenaude**

- Renton School District
- Superintendent

Bish Paul

- Gates Foundation
- Senior Program Officer

Susan Rose

- Quincy High School
- Assistant Principal

Alyson Rotter

- Olympic College
- Associate Dean-K-12 Partnerships

**Domonic
Vanthom**

- WSU-Vancouver
- Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

Becky Wallace

- OSPI
- Assistant Superintendent, Secondary Education and Pathway Preparation



Goals: 2025–26 Academic Year Campaign

Our Goal: Increase financial aid completion across WA high school seniors

I	Ensure 46,000 seniors complete the FAFSA or WASFA.
II	Raise FRPL-eligible student completion by at 6% or more in at least 150 high schools.
III	Close the gap in FAFSA completions between FRPL and non-FRPL students.
IV	Reduce disparities in FAFSA completion rates, especially among those from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups.

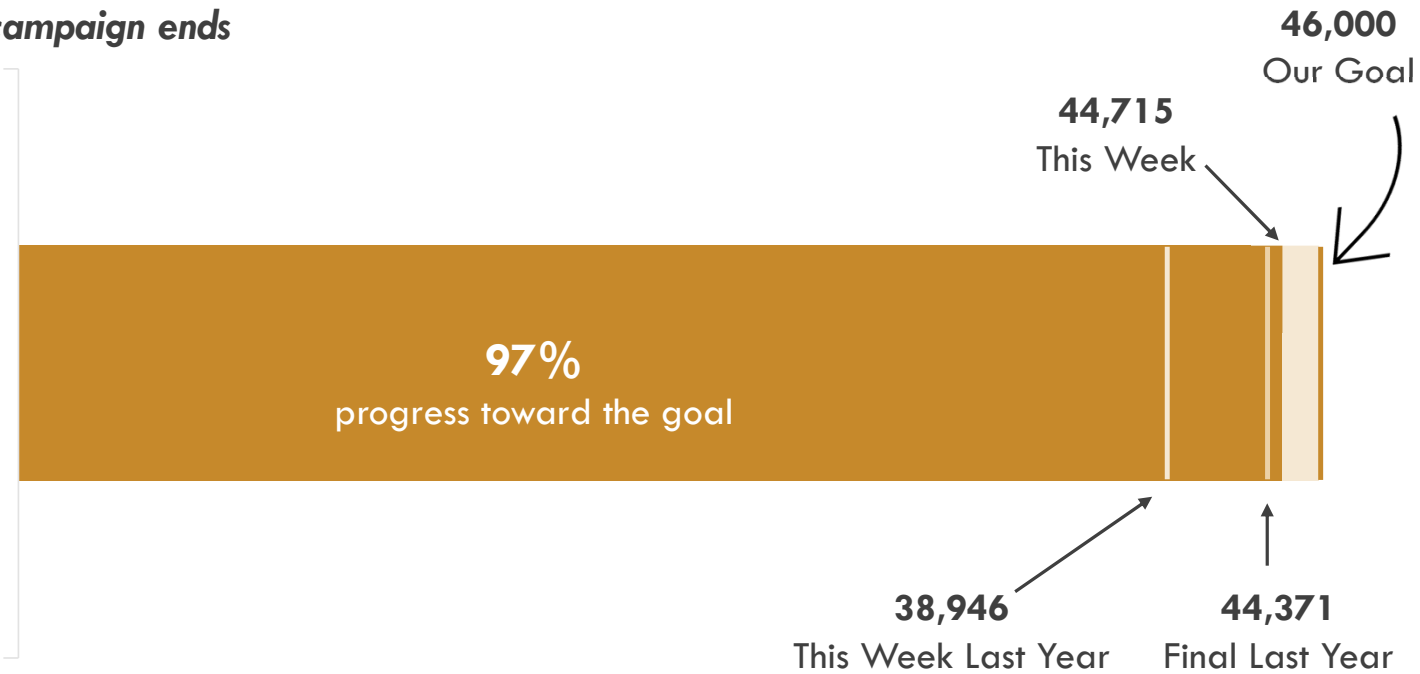


Progress Toward Goal #1 (Overall Goal)

As of June 02: Class of 2026 FAFSA & WASFA completion rate is 52%

18 out of 53 weeks to go until the campaign ends

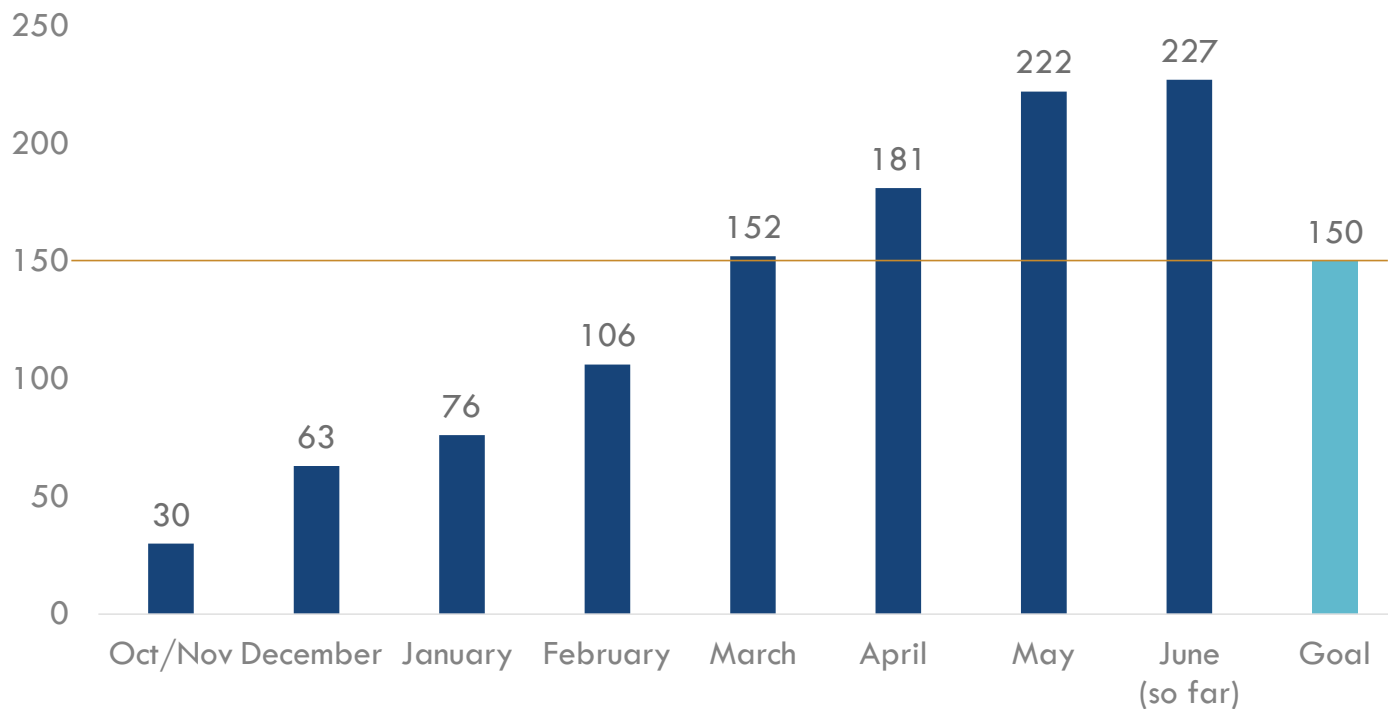
Progress Toward Goal #1





Progress Toward Goal #2

Cumulative Count of Schools Meeting 6% Increase in FRPL FAFSA Completion Goal

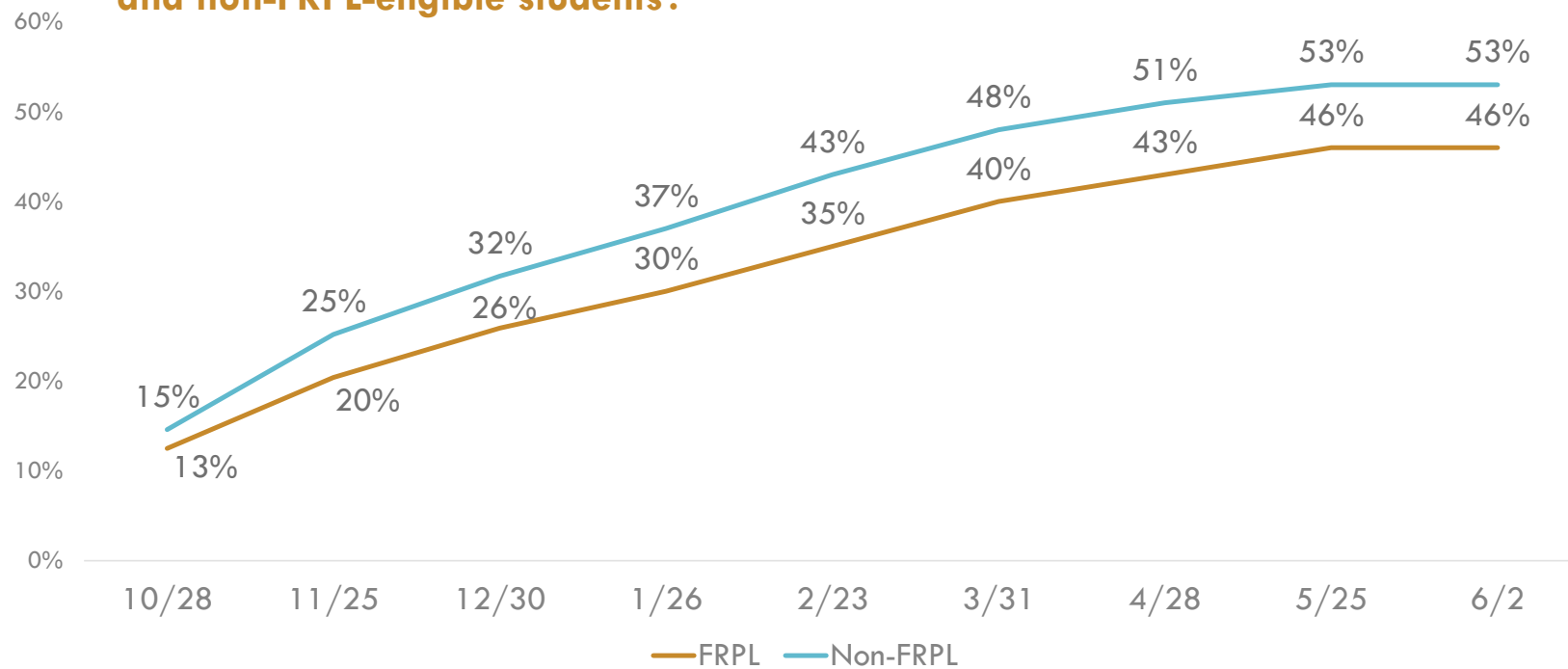


We have met this goal!



Progress Toward Goal #3

Going Forward: How can we close the completion gap between FRPL-eligible students and non-FRPL-eligible students?

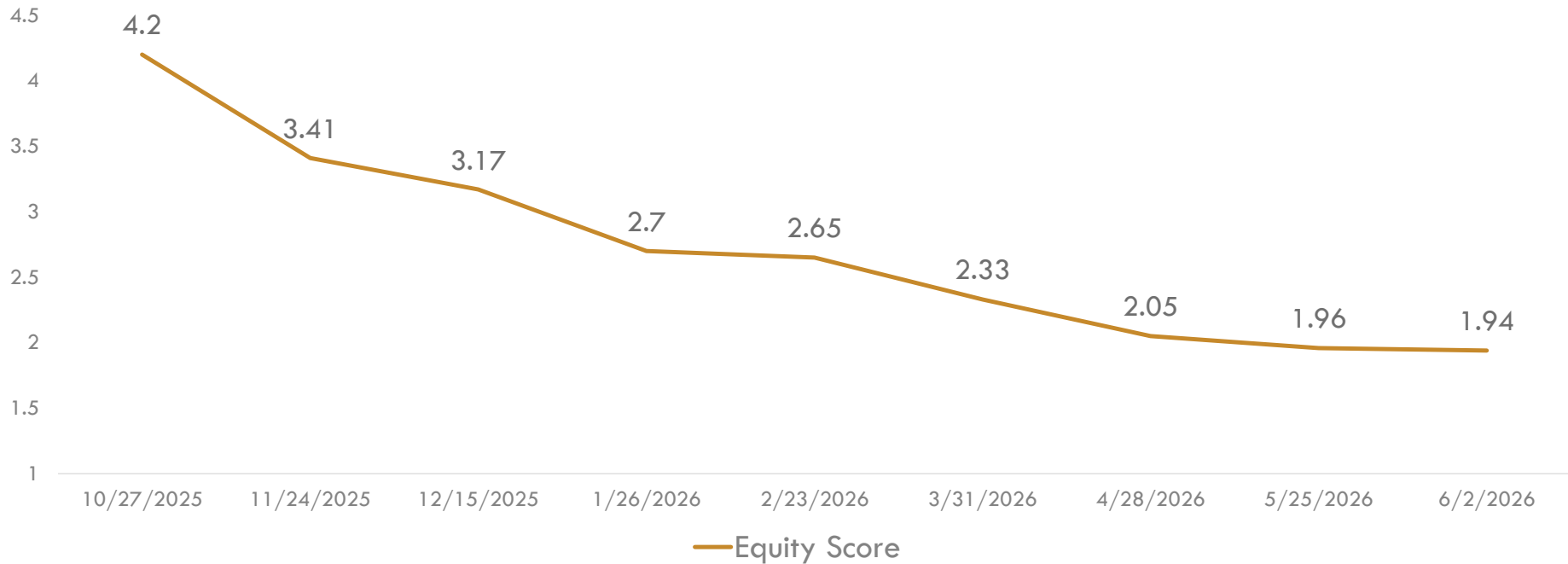


Gap still above January but improved from 9pp peak to 7pp



Progress Toward Goal #4

By race/ethnicity, the Equity Gap Score is **1.94** – the group with the highest FAFSA completion has a rate that is just over two times the group with the lowest completion rate (**Asian 64%** vs. **NHPI 33%**).





Advisory Board Takeaways & Recommendations: Context Setting

- The Advisory Board focused on various topics throughout the year at its meetings.
 - Takeaways and recommendations came from roundtable and topical discussions at each meeting.
- Survey.
 - Advisory Board members completed a survey in May that helped prioritize and distill these takeaways and recommendations.
- Three key takeaways with recommendations that are relevant across multiple areas.



Key Takeaways

1. Students are more likely to complete the FAFSA or WASFA when they understand why it matters.
2. Students are more likely to complete the FAFSA or WASFA when support is trusted, easily accessible, and normalized.
3. Students and families are more likely to complete the FAFSA or WASFA when help is timely and personalized.

What's Working – Challenges – Recommendations



1. Students are more likely to complete the FAFSA or WASFA when they understand why it matters.

What's Working

- Clear, visible, consistent messaging is helping to raise awareness.
- Myth-busting helps students and families understand that financial aid is relevant for them and can support many pathways.
- Consistent College and Career advising and High School and Beyond Plan usage are critical.

Challenges

- Connecting to “the why” of postsecondary pathways.
- Many students and families don't believe they will qualify for aid, and the process can still be confusing.
- Current supports and structures may not help all students apply for aid, including later in the academic year.



2. Students are more likely to complete the FAFSA or WASFA when support is trusted, easily accessible, and normalized.

What's Working

- School-based supports:
 - Advisory periods, classroom visits, college and career centers, FAFSA/WASFA labs, training, school day events, and direct reminders from school staff.
- Visibility:
 - Posters, school announcements, social media, challenge weeks, school rankings, incentives, celebration events, and campaign initiatives such as *Your Future, Funded* to normalize financial aid application completion.

Challenges

- Schools are trying to support financial aid application completion in a crowded senior year.
- Counselors and other staff are balancing competing priorities, and high counselor-to-student ratios make it difficult to provide students with consistent, hands-on support.
- Partnering with community organizations in a way that is helpful and most supportive.
- Not every school or student has access to community partner supports.



3. Students and families are more likely to complete the FAFSA or WASFA when help is timely and personalized.

What's Working

- 1:1 conversations with multiple follow-ups.
- Outreach tailored to student and family situations: calls to families in their home language, after-hours support, family-centered events during and outside of school.
- Data to help schools identify which students still need support.
 - Tools like the WSAC FAFSA Completion Dashboard for HS Seniors, WSAC portal, High School and Beyond Platform.

Challenges

- While in-school support works for many, there are greater barriers and needs for families who are first-generation, whose home language is not English, are mixed-status, have privacy concerns, or don't trust the system.
- Family engagement barriers can become more prominent later in the FAFSA cycle.
 - Students may (or may not) start the application, but get stuck because they need parent information, such as financial data.
- School staff and community partners have limited time and access to provide 1:1 support.
- Data is useful only when schools and partners have a workflow and staff capacity to use it.



Recommendations

- Start earlier and connect financial aid to students' future goals.
- Expand 1:1 and hands-on support for students and families during school hours as well as after.
- Add more personalized and intensive support for those students and families who need it most.
- Expand and coordinate trusted messenger and community-based networks.
- Strengthen local capacity by building on existing tools, supports, and partnerships.
- Explore policy and system approaches that help normalize and reinforce completion.



Strategic Questions for Future Work

- How can FAFSA/WASFA completion efforts help the state reach its enrollment and attainment goals?
- What strategies are most effective for students and families facing the greatest barriers to financial aid application completion?
- How can we sustain and scale postsecondary pathway planning and financial aid application completion given capacity and budget realities?



Discussion With Advisory Board: Takeaways and Recommendations

- Do these takeaways and recommendations reflect the most important lessons and insights surfaced this year?
- Are there important nuances, tensions, or strategic questions that should be more clearly reflected in the final report?



Community Voices

- Open floor for guests and partners to share.



Next Steps

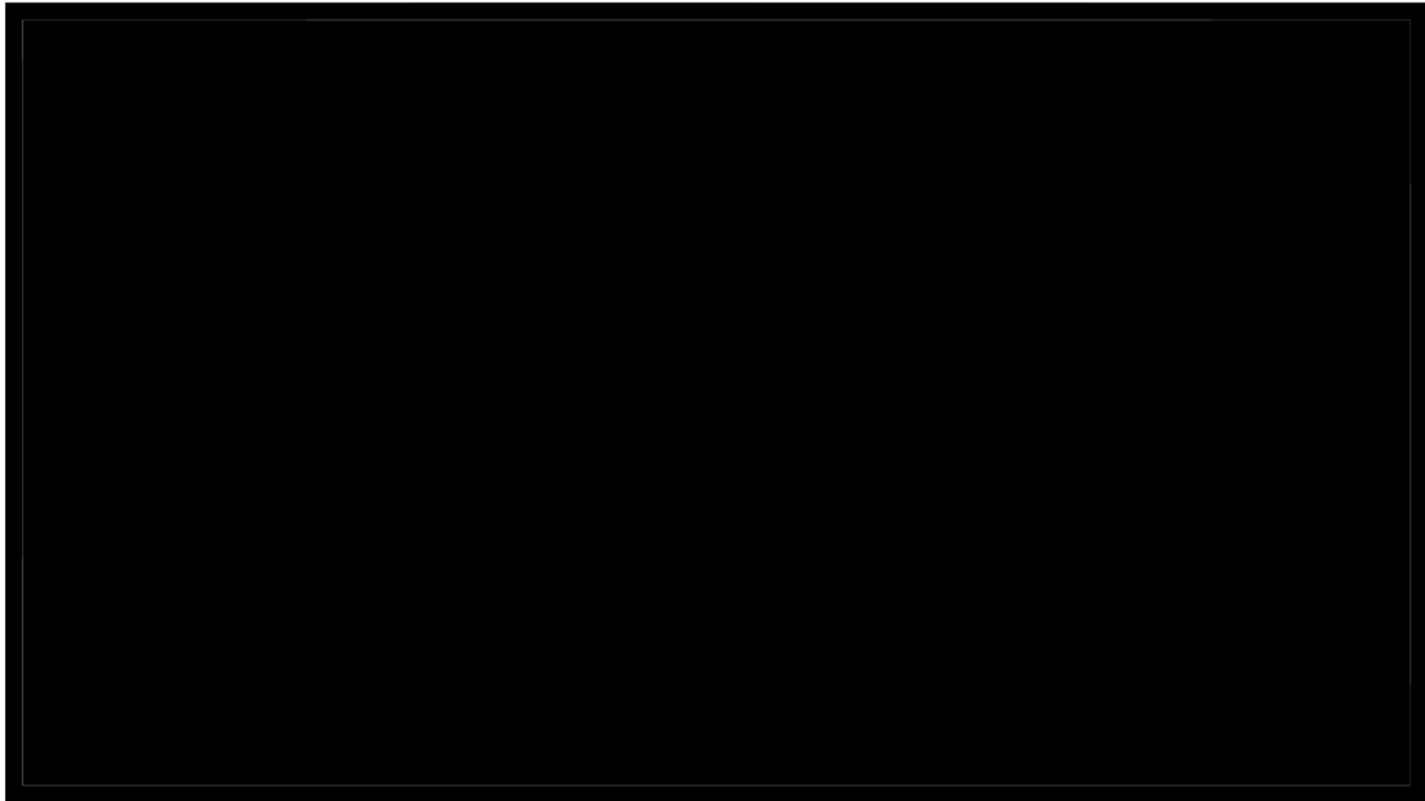
- WSAC will finalize recommendations after the June 2 Advisory Board meeting.
- Campaign activity and data analysis are happening this summer to inform next year's campaign goals and strategies.
- Final campaign report is due October 31.
 - Draft will be shared with Advisory Board members in early October for the opportunity to provide feedback before it goes to the Governor's Office.
- Join the Fall Virtual Financial Aid Summit: September 24: bit.ly/Fall26Summit



Quick Break



Remarks from Governor Bob Ferguson





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- Please join us!



THANK YOU!

