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## **NC Private Colleges and NCDPI work to get HS Grads into College this Fall**

**RALEIGH, NC** - The NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU) have been working hard to overcome barriers created by the COVID-19 pandemic and potential effects on high school seniors' plans to attend college in the fall. High school seniors have been faced with missing major high school activities, moving to remote learning and not having a traditional graduation ceremony. NCICU and NCDPI are partnering to help students start the next phase of their education. With a *myFutureNC* goal of two million North Carolinians with a post-secondary degree or high-quality credential by the year 2030, the state is invested in making sure the transition to college is not only possible during this time of upheaval, but is as seamless as possible.

"We are working with the NCICUs to support the transition of our students to post-secondary opportunities," said State Superintendent Mark Johnson. "We are grateful for NCICU as they intentionally work to support students into their college experiences."

To connect recent high school graduates and colleges, NCICU and NCDPI have worked together to provide contact information (with parental approval) of students who are graduating this year so they can learn about college opportunities and scholarships. Most of NCICU's 36 colleges and universities report that if students act quickly, there is still time to be admitted for the fall semester.

"We deeply appreciate this latest collaboration with DPI to share information with recent high school graduates and help them understand that college is still possible for the fall despite the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic," said NCICU president, Hope Williams. "We worked closely with the Department on the application process for seniors, ensuring that students were not harmed by the cancellation of tests normally required for admission or the modifications in grading systems for the spring semester."

The first step would be to complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Completing the FAFSA is a prerequisite to receiving not only Federal aid, such as PELL grants, but also state and institutional aid. More than 50% of North Carolina students who attend our state's private colleges and universities are PELL eligible. NC students who attend a private college or university in North Carolina may be eligible to receive the North Carolina Need-Based Scholarship, and institutional aid is also often determined based in part on the student's FAFSA.

The FAFSA can be filled out here: <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>, and high school counselors and college financial aid staff can assist in the process. In addition, *myFutureNC* is creating a FAFSA campaign this month, called "FAFSA Frenzy," to encourage recent graduates to complete the FAFSA and to realize college is still possible this fall.

NCICU campuses are working directly with students who may have been affected by COVID-19 to be sure they do not get behind in their pursuit of a college degree. There are a number of options for support of these students, and applicants should contact admissions and financial aid offices to learn what those options are.

The college experience may look a bit different in the fall, but the collegial atmosphere, social interaction and learning opportunities of campus life cannot be overstated. For those who have been waiting for this life affirming experience, it is important to know that college is still possible!

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