

Commissioner's Spotlight

February 10, 2026

Key Deliverables for 2026 (working list)

Financial Aid and Student Success

- Pre-Collegiate Marketing and Recruitment
- Expand GEAR UP Collaboration
- Early College
- HS Graduation Requirements
- SU SUCCESS 2.0

Economic Mobility

- Earnings Metrics and Reporting
- Work-Based Learning

Innovation

- Innovation and Regulation
- ReUp Education
- Financial Aid Pilot

Public Good

- Environmental Scan and Literature Review
- Goal Setting (5 and 18-month)

Financial Aid and Student Success

- **Pre-Collegiate Marketing and Recruitment:** Renew and deepen the partnership with DESE to expand proactive outreach and marketing of state financial aid programs to secondary students
- **Expand GEAR UP Collaborations:** Increase financial aid advising and postsecondary guidance by extending GEAR UP partnerships to additional high schools
- **Early College:** Expand student participation while strengthening the foundation, structure, and implementation of Early College programs.
- **High School Graduation Requirements:** Align FAFSA completion, Early College, and dual enrollment programs with new high school graduation requirements.
- **SU SUCCESS 2.0:** Implementation of hybrid Georgia State - CUNY ASAP model making use of predictive analytics and pro-active, case management intervention strategies.

Pre-Collegiate Marketing and Recruitment: Renew and deepen the partnership with DESE to expand **proactive outreach and marketing** of state financial aid programs to secondary students

DHE & DESE Team Members Presenting Today



Nicole Giambusso
Director of Strategic Communications,
DHE



Nyal Fuentes
College and Career Readiness Coordinator, DESE

Go Higher Brand and Ad Campaign



**GO
HIGHER**

Making Higher Education Possible

Launch, Scope, and Target Audiences

- Launched *Go Higher* as a single, statewide umbrella brand to clarify and promote Massachusetts financial aid programs
- Reinforced that higher education is accessible and affordable for students of all ages
- Billboards, bus panels, signage, and digital ads appeared in English and Spanish

Sample Ads

The collage consists of nine sample ads arranged in a 3x3 grid. Each ad features the 'GO HIGHER' logo and the website 'Mass.gov/GoHigher'. The ads are divided into two main language groups: English (top and right columns) and Spanish (bottom and left columns). The English ads promote college affordability and financial aid expansion. The Spanish ads also promote college affordability and use the slogan 'En Massachusetts, la universidad ahora está al alcance de más personas' (In Massachusetts, college is now within reach of more people).

Top Row (English):

- Left:** **En Massachusetts, la universidad ahora está al alcance de más personas**
- Middle:** **Massachusetts is making college more affordable**
- Right:** **Massachusetts is making college more affordable**

Bottom Row (Spanish):

- Left:** **En Massachusetts, la universidad ahora está al alcance de más personas**
- Middle:** **Massachusetts is making college more affordable**
- Right:** **Massachusetts is making college more affordable**

Right Column (English):

- Top:** **Massachusetts is making college more affordable**
- Middle:** **Massachusetts is making college more affordable**
- Bottom:** **Massachusetts is making college more affordable**

Left Column (Spanish):

- Top:** **En Massachusetts, la universidad ahora está al alcance de más personas**
- Middle:** **Massachusetts is making college more affordable**
- Bottom:** **En Massachusetts, la universidad ahora está al alcance de más personas**

Sample Out of Home Ads and Search



A photograph of a smartphone screen displaying a search result. The search query is 'GO HIGHER'. The result is a link to 'www.mass.gov' with the text 'Go Higher Financial Aid | Get Help Paying for School | Explore MA College Aid'. Below the link, it says 'Ad' and 'www.mass.gov'. The description of the ad is 'Learn more about free and affordable college opportunities available to MA students. Find the financial support you need to pay for college with Go Higher.' At the bottom of the search result, there are links for 'Free College Options', 'See All Topics', and 'Certificate P...'. The phone has a white case.

Out of Home – Map

“Out of Home” includes billboards, bus panels, and signage. This map does not include statewide digital reach.



Mall Standees: Hyannis

PVTA Bus Panels: Springfield

Print Billboards: Great Barrington, Lanesborough, North Adams, Pittsfield

Digital Billboards: Allston, Attleboro Falls, Boston, Canton, Chicopee, East Weymouth, Everett, Fall River, Lowell, Marshfield, Methuen, New Bedford, Norton, Peabody, Rehoboth, Springfield, Tyngsboro, West Bridgewater, Worcester

MBTA Subway Posters: General Market

MBTA Liveboards: Downtown Crossing, Government Center, North Station, Park Street, Ruggles, South Station

Scale and Reach

- Campaign ran **Sept 22–Nov 26, 2025**, statewide, in **English and Spanish**
- **54M+ total impressions in ~2 months**
- **229,000+ visits** to the Go Higher landing page (mass.gov/GoHigher)
- Targeted high school students and adult learners, with emphasis on where FAFSA completion rates are low, particularly in gateway and rural communities
- Ads performed above industry benchmarks

Key Takeaway: The campaign successfully introduced a new brand, reached residents at scale, and drove meaningful engagement with financial aid information

Next Steps: Spring 2026 while students continue completing the FAFSA

Advisory Council for the Advancement of Representation in Education (ACARE)

The Go Higher Campaign and Data Dashboard Align with ACARE Report.

ACARE Report Commitments: Proactive and Ongoing Communication and Engagement

ACARE Report Recommendations:

- Increase Exposure and Access to Higher Education for K-12 Students
- Re-Engage Adult Learners and Encourage Participation in Higher Education

Data Dashboard

Massachusetts Public High School FAFSA Completion

FAFSA Dashboard Information and Benefits

- Near real-time updates on FAFSA completion rates by public school, district, and student group
- Works with the Joint FAFSA resolution of BHE and BESE to set completion goals, enhance tracking, leverage existing partnerships and heighten Interagency collaboration
- Year-to-date comparison
- Highlights “high flyers” and “big movers”

[Link to FAFSA Completion Dashboard](#)

FAFSA Dashboard Information and Benefits, continued

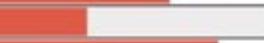
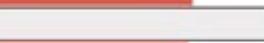
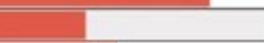
- DESE matches FAFSA completion records with Student Information Management System (SIMS) data.
 - DHE/OSFA tracks MA FAFSA completion data and provides weekly files to DESE
 - FAFSA completion data is shared with MA school districts
 - Students' individual information remains private.
- Rates on the dashboard may be slightly lower than actual numbers.
- Expands data access and transparency to advance shared efforts.
 - School districts had existing access to this data through a secure portal.

Dashboard View

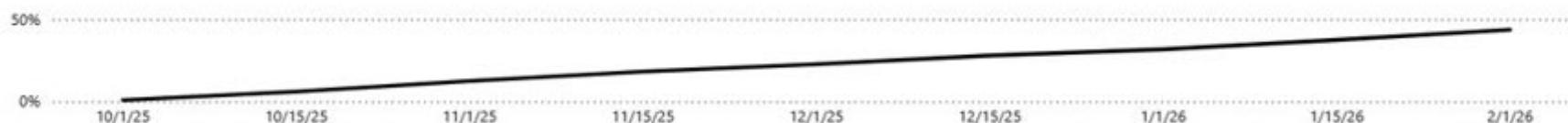


43.8% of Massachusetts 12th graders completed FAFSA (as of Feb 01, 2026)

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	#Grade 12 Students	Submitted FAFSAs	Submission Rate	Completed FAFSAs	Completion Rate	%StateCompleteChart
All Students	70,385	31,816	45.2%	30,825	43.8%	
Low Income	26,174	7,935	30.3%	7,591	29.0%	
Non-Low Income	44,211	23,881	54.0%	23,234	52.6%	
Students with Disabilities	11,082	2,527	22.8%	2,439	22.0%	
Students without Disabilities	59,303	29,289	49.4%	28,386	47.9%	
English Learners	6,188	571	9.2%	513	8.3%	
Non-English Learners	64,197	31,245	48.7%	30,312	47.2%	
Male	35,662	13,597	38.1%	13,168	36.9%	
Female	34,429	18,131	52.7%	17,572	51.0%	
Nonbinary	294	88	29.9%	85	28.9%	
American Indian or Alaska Native	160	55	34.4%	55	34.4%	
Asian	5,467	3,549	64.9%	3,429	62.7%	
Black or African American	7,544	2,957	39.2%	2,804	37.2%	

Massachusetts FAFSA Completion Rate Year-To-Date: All Students



Suppressed data is excluded from this table. Only districts with more than 6 students in the student group selected are shown.
Click on student group in table above to change the student group in Year-to-Date Chart. Click again to deselect.

MA FAFSA Completion Status as of Feb. 1

- 43.8% of MA public school 12th graders have completed the FAFSA, including
- 5th in the nation according to National College Attainment Network (NCAN)

	# Grade 12 Students	Completion Rate
All Students	70,385	43.8%
Low Income	26,174	29.0%
Non-Low Income	44,211	52.6%
Students with Disabilities	11,082	22.0%
Students without Disabilities	59,303	47.9%
English Learners	6,188	8.3%
Non-English Learners	64,197	47.2%
Male	35,662	36.9%
Female	34,429	51.0%
Nonbinary	294	28.9%

	# Grade 12 Students	Completion Rate
American Indian or Alaska Native	160	34.4%
Asian	5,467	62.7%
Black or African American	7,544	37.2%
Hispanic or Latino	17,378	26.5%
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	2,721	45.5%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	66	36.4%
White	37,049	50.4%

District Overview



25.8% of Chicopee
12th graders completed FAFSA (as of Feb 01, 2026)

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Chicopee

School

All Schools

District/School Overview All Student

	#Grade 12 Students	Submitted FAFSAs	Submission Rate	Completed FAFSAs	Completion Rate
Chicopee	539	142	26.3%	139	25.8%
Chicopee Academy	14	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Chicopee Comprehensive High School	296	92	31.1%	90	30.4%
Chicopee High	229	50	21.8%	49	21.4%

Student Group Overview

	#Grade 12 Students	Submitted FAFSAs	Submission Rate	Completed FAFSAs	Completion Rate
All Students	539	142	26.3%	139	25.8%
Low Income	314	66	21.0%	66	21.0%
Non-Low Income	225	76	33.8%	73	32.4%
Students with Disabilities	70	6	8.6%	6	8.6%
Students without Disabilities	469	136	29.0%	133	28.4%
English Learners	31	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Non-English Learners	508	142	28.0%	139	27.4%
Male	289	62	21.5%	60	20.8%
Female	249	79	31.7%	78	31.3%
Nonbinary	1	--	--	--	--
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	--	--	--	--
Asian	7	4	57.1%	4	57.1%
Black or African American	26	7	26.9%	7	26.9%

Suppressed data is excluded from this table. Only districts with more than 6 students in the student group selected are shown.

High Flyers



High Flyer

Districts with highest FAFSA completion rates

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Data as of

Latest Period

Student Group

Low Income

Suppressed data is excluded from this table. Only districts with more than 6 students in the student group selected are shown.

Data as of: Feb 1, 2026

District	#Grade 12 Students	Completed FAFSAs	Completion Rate
Sturgis Charter Public (District)	32	19	59.4%
Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter (District)	15	9	60.0%
Concord-Carlisle	23	14	60.9%
South Shore Charter Public (District)	23	14	60.9%
Dover-Sherborn	18	11	61.1%
Lexington	54	33	61.1%
Rockport	8	5	62.5%
Academy Of the Pacific Rim Charter Public (District)	22	14	63.6%
Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers: A Horace Mann Charter Public School (District)	64	41	64.1%
Lenox	14	9	64.3%
Groton-Dunstable	17	11	64.7%
Abby Kelley Foster Charter Public (District)	32	21	65.6%
Boston Preparatory Charter Public (District)	42	28	66.7%
Brooke Charter School (District)	58	39	67.2%
Mendon-Upton	13	9	69.2%
Norwell	13	9	69.2%
Manchester Essex Regional	10	7	70.0%
Roxbury Preparatory Charter (District)	61	43	70.5%
Match Charter Public School (District)	31	22	71.0%

Big Movers



Big Movers

Districts with largest percentage point increases in FAFSA completions

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From

Two Weeks Prior

To

Latest Period

Student Group

All Students

Suppressed data is excluded from this table. Only districts with more than 6 students in the student group selected are shown.

From: Jan 15, 2026**To: Feb 1, 2026**

District	#Grade 12 Students	Completions Rate (From Date)	Completions Rate (To Date)	New FAFSAs Completed	% Pt Increase
Mystic Valley Regional Charter (District)	91	62.6%	82.4%	18	19.8%
Baystate Academy Charter Public School (District)	31	22.6%	41.9%	6	19.4%
Hadley	34	44.1%	61.8%	6	17.6%
Roxbury Preparatory Charter (District)	91	52.7%	70.3%	16	17.6%
Avon	49	28.6%	44.9%	8	16.3%
Ma Academy for Math and Science	49	55.1%	71.4%	8	16.3%
Codman Academy Charter Public (District)	31	35.5%	51.6%	5	16.1%
Brooke Charter School (District)	114	57.0%	72.8%	18	15.8%
Academy Of the Pacific Rim Charter Public (District)	52	53.8%	69.2%	8	15.4%
Abby Kelley Foster Charter Public (District)	80	55.0%	70.0%	12	15.0%
Hull	55	41.8%	56.4%	8	14.5%
Lenox	59	59.3%	72.9%	8	13.6%
Boston Preparatory Charter Public (District)	75	58.7%	72.0%	10	13.3%
Neighborhood House Charter (District)	47	42.6%	55.3%	6	12.8%
Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public (District)	63	46.0%	58.7%	8	12.7%
Harvard	82	51.2%	63.4%	10	12.2%
Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter (District)	124	61.3%	73.4%	15	12.1%

What's Next

What's Next

- DHE and DESE ongoing collaboration
- Continued publicity of Go Higher programs and Mass.Gov/FinancialAid
- GEAR UP
- Innovation
- Statewide Graduation Council Recommendations