

# TRANSITION POINTS

The Education Strategy Group Newsletter

## NEW RESOURCE: Fast Track FAFSA Completion Strategies in Action

Even before the education landscape was upended by the COVID-19 pandemic, we knew that increasing completion rates of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a critical component of increasing successful postsecondary attainment. Students who complete the FAFSA are more likely to enroll in higher education, persist in their college coursework, and obtain a degree. Today, as families and higher education institutions face deep financial hardship, completing the FAFSA is more important than ever; yet across the country, 55,000 fewer students - 2.8 percent - have completed the FAFSA compared to this time last year.



Earlier this year, ESG released [Fast Track FAFSA Completion](#), a report on the highest impact strategies for increasing FAFSA completion. Building on the lessons from this report, today we are releasing [a series of five case studies](#) that highlight the impressive efforts of local communities across the country to support students and families in completing the FAFSA. Though the research underlying these case studies was conducted before the outbreak of the pandemic, the strategies they highlight remain crucial areas of focus for communities working to increase their FAFSA completion rates and, ultimately, college enrollment and success. These include targeted efforts in the areas of:

- **CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION:** How can K-12 and higher education work together to improve FAFSA completion rates?
- **DATA:** How can data be leveraged into action?
- **EQUITY:** What are the most effective strategies to increase FAFSA completion among traditionally underserved populations?
- **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT:** How can parents and families be effectively engaged to bolster FAFSA completion?
- **PARTNERS:** What capacity and support can third-party organizations offer?

In addition, state agencies, school districts, postsecondary institutions, and community organizations have quickly pivoted over the past several weeks to providing FAFSA support virtually. We're highlighting these promising emerging strategies in a [NEW BLOG POST](#), also published today as part of our #AccelerateRecovery series.

## #AccelerateRecovery: An ESG Blog Series

The COVID-19 crisis and related recession threaten to be a generational setback for the educational equity gains we have made as a country since the 2008 recession. In the long run—without dramatic intervention—



millions of Americans are likely to face significant hurdles that limit economic mobility.

ESG has put together a [blog series](#) digging into key areas for leadership to prioritize in their efforts to accelerate recovery for our country and our most vulnerable

populations. Posts to date include:

**Accelerating Recovery**: In this introductory post, ESG President & CEO Matt Gandal outlines five areas where visionary leadership and continued investment will be critical to a successful and equitable recovery.

**Give Students a Virtual Hand in the College Transition**: ESG Senior Director Ryan Reyna highlights promising practices states and districts can use to ensure that the high school to college transition leak does not become a gushing stream as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

**Ensure All Pathways and Credentials Lead to Real Economic Opportunity**: In this challenging economic environment, neither families nor our economy can afford to have individuals pursue dead-end pathways that do not result in credentials with real value in the evolving job market. ESG Principal Kathleen Mathers describes strategies for leveraging real-time labor market information to improve student outcomes.

**Prepare Colleges to Serve Out-of-Work Adults**: As unemployed individuals begin returning to postsecondary education looking to upskill, ESG Director Brett Visger offers four priorities for effectively supporting these students toward successful postsecondary credential attainment for greater economic opportunity.

**Double Down on FAFSA Completion**: ESG Senior Associate Lauren Norton breaks down strategies that agencies, districts, institutions, and community organizations have developed to provide virtual support for FAFSA completion.

We plan to publish more strategies, ideas, and reflections as this series continues in the weeks to come.

## Making A Comeback: A Webinar Series with ACCT and SHEEO

ESG is joining our partners at The Association of Community College Trustees and The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association to present [a series of online forums](#), designed to help state and institutional leaders anticipate and respond to challenges facing higher education due to COVID-19 and the economic crisis the pandemic has caused.



These online events will offer insights and advice from leading experts on shifting labor markets, high school to college transitions, fall semester contingency planning, and more in the post-pandemic environment. The first event - [Planning for a Changing Labor Market](#) - will be held **tomorrow**, May 7, at 2:00 p.m. ET.

Future webinars include:

- [Bridging K-12 to College Transitions](#): Wednesday, May 20, 2:00 p.m. ET

- [Contingency Planning for the Fall](#): Wednesday, June 3, 2:00 p.m. ET

Learn more and sign up for each webinar [here](#).

## ESG HIGHLIGHTS: Meet Our New Team Member



### **Nicole Osborne, Associate**

Nicole joins ESG to help shape the growth of both internal and external data strategy and analytics. Prior to joining ESG, Nicole was a Data Analyst at Syracuse University's Division of Advancement and External Affairs. There, she supported prospect research, annual fund, and major gift fundraising teams to design systems and execute reporting for the University's \$1.5 billion campaign strategy.

Previously, she worked in customer success for Crescerance, a mobile app and website development company. There, she was responsible for managing community engagement products for independent, charter, and public school districts across the country. Nicole also worked at KIPP Metro Atlanta Schools where she conducted accountability reporting to the Georgia Department of Education and the KIPP Foundation and implemented online data and assessment products across the district. To learn more about [Nicole](#) and her work supporting ESG's [Career Readiness portfolio](#), visit our [website](#).



*Education Strategy Group is a mission-driven consulting firm that works with K-12, higher education, and workforce leaders to achieve greater impact. We work across sectors and across the aisle to move the needle on issues that are critical to improving student success.*

[Contact us](#) to learn more and work together