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CT's Colleges and Universities Teaming to Help Students Navigate FAFSA Process, Applications

#CTCollegeBound

HARTFORD: Connecticut's public and private colleges and universities are partnering to provide virtual information sessions and individual appointments to help guide students and their families through application and financial aid forms.

The University of Connecticut (UConn), Connecticut State Colleges & Universities (CSCU), the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), New Haven Promise, the Connecticut Association of Professional Financial Aid Administrators (CAPFAA), College Board and the Connecticut State Department of Education announced the initiative today, recognizing that current pandemic-related circumstances might make the process more complicated for families than in regular years.

Six general information sessions have been scheduled so far to take place on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from Jan. 26 to Feb. 7, and additional sessions might be added as needed. The sessions all will be held virtually, and students and their families will also be able to reserve one-on-one appointments with admissions and financial aid officers.

Interested students and families can register here: <http://bit.ly/ctcollegebound>

The **FAFSA**, or Free Application for Federal Student Aid, is used by colleges, universities and the federal government to help determine a student's qualifications for grants, loans, scholarships, work-study opportunities, institutionally funded aid programs and other assistance.

"FAFSA completion is a critical component of the college preparation process," CSCU Interim President Dr. Jane Gates said. "Whether a student is considering a community college, a state university, or a private institution, financial aid may be available. There is no reason to leave money on the table. I encourage all potential college students and their families to fill out a FAFSA as soon as possible."

Although the FAFSA is not mandatory, all higher education institutions strongly urge applicants to submit it so they receive the aid for which they are qualified and to provide them with an affordable education, up to and including a full ride depending on applicants' financial circumstances.

"Not only is the FAFSA necessary for eligibility for federal aid programs, but institutions, including UConn, utilize the results of the FAFSA as we determine eligibility for institutional and state aid offers," said Nathan Fuerst, Vice President of Enrollment Planning and Management at UConn. "FAFSA submission deadlines for many institutions are approaching soon, so we are hopeful this initiative will be successful in providing yet one more opportunity for students to complete the FAFSA on time."

Participants in the virtual events will receive information in advance on the kinds of paperwork and financial forms they will need to have on hand. During the workshop, they will be guided on completing the form, the kinds of aid that might be offered, and what to expect when considering those options. In most cases, students will actually be able to hit submit on the FAFSA at the close of the workshop.

“This year’s recent FAFSA and college application declines have galvanized our partners to support students above and beyond what they’ve already been doing,” said Chris Soto, Director of Innovation and Partnerships at CSDE. “This all-hands-on-deck approach is a strong signal to students and families that we are working together to ensure we increase college access for every senior looking to pursue a post-secondary opportunity.”

“Connecticut’s independent colleges and universities have a strong commitment to supporting access and opportunity for our state’s residents,” CCIC President Jennifer Widness said. “We are thrilled to be a part of this important initiative to make sure that despite the pandemic and the need to remain socially distant, Connecticut students and their families have the necessary support to navigate the college application and financial aid process.”

“We know that a student who completes the FAFSA is more likely to attend college immediately -- and personalized assistance significantly improves FAFSA completion rates,” said David Adams, Vice President of the College Board’s New England Regional Office. “We’re excited to partner with Connecticut to help more students access the financial aid that will help make their college dreams a reality.”

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***About UConn:** The University of Connecticut is a national leader among public research universities, with more than 32,000 students seeking answers to critical questions in classrooms, labs, and the community. A culture of innovation drives this pursuit of knowledge throughout the University’s network of campuses. Visit UConn at <https://uconn.edu>*

***About CSCU:** The Connecticut State Colleges & Universities (CSCU) provide affordable, innovative and rigorous programs for students to achieve their personal and career goals as well as contribute to the economic growth of Connecticut. Visit CSCU at <https://www.ct.edu/>*

***About CCIC:** Founded in 1932, the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC) is an association that represents 15 accredited nonprofit independent colleges and universities in Connecticut. CCIC provides public policy leadership and support of higher education, fosters cooperative efforts*

among colleges and universities and serves as a liaison between the state and the independent institutions. Visit CCIC at www.theccic.org

About the Connecticut State Department of Education: *The Connecticut State Department of Education is the administrative arm of the Connecticut State Board of Education. Through leadership, curriculum, research, planning, evaluation, assessment, data analyses and other assistance, the Department helps to ensure equal opportunity and excellence in education for all Connecticut students. The Department is responsible for distributing funds to all Connecticut public school districts. The Department also operates the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System. Visit the CSDE at <http://portal.ct.gov/sde>*
