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## For Immediate Release

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## Idaho College Enrollment Bump May Be Coming

By Debbie Critchfield, President, Idaho State Board of Education

A couple of key early indicators tracked by the Idaho State Board of Education suggest more Idaho high school seniors are planning to enroll in college or a career technical program in the fall.

- More than 9,300 Idaho high school seniors have completed their Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms to date - a two percentage point increase from this time last year.
- Nearly 11,000 seniors to date have used the State Board's Apply Idaho website to apply to college in Idaho – *an increase of over 2,800 students* compared to this time last year.

The bump in Idaho's FAFSA completions to date has moved our state up in national rankings. The National College Access Network last year ranked Idaho 44<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states in the percentage of high school seniors who had completed their FAFSA forms by the late June deadline. In 2019, as of the beginning of April, Idaho ranks 39<sup>th</sup>. If the increased rate of completion holds or even improves between now and the end of June, Idaho's ranking will move up at least five spots this year.

"I'm thrilled," Idaho State Board College and Career Advising Program Manager Byron Yankey said. "FAFSA completion is a predictor of student enrollment. It is a national marker. "When states see increased FAFSA's, college enrollment generally increases."

Yankey attributes the increase to Idaho’s push of strategic initiatives to improve its “go-on” rate – the percentage of high school graduates who enroll either in career technical programs or college. The go-on rate has stayed at about 48 percent for the last five years.

Beginning three years ago, in partnership with the Legislature and the Governor, the Board launched several initiatives to improve the go-on rate.

**Direct Admissions Program** – automatically admitting all Idaho high school graduates to at least six of our public institutions. Each fall, the Board sends out Direct Admissions letters to each of Idaho’s approximately 22,000 high school seniors.

**Apply Idaho website** – a single site where Idaho high school seniors can submit applications to one or more of Idaho’s institutions free of charge and complete their FAFSA forms. The entire application process takes about 10 minutes.

**FAFSA WEB** - an online portal enabling high school counselors to monitor their students’ progress throughout the process of applying for federal financial aid. Filling out a FAFSA form can be intimidating. “In the past, a counselor would see a student in the hallway and ask them if they had finished their FAFSA,” Yankey said. “The usual answer was “yes” but the counselor had no way of knowing for sure. FAFSA WEB helps counselors improve their effectiveness because they know how to help students and where to start the process.”

**College and Career Counseling funds** – help districts hire additional staff who focus on college and career exploration and provide resources to stage career fairs, parent nights and to provide campus visits. These efforts no longer are primarily confined to the last year of high school, but now begin in middle school and build each year a student is in high school. College and career counselors work with students and parents to provide information, answer questions, and provide encouragement to take the next step after graduation.

Board Member Dr. Linda Clark believes these efforts and initiatives are beginning to take hold “This is really encouraging for increasing enrollment in the fall,” she said. “We on the Board recognize the value of these tools. If they are indeed making a difference as it appears they are, we will see increased enrollment figures for Idaho residents, the people these initiatives are intended for.”

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