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Colorado colleges and universities see jump in applications following Colorado Free Application Day

Students submitted more than 22,000 applications during first-ever campaign

DENVER, Jan. 3, 2019—Colorado students submitted more than 22,000 college admissions applications during the first-ever Colorado Free Application Day on Oct. 30, 2018, when all public colleges and universities in the state and several private institutions waived application fees.

As students and families took advantage of the opportunity to apply for free, institutions received 22,294 admissions applications, an increase of more than 1,000 percent from total applications submitted on Oct. 30, 2017. Colorado State University (CSU) led with more than 5,550 applications, followed by CU Boulder (4,791) and the University of Northern Colorado (3,905). Statewide, application submissions were up 12 percent through Nov. 15 compared to the same timeframe last year.

Colorado Free Application Day capped off College Application Month, an annual statewide campaign coordinated by the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) that encourages students to submit at least one postsecondary application and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Despite being one of the most educated states in the country, Colorado sent just 56 percent of Colorado high school graduates to a college, university or certificate program in 2016, and just 50 percent of students submitted a FAFSA application, a key indicator of college enrollment.

“To remain competitive in a dynamic global economy, we must encourage more Colorado students to earn a certificate or degree,” said Gov. John Hickenlooper, who announced Colorado Free Application day in [this video message](#). “I am proud that our institutions rallied around young people and showed that we believe in their unlimited potential.”

About half of the applications (10,700) were submitted by students of color, and a third were submitted by first generation students (7,440)—two groups that have historically lower college enrollment rates in Colorado. Among the 2016 graduating high school class, there was a 16.5 percentage point gap in postsecondary enrollment among white and Hispanic students, who make up the fastest-growing ethnic group in the state, and a 6.3 gap among white and African American students.

“We want Colorado students to attend Colorado institutions, and the day gave us an opportunity to work with students who otherwise may not have applied,” said Kevin MacLennan, CU Boulder assistant vice chancellor of enrollment management. “It sends a positive message about Colorado institutions.”

By removing a common barrier to higher education, Colorado Free Application Day moves the needle toward the Colorado Department of Higher Education’s strategic goals to increase credential completion and remove equity gaps in Colorado’s higher education system—the racial disparities in educational attainment and student success.

“Many students said they were motivated to apply in-state and were encouraged by parents and teachers,” said Timalyn O’Neill, associate director of admissions at CSU. “This allows us to keep strong students in state by giving them earlier access to scholarships.”

This year's College Application Month included more than 6,800 students from 76 schools, which hosted more than 80 college application and FAFSA completion events statewide. For successfully applying and filing their FAFSA, high school seniors Joseph Pham of Pinnacle Charter High School in Thornton and Grace Gonzalez of Coal Ridge High School in New Castle each won a \$1,000 scholarship from CollegeInvest as part of the Colorado Department of Higher Education's College Application Month drawing.

"We believe that there's a dream school in Colorado for every Colorado student, and we're thrilled so many students took advantage of this opportunity," said Dan Baer, executive director of CDHE. "I'm grateful to all our institution partners for making this day a success."

For more information on College Application Month and Colorado Free Application Day, visit www.ciccollegeappmonth.org.

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