



Factors That Jeopardize Postsecondary Enrollment and Success for Black Students in Florida

—
Summary Findings from a 2021 Survey
by The Hope Center

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Maria Sastre, Director

Steven Wheeler, Director

Authors

Vanessa Coca, Ph.D., Director of Research

The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice

Kallie Clark, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate

The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice

Contributors

Paul G. Perrault., Ph.D., Senior Vice President,
Community Impact and Learning
Helios Education Foundation

Ian Hickox, Editorial Director
Collaborative Communications

Grace Maseda, APR, Vice President,
Marketing and Communications
Helios Education Foundation

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About Helios Education Foundation

Helios Education Foundation is dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals in both Arizona and Florida by creating opportunities for success in postsecondary education. Fundamental beliefs in Community, Equity, Investment, and Partnership propel student supports and guide the foundation's strategic investments. While all students benefit from the transformational power of education, Helios focuses on serving first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students, thus addressing the education equity gap that often prevents these students from realizing their potential.

Through our Black Student Success Strategy, Helios is helping Black students from the state's large population centers—South Florida, Central Florida, and Tampa Bay—achieve a postsecondary education.

Dear Education Partner,

Helios Education Foundation believes that a high-quality education and a postsecondary degree should be accessible and achievable for every student. This belief, rooted in an ambitious commitment to eliminate educational inequity, motivates us to invest in partnerships that increase educational attainment, close achievement gaps, and expand access to opportunity.

While our partnerships are strong, and our commitment is unwavering, there is much work to do to ensure that all students in Florida, and Black students in particular, have every opportunity to succeed. In collaboration with local and statewide partners, Helios focuses on supporting strategies that contribute to Black student success by breaking down enrollment and completion barriers and connecting Black students with support services that promote postsecondary persistence.

Through the findings presented in this brief, we shine a light on key non-academic factors that affect college-going for Black students in Florida. By illuminating these challenges, and by proposing potential interventions that the education field and community leaders can provide, we strive to position more Black students for lifelong success.

Sincerely,



Vince Roig

Vince Roig
Founding Chairman



Paul J. Luna

Paul J. Luna
President & CEO



This brief reports new findings from a survey fielded by The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice in July 2021. These findings identify factors that influence postsecondary enrollment and success among Black students in Florida. They also reveal the extent to which the pandemic has exacerbated long-standing impediments to postsecondary access and attainment. At the same time, within the context of ongoing efforts to close opportunity gaps, the findings in this brief point toward actions that the education field and community leaders can take to expand access to opportunity, mitigate barriers that impede Black students, in particular, and make Florida's education systems more equitable.

Why Postsecondary Attainment for Black Floridians Matters

Postsecondary enrollment and attainment expand the range of opportunities available to individuals in the workforce—especially as more and more jobs require some form of postsecondary training—and can lead to higher earnings and greater economic stability and mobility. Beyond the advantages that postsecondary attainment can provide individuals and families, overall attainment rate increases also have a significant positive impact on a state's economy.¹

In Florida, there are stark racial disparities when it comes to postsecondary enrollment and success. Black Floridians are much less likely than individuals from other racial and ethnic groups to have completed a postsecondary education. For example, only 31 percent of Black Floridians, ages 25 to 64, hold an associate or bachelor's degree. This rate is 11 percentage points lower than the overall degree attainment rate in Florida and 15 percentage points lower than the rate for White Floridians.²

If we aspire to have an equitable education system in Florida, and to ensure that Black students in the state can access the learning opportunities that set them up for lifelong success, then closing gaps in postsecondary participation and attainment must be treated as a greater priority than it has been to date.

To do this, it is vital that schools and districts, postsecondary institutions, state agencies, policymakers, and advocates and philanthropic organizations identify, understand, and mitigate the specific barriers for Black students—many of which are non-academic—that inhibit postsecondary participation and success among students who nonetheless aspire to a postsecondary education.

Moreover, it is essential that these entities recognize that Black students in Florida are not a monolith. The diversity of their ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, and sexualities—and the intersectionality of these identities—influence the educational experiences and outcomes of Black students in ways that need to be understood and supported.

Florida's State Colleges Are Key to Expanding Postsecondary Participation Among Black Students

Community colleges are among the most accessible postsecondary institutions, thanks to open admissions policies, the large numbers of students they collectively serve, and, compared to four-year colleges and universities, lower overall cost of attendance. As such, Florida's 28 state colleges, which offer two-year associate degrees as well as (at most colleges) select bachelor's degrees in areas of high need in the community, represent a key mechanism for expanding access to postsecondary opportunities in Florida.

Problematically, though, enrollment in Florida's state colleges has steadily declined in recent years. This trend is consistent with similar declines at the national level and has been accelerated by the pandemic. Over the past two years, community college enrollment declines nationwide have been the steepest among minority students, and enrollment among Black students has declined most of all. In 2020, community college enrollments by Black students across the country fell by 11 percent.³

Of course, these declines must be considered in the context of the heightened challenges occasioned by the pandemic, but they also fit into broader patterns of underrepresentation of Black students at postsecondary institutions, despite their aspirations to enroll and succeed.

Non-Academic Barriers Mean Postsecondary Ambitions Too Often Go Unrealized

Historically, nearly 90 percent of all high school students anticipate enrolling at a postsecondary institution each year.⁴ However, just 69 percent of high school graduates make the transition and actually enroll.⁵

This gap between postsecondary intentions and enrollment rates—also known as summer melt—disproportionately affects community college students and Black students.⁶ It is also one of the factors that contributes to lower postsecondary attainment rates among Black students, who earn two-year college degrees at rates 10 to 15 percentage points lower than those of their Latino, Asian, and White peers.

¹ Belfield, C. R., & Bailey, T. (2011). The benefits of attending community college: A review of the evidence. *Community College Review*, 39(1), 46–68; Mountjoy, J. (2019). Community colleges and upward mobility. Available at SSRN 3373801; Daly, M. C., Buckman, S. R., & Seitelman, L. M. (2020). The unequal impact of COVID-19: Why education matters. *FRBSF Economic Letter*, 17, 1–5.

² <https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/#progress-state/FL>

³ National Student Clearinghouse. (2021). <https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/blog/community-colleges-for-profit-and-rural-institutions-black-undergraduates-and-male-undergraduates-suffered-most-from-online-only-2020-summer-sessions-according-to-latest-enrollment-data/>.

⁴ Chen, X., Wu, J., & Tasoff, S. (2010). Postsecondary expectations and plans for the high school senior class of 2003–04. Issue Tables. NCES2010–170rev. *National Center for Education Statistics*.

⁵ Castleman, B. L., & Page, L. C. (2020). *Summer melt: Supporting low income students through the transition to college*. Harvard Education Press.

⁶ Arnold, K., Fleming, S., DeAnda, M., Castleman, B., & Lynk Wartman, K. (2009, Fall). The summer flood: The invisible gap among low income students; Wildavsky, B. (2014). Nudge nation: A new way to prod students into and through college. *JE Lane; Thought and Action*, pp. 23–34; Castleman, B. L., Page, L. C., & Schooley, K. (2014). The forgotten summer: Does the offer of college counseling after high school mitigate summer melt among college-intending, low-income high school graduates? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 33(2), 320–344.

Many of the barriers that contribute to summer melt, and lower rates of postsecondary enrollment more broadly, are independent of academic skills and preparation. Financial constraints, family obligations, homelessness, and involvement with the justice system all create barriers to postsecondary access and participation.⁷ Additionally, students often receive insufficient support navigating the application and enrollment process—including completing mandatory paperwork, submitting financial aid documents, and registering for classes—creating further challenges that are independent of student’s academic preparation for postsecondary education.⁸ Barriers like these are often greater and more numerous for Black students, who are more likely than other students to attend high schools with fewer resources and reduced access to counselors.

What Black Students in Florida Say About Challenges They Face

The Hope Center has fielded its national #RealCollege survey annually since 2016. In Fall 2019, the #RealCollege survey was fielded at four Florida state colleges.⁹ The findings revealed widespread basic needs insecurity—defined as food insecurity, housing insecurity, or homelessness—among Black students. At that time, 70 percent of Black students were experiencing basic needs insecurity, a rate that was at least 11 percentage points higher than their Asian, Latino, and White peers (Table 1).

TABLE 1 Disparities in Basic Needs Insecurity, by Race, at Four Florida State Colleges

	N	%
Overall	1,296	57
Black	352	66
Latino	658	55
Asian	50	54
White	603	54

SOURCE | 2019 #RealCollege Survey

NOTES | N represents the number of students who answered in the affirmative. Basic needs insecurity refers to food insecurity, housing insecurity or homelessness. Classifications of racial/ethnic background and gender identity are not mutually exclusive. Students could self-identify with multiple classifications. Students who identify as Pacific Islander are not included in Asian category. Data include all college survey respondents, between the ages of 18–21, who attend a Florida college (n=1,296).

Unsurprisingly, in 2020, the impacts of the pandemic emerged as especially acute challenges that jeopardized the physical and mental health of students and their families, as well as their financial stability. In the fall of that year, the #RealCollege survey found that nearly 40 percent of Black students had lost their jobs, and nearly 50 percent were responsible for providing care for a family member in addition to attending their own college classes (Table 2).

In 2021, to better understand how these previously identified experiences and challenges were manifesting for prospective Black state college students during the second summer of the pandemic, The Hope Center partnered with Hillsborough Community College and Miami Dade College to survey prospective students who had applied in the spring with the intention of enrolling—for the first time—the following fall.

More than 6,000 applicants to Miami Dade College, and nearly 8,000 to Hillsborough Community College, were surveyed. In total, 11 percent of applicants included in the survey sample responded (N = 1,188). Of these respondents, 257 were Black applicants.

The survey was designed to illuminate respondents’ expectations, challenges, and obligations, both to identify barriers to enrollment and, relatedly, to identify opportunities to provide supportive interventions.

The Diversity of the Black Applicants Surveyed

The Black applicants who responded to the survey were from diverse backgrounds and had intersectional identities. More than 80 percent identified as African American or Black; 31 percent were Black Hispanic or Afro-Latin; 17 percent were West Indian or Caribbean; and 10 percent were African.

More than 80 percent were between 18 and 20 years old and recently have graduated from high school, but this varied by ethnicity. Half of African-identifying respondents were recent high school graduates, compared to 90 percent of Black Hispanic, and 76 percent of Caribbean respondents.

TABLE 2

Fall 2020 COVID-Related Challenges for Students at Four Florida Colleges

	N	%
COVID-19		
I was sick with COVID-19	76	7
A close friend or family member was sick with COVID-19	540	51
A close friend or family member died of COVID-19	251	24
Anxiety and Depression		
Experiencing at least moderate anxiety	397	26
Experiencing at least moderate depression	489	32
Job Loss or Reduction in Pay /Hours		
I lost my job	431	39
My current hours/pay are lower than they were before	288	26
Other Challenges		
I had to take care of a family member while attending class	558	53
I had problems with internet or computer access	497	47

SOURCE | 2020 #RealCollege Survey

NOTES | N represents the number of students who answered in the affirmative. Data include all college survey respondents, between the ages of 18–21, who attend a Florida college (n=2,281). Some students may have more than one personal experience with COVID-19.

⁷ Gross, J. P., Stolzenberg, E., & Williams, A. (2020). College choice and enrollment among youth formerly in foster care. *Journal of College Access*, 5(2), 8–31; Courtney, M., Dworsky, A., Brown, A., Cary, C., Love, K., & Vorhies, V. (2011). Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 26. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago; Courtney, M. E., Roderick, M., Smithgall, C., Gladden, R. M., & Nagaoka, J. (2004). The educational status of foster children. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Cheryl_Smithgall/publication/268053940_The_Educational_Status_of_Foster_Children/links/54e4c0320cf22703d5bf415e.pdf; Koppisch, D., Goldrick-Rab, S., & Dahl, S. (2021). *Philadelphians speak up about barriers to college completion: A #RealCollegePHL report*. The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice; Kane, T. J. (2003). *A quasi-experimental estimate of the impact of financial aid on college-going* (No. w9703). National Bureau of Economic Research; Dynarski, S., Libassi, C. J., Micheltore, K., & Owen, S. (2018). *Closing the gap: The effect of a targeted, tuition-free promise on college choices of high-achieving, low income students* (No. w25349). National Bureau of Economic Research.

⁸ Stephan, J. L., & Rosenbaum, J. E. (2013). *Can high schools reduce college enrollment gaps with a new counseling model?* *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 35(2), 200–219; Castleman, B. L., Arnold, K., & Wartman, K. L. (2012). *Stemming the tide of summer melt: An experimental study of the effects of post-high school summer intervention on low-income students' college enrollment*. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 5(1), 1–17; Rall, R. M. (2016). Forgotten students in a transitional summer: Low-income racial/ethnic minority students experience the summer melt. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 85(4), 462–479; Goldrick-Rab, S. (2021). *Paying the price*. University of Chicago Press.

⁹ Daytona State College, Tallahassee Community College, Florida State College at Jacksonville, and Miami Dade College





Approximately 66 percent of the Black applicants who responded to the survey would be the first in their family to attend college; 66 percent were female; and approximately 16 percent indicated they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or pansexual, or identify with another sexual orientation (Table 3).¹⁰

Compared to White applicants, Black applicants were much more likely to receive means-tested benefits—federal benefits delivered through programs such as Medicaid; the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); free or reduced-price lunch; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)—which are indicative of particularly low household incomes.

Applicants' Plans for Florida State College Enrollment

At the time they completed the survey, approximately 66 percent of Black applicants planned to enroll in a Florida state college full time, but this varied by ethnicity. Caribbean applicants were much more likely to plan to enroll full time, compared to Hispanic Black applicants. Overall, a greater percentage of Black applicants planned on full-time enrollment, compared to Latino or White applicants (Table 4).

Applicants' Access to Advance Preparation and Guidance

Most Black applicants responding to this survey had at least some advance college preparation. During high school, approximately 75 percent of Black applicants met with a counselor, teacher, or coach to discuss college. Among Black applicants who received such support, 85 percent discussed general college options; 75 percent talked about how to file a FAFSA, and about 66 percent discussed financial aid in general.

However, less than 50 percent of Black applicants—and just 41 percent of those who identify as African American—received support during high school to help them plan how they would address their basic needs in college (for example, food security, housing, physical health, and mental health).

¹⁰ Larger representation of female survey respondents, while notable, is consistent with previous studies conducted by The Hope Center, and mirrors overall gender disparities in enrollment at both Miami Dade College and Hillsborough Community College.

TABLE 3

Characteristics of Two-Year College Applicants in Florida, by Race/Ethnicity

		Black		Latino		White	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Racial and ethnic categories of which Black applicants identify (not mutually exclusive)	African American or Black	213	83	0	0	0	0
	Black Hispanic or Afro-Latin	44	31	0	0	0	0
	African	25	10	0	0	0	0
	West Indian or Caribbean	43	17	0	0	0	0
	Latino	48	19	663	100	0	0
	White	21	8	278	42	216	100
	Other	8	3	14	2	6	3
	Asian	7	3	8	1	3	1
	American Indian	5	2	2	0	2	1
	Indigenous	4	2	3	0	2	1
	Middle Eastern	2	1	4	1	1	0
Age	18–20	210	82	581	88	163	76
	21–23	13	5	32	5	24	11
	24 and over	33	13	48	7	28	13
Gender	1st generation college student	105	68	275	58	113	77
	Male	82	32	220	33	70	32
	Female	170	66	427	64	137	63
	Non-binary / Other	6	2	12	2	12	6
LGBT		36	16	102	17	46	23

SOURCE | Survey of new college applicants to Miami Dade College and Hillsborough Community College. Administered in July, 2021. N= 1,188.

NOTES | Race and ethnic categories are not mutually exclusive, with the exception of the following: Applicants who identified as either African American, Black Hispanic, African, or Caribbean are not included in estimates for Latino or White. Applicants who identified as Latino are not included in estimates for White.

TABLE 4

Fall Enrollment Plans of Two-Year College Applicants in Florida

	Intended enrollment type for Fall					
	Full-time		Part-time		I'm not sure	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Black Applicants						
Overall	160	66	54	22	30	12
African American	129	64	48	24	24	12
Black Hispanic	36	59	15	25	10	16
African	15	65	/	/	/	/
Caribbean	35	81	/	/	/	/
Non-Black Applicants						
Latino	427	69	125	20	71	11
White	115	59	55	28	26	12

SOURCE | Survey of new college applicants to Miami Dade College and Hillsborough Community College. Administered in July, 2021. N= 1,188.

NOTES | Note: 95% of applicants still planned on attending their intended college in the fall; categories are mutually exclusive. N represents the number of applicants who answered in the affirmative. Race and ethnic categories are not mutually exclusive, with the exception of the following: Applicants who identified as either African American, Black Hispanic, African, or Caribbean are not included in estimates for Latino or White. Applicants who identified as Latino are not included in estimates for White. Cells with too few applicants to accurately measure are indicated with a "/".

Applicants' Emotional Experience of the Postsecondary Transition

The transition from high school to a postsecondary institution can be an emotionally turbulent experience.¹¹ More than 50 percent of Black respondents said they were excited about college, and about 40 percent felt confident about attending college in the fall. However, that excitement was much less common among Black applicants than it was among their White peers, 69 percent of whom felt excitement. Almost 33 percent of Black applicants indicated that they were scared about college, a feeling shared by a similar proportion of Latino applicants.

Compared to their White peers, Black applicants were more likely to feel pressure related to attending college in the fall and less likely to feel relaxed about the opportunity. Caribbean applicants were especially likely to feel nervous and stressed, and less likely to feel confident, compared to their Black Hispanic or African-identifying peers (Table 5).

College Affordability is a Prevailing Concern for the Majority of Black Applicants

About 60 percent of the Black applicants who responded to the survey were worried or stressed about paying for college. Beyond concern or stress about affording the cost of college, early 30 percent of Black applicants who had applied to one of the surveyed Florida state colleges doubted they would even be able to afford to attend at all. This concern was especially common among African Americans, 31 percent of whom shared the feeling, compared to just 13 percent of their White counterparts (Table 6).

These feelings of doubt may be related to uncertainty and a lack of information about the cost of Florida's state colleges and the specific mechanisms available to help them afford college. For instance, 13 percent of Black respondents were unsure about whether they would be required to pay in-state tuition or out-of-state tuition.



		Percent of students feeling:													
		Relaxed		Pressured		Scared		Confident		Nervous		Stressed		Excited	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Black Applicants	Overall	32	22	39	26	44	30	64	44	74	49	78	53	87	58
	African American	31	27	26	23	35	30	49	43	59	52	55	47	66	57
	Black Hispanic	23	52	26	59	22	50	17	39	12	27	/	/	/	/
	African	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	13	76
	Caribbean	10	29	/	/	14	40	10	29	23	66	20	59	19	54
Non-Black Applicants	Latino	97	21	108	24	153	33	202	44	254	56	221	48	292	63
	White	39	27	31	22	38	26	62	43	83	58	75	52	99	69

SOURCE | Survey of new college applicants to Miami Dade College and Hillsborough Community College. Administered in July, 2021. N= 1,188.

NOTES | N represents the number of applicants who answered in the affirmative. Questions above are measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “very” to “not at all”. Applicants who indicated their level of concern at somewhat or very were counted in the percentages displayed above. Race and ethnic categories are not mutually exclusive, with the exception of the following: Applicants who identified either African American, Black Hispanic, African, or Caribbean are not included in estimates for Latino or White. Applicants who identified as Latino are not included in estimates for White. Cells with too few applicants to accurately measure are indicated with a “/”.

		Worried or stressed about taking out student loans		Worried or stressed about paying for college		Doubtful about affording college	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Black Applicants	Overall	129	65	123	62	56	28
	African American	101	64	99	63	49	31
	Black Hispanic	37	69	35	65	11	20
	African	15	75	15	75	/	/
	Caribbean	28	70	28	70	10	24
Non-Black Applicants	Latino	399	75	368	68	124	23
	White	102	59	88	51	23	12

SOURCE | Survey of new college applicants to Miami Dade College and Hillsborough Community College. Administered in July, 2021. N=1,188.

NOTES | N represents the number of applicants who answered in the affirmative. Questions above are measured on a five point Likert scale, ranging from “very” to “not at all”. Applicants who indicated their level of concern at somewhat or very were counted in the percentages displayed above. Race and ethnic categories are not mutually exclusive, with the exception of the following: Applicants who identified either African American, Black Hispanic, African, or Caribbean are not included in estimates for Latino or White. Applicants who identified as Latino are not included in estimates for White. Cells with too few applicants to accurately measure are indicated with a “/”.

- ¹¹ Kahn, J. H., Kasky-Hernández, L. M., Ambrose, P., & French, S. (2017). Stress, depression, and anxiety among transitioning college students: The family as a protective factor. *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*, 29(2), 11-25; Smith, S. E. (1997). High school-to-college transition: An intervention to reduce student anxiety. *Journal of College Admission*, 157, 8-15; Hicks, T. L. (2002). *An assessment of the perceptions and expectations of pending college experiences of first generation and non-first-generation students attending summer pre-college programs*. Wilmington College (Delaware).

TABLE 7 Prevalence of Basic Needs Insecurity Among Two-Year College Applicants in Florida									
		Any BNI		Food Insecurity		Housing Insecurity		Homelessness	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Black Applicants	Overall	257	26	153	25	257	18	148	11
	African American	213	26	119	27	213	15	113	12
	Black Hispanic	64	38	47	26	64	33	46	11
	African	25	48	17	29	25	40	17	18
	Caribbean	43	35	34	21	43	30	34	13
Non-Black Applicants	Latino	663	23	477	10	663	20	461	9
	White	216	19	150	15	216	14	146	11

SOURCE | Survey of new college applicants to Miami Dade College and Hillsborough Community College. Administered in July, 2021. N=1,188.

NOTES | N represents the number of applicants who answered in the affirmative. Race and ethnic categories are not mutually exclusive, with the exception of the following: Applicants who identified either African American, Black Hispanic, African, or Caribbean are not included in estimates for Latino or White. Applicants who identified as Latino are not included in estimates for White.

The difference between these tuition rates is sizable, such that it has the potential to determine whether applicants believe they can afford to enroll. In Florida, for instance, undocumented students must pay out-of-state tuition¹² and are ineligible for state or federal financial aid. By way of example, undocumented full-time students would pay, at a minimum, an additional \$6,800 per year in tuition at Miami Dade College, and an additional \$9,000 per year in tuition at Hillsborough Community College.



Concerns about affordability and a lack of clarity about how much they will be required to pay for a Florida state college education is especially relevant given the comparatively high rates of basic needs insecurity among Black respondents (Table 7). Compounding concerns about meeting basic needs is the expectation shared by approximately 60 percent of Black respondents that they will pay their college-related expenses, at least in part, with money received from family or money from savings.

Additionally, the overwhelming majority (83 percent) of Black respondents expected to contribute financially to their families while attending a Florida state college; 14 percent expected to cover half of their families' expenses, and 11 percent expected to be the main source of financial support for their families (Table 8).

Importantly, the majority of Black applicants do not see financial aid, either loans or grants, as comfortable or likely options to help them pay for a Florida state college. Nearly 66 percent felt worried or stressed about taking out student loans and, even though most of the Black applicants who responded to the survey had filed their FAFSA, less than 50 percent believed that the federal Pell Grant would help them pay for college (Table 9).

¹² Unless the students meet specified criteria and apply for an out-of-state tuition fee waiver.

		Student's expectations of their contribution											
		I do not expect to contribute		Contribute a little		Contribute some, but not quite half		Cover half the bills		Main financial support		I am not sure	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Black Applicants	Overall	37	17	32	16	54	28	28	14	22	11	25	13
	African American	28	18	26	17	39	25	21	14	17	11	23	15
	Black Hispanic	/	/	/	/	18	33	11	20	/	/	/	/
	African	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Caribbean	/	/	10	24	11	27	/	/	/	/	/	/
Non-Black Applicants	Latino	55	10	106	20	173	32	59	11	44	8	101	19
	White	35	20	30	17	38	22	21	12	22	13	27	16

SOURCE | Survey of new college applicants to Miami Dade College and Hillsborough Community College. Administered in July, 2021. N=1,188.

NOTES | N represents the number of applicants who answered in the affirmative. N represents the number of applicants who answered in the affirmative. Race and ethnic categories are not mutually exclusive, with the exception of the following: Applicants who identified either African American, Black Hispanic, African, or Caribbean are not included in estimates for Latino or White. Applicants who identified as Latino are not included in estimates for White. Cells with too few applicants to accurately measure are indicated with a "/".

		Black Applicants										Non-Black Applicants			
		Overall		African American		Black Hispanic		African		Caribbean		Latino		White	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Tuition Type Expectation	In-state tuition	163	81	129	80	45	82	11	55	33	80	437	81	134	77
	I'm not sure	26	13	22	14	10	18	/	/	/	/	78	14	12	7
	Out-of-state tuition	13	6	10	6	/	/	/	/	/	/	27	5	28	16
Financial Support Expectations	Pell Grant	73	47	61	50	18	40	/	/	20	59	167	40	46	36
	Student loans	51	35	41	36	11	27	/	/	10	31	169	39	54	39
	Private scholarships	31	22	26	24	/	/	/	/	/	/	73	18	27	22
	School or government scholarships	91	61	70	60	34	72	/	/	16	57	235	55	57	44
	A job I have now	78	53	60	52	24	55	/	/	21	66	196	45	71	52
	Future job	90	62	73	64	20	49	11	65	19	63	244	59	65	51
	Family and friends	89	60	68	60	20	47	11	73	22	65	314	71	99	69
	Savings	84	59	68	61	20	47	/	/	18	58	256	60	96	67

SOURCE | Survey of new college applicants to Miami Dade College and Hillsborough Community College. Administered in July, 2021. N=1,188.

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12 Factors That Jeopardize Postsecondary Enrollment and Success for Black Students in Florida

Conclusion and Recommendations

The decision to pursue a postsecondary education is a fraught one for many Florida students, as they seek to balance their educational ambitions against a broad spectrum of challenges, including financial insecurity, perceptions of the affordability of Florida's state college system, family obligations, and difficulty in navigating the postsecondary landscape. All of this was true before the pandemic, but the challenges facing students have been made all the more acute, and the uncertainty greater, as the pandemic has continued.

The findings from The Hope Center's survey provide ample evidence of these challenges and uncertainties, as well as an important window into how Black applicants in Florida, at the threshold of their desired transition to the state college system, perceive their postsecondary opportunities.

Importantly, the findings also point to tangible efforts and actions that institutions, education organizations, community leaders, philanthropic organizations, student advocates, and other community-based entities should undertake. These include ways to alleviate students' stress and uncertainty, promote greater financial security and increase college affordability, and better inform students of their options and how to access them, all in service of helping more Black students who aspire to a postsecondary education make the transition from high school, by applying, enrolling, matriculating, and ultimately completing college. Specific recommendations include:

- Provide targeted coaching, through on-campus departments and community-based organizations with the necessary expertise, to engage with and support students who are juggling substantial family obligations along with college and work.
 - Relatedly, high schools and postsecondary financial aid offices should intensify outreach to provide students and families with actionable information about financial aid options and consistent support to ensure that students complete the FAFSA and renew it annually.
- Expand efforts to connect students who need them with public benefits programs, including SNAP and rental assistance, through targeted communications efforts and dedicated full-time facilitators or liaison officers.
- Promote access to and distribute emergency financial aid, both in the form of one-time and maintenance/regular payments, through easily accessible institutional and philanthropic relief programs.
 - Florida postsecondary institutions should advance new requests for emergency aid through both state and federal legislation, given that federal pandemic relief funds will expire within a year.
- Conduct proactive, and culturally specific and inclusive, mental health outreach to help students and their families navigate uncertainty, stress, and ongoing health challenges and access additional public or institutional resources, such as emergency financial aid or counseling.



www.helios.org

HELIOS EDUCATION CAMPUS
4747 N. 32nd Street
Phoenix, AZ 85018
PH: 602-381-2260

TAMPA OFFICE
101 E. Kennedy Blvd., Suite 2050
Tampa, FL 33602
PH: 813-387-0221