



**A** significant percentage of college-going students will have financial need in spite of place or time and regardless of the year. We recognize this current calendar year as similar to previous years when, regionally and nationally, we experienced economic downturns. The subsequent financial impact was endured by our students and among our district communities.

Most recently, for those who desired higher education this fall semester, major concern was not where to attend college, but whether to go to college at all or defer. Much of that concern may be attributed to COVID-19, however, our conversations with current and prospective students and families have increasingly reflected a tone of financial uncertainty.

I think we would agree this uncertainty will continue to impact and delay the educational plans of students well into 2021. We know from our semester data that the adult student population and students of color have been most severely affected. There is no doubt dreams were deferred and, in many cases, derailed.

So, what can or should we do to reverse this very real concern? We are able, collectively and individually, to change this underlying sentiment of financial uncertainty with regard to college through fostering an environment of equitable access for all. With high schools now mandating (per Illinois law) the completion of FAFSA as a graduation requirement, we can be inclusive of all students with a specific focus on encouraging and facilitating FAFSA completion for our adult student population. Here are some suggested, practical ways to get involved:

- Learn FAFSA basics; click here for a [short video](#)
- Talk to students about their financial needs
- Tap campus resources and make referrals at every opportunity
- Encourage and support donation to the student emergency fund
- Explore a related grant opportunity
- Nudge a colleague to join you in this endeavor
- Say thank you to our employees who do this daily work

October 1 is the start date for filing FAFSA for the 2021-2022 academic year. Let's encourage FAFSA completion! While students may still complete FAFSA for our current academic year, applying for financial assistance early in the process is advantageous. Triton's Financial Aid Office stands ready to answer questions and provide assistance!

As we educate ourselves and encourage students to utilize the financial support resources already available on our campus, we will make a positive impact for many in their financial capacity to attend college in future semesters.

President Moore