


Cash for College makes college more affordable by boosting **Free Application for Federal Student Aid** (FAFSA) completion through a combination of direct services in the Birmingham City Schools and a statewide FAFSA completion network.

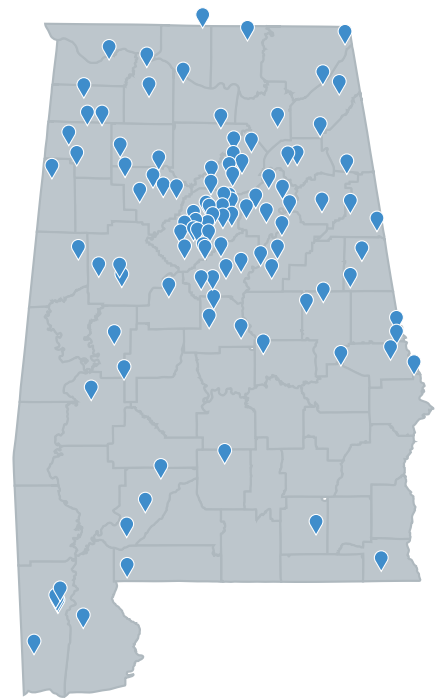
 **207** high schools participated in Cash for College Alabama

 **14,270** FAFSAs completed by June 30

 **9th highest** statewide increase in FAFSA completions in the nation



60% of Birmingham City Schools' Class of 2017 completed their FAFSA by June 30.



FAFSA Fast Facts

- Nationally, 9 out of 10 students who complete the FAFSA attend college the following fall.
- All families seeking federal or state financial aid – including grants, loans and work-study programs – must complete the FAFSA.
- Many colleges require the FAFSA for both merit and need-based scholarships.
- Students should file their FAFSA during their senior year of high school and renew it for each year of college.
- Most Alabama high school seniors qualify for Pell Grants of up to \$5,920 per year.
- Students can use Pell Grants for two-year and four-year technical and academic programs.



I grew up in a family of 11 children and dropped out of high school when I was 16. Ten years later, I was divorced with three children and working two jobs. I realized I wasn't going to be able to make ends meet and that I needed to go back to school so that I could get a better-paying job.

My first semester in college, I paid out-of-pocket for one class at Calhoun Community College because that was what I could afford. I made an "A" in the class, so I knew that I could handle taking more classes, but I wasn't sure how I would pay for them.

A friend who was aware of my situation suggested that I complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). I had never heard of it, and she told me that I could get money for school that I didn't have to pay back. I completed the application and received a Pell Grant. With the money from the grant, I took four classes in the spring and five and six classes in the following semesters.

Because of the FAFSA, I graduated debt-free in two years. I got my degree in elementary education from Athens State University.

Ruby De La Peña is a graduate of Calhoun Community College and Athens State University and teaches in Athens City Schools.



I have been a school counselor for 22 years and have seen that one of the major barriers for students to attain postsecondary education is not completing the FAFSA.

As the 11th and 12th grade counselor at C.F. Vigor High School in Mobile, I help plan a variety of activities to ensure that students and parents have the tools to complete the FAFSA in a timely manner. We are in an area where there is a digital divide, so we allow parents to use the computers during school hours and get assistance with filling out the form.

In early October, we hold a financial aid workshop for parents and students. Once the FAFSA opens, and in conjunction with our state college application week, we hold FAFSA days and FAFSA nights. Volunteers from local colleges and community agencies attend these events and assist parents and students with the FAFSA by the March 1 priority deadline, so that students can get the most money to pay for college.

Completing the FAFSA is the first step to receiving financial aid, which plays a major role in students deciding to go to college. C.F. Vigor High School, in partnership with the Mobile community, actively works to provide all students access to postsecondary education, and we believe providing FAFSA assistance is an important part of that work.

Cheryl Robinson-Sutton is in her 27th year as an educator and currently serves as the 11th and 12th grade school counselor at C.F. Vigor High School in Mobile.



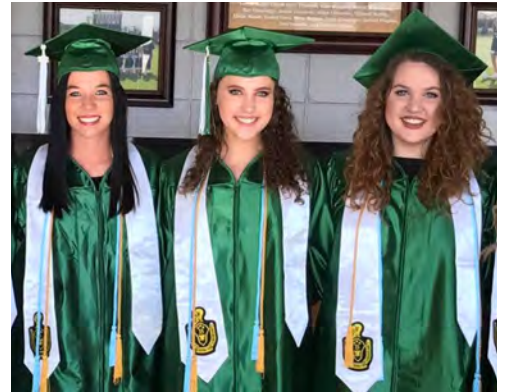
I never went to college and neither did anyone in my family, so I did not have a guidebook for my son when he was growing up on how he could go to college.

My husband and I would always talk about saving for our son's college education, but we are average working people from Calera. It takes everything to live, so we were not able to save the money. I knew my son wanted to go to college, and I was concerned because we couldn't afford it and didn't want him to go into debt.

The summer before my son's senior year, I found out about the FAFSA from a friend. My friend kept telling me that we would probably get free money for college if we filled out the FAFSA. At first, I didn't believe him because nothing is free, but he convinced me to fill it out. He sat down at a computer with me and helped me complete the form. I'm not computer savvy and had never seen a FAFSA before, so I would have struggled doing it without his help.

My son attends Jefferson State Community College because he received a Pell Grant by filling out the FAFSA. In my opinion, FAFSA determined his future and will allow him to pursue a career where he can make himself a good living.

Lesia White is self-employed and works as a substitute school bus driver in Calera.



The Blueprints College Success Initiative works with students during their junior and senior years of high school to plan, prepare, and pay for postsecondary education.

We also work with first-year students at Lawson State Community College to smooth the transition from high school to college.

457

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SERVED

62

COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS SERVED

8

HIGH SCHOOLS

86

NEAR-PEER AND PEER MENTORS

Summer 2017 Drop-In Center

Alabama Possible's Summer Drop-In Center provided free assistance for students and families to overcome challenges in the college enrollment process. Program features included:

- figuring out financial aid
- completing college applications and registration forms
- signing up for housing
- planning a budget
- answering other college questions

"I decided to bring my granddaughter in for assistance with finding additional funds. It takes a village to raise a child, and you have become a part of the village that will get her to college."

Veronica Taylor, a Bessemer grandmother who visited the Summer Drop-In Center with her granddaughter Shaquandra. They completed financial aid and scholarship applications so that Shaquandra could afford to go to The University of Alabama this fall.



"It was scary not knowing what my future would be like. I've always wanted to be a nurse, but I didn't know how I would get there or if I would be able to achieve that goal. There's a lot of information that you need to complete in order to apply for college, and the program really helped me with the FAFSA."

Jordan Porter
Locust Fork High School Class of 2017
Jefferson State Community College Student

2016-17 BLUEPRINTS COLLEGE SUCCESS INITIATIVE PARTNERS

Holy Family Cristo Rey High School
The University of Alabama
Shelton State Community College
Lawson State Community College
UAB
University of Montevallo
Northwest-Shoals Community College
Birmingham-Southern College
Locust Fork High School
Central (Tuscaloosa) High School
Phil Campbell High School
Hillcrest High School
Montevallo High School
Ramsay High School
Wenonah High School

2016-17 BLUEPRINTS GRADUATES ARE ATTENDING THE FOLLOWING COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES:

Alabama A & M University
Alabama State University
Alcorn State University
Arkansas Baptist College
Auburn University
Auburn University at Montgomery
Austin Peay State University
Baylor University
Benedict College
Berea College
Bethany College
Bevill State Community College
Birmingham-Southern College
Bluegrass Community Technical College
California State University-Fresno
Chattahoochee Valley Community College
Clark Atlanta University
Cornell University
Delta State University
Dodge City Community College
Eastern Illinois University
Eastern Nazarene College
Faulkner University
Florida State University
Gadsden State Community College
Wallace State Community College-Hanceville
Wallace Community College Selma
Georgetown University
Gulf Coast State College
Hinds Community College
Howard University
Huntingdon College

Independence Community College
Iowa Central Community College
Jacksonville State University
Jefferson State Community College
Calhoun State Community College
Judson College
Kentucky State University
LaGrange College
Lane College
Lawson State Community College
Le Moyne-Owen College
Lincoln University
Lurleen B. Wallace Community College
Marion Military Institute
Maryville College
Mercer University
Middle Tennessee State University
Miles College
Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College
Mississippi Valley State University
Murray State University
Northwest-Shoals Community College
Oakwood University
Presbyterian College
Ringling College of Art and Design
Rust College
Rutgers University
Santa Fe College
Shelton State Community College
Snead State Community College
Southern Wesleyan University
South Georgia State College
South University
Spelman College
Stillman College
Tennessee State University
Tennessee Technological University
Tennessee Wesleyan College
Trident Technical College
Troy University
Tuskegee University
UAB
UAH
The University of Alabama
University of Florida
University of Georgia
University of Minnesota-Crookston
University of Mobile
University of Montevallo
University of North Alabama
University of South Alabama
University of West Alabama
Valdosta State University
Vermilion Community College



Could you survive a month in poverty?

During 2017, more than 1,500 individuals learned about barriers that low-income families face by taking part in a poverty simulation.

Participants have an opportunity to learn about the barriers faced by low-income families as they try to get to work, get the kids to school, feed their families, and keep their homes safe.

What do Alabamians say about their experience?

"The poverty simulation allows, however briefly, a tiny window into a life that many of us have never lived – one that involves lack of transportation, long lines, scarcity that directly affects our children."

Rachel Estes
Canterbury Methodist Church Director of Outreach & Missions

"We walk alongside those living in neighborhoods of poverty, but we do not understand what it is like to live with these struggles and obstacles from the inside. This simulation (gave) us the briefest taste of that reality and I hope it will strengthen our resolve individually and as a congregation to do all that we can to make a difference."

Reverend Susan Clayton
Independent Presbyterian Church Associate Pastor for Community Ministries

"It opens your eyes to the situations that are out there. That's why (we) are here: to get exposed to different things."

Carter Williams
Auburn University Junior

"I couldn't help but notice how I heard laughter during the first 20 minutes or so as everyone learned their roles and scenarios, but as time progressed, I noticed people actually stressed."

Craig Sosebee
Blount County Schools Educator

2017 POVERTY SIMULATION PARTNERS INCLUDE:

Alabama Partnership for Children
Alabama State Bar Association
Auburn University
Birmingham-Southern College
Blount County Schools
Calhoun County Schools
Canterbury United Methodist Church
Cleburne County Schools
GEAR UP Alabama
Independent Presbyterian Church
Jack and Jill Clubs of Birmingham
Judson College
Junior League of Greater Birmingham
Leadership Alabama
Leadership Birmingham
Leadership Montgomery
Lott Carey Ministries
Marion Military Institute
Perry County Schools
Samford University
Shelby County Schools
St. Luke's Episcopal Church
Talladega City Schools
The University of Alabama School of Law
UAB
University of Montevallo
University of West Alabama
Walker Area Community Foundation

To bring a poverty simulation to your campus, civic organization, business, or faith community, please contact Kristina Scott at kscott@alabamapossible.org

Poverty is down. We still have work to do.

Nearly 900,000 Alabamians live below the poverty line, which is just \$24,257 a year for a family of four.

Alabama Possible's 2017 Alabama Poverty Data Sheet highlighted statewide poverty rates and data related to educational attainment, employment, and food security.

Although Alabama's overall poverty rate slightly declined, and our median household income is up, we still have work to do. The rest of America recovered from the recession at an even faster pace, and the gaps between Alabama and the nation's poverty rate and median household income are bigger than ever.

So, what do your fellow Alabamians have to say about poverty in Alabama?

"The state is seeing some positive movement in its fight against a formidable and persistent foe; however, there is still a way to go. Many states have rebounded well from the economic depths of the Great Recession, yet Alabama's recovery has been much slower, and the disparity in many categories (poverty rate, median household incomes, food insecurity, etc.) between the state and national averages is sizable."

Ken Robinson
Lagniappe Weekly Columnist

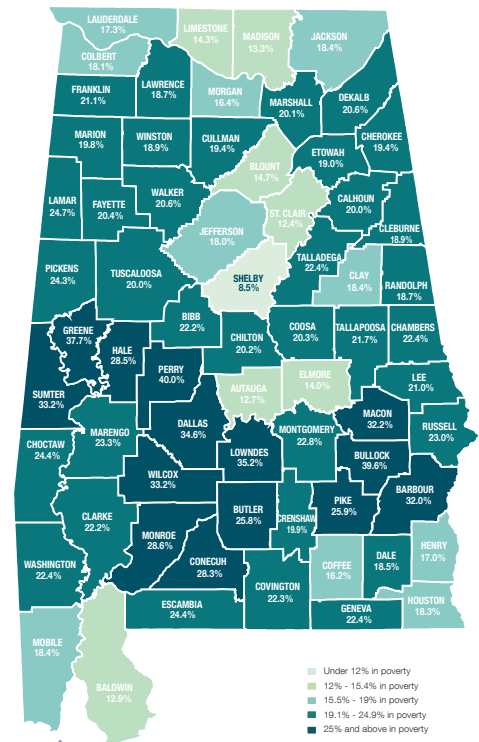
"We must not be satisfied when someone tells us 'that is the best we can do.' We should never accept the notion that 'doing all right' is the norm and is acceptable. Our challenge is to find new opportunities, make tough decisions, raise expectations, and tackle the status quo."

Jeremy Arthur
Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama President & CEO

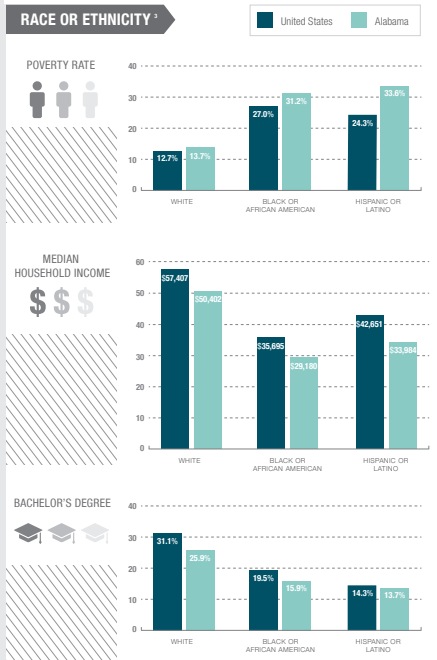
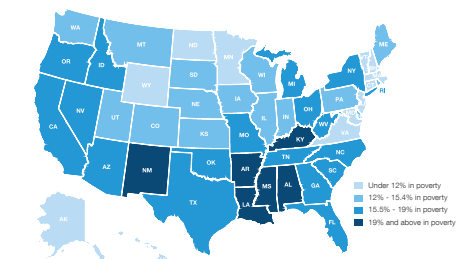
"In the real estate business, investment returns are often dictated by the critical 'location, location, location' decision. Similarly, to address poverty in Alabama, our most reliable investment is education, education, education."

Felicia Stewart
Community Activist and Cash for College Volunteer

POVERTY RATE IN ALABAMA



POVERTY RATE BY STATE



POVERTY THRESHOLDS BY FAMILY SIZE



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Many thanks to the foundations, higher education institutions, faith communities, business and community organizations, and individuals who helped break down barriers to prosperity by investing in our work.

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- Auburn First Baptist Church
- Canterbury United Methodist Church
- Highlands United Methodist Church
- Independent Presbyterian Church
- Southside Baptist Church
- St. Luke's Episcopal Church

COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

- Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice
- Alabama ARISE
- Alabama Commission on Higher Education
- Alabama Cooperative Extension Services
- Alabama Partnership for Children
- Alabama School Readiness Alliance
- Alabama State Department of Education
- Alabama Symphony Orchestra
- Alabama Workforce Council
- Arc Stories
- Birmingham Chapter of Jack and Jill of America
- Birmingham City Schools
- Birmingham Education Foundation
- Birmingham Public Library
- Black Belt Treasures
- Blount County Schools
- Bold Goals Coalition
- Cahaba Valley Healthcare
- Center for Eating Disorders
- Colorado Department of Higher Education
- Daniel Foundation of Alabama
- David Mathews Center for Civic Life
- Department of Homeland Security
- EAT South
- End Child Hunger in Alabama
- Equal Justice Initiative
- Franklin County Schools
- GEARUP Alabama
- Greater Birmingham Humane Society
- Holy Family Cristo Rey Catholic High School
- National Association of Social Work - Alabama
- National College Access Network
- Pathways Home
- Perry County Schools
- Shelby County Schools
- Tallegga County Board of Education
- Tuscaloosa City Schools
- Tuscaloosa County Schools
- United Way of Central Alabama
- Urban Ministry, Inc.
- VOICES for Alabama's Children

- Reese Phifer, Jr. Memorial Foundation
- Rosen Harwood
- Russell Supermarkets
- Southern Education Foundation
- St. Vincent's Health System
- Taco Bell Foundation for Teens
- Ticket Biscuit
- Vowell & Associates
- Vulcan Materials Company Foundation
- Walker Area Community Foundation
- Wells Fargo Foundation
- YWCA Central Alabama

HIGHER EDUCATION ALLIANCE CORNERSTONE MEMBERS

- Auburn University
- Auburn University at Montgomery
- Birmingham-Southern College
- Northwest-Shoals Community College
- Samford University
- The University of Alabama
- UAB

HIGHER EDUCATION ALLIANCE MEMBERS

- Alabama Community College System
- Athens State University
- Bevill State Community College
- Faulkner University
- Jacksonville State University
- Jefferson State Community College
- Judson College
- Lawson State Community College
- Marian Military Institute
- Northeast Alabama Community College
- Shelton State Community College
- Stillman College
- Trenholm State Community College
- Troy University
- University of Montevallo

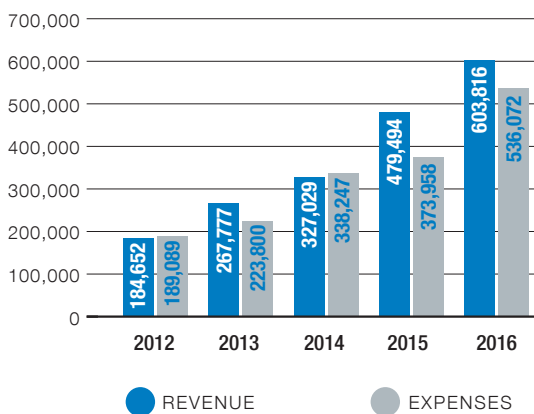
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Growing investments to remove barriers to prosperity, 2012-2016



source: Alabama Possible Form 990

Alabama Possible stewards its sustainability through an operating reserve fund. Our 990 is at alabamapossible.org/990

Every effort has been made to acknowledge the generosity of our supporters correctly and completely. Should you discover an error or omission, please call us at 205-939-1408.

*Alabama Possible breaks down barriers to prosperity
through education, collaboration, and advocacy.*

Our Values

Equity All people have the right to a prosperous and meaningful life.

Resiliency Communities are inherently strong, capable, and in charge of their own futures.

Partnerships We work together to maximize limited resources.

The Golden Rule We build relationships based on reciprocity, respect, and compassion.



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