

First Lady Michelle Obama Joins Get Schooled, Viacom and U.S. Education Secretary to Encourage High School Students to Complete the FAFSA

First Lady Michelle Obama discusses the importance of filling out the 2014 FAFSA to determine eligibility for federal grants, loans and work-study

Alexandria, VA (February 5, 2014) – Today, First Lady Michelle Obama joined Get Schooled, Viacom and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan at the T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, VA, to discuss the importance of completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) when planning for college. High School seniors filled out the recently released 2014 FAFSA at a workshop, guided by their parents and high school counselors.

The First Lady spoke directly to young people about the importance of completing the FAFSA as a pivotal step toward finishing education beyond high school. The First Lady focused on issues of youth empowerment and education, in particular working to achieve the President’s “North Star” Goal of America having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020.

In mid-February, the First Lady, Get Schooled, Viacom, Google and the U.S. Department of Education will continue their efforts to encourage students to complete the FAFSA through a spot featuring the First Lady, as well as providing a range of online support and tools to help students.

Many students fail to attend college after high school and of those who attend, many drop out. Research shows a key factor in these decisions is the fear of the cost of college and the confusion over how to access financial support for college.

“Only 49 percent of American high school seniors fill out a FAFSA form. Yet research shows that if a student completes a FAFSA, there is a 90 percent chance they will enroll in some college within 12 months,” said Marie Groark, executive director of Get Schooled. “Get Schooled is proud to stand with the First Lady and Secretary Duncan to encourage more students and parents to access these resources that will help them have access to a higher education and achieve their goals. We believe that key to increasing the number of low-income students graduating from college is improving FAFSA completion rates – and it’s free and easier than ever to complete and submit.”

The U.S. Department of Education awards approximately \$150 billion every year to help millions of students pay for college. This federal student aid is awarded in the form of grants, low-interest loans and work-study funds. In addition, many states and colleges use FAFSA information to determine eligibility for state and school aid, and some private financial aid providers may use FAFSA information to determine whether and applicant qualifies for their aid.

Today’s workshop provided students with an opportunity to learn about the FAFSA and fill out a form at the school. Currently, 3,300 students attend T.C. Williams High School, a fully accredited high school with an 86 percent on-time graduation rate. T.C. Williams supports a school-wide college-going environment through a range of programs and courses that help

students prepare for higher education and careers. The school has also implemented a targeted FAFSA completion strategy where counselors track which of their high school seniors have completed the FAFSA and target support to those who have not. In addition, the school hosts FAFSA sessions for students and parents on weeknight evenings and during the day on the weekends. T.C. is one of Virginia's largest high schools with one of the most diverse student populations in the state.

For more information and help with filling out the FAFSA, please visit:

<https://getschooled.com/>