



# 2022

## STUDENT VOICE SUMMIT REPORT

A diverse group of fifty high school students from Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee counties attended our annual Student Voice Summit event this year and shared their outlook on next steps after graduation. They also shared some of the biggest obstacles they face and offer possible solutions to help them and their classmates feel more confident in life after high school. We documented their reactions to data collected from recent FutureMakers Coalition reports to better understand their points of view based on their life experiences.

*The most common problems students are facing when deciding what to do after high school graduation and solutions to these problems, proposed by the students.*

## PROBLEMS

- Lack of accessible information about college and scholarships
- Time constraints
- Financial barriers to higher education
  - Feeling pressured and overwhelmed

## SOLUTIONS

- One-stop-shop for college information (website, workbook, etc.)
- Well-known scholarship resources
- More personalized assistance from counselors or mentors
  - Mental health support

# SCHOLARSHIPS

FAFSA rates have declined even though the most immediate need among students during the COVID-19 pandemic was scholarships. Students reported this is because:

- Information about FAFSA & financial aid is "sporadic or incomplete"
- Seniors are choosing, or are forced because of financial constraints, to enter the workforce right out of school instead of pursuing a credential
- Students with immigrant parents have trouble accessing necessary documents



## COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

We asked participants: Why do you think college enrollment declined in Fall 2020?

Family finances became a concern during the pandemic so it wasn't clear how the education would be paid for.

Breakdown in communication about financial aid, college, and career planning.

Students focused on high-paying jobs that do not require a credential beyond a high school diploma or GED.

Financial crisis fueled students' concerns about going into debt.

**48%** of SWFL employers say they **WOULD** pay higher starting salaries for employees with a credential, certificate, or certification. We asked the students if they knew this information:

### Those who haven't:

Said this helps them better understand the relationship between educational attainment and salary potential.



### Those who have:

Indicated the data encouraged them to consider pursuing a credential beyond high school.

### Everyone:

Stated this type of information should be better communicated by school counselors.

SALARIES

## GRADUATION RATES

What do you think explains the differences in high school graduation rates in Southwest Florida among races?

Two major themes emerged from the students' comments:



"Where do you even start?"

- A local high school student's response regarding struggles they're facing during preparation for life after high school.

1. Some schools do not have access to the same resources as other schools, such as teachers and support staff (e.g. translators).
2. Cultural differences often influence the value a student places on having an education vs. having a job and supporting their family.

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