



A Community for Completion

*Promising Practices to Increase Completion
in the Florida College System*

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From the desk of Narcissus Willis

Did You Know?

“On one day and one night in January 2013, local communities counted 45,364 persons who were living on the street, or in an emergency shelter.”

“Florida continues to have the third largest homeless population in the country; 8.7% of the nation’s homeless live in Florida.”

- [Council on Homelessness 2013 Report](#)

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Homeless Student Advising

Homelessness in Florida

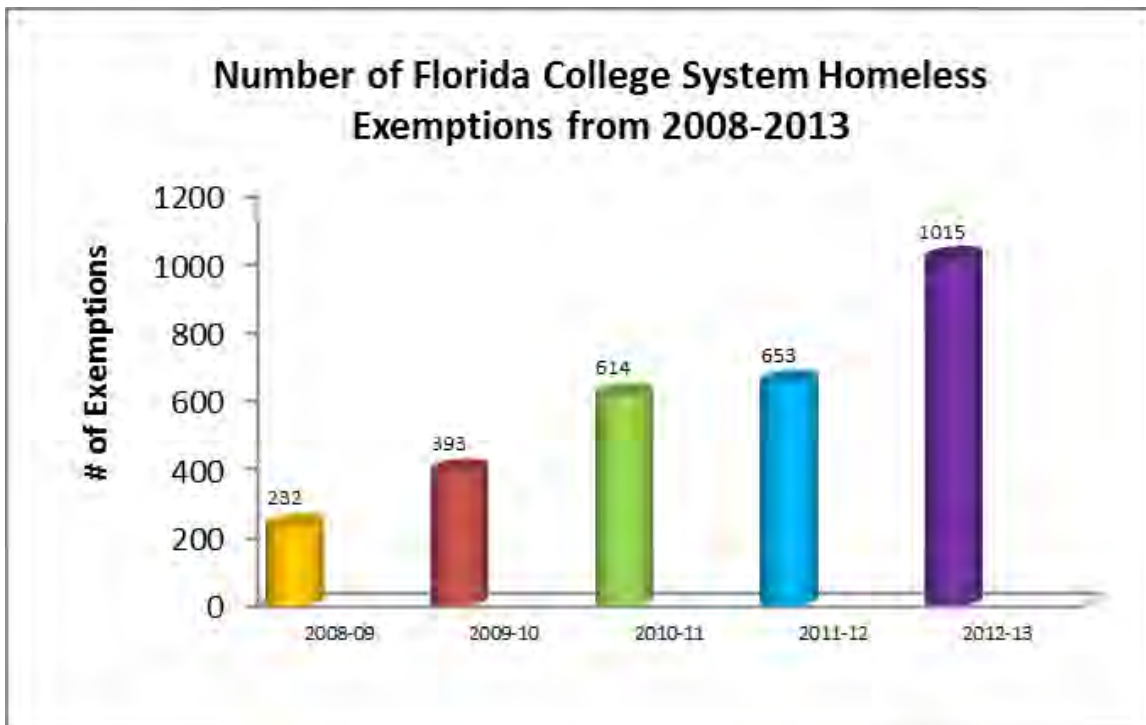
Since 2007, Florida has had one of the largest increases in homelessness (14.8 percent), according to the [2012 Annual Homeless Assessment Report, Volume 1](#), issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Nationally, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has identified families with children as the fastest growing homeless population. During the 2011-12 school year, 63,685 students were reported homeless in Florida’s public schools.

Educational assistance for the homeless

In Florida, we have legislation to assist students who are homeless with postsecondary education. Section 1009.25 (1)(f), Florida Statutes, *Fee exemptions*, identifies the following students as exempt from the payment of tuition and fees, including lab fees, at a school district that provides workforce education programs, Florida College System institution, or state university:

A student who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or whose primary nighttime residence is a public or private shelter designed to provide temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

Homeless Exemption Statistics



As can be seen from the chart above using unduplicated data, the number of homeless exemptions provided in the Florida College System have steadily increased each year to almost five times the number of exemptions reported in 2008. There were 1,015 exemptions granted on the basis of section 1009.25 (1)(f), Florida Statutes, in the 2012-13 school year.

Homeless Exemption Process

Florida Gateway College says: When homelessness is confirmed, the student completes the “Petition for Qualification of a Tuition/Fee Exemption Based on Homelessness” form. The student, with help from the enrollment management director, develops a timeline of circumstances leading up to the present situation of homelessness. All supporting documentation is helpful, including documentation of homelessness while enrolled in secondary education, which may be obtained from the district homeless liaison. The status of homelessness must be reviewed/re-approved each semester. A hold will be placed on students’ records preventing them from registering beyond the term in which the petition approval was granted.

Students receiving this exemption should be encouraged to begin establishing ties to Florida, such as by obtaining a Florida ID and voter’s registration, in order to qualify for in-state tuition rates should their circumstances change.

Palm Beach State College says: Students must lack adequate nighttime accommodations and must provide documentation that they have been using a homeless shelter or assistance for the homeless in order to be determined eligible. Students are ineligible to qualify for a homeless exemption if they have housing provided by a transition housing program.

Note: College policies and procedures vary for determining eligibility for the homeless exemption. There have been a growing number of students seeking this exemption, so it is important for each college to have a written policy regarding eligibility that includes acceptable documentation.

The Transition from High School to College for Homeless Students

How do you help facilitate the homeless students' transition from high school to college?

Quote of the Day

My vision is to “create a continuum of support ensuring students experiencing homelessness graduating from high school have access to higher education through collaborative efforts and practices that assist these students with enrollment and success by creating a bridge between high school and college.”

*– Ericka Remsberg,
Licensed Clinical
Social Worker &
Homeless Liaison
for Pasco County
Schools.*

Licensed Clinical Social Worker and homeless liaison for Pasco County Schools, Erika Remsberg, is an ardent advocate for homeless students in her county. This year there are more than 1,800 homeless students in Pasco County Schools. Of those students, 77 are seniors in high school and 24 plan to go to college.

In Santa Rosa County, Dr. Karen Barber, director of federal programs, and her team provide complete case management wrap-around services to homeless K12 students. Annually, students are taken to visit local colleges such as Pensacola State College to visit recruiters, admissions and financial aid offices.

In Pasco and Santa Rosa school districts, guidance counselors and homeless advocates personally help students with college applications, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the application to qualify for the fee exemption, and understanding residency requirements.

Both districts have even partnered with banks to purchase computers for the homeless students who successfully enroll in college.

The Transition from High School to College for Homeless Students

How can colleges help districts with advising homeless students' and facilitating their transition to college?

Ms. Remsberg stated that a direct line of communication with a college homeless liaison would be very helpful to districts, students and parents. Because homeless students may have limited transportation capabilities or computer access, it is imperative that the communication avenues be easy and efficient.

She applauded St. Petersburg College on its communication methods with the districts and students. She stated that its website was very helpful. She believes that if colleges post whom homeless students should contact and a checklist of what is needed to qualify for the fee exemption on their website, that it would mitigate some of the communication complications her district experiences.

Dr. Barber also reiterated that a specific person to contact at the college would significantly help students have a smooth transition.

Scholarship Opportunities for Homeless Students

LeTendre Education Fund for Homeless Children–

Through this fund, the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth provides scholarship assistance to students who are homeless or have experienced homelessness.

[2014 LeTendre Scholarship Application.](#)



Division of Florida Colleges

325 West Gaines Street
Suite 1544
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400

Phone: 850-245-0407
Fax: 850-245-9466

Visit us online at
<http://www.fldoe.org/fcs/>

Our Mission

The Division of Florida Colleges is a dynamic and responsive Department of Education team. We provide leadership and advocacy to promote education innovation and continuous improvement within the Florida College System, fueling economic development for the state of Florida and its citizens.

Our Vision

The Division of Florida Colleges will be the nation's leading advocate for postsecondary educational opportunity, access and student success. We help our colleges change the world!

February: Black History Month

In 1976, February was officially designated as Black History Month.

The question is not whether we can afford to invest in every child; it is whether we can afford not to.

-Marian Wright Edelman

The above quote appeared in *The Measure of Our Success* by author Marian Wright Edelman, a graduate of Spelman College and Yale Law, the first African American woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund and an advocate for disadvantaged Americans.

Call for Promising Practices

Do you have a topic or promising practice that you would like featured in one of our future issues?

If so, please email me, Narcissus Willis, at narcissus.willis@fldoe.org with a 50-100 word write-up of your topic or promising practice geared toward improving completion at your Florida College.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Next month's topic:
Textbook Affordability
