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Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara Conducts FAFSA Test at Santa Maria High School

Organization selected to conduct FAFSA beta testing for third consecutive year.

Santa Barbara, CA — Selected once again by the U.S. Department of Education to serve as an exclusive California test agent, the Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara hosted a community workshop in Santa Maria on August 7 to conduct testing of the latest iteration of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This is the third consecutive year that the Foundation has been selected to participate in the department's FAFSA assessment efforts.

Hosted at the Santa Maria High School Library, the four-and-a-half-hour workshop involved approximately 175 seniors, mostly from Santa Maria High, together with parents, siblings, Santa Maria High School counselors, and representatives from the Loyal Teach, Early Academic Outreach, and California Student Opportunity and Access programs. Federal Student Aid officials, outreach personnel from Allan Hancock College, and a representative from the Resilience, Education Adventure, Community, and Health (REACH) program were also on hand. One hundred sixty students successfully submitted 2027-28 FAFSA forms during the workshop, and participants reported no major issues with the application process.

"We are incredibly proud that the Scholarship Foundation, the Santa Maria community, and, most importantly, our local students were selected to represent California in this important national effort," said Foundation President and CEO Calen Ouellette. "Their participation is helping the U.S. Department of Education test and strengthen the FAFSA experience for students and families across the country. It is a remarkable opportunity for our community to have a voice in shaping a process that affects access to higher education nationwide, and it speaks to both the expertise of our

Foundation team and the tremendous engagement of the students, families, educators, and other partners here in Santa Maria.”

As was the case in 2025, the Scholarship Foundation was the only organization in California selected by the U.S. Department of Education to conduct FAFSA testing this year. In 2024, the Foundation was one of only six organizations nationwide selected to conduct FAFSA testing.

Required by virtually all organizations that provide college financial aid, the FAFSA in recent years was released on October 1, but the 2023 and 2024 iterations were delayed until December owing to technical problems, prompting the Department of Education to initiate annual testing by select organizations starting in 2024. This year, the department will revert to its former schedule and release the new FAFSA on October 1.

The Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara is the nation’s largest community-based provider of college scholarships, having cumulatively awarded in excess of \$175 million to more than 66,000 county students since its founding in 1962. A nonprofit organization, the Scholarship Foundation also provides free financial aid advising services. For additional information, visit www.sbscholarship.org.

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