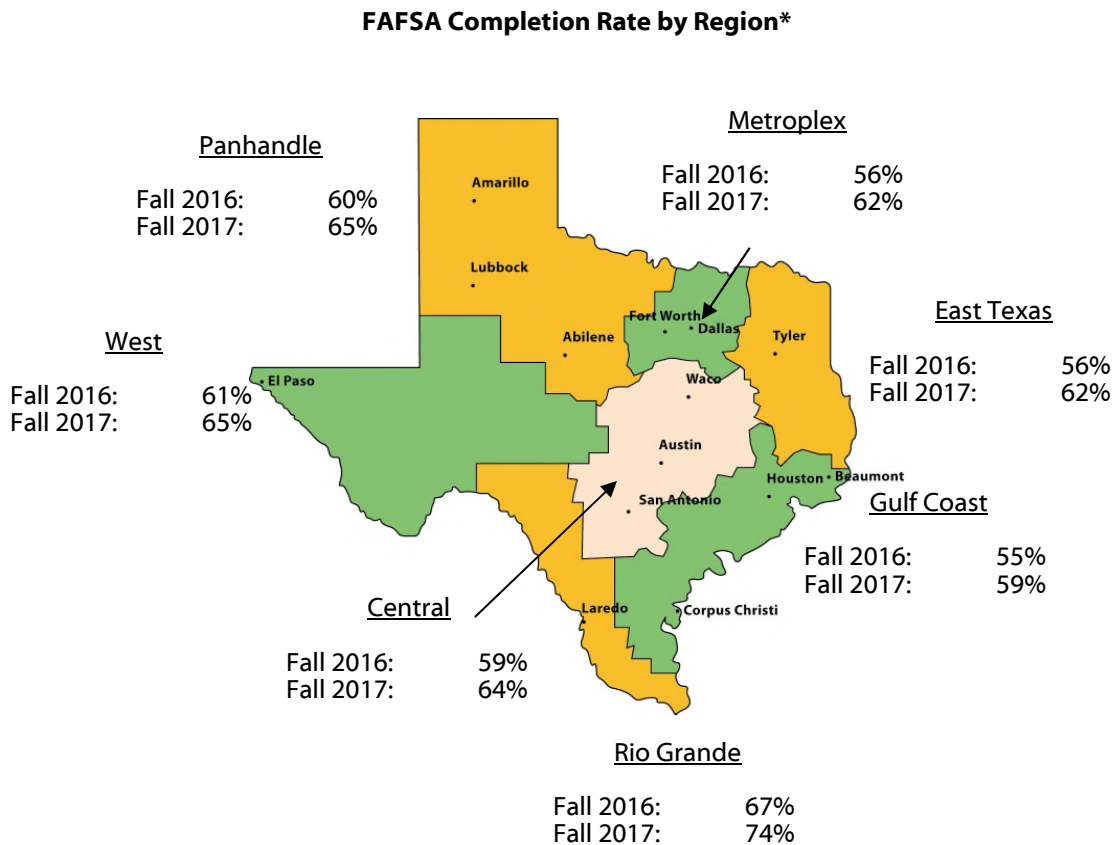


Rio Grande Valley Has Highest FAFSA Completion Rates in Texas



The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the standardized financial aid application used by nearly all colleges and universities to award all types of financial aid. The form is administered by the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA), part of the U.S. Department of Education. Many students and families do not realize that most colleges and universities use this form to award all financial aid, not only Federal loans and grants. By completing the FAFSA, students and their families may have access to more financial options and may be able to make more informed decisions about college enrollment. Because of the importance of filling out the FAFSA and the strong correlation between FAFSA completion and college attendance, FSA has made data on FAFSA completion available to high schools and the public.

Completion rates increased between the fall of 2016 and the fall of 2017, likely due largely to two things. First, the first day of FAFSA filing was moved up three months, allowing seniors to complete the form starting October 1, 2016, rather than January 1, 2017. And second, alongside this change, FAFSA filers are now able to use their prior-prior year tax information, as opposed to their prior year tax information, which would not be available for families to use until at least January. These changes have had obvious effects across Texas. All regions saw increases between 4 and 7 percentage points. At 74 percent, high school seniors in the Rio Grande Valley region had the highest FAFSA completion rate by October 2017.

* Fall 2016 represents the class of 2015-2016 high school seniors completing the FAFSA as of October 6, 2016; Fall 2017 represents the class of 2016-2017 high school seniors completing the FAFSA as of October 6, 2017.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal Student Aid, *FAFSA Completion by High School* (<http://studentaid.ed.gov/about/data-center/student/application-volume/afsa-completion-high-school>). Number of high school seniors from Texas Education Agency, special request.

