In addition to launching the FAFSA Completion Tool, the department is continuing to assist college access counselors by providing data about individual students to schools participating in its FAFSA Completion Pilot Project.

The U.S. Department of Education has released a new tool that will help high school counselors and school leaders by giving them a resource to monitor FAFSA completions and better help students access higher education.

School officials can now track FAFSA submission and completion statistics at individual high schools on the FAFSA Completion website, which will help them ensure that their students are filling out the FAFSA and therefore are able to determine their eligibility for federal student aid – a key factor in families' college decisions.

“We know that completing a FAFSA is a critical component of accessing higher education, and this data will be a key tool for high school guidance counselors and local officials,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “We hope that by providing this resource in the heart of FAFSA filing season we can empower school leaders as they assist students and families in preparing for college.”

Making the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) easier to use has been a key part of the Administration's effort to increase access to college and help the nation reach President Obama's goal to lead the world in college graduates by 2020.

In addition to determining eligibility for federal student aid, which includes Pell grants, federal student loans and work study opportunities, many states, institutions and private organizations rely on the FAFSA to determine eligibility for non-federal sources of aid, so filing a FAFSA has become the gateway to accessing funds for college.

Key studies have indicated that FAFSA completion correlates strongly with college enrollment, particularly among low-income populations.

College access professionals, guidance counselors, principals and high school educators have been increasingly requesting data from the department on how many FAFSAs their students have completed in their efforts to best assist students and their families and, in the past, the Department did not have the means to provide real-time, high school-specific data. School officials had to rely on self-reported rates of FAFSA submission and completion, which often were higher than actual rates. Through the FAFSA Completion Tool, which will be updated every two weeks, educators will have reliable data to track FAFSA submission and completion and gauge their progress in increasing FAFSA completion. School officials can determine their school-wide FAFSA completion rate by comparing the number provided by the FAFSA Completion Tool with the number of seniors in their high school.

In addition to launching the FAFSA Completion Tool, the department is continuing to assist college access counselors by providing data about individual students to schools participating in its FAFSA Completion Pilot Project.

The FAFSA pilot project provides individualized FAFSA completion data to 20 sites across the country so that each site can focus its resources on students who have not completed the FAFSA and make FAFSA completion a component of a comprehensive college- and career-ready strategy. The department announced plans this year to expand the project to include 92 additional sites for the 2012-13 school year based on the popularity of the innovative pilot.

To access FAFSA submission and completion data for every high school, visit: www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov/datacenter/fafsahs.html