

The Kickoff Event was hosted at the Graduate! Philadelphia Center. View photos at www.flickr.com/photos/graduatephiladelphia/sets/



Posted on Wed, Feb. 4, 2009

Students to get help filling out aid forms

By Kristen A. Graham

Inquirer Staff Writer

In an effort to get more Philadelphians to college, officials last night announced a campaign to help students and parents fill out federal financial-aid forms.

No new money is going to fund the "Philly Goes 2 College" initiative. Rather, city and school district employees and other volunteers will be sent to schools, college access centers, and information sessions around the city.

Over \$100 billion in federal aid is available for college, officials said, but many city residents who qualify miss out because they don't - or can't - complete the paperwork.

Mayor Nutter has made college attainment a key platform of his administration, and has vowed to double the number of residents with a higher education.

Currently, just 18 percent of all Philadelphians 25 and older have a college degree. That rate places the city near the bottom of all big cities in college attainment.

District Superintendent Arlene Ackerman pledged her support for the campaign last night. School district staff members have helped more than 300 students fill out forms since January, officials said.

"I know the forms are complicated, but that's why we have trained professionals to help you," she said. "We're here to make college more than a possibility for you."

In order to qualify for federal and state financial assistance for the upcoming school year, students must fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by June 30. Because some schools and agencies have earlier deadlines, students are advised to complete the forms as soon as possible.

Staff and volunteers will be available to help with financial-aid forms from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at Community College of Philadelphia's Northwest campus, 1300 W. Godfrey Ave. People needing help should bring official documents, including: government-issued IDs, W-2 forms, Social Security numbers, federal income-tax returns, and records of untaxed income.

Other events will be held throughout the spring.

For more information, visit www.phillygoes2college.com or call 215-686-2169.