

Sandra C. Roa, Ph.D.

WORK SAMPLES

1. Florida College Access Network

Assistant Director of Communications, 2023-25

2. IMAGININGS

Arts Against Dehumanization, Co-Founder

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

I am a digital communications professional and communication scholar with more than 15 years of experience working at the intersection of journalism, communications, and digital media in academic, nonprofit, and newsroom environments. I specialize in multimedia storytelling, graphic design, social media management, email and newsletter production. I have a strong passion for arts-based research and social justice.

FLORIDA COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK

Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is a statewide movement of education and policy leaders collaboratively working to ensure all Floridians can achieve an education beyond high school and prosper.

PLAY



2024 Student Advocacy Fellows

Story: Students visit state legislators to advocate for improved education policies that support underrepresented students.

PLAY



Talent Strong Florida | Tampa Bay

Video: Legislative leaders and students share their views and experiences with education policy and about the value of higher education.

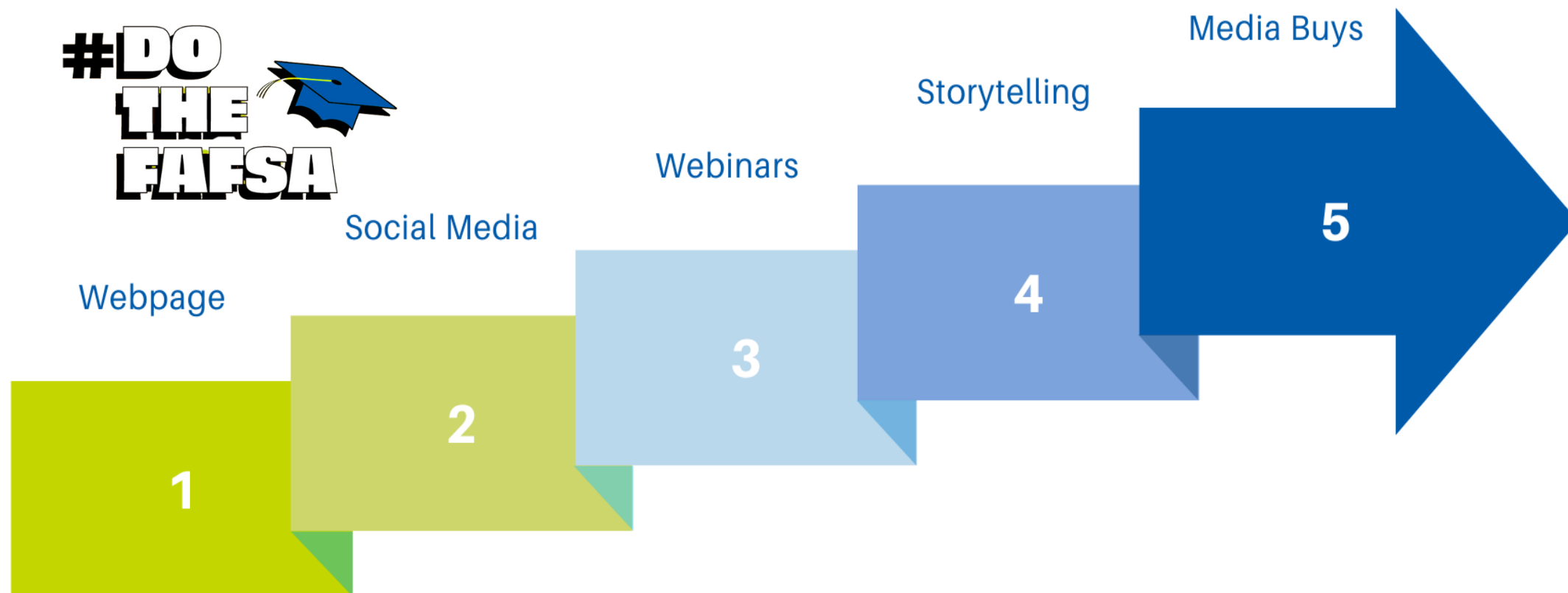
PLAY



Talent Strong Florida | Sarasota

Story: Sarasota community leaders launch career and college readiness goals.

MY ROLE: Led all communication efforts to engage audiences online and in person. My responsibilities included: hosting storytelling workshops to increase partner capacity, multimedia storytelling to raise awareness on how education policy can improve, social media management, media relations, and event organizing.



MY ROLE: I led a social marketing campaign during the 2024-25 Free Application for Financial Student Aid (FAFSA) cycle after a botched update, which affected students nationwide. In Florida, I strategized and oversaw the implementation of a \$250K grant from the Department of Education to educate communities and students on how to complete the simplified form.



Florida's College Access Organizations Rally to Boost FAFSA Completion

Jul 11, 2024 | [News](#)

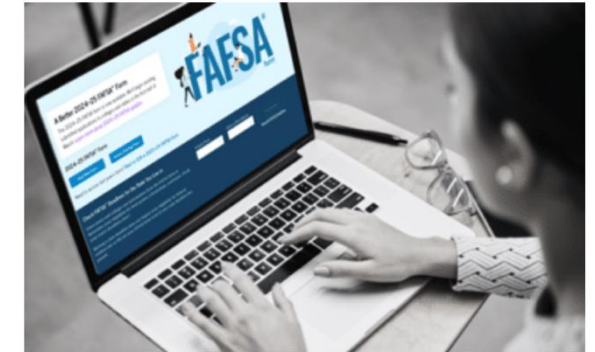
The #DotheFAFSA campaign aims to reach Class of 2024 high school seniors Florida's community coalitions are rallying around the #DoTheFAFSA messaging campaign to encourage more seniors to complete the 2024-25 Free Application for Federal Student Financial Aid (FAFSA)...



Citrus County Coalition Helps Students Complete Their FAFSA

Aug 13, 2024 | [News](#)

Throughout the summer, Citrus County students experiencing errors with their 2024-25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form turned to a local phone number for help. "People called me at the weirdest times," said Madison Beauregard, a freshman at the...



Key Takeaways from "Summer FAFSA Strategies: How Florida Closed Gaps for the Class of 2024" Webinar

Sep 20, 2024 | [Events](#)

Florida's college access community rallied this summer to boost FAFSA completion rates for the Class of 2024, overcoming significant challenges posed by a delayed rollout. The Florida College Access Network (FCAN) recently convened key partners to showcase strategies...

MY ROLE: Wrote stories that aligned with the organization's mission and raised awareness of opportunities to improve education policy by highlighting data and best practices that led to better outcomes.

BILLBOARDS



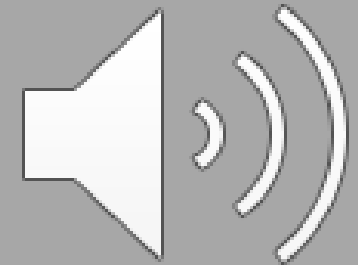
SOCIAL MEDIA



Trilingual Assets



RADIO



Talent Strong Florida is an ongoing statewide communications campaign designed to inform, educate, and raise awareness of the benefits of access to high-value credentials and degrees during and beyond high school.



❖ [Website](#)

❖ [Email campaigns](#)

❖ [Toolkit](#)

❖ [Newsletters](#)

❖ [Regional factsheets](#)

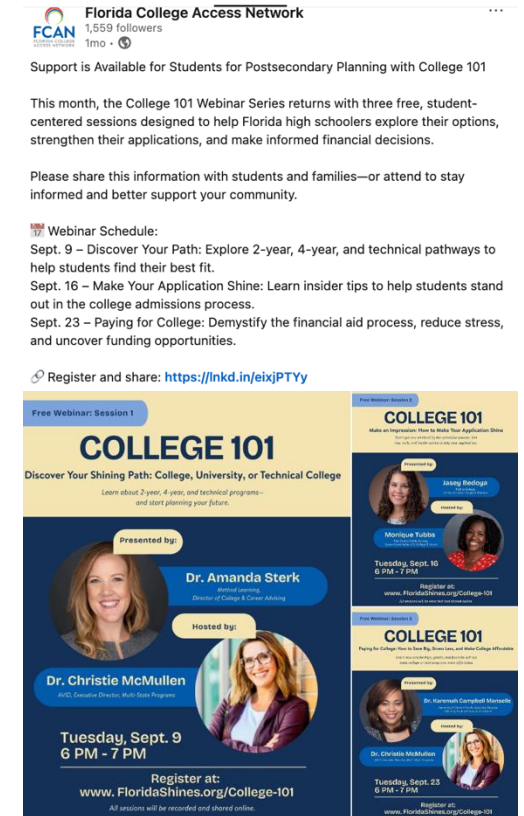
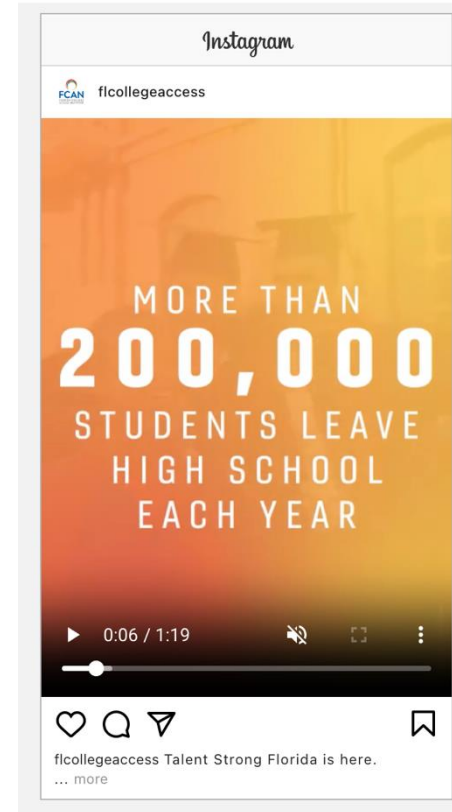
❖ [Videos](#)

❖ [Media engagement](#)

❖ [Event Marketing](#)

❖ [Social Media](#)

MY ROLE: I partnered with our network partners to leverage relevant data and community-focused economic impact information that supported the value of the college degree and its alignment with in-demand high-level skills, labor market informed pathways, and collaboration between higher education, business, philanthropy, economic development, and workforce development.



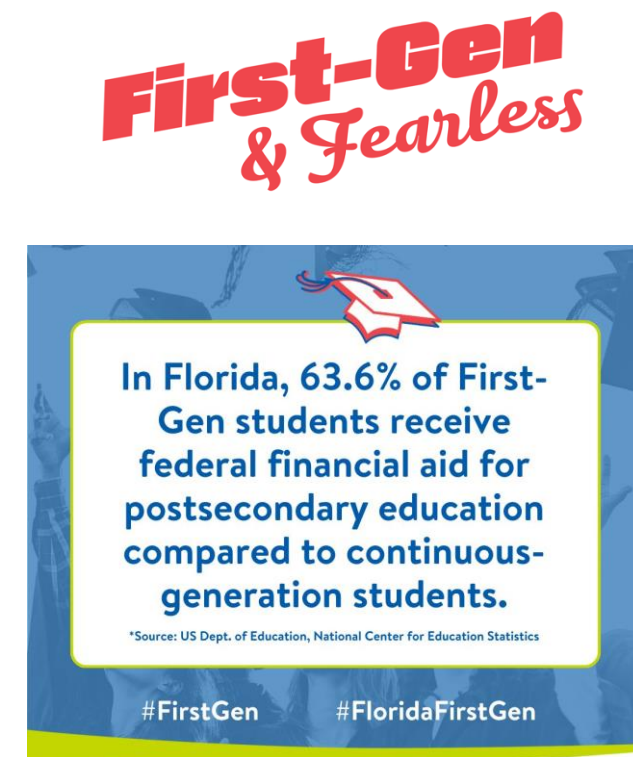
MY ROLE: I designed audience-specific social media content across all channels targeting statewide partners, legislators, education and business leaders, and students. Nearly all posts engagement was organic leading to increased followers, reach, and shares.



[LINK](#)



[LINK](#)



FLORIDA
COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK

MY ROLE: On the left, I used student interviews and photos to create graphic assets that promoted the *Talent Strong Florida* campaign. Right, I co-created a storytelling initiative, *First-Gen and Fearless*, with statewide partners to support first generation students. I developed a logo, assets, digital toolkits, and social media posts text.

Press Releases



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Jan 22, 2025

Contact: Sandra C. Roa
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Registration opens for FCAN's Talent Strong Florida Summit: May 5-7, 2025
~ Advancing Florida's future by aligning local talent with workforce needs through increased postsecondary education attainment. ~
[Press Kit](#)

TAMPA, FLA. — Registration opens today for Florida College Access Network's (FCAN) annual [Talent Strong Florida Summit](#) taking place May 5-7, at the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress Resort in Orlando.

This year's summit theme "Higher Education, Higher Rewards", underscores the critical role of postsecondary education in supporting Florida's economic growth and addressing workforce demands. The summit draws focus to the fiscal, societal, and individual benefits of higher education while highlighting the urgency of increasing college enrollment to meet Florida's growing needs.

"Recent reports spotlight sustained and robust economic growth across Florida's regions, emphasizing the demand for a highly skilled workforce," said Braulio Colón, FCAN's executive director. "Education beyond high school is essential for ensuring Florida residents reap the benefits of Florida's dynamic and growing economy. We remain committed to ensuring all students and residents have access to opportunities that prepare them to thrive and contribute to Florida's future prosperity."

Currently, 54.5% of Florida residents aged 25-64 hold a postsecondary degree or credential¹. However, most jobs in Florida will require a degree or high-value credential by the year 2031².

"Overall, Florida has made progress during the last decade, yet demographic trends, projections around enrollment, and the complexity of our regional economies suggest there's a need to be more intentional to ensure all students are prepared and supported," said Colón.

The Talent Strong Florida Summit will convene education leaders, policymakers, and community stakeholders from across Florida to discuss actionable strategies for improving

¹ Lumina Foundation, (n.d.). *Stronger nation*. <https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/#/progress/state/FL>
² Georgetown University, (2023). *After everything: Projections of jobs, education, and training requirements through 2031*. <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections2031-National-Report.pdf>

Thought Leadership

OPINION > COMMENTARY

Florida has billions to gain by making college more affordable. Here's how
| Opinion



Ricardo Ramirez Buxeda / Orlando 5
Students celebrate their graduation while onstage at the University of Central Florida Spring 2019 Graduation Ceremony for the College of Community Innovation Education at the Addition Financial Arena, on Friday, May 3, 2019.

By BRAULIO COLÓN
PUBLISHED: March 17, 2025 at 5:42 AM EDT

SOUTH FLORIDA
SunSentinel

A growing chorus of skeptics question whether a college education is still the "golden ticket" to the American dream. Yet [more than 70%](#) of Americans still believe in the value of college, according to a survey by New America. Despite its detractors, college remains the pathway with the most promise for Americans' economic mobility. College-educated Americans enjoy higher lifetime earnings — almost a million dollars more than their high school-educated peers — greater job stability and a better quality of life.

An important factor often overlooked in the college value debate is the fact that a college-educated workforce reaps billions in economic benefits for our state. A [recent report](#) by the Helios Education Foundation found that increasing college enrollment by just 10% would generate \$8.38 billion more revenue annually for Florida. Increasing college completion by 20% would generate \$7.59 billion. That's billions of dollars more for Florida each year; revenue that benefits everyone who calls Florida home.



Braulio Colón is executive director at the Florida College Access Network. (courtesy, Braulio Colón)

Florida's business community also has an important stake in a well-educated workforce. The Florida Council of 100 [reports](#) that Florida's diversifying economy is moving away from low-wage sectors toward relatively high-wage ones. The Florida Chamber of Commerce's Top 30 High Demand Careers all require higher education, 43% of them a bachelor's degree.

Florida is doing a lot of things right to build the workforce of tomorrow. The U.S. News & World Report has ranked Florida No. 1 in the nation in higher education for eight years running. One of Gov. Ron DeSantis' first acts in office was to issue an executive order calling to make Florida the best in the nation in workforce education. A few years back, the Florida Legislature set a goal for at least 60% of working-age Floridians to hold a postsecondary degree, credential or training experience by 2030. In recent years, our legislature has enacted a number of policies to make a postsecondary education within the reach of more Floridians, such as increased access to dual enrollment courses and new career pathway programs that "stack" technical certificates toward college credits and degrees.

MY ROLE: I increased visibility using earned media by leveraging FCAN's *Talent Strong Florida* campaign and the CEO's thought leadership. These materials bridge the higher education with economic growth and talent demand.

Dual enrollment: Impacting students' career and college readiness

Eighteen-year-old Mason Fisher was not your typical high school senior. Each day, at 5:30 am, he shouldered the weight of his future career as he walked to his bus stop. Among his essential tools were a hefty 20-pound tool bag, a protective helmet, and a flame-resistant jacket, which he paid for with his part-time salary.

Fisher's early morning journey was part of his participation in [Pinellas County's dual enrollment program](#), which offers eligible high school students the opportunity to earn elective credits towards their high school diploma, a career technical certificate, and a degree program.

While enrolled in [Pinellas Technical College \(PTC\) – St. Petersburg Campus](#), Fisher's senior year put him on a career pathway in [welding technology](#). Once Fisher completes the program, he plans to become a certified Flux Core Arc professional and work in the fabrication, repair, or construction industry.

As Florida continues to expand its population and the need to rebuild aging infrastructure increases, Fisher's welding expertise will keep him busy.

"I can't sit down for too long. I get all antsy. I like to do stuff with my hands; that's why I'm here," Fisher said.



Mason Fishers welds inside the Pinellas Technical College's Welding Technologies workshop. (Photo by Sandra C. Roa.)

According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects, there will be approximately 47,600 job openings annually for welders and similar experts over the next decade. Once Fisher is ready, his entry-level wage in Florida can be as high as \$46,000 a year, depending on the employer, according to [Indeed](#). If Fisher chooses, he can pursue more industry certifications to increase his salary; otherwise, Fisher's career and income growth will be limited by the very nature of his craft.

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Dual enrollment programs expand access to college-level coursework for middle and high school students who might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience college-level classes. Research shows that when students attain education beyond high school, there are significant benefits. According to the [2022 Florida TaxWatch Report](#), workers with high-quality credentials or postsecondary degrees receive higher wages, enjoy better health, and contribute more to their communities. Dual enrollment is an acceleration program that affords high school students with multiple opportunities to pursue career pathways while reducing the expense of obtaining a certification or credits that can count towards a degree. The school district pays for tuition and textbooks.

“If we can expose kids at an earlier age, as juniors and seniors, then they can get an early start on a career path,” said Christopher Blackwell, a recruiter at PTC.

Many students enrolled in the dual enrollment program at PTC rely on financial assistance. This program appeals to those residing in low-income communities who aim to fulfill their high school requirements while simultaneously preparing for their future careers.

Upon high school graduation, most students must re-enroll as adult students to complete their program and pass the tests required to earn a career certification. For students who are interested in pursuing an academic degree, dual enrollment serves as a bridge.

Certain course hours completed can be used as transferable credits within the Florida College System and State University System. In this way, dual enrollment provides a non-traditional pathway that leads to career and college readiness while also alleviating the financial burden associated with higher education.

Some students leverage dual enrollment to enter certificate programs that leads directly into a career pathway—Fisher’s next step, is to apprentice with the steelworker’s union.

IMAGININGS

Presented by Arts Against Dehumanization, this collective art project is a way of resisting authoritarianism by asking creative thinkers to draw from lived experience, humanity, and desire to visualize a better future.

PROMPT: Share your reflections in whatever form feels most relevant, including a favorite quote, data point or research insight, quick snapshot of a reflective moment, or a short phrase/poem.



MY ROLE: Designed project, flyer, logo and communication strategy. *Notes:* (Left) The Arts Against Dehumanization logo balancing circles with lines to symbolize the community and social connections. (Right) The flyer uses constructivist aesthetics to convey a social movement.

Sandra C. Roa, Ph.D.

ONLINE PORTFOLIO

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Thank you!