National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

Getting Started: State Advocacy

© 2021 NASFAA

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

 © 2021 NASFAA

Agenda

- The Basics: What is Advocacy?
- First Steps: Develop Core Advocacy Principles
- Take Action: The State Advocacy Toolkit

 © 2021 NASFAA

Advocacy 101: What is advocacy?

advocacy

the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal;
the act or process of advocating something

advocate

a person who argues for or supports a cause or policy

 © 2021 NASFAA

Why does advocacy matter?

Your voice matters!

During this time of heightened partisanship, it's more important than ever to make sure your voice is heard in policy debates – especially on issues that could affect you on a daily basis

Members of the legislature and their staff are most interested in the day-to-day concerns of their constituents in their states and districts

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

 © 2021 NASFAA

Advocacy Basics

- Advocacy is not always lobbying, lobbying is always advocacy
- You don't need to be in Washington, D.C. or your state capital to be an effective advocate
- Advocacy can and should be **proactive** and **reactive**
- Effective advocacy uses data, research, and stories

 © 2021 NASFAA

First Steps: Develop Core Advocacy Principles

 © 2021 NASFAA

Advocacy Principles

- Defines key issues of importance
- Serves as a framework for advocacy
- Helps to prioritize engagement on issues

 © 2021 NASFAA

Develop "Core Advocacy Principles"

- Questions to consider?
  - What is the mission of your organization
  - What is important to your association?
  - What do you believe in?
  - What major issues keep coming up at the state level?

- Tips:
  - Narrow your focus—too many principles dilutes what is truly important (4-5 is optimal)
  - Don't get so specific that you box yourself in, but be broad enough that one principle could capture multiple issues

 © 2021 NASFAA

NASFAA Core Advocacy Principles

- Increasing access to higher education, including early awareness and outreach
- Simplifying student aid systems
- Encouraging college persistence & completion
- Promoting college savings and financial education
- Minimizing student indebtedness and emphasizing grant and work aid
- Supporting the primacy of need-based aid

 © 2021 NASFAA

Sample Issue – State Grant Budgetary Concerns

Citing budgetary concerns due to COVID-19, your legislature is considering modifying the state grant so that it would only cover, at maximum, 75 percent of tuition.

 © 2021 NASFAA

Exercise: Develop Advocacy Plan/Materials

1. Does this issue fall within the scope of your advocacy principles? If so, which one(s)?

2. After you have evaluated the issue, let's review the State Advocacy Toolkit to determine what resources and materials can support your advocacy efforts.

 © 2021 NASFAA

Take Action: The State Advocacy Toolkit

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

 © 2021 NASFAA

State Advocacy Toolkit Components

User Guide

The User Guide includes advocacy tips, instructions on how to contact your state representatives, and more!

Letter and Email Templates

Letter and Email templates that can be customized with your information before sending to your state lawmakers.

Talking Points

The talking points outline and give examples of the importance of state financial aid programs.

Student Advocacy Manual

The Student Advocacy Manual provides resources for students to support their advocacy efforts.

State Legislation Activity Form

The State Legislation Activity Form is for you to share any proposed, pending or recently passed legislation that could impact the financial aid community in your state, or to simply update us on percolating issues.

ECS State Education Policy Tracker

A resource to track postsecondary education bills that have been introduced at the state level. The tool allows users to search legislation by state, issue area, or bill status.

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

 © 2021 NASFAA

State Advocacy Toolkit: User Guide

The User Guide features detailed steps on how to find your local lawmaker, how to develop your message, and tips for effective advocacy.

- Find Your Representatives
- Develop Your Message
- Tips for Effective Advocacy
- Maintain the Relationship

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

Find Your Representative

- Go to OpenStates.org
- Enter your Zip Code
  - You will find out who your local lawmakers are
- If your primary residence is in a different district than the district your institution is located in, you might consider reaching out to representatives from both districts.

 © 2021 NASFAA

 © 2021 NASFAA

Tips for Effective Advocacy

1. Keep it **local**
2. Keep it **personal**
3. Keep their position in **mind**
4. Keep it **factual**
5. Keep **informed**

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

Tips for Effective Advocacy

Do...

- Clearly state who you are representing
- Show gratitude for something specific
- Share your information, but also listen
- Be concise
- Ask for support on something specific
- Focus on students
- Have some "fast facts" and data about your school and student population

Do Not...

- Suggest cutting other programs to pay for student aid increases
- Engage in political discussion
- Answer a question for which you do not know the answer

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

 © 2021 NASFAA

Develop Your Message

Letter/Email Templates

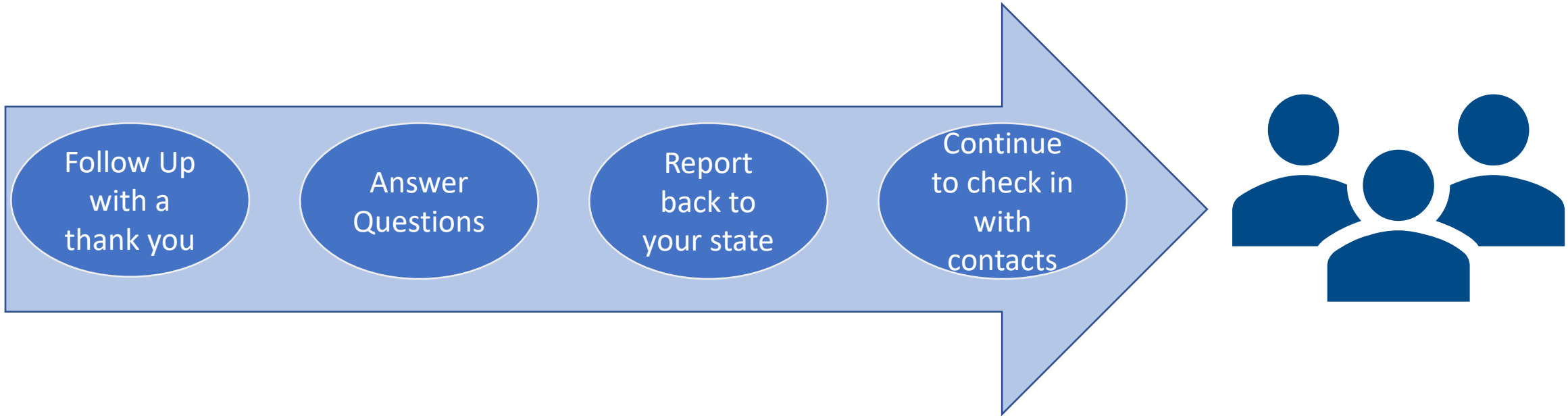
Talking Points

School-Specific Data

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

 © 2021 NASFAA

Maintain the Relationship



 © 2021 NASFAA

State Advocacy Toolkit Components

User Guide

The User Guide includes advocacy tips, instructions on how to contact your state representatives, and more!

Letter and Email Templates

Letter and Email templates that can be customized with your information before sending to your state lawmakers.

Talking Points

The talking points outline and give examples of the importance of state financial aid programs.

Student Advocacy Manual

The Student Advocacy Manual provides resources for students to support their advocacy efforts.

State Legislation Activity Form

The State Legislation Activity Form is for you to share any proposed, pending or recently passed legislation that could impact the financial aid community in your state, or to simply update us on percolating issues.

ECS State Education Policy Tracker

A resource to track postsecondary education bills that have been introduced at the state level. The tool allows users to search legislation by state, issue area, or bill status.

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

State Advocacy: Letter and Email Templates

- This letter and email template can be modified to fit your institution/association and topic matter.

- The template letter focuses on funding and can be customized with your information before sending to your lawmakers.

Subject: Support of [State Grant Program]

Dear Lawmaker [Last Name]:

On behalf of the [State/Regional Association or Institution], we thank you for your continued support of [state] students' pursuit of a postsecondary education. [State/Regional Association] is an organization of professional financial aid administrators committed to instituting and promoting activities that provide financial aid and support to students and their families.

We write to urge you to fully fund the [state grant/loan program], as it has served a critical role in opening the doors to educational opportunities for students in [state]. These programs support [total number of postsecondary students] students at [total number of institutions] diverse institutions of higher education within our [state], including [total number of] Federal Pell Grant recipients. During the [last aid year], the [State Grant Program] provided [$_ million] to [total number] of low-income students.

As financial aid professionals in [state], we call on you to continue to make higher education accessible and affordable. Given the range of students who benefit from the [state grant programs], it is vital that these programs receive robust and continued funding to support students in an evolving higher education landscape. We understand there are many competing priorities for the state, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, but higher education is an investment with proven, long-term returns for both individual students and our state's economy. The pandemic's impact on the earnings and financial stability of students and families, particularly those who are low-income, makes the [state grant program name] more important than ever in ensuring students have the resources needed to enroll this fall.

Our organization would be delighted to answer any questions you may have or discuss this issue further. We look forward to working with you on [state grant program] funding and other postsecondary issues as the fiscal [year] budget moves forward. Thank you for all that you do for [state] students.

Sincerely,

[Your name and contact information]

 © 2021 NASFAA

State Advocacy Toolkit Components

User Guide

The User Guide includes advocacy tips, instructions on how to contact your state representatives, and more!

Letter and Email Templates

Letter and Email templates that can be customized with your information before sending to your state lawmakers.

Talking Points

The talking points outline and give examples of the importance of state financial aid programs.

Student Advocacy Manual

The Student Advocacy Manual provides resources for students to support their advocacy efforts.

State Legislation Activity Form

The State Legislation Activity Form is for you to share any proposed, pending or recently passed legislation that could impact the financial aid community in your state, or to simply update us on percolating issues.

ECS State Education Policy Tracker

A resource to track postsecondary education bills that have been introduced at the state level. The tool allows users to search legislation by state, issue area, or bill status.

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

State Advocacy: Talking Points

NASFAA has developed a set of talking points that outline the importance of state financial aid programs.

General Talking Points	Impact on College Enrollment and Attainment
Focus on the critical role that state aid programs play in promoting student access and success, placing particular emphasis on the importance of these programs amid the COVID-19 pandemic.	Highlight research demonstrating the effectiveness of specific state aid programs in improving higher education access and attainment for in-state students

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

 © 2021 NASFAA

State Advocacy Toolkit Components

User Guide

The User Guide includes advocacy tips, instructions on how to contact your state representatives, and more!

Letter and Email Templates

Letter and Email templates that can be customized with your information before sending to your state lawmakers.

Talking Points

The talking points outline and give examples of the importance of state financial aid programs.

Student Advocacy Manual

The Student Advocacy Manual provides resources for students to support their advocacy efforts.

State Legislation Activity Form

The State Legislation Activity Form is for you to share any proposed, pending or recently passed legislation that could impact the financial aid community in your state, or to simply update us on percolating issues.

ECS State Education Policy Tracker

A resource to track postsecondary education bills that have been introduced at the state level. The tool allows users to search legislation by state, issue area, or bill status.

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

 © 2021 NASFAA

Engage Students in your Advocacy Efforts

To include students in your advocacy efforts, you should look for students who are engaged in the campus community and are invested in maintaining state aid programs.

[Download Student Advocacy Manual (PDF)]

Engaging the students who benefit from state student aid programs can be an extremely effective tool when advocating for robust funding. Gather student testimonials with permission to share.

You may consider reaching out to the student government association, student groups that work with education issues, or Federal Work-Study students in your office.

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

 © 2021 NASFAA

Student Advocacy Manual Includes

- Advocacy Tips
- Sample Script for phone call
- How to find/contact state representatives
- Leveraging Social Media
- Letter/email templates
- Creating a social media campaign

This resource can be shared with students to support state student aid advocacy efforts.

Download Manual (PDF)

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

 © 2021 NASFAA

State Advocacy Toolkit Components

User Guide

The User Guide includes advocacy tips, instructions on how to contact your state representatives, and more!

Letter and Email Templates

Letter and Email templates that can be customized with your information before sending to your state lawmakers.

Talking Points

The talking points outline and give examples of the importance of state financial aid programs.

Student Advocacy Manual

The Student Advocacy Manual provides resources for students to support their advocacy efforts.

State Legislation Activity Form

The State Legislation Activity Form is for you to share any proposed, pending or recently passed legislation that could impact the financial aid community in your state, or to simply update us on percolating issues.

ECS State Education Policy Tracker

A resource to track postsecondary education bills that have been introduced at the state level. The tool allows users to search legislation by state, issue area, or bill status.

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

State Legislation Activity Form

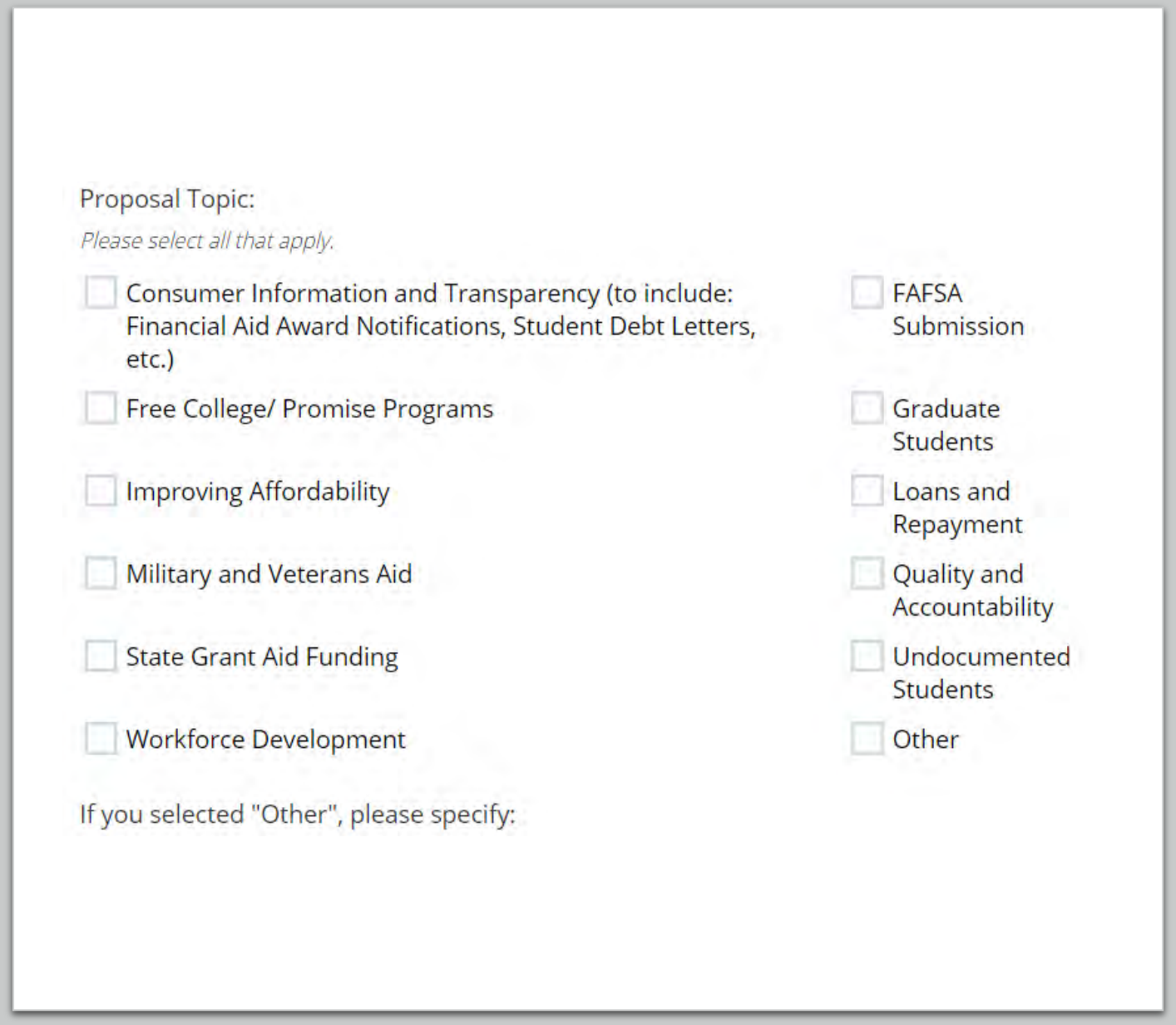
As NASFAA becomes more engaged in state policy and advocacy, we want to hear from you!

The State Legislation Activity form is for you to share any proposed, pending or recently passed legislation that could impact the financial aid community in your state, or to simply update us on percolating issues.

 ©
2021 NASFAA

State Legislation Activity Form

- You are our eyes and ears as we work to have a greater influence in student aid policy across the country.
- This information will help us better track proposals and trends in state student aid policy.
- State Legislation Activity Form



Proposal Topic:

Please select all that apply.

- [ ] Consumer Information and Transparency (to include: Financial Aid Award Notifications, Student Debt Letters, etc.)
- [ ] Free College/ Promise Programs
- [ ] Improving Affordability
- [ ] Military and Veterans Aid
- [ ] State Grant Aid Funding
- [ ] Workforce Development
- [ ] FAFSA Submission
- [ ] Graduate Students
- [ ] Loans and Repayment
- [ ] Quality and Accountability
- [ ] Undocumented Students
- [ ] Other

If you selected "Other", please specify:

 © 2021 NASFAA

State Advocacy Toolkit Components

User Guide

The User Guide includes advocacy tips, instructions on how to contact your state representatives, and more!

Letter and Email Templates

Letter and Email templates that can be customized with your information before sending to your state lawmakers.

Talking Points

The talking points outline and give examples of the importance of state financial aid programs.

Student Advocacy Manual

The Student Advocacy Manual provides resources for students to support their advocacy efforts.

State Legislation Activity Form

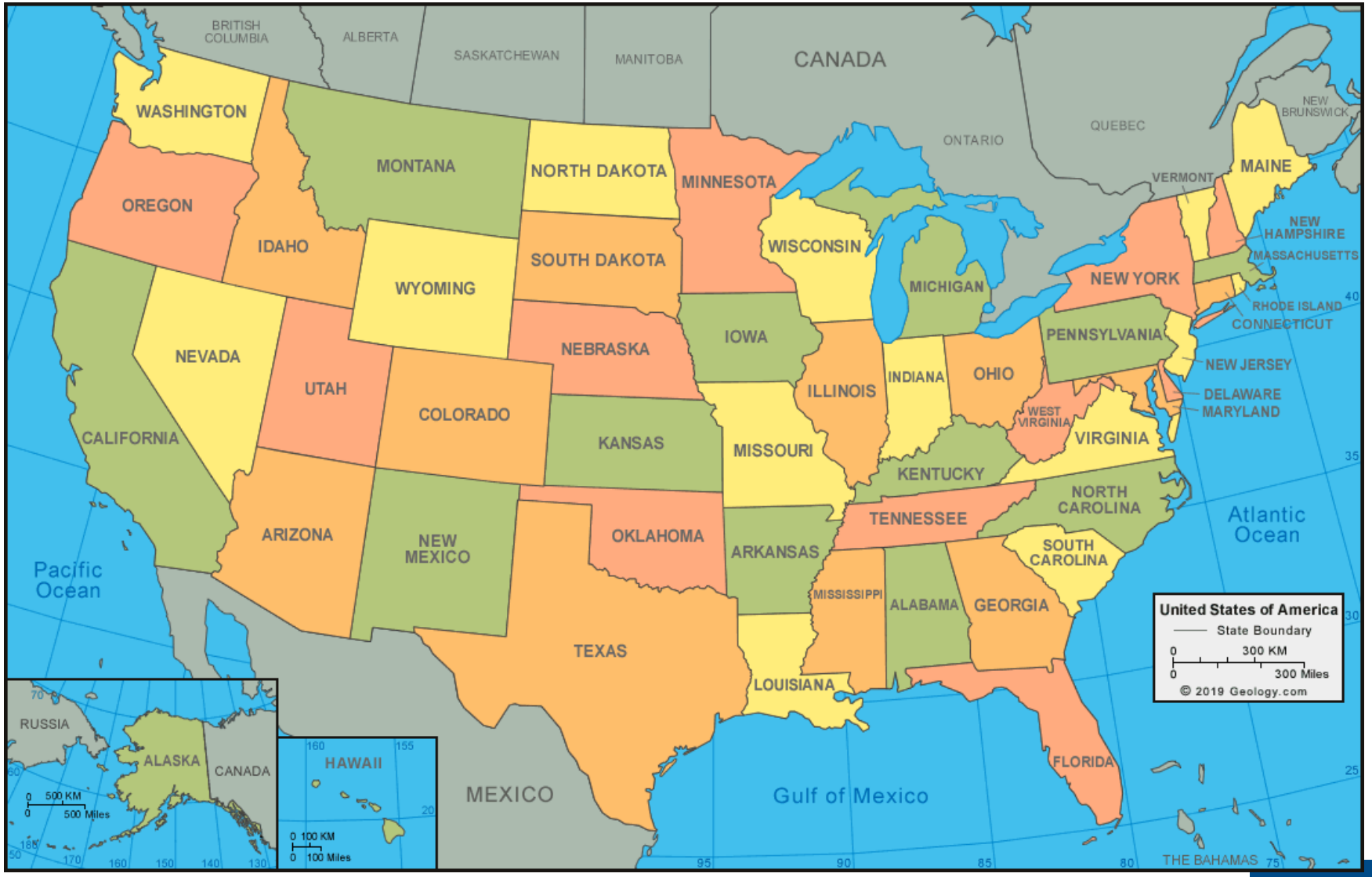
The State Legislation Activity Form is for you to share any proposed, pending or recently passed legislation that could impact the financial aid community in your state, or to simply update us on percolating issues.

ECS State Education Policy Tracker

A resource to track postsecondary education bills that have been introduced at the state level. The tool allows users to search legislation by state, issue area, or bill status.

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

 © 2021 NASFAA



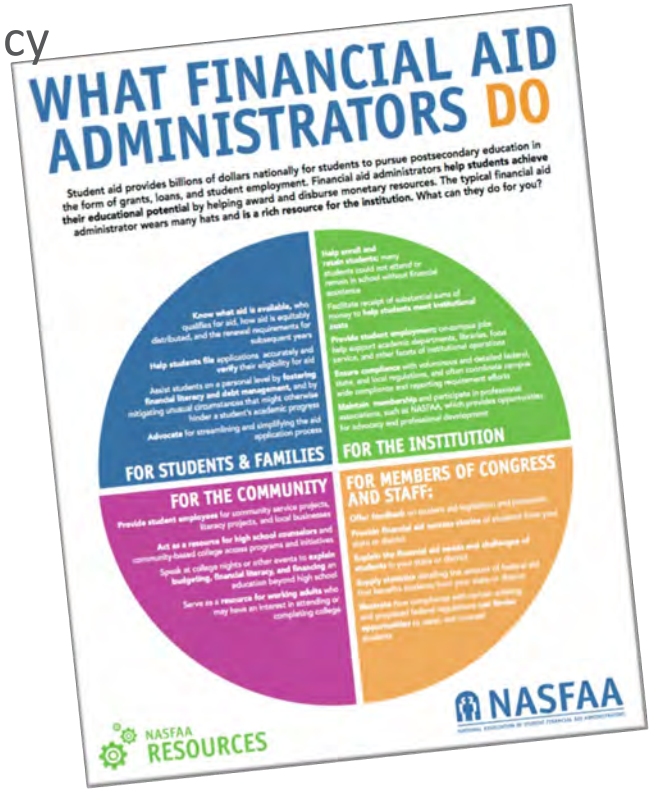
(Photo from geology.com, 2020)

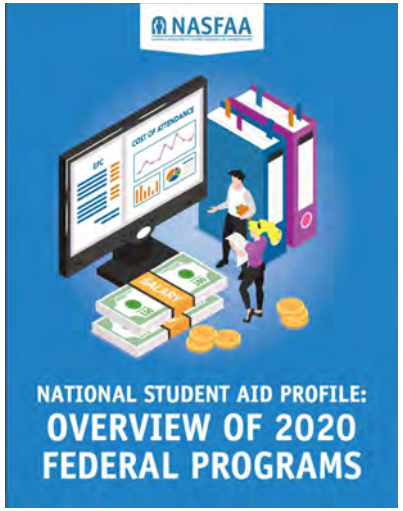
NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

NASFAA Advocacy Resources

The State Advocacy Toolkit also includes several existing NASFAA Resources that are helpful to advocacy efforts:

- NASFAA Advocacy Resources
- NASFAA Advocacy Web Page
- NASFAA Core Advocacy Principles
- NASFAA COVID-19 Web Center
- What Financial Aid Administrators Do





 © 2021 NASFAA

NASFAA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS