

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

ANNUAL REPORT

2020/21

NASFAA

is the largest postsecondary education association with institutional membership in Washington, DC, and the only national association with a primary focus on student aid legislation, regulatory analysis, and training for financial aid administrators in all sectors of postsecondary education. No other national association serves the needs of the financial aid community better or more effectively.

Inside NASFAA's 2020/21 Annual Report

A Message From Our National Chair	3
A Message From Our President.....	4
Governance and Leadership	5
Policy and Federal Relations	8
Communications	12
NASFAA Business Services	15
Professional Development and Certification	18
Diversity Leadership Program	21
NASFAA National Conference.....	22
NASFAA Annual Awards.....	24
Leadership Symposium	25
Membership	26
Dallas Martin Endowment.....	27
Volunteers	30
Finance	32

A Challenging Trail: A Message From Our National Chair



When my boys were in grade school, the Hicks family traveled to the Grand Canyon, where we hiked a tiny piece of the North Kaibab Trail. This trail is lauded as the least visited and most difficult of the three maintained trails at the park. Because of this, park rangers are strategically stationed along the trail to monitor hikers and prevent or minimize injury and death.

When we came to the first park ranger, about a quarter of a mile down the trail, he immediately alerted to our presence. We assured him we had no intention of hiking to the bottom but were doing the first stretch for the experience. He relaxed.

On the way back, while we rested before hiking the nearly vertical climb to the top, we engaged the ranger in conversation. He entertained us with stories of rescues, facts about the canyon, and lessons from his experience as a ranger on the trail. He indicated that a big part of his job was reassuring people. All most hikers need, he said, is a little “fluffing up” to give them the encouragement to keep on hiking when all seems lost.

This annual report details the facts about what NASFAA accomplished during a year of crisis and change. In many ways and on many levels, it was a year of significant achievement – much like hiking the Grand Canyon. What I also observed on my trek through this past year was the occasional need to fluff people up.

The 2020-21 year was a difficult one. Professionally, we had to figure out how to “do” financial aid from our homes. We had to learn and adopt new software so we could meet and work virtually. We had to relearn how best to communicate with and serve students. We had to quarantine frequently. Some of us got sick. We dealt with feelings of fear, isolation, and loneliness. We watched helplessly as we and our students lost family members and friends to the virus and were unable to attend or hold the services that help the living cope with these kinds of life events. It was easy to become overwhelmed.

But financial aid people are tenacious. We are hikers of difficult paths. I want to thank each dues-paying member and volunteer who contributed this year to the work of NASFAA. I was blessed to witness nationally what I heard about almost from the first day I entered the profession: Financial aid people help. We help each other. We help our campuses. We help our students. When times get hard, we come together and we help.

I mean it sincerely when I say it has been my honor to serve as the 2020-21 National Chair of NASFAA. We leave the year uncertain about what the future will bring. We are, however, strong in the knowledge that when we become overwhelmed, an entire community of financial aid friends stands ready and willing to encourage us to finish the trail.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda Hicks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Brenda Hicks, 2020-21 National Chair

Our Strength Is in Our Community: A Message From Our President



What does it mean to be part of a community?

Once upon a time, we defined “community” as connection among people in close proximity, but the information age has shifted that definition. Today’s “community” is better defined as a group of people who share common ideals or interests, who maintain regular contact (virtually or in-person), and who lean on one another when times are tough.

There’s no question that times have been tough. Since the first days of the pandemic, we have lost nearly 650,000 fellow Americans to COVID-19 and experienced political and social upheaval the likes of which few could have fully predicted at the start of 2020.

It’s almost impossible to overstate the impact of the changes we have weathered together. Here we remain, a community of higher education professionals, spanning the breadth of the U.S. at schools small and large, all united and steadfast in our dedication to serving students, families, and our institutions.

In our financial aid community, we make room for differences. Our schools differ significantly, as do the students we serve. These differences do not divide us but rather unite us as we work together to develop, implement, and administer programs that serve all students — to the tune of billions of new federal Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund dollars.

Many industries and communities within the professional world have crumbled under the weight of the pandemic and all the change it has catalyzed. But our vast community of financial aid professionals is stronger today than it has ever been. Even though many of us have been working virtually, engagement levels with NASFAA are at all-time highs. Record numbers turned out to attend free NASFAA COVID-19 webinars last year — more than 9,000 at our highest count. Every attendee had one key question in mind: How can we best help our students?

The NASFAA Board of Directors made our mission clear: Our association needs to show up to support financial aid administrators facing monumental challenges. Here are some ways we met that challenge in 2020-21:

- This year, more than 97% of NASFAA members chose to renew with us. To demonstrate our sincere appreciation to the entire membership for continued support of NASFAA, we offered this year’s virtual National Conference in June 2021 for only \$99 per institution. Our most-attended sessions at the event welcomed more than 4,500 attendees.
- In addition to helping members implement the second and third rounds of COVID-19 HEERF grants, NASFAA’s policy team continued to advocate for FAFSA simplification and ultimately saw it come to fruition.
- AskRegs continued to drive member engagement, with record usership levels this year of more than 2 million knowledgebase views and more than 7,000 questions submitted and answered.
- We made good on our promise to examine the areas of need within our large and diverse membership and explore our own unconscious biases via the development and publication of two member-created task force deliverables.
- Our “Off The Cuff” podcast logged more than 90,000 downloads last year, bringing us to 250,000 downloads since its inception five years ago.

As I said in last year’s annual report, one of the things I love most about this community is the commitment to service. Twelve months ago, I urged members to keep adapting, pulling together, strategizing about how to best serve our students — and most importantly — to keep asking, every day, “How can we help?”

Today I can report you did all this and more. I am so proud to be part of this wonderful community. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Justin S. Draeger'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and 'D'.

Justin S. Draeger, NASFAA President and CEO

Governance and Leadership

2020-21 was a year no one could have entirely planned for. But despite the challenges and uncertainty wrought by the ongoing pandemic, the NASFAA Board of Directors, led by National Chair Brenda Hicks, continued to make progress on our strategic plans, provide fiscal and strategic oversight, shore up our dedication to NASFAA's mission, and pivot on a dime when needed to best serve our membership. To ensure the safety of the participants, the board met virtually over the past year; however, they made special efforts to ensure the group still operated as a cohesive unit, united by a shared commitment to NASFAA's mission and members.

A summary of key board activities follows.

July 30, 2020: Virtual Board Meeting

No votes were taken at this first meeting, but under the leadership of Chair Hicks, the new board spent time getting to know one another, discussing important issues still in progress, and making plans for a meaningful and challenging program year for NASFAA.

November 16-17, 2020: Virtual Board Meeting

Audit Approval. The board voted to approve the clean audit conducted by independent auditor RSM US LLP, as brought forward by the Financial Affairs Committee (FAC).

2020-21 Operating Budget Approval. The board voted to approve a very conservative 2020-21 Operating Budget, which the FAC presented on the heels of a strategic decision to spend several months in the early part of the pandemic operating on a month-to-month cash basis. FAC developed this budget with the understanding that many pandemic-related uncertainties could still impact revenues and expenses. Unlike the break-even budgets of the past, the 2020-21 budgeted bottom line reflects a deficit of approximately \$400,000, after the management team made every effort to reduce operating costs and conservatively budget revenue.

2020-21 Board-designated Spending Approval. Board-designated Funds provide the board the ability to designate and/or restrict the reserves of the organization for strategic initiatives. These funds do not come from the operating budget and must be approved by the board before they can be spent. The board approved an earmark of \$727,000 in board-designated funds for this FY.

Leadership Conference 2021 Budget Approval. The board approved a budget for the February 2021 all-virtual Leadership Symposium, as presented by FAC.

2020-21 Dues Approval. The board voted to approve no dues increase for the fiscal year and to hold the cost for the Webinar Package steady, as recommended to the board by FAC.

2020-23 Strategic Long-range Plan (SLRP) Approval. Association Governance Committee Chair/Past National Chair Paula Luff reviewed the diligent work of Association Governance Committee (AGC) to update the three-year SLRP, which the board approved as presented.

Blue Icon Funding Request Approval. Blue Icon Advisors' Executive Director Mindy Eline provided a snapshot of Blue Icon's budget and highlighted the original line of credit from NASFAA. The board approved a recommendation from the Blue Icon Board of Managers to increase the line of credit by \$250,000 (to \$1 million) to cover operating expenses for Blue Icon's second year in business.

March 22-23, 2021: Virtual Board Meeting

Payroll Protection Program Round Two Acceptance. In light of the ongoing pandemic, the continued and prolonged budget pressures on NASFAA member institutions, ongoing institutional and statewide travel bans, and the availability of new funds, the board accepted management's request to approve the Second Draw Loan via the Small Business Administrations Paycheck Protection Act with the expectation that this loan will be forgiven.

June 29-30, 2021: Virtual Board Meeting

Ratification of 2021-22 Standing Committee Rosters. The board voted to ratify new members for the AGC, FAC, Ethics Commission, Nominations and Elections Committee, and Awards Committee, per board policy.

2021-22 Operating Budget and Blue Icon Management Agreement Approval. Unlike our normal budgeting process, which is constructed via budget requests originating from department heads, this year executive leadership constructed the budget in consultation with department leaders. If membership holds steady, we expect to break even on the 2021-22 operating budget. As part of the budget discussion, Mindy Eline shared that NASFAA reviews the Blue Icon Management Agreement allocation annually to ensure it accounts for all NASFAA resources used by Blue Icon. This year the fee increased from 8.4% to 13.1%. The board approved both the 2021-22 Operating Budget and the Blue Icon Management Agreement with NASFAA.

2021-22 Board-designated Funds Approval. Board-designated funds provide the board the ability to designate and/or restrict the reserves of the organization for strategic initiatives. For the forthcoming year, the board approved an earmark of \$449,000 in such funds.

New Blue Icon Board of Managers Members Approval. Mindy Eline noted that two members will be completing their term on Blue Icon's board of managers, to be replaced by Kelly Morrissey (Community College of Rhode Island) and David Page (Dillard University) beginning July 1, 2021. The board approved these new appointments.



The 2020/21 Board of Directors

As a national professional association, NASFAA is led by the financial aid administrators who make up the core of its membership. NASFAA institutional members may be elected to the Board of Directors, which is the governing body of the association. The board of directors is responsible for establishing broad policies, setting and ensuring compliance with the organizational mission, and providing oversight and guidance for the future direction of the association. It is vested with all powers to manage the association's business, property, and assets, and is responsible for hiring and evaluating the president. The president is responsible for NASFAA's day-to-day operations, carrying out the mission as directed by the board, and the work of NASFAA's employees.

Elected and Appointed Leadership

- The **national chair**, **national chair-elect**, and **immediate past national chair** are the elected officers of the Association. The national chair-elect must be elected by a majority vote of the institutional membership and must be an institutional member of NASFAA (voting).
- Six **regional representatives**, who must be institutional members of NASFAA, are selected from each recognized regional association (voting).
- Six **national representatives-at-large**, who must be institutional members of NASFAA, are elected by vote of the institutional membership without regard to geographical location (voting).
- The **treasurer** is appointed by the national chair each year and approved by the board (voting).
- Up to four **commission directors** are appointed by the national chair each year and approved by the board of directors (non-voting).
- The **president** is appointed and confirmed by the board of directors (non-voting).
- The **board executive secretary** is appointed by the president (non-voting).

The 2020/21 NASFAA Board of Directors

Officers

National chair: Brenda Hicks, Southwestern College

National chair-elect: Brent Tener, Vanderbilt University

Past national chair: Paula Luff, Ball State University

Treasurer: Keith Williams, Michigan State University

Regional Representatives

EASFAA: Marie Johnson, University of Vermont

MASFAA: Michelle Trame, University of Illinois Urbana - Champaign

RMASFAA: James Broscheit, Montana State University

SASFAA: William Spiers, Tallahassee Community College

SWASFAA: Mendy Schmerer, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

WASFAA: Scott Cline, California College of the Arts

Representatives-at-Large

Brad Barnett, James Madison University

Zita Barree, Hampden-Sydney College

Kristi Jovell, Middlebury College

Emily Osborn, Northwestern University Chicago Campus

Samantha Veeder, University of Rochester

Denise Welch, Panola College

Commission Directors

Nancy Grant, Ilisagvik College

David Page, Dillard University

Christina Tangelakis, Glendale Community College

Ex Officio

President: Justin Draeger, NASFAA

Board executive secretary: Beth Maglione, NASFAA

NASFAA CFO: Mitchell Weintraub, NASFAA/Cordia Partners

Special Advisor to the Board

Diversity officer: Scott Skaro, United Tribes Technical College

Policy and Federal Relations:

Advocacy, Research, and Grants

NASFAA's policy team was busier than ever this past year, working to help members implement COVID-19 relief, waivers, and flexibilities while also advocating for longer-term policy recommendations. In addition to helping members implement the second and third rounds of COVID-19 Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF) funds, the team continued to advocate for FAFSA simplification and ultimately saw it come to fruition! To top it off, NASFAA's grant-funded work continued to flourish this year, providing the opportunity to further advance our important policy research.

Legislative Advocacy

Congress Boosts Student Aid Funding in FY 2021 Appropriations

In December 2020, Congress approved government spending levels for fiscal year 2021 with the passage of the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021](#). This legislation, which allocated \$73.5 billion in discretionary funding for the Department of Education (ED) in FY 2021 (\$785 million more than in FY 2020), included a \$150 increase to the maximum Federal Pell Grant, boosting the 2021-22 award year maximum grant amount to \$6,495. The bill also allocated \$1.19 billion for the Federal Work-Study (FWS) program, a \$10 million increase over FY 2020 levels, and \$880 million for the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) program, a \$15 million increase compared to FY 2020.

Biden Administration Proposes Historic Pell Grant Increase

In spring 2020, the Biden administration unveiled the American Families Plan (AFP), which included a \$1,475 increase to the maximum Pell Grant, followed in May 2021 by the president's fiscal year 2022 budget request, which proposed an additional increase of \$400 to the maximum award. Together, the increases included in the budget request and the AFP would boost the grant by \$1,875, bringing the new maximum award to \$8,370. In addition to proposing this historic increase to the Pell Grant, the administration has supported expanding Pell Grant eligibility to individuals enrolled in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, known as "Dreamers."

Congress Passes Long-awaited FAFSA Simplification Bill

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, also included language to simplify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). NASFAA [has advocated heavily](#) for FAFSA simplification for several years and worked closely with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle on the final legislation. The [changes include](#) substantial modifications to need analysis, establishment of "look-up tables" to determine eligibility for the maximum Pell Grant, renaming the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) to the Student Aid Index (SAI), and eliminating the questions about drug conviction and Selective Service registration.

These new changes will complement the December 2019 [Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education \(FUTURE\) Act](#), which allows direct data sharing between ED and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). This data sharing will streamline the FAFSA-filing process by allowing individuals to have their IRS-verified income data directly imported into the form. It will also ease the income verification process for student loan borrowers requesting or renewing eligibility for income-driven loan repayment plans. ED announced plans to implement the FAFSA changes through an iterative process, with full implementation set to be complete by the 2024-25 year. With the help of member feedback, NASFAA will remain very engaged in the implementation process.

NASFAA Works to Ensure Smooth Implementation of Pell Eligibility for Incarcerated Students

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 lifted the 1994 ban restricting Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated students, expanding postsecondary access for millions of students across the country. As ED works to implement Pell Grant reinstatement, it is critical to develop solutions that address the unique challenges experienced by incarcerated students navigating the financial aid application process. Additionally, as Pell Grant eligibility is restored, financial aid administrators, most of whom have not worked directly with incarcerated students since the ban was put into effect in 1994, will play a critical role in counseling and assisting students through the aid application process.

To assist in the implementation effort and ensure the financial aid community is prepared to support this important population, NASFAA convened a [Pell Restoration for Incarcerated Students Working Group](#) consisting of NASFAA members and individuals knowledgeable about Second Chance Pell. The Second Chance Pell Experimental Sites program — originally introduced as part of the Obama administration's efforts to promote "alternatives to incarceration and eliminate unnecessary barriers to reentry" — allows approved institutions of higher education to award Pell Grants to eligible incarcerated students. The working group is examining the challenges incarcerated students may face throughout the FAFSA completion and aid application processes once Pell Grant eligibility is fully restored.

In addition to identifying challenges and best practices learned through Second Chance Pell, the group is developing recommendations for ED and Congress, institutions, and NASFAA to ensure a smooth implementation that promotes postsecondary access and success for incarcerated students. The recommendations will particularly focus on the technical details surrounding the financial aid administration and application processes.

Department of Education

NASFAA Working Group Tackles Institutions' Concerns About FAFSA Changes

The sweeping FAFSA and Federal Methodology (FM) formula changes under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 will require ED to work closely with NASFAA and other stakeholders in order to ensure the rollout is as smooth, efficient, and seamless as possible for students and institutions. In an effort to provide campus-level feedback, perspective, and insight to ED through the implementation process, NASFAA convened a diverse group of its members to form the FAFSA Simplification Implementation Working Group. The working group, which commenced in April 2021, will focus their conversations around topics like outreach to students and families regarding the FM and data-sharing changes, development of Pell Grant eligibility "look-up" tables, early awareness efforts related to Pell Grant eligibility, interaction of the changes with state and institutional financial aid policy, and development of the FAFSA form. This group will help ensure ED hears the perspectives of institutions during this massive modification to the federal student aid application process.

COVID-19 Advocacy

Since the COVID-19 crisis began in early March 2020, NASFAA staff has been in constant contact with ED staff, suggesting areas of possible regulatory and statutory flexibilities, where authorized, and assisting members in understanding and implementing ED's guidance relating to HEERF. With three separate HEERF funding streams, (HEERF I, HEERF II, and HEERF III), NASFAA recognized its responsibility to make sure members had timely, accurate, and clear information on all three HEERF grants. To assist members, NASFAA created an arsenal of tools, including a [COVID-19 Web Center](#), multiple infographics and one-pagers to explain the changes related to HEERF [reporting](#), and a [chart](#) to show the differences in rules between the three HEERF tranches. NASFAA hosted webinars whenever new guidance related to COVID-19 came out, presenting a total of ten 90-minute webinars, each featuring live question-and-answer sessions, since the pandemic began.

NASFAA Advocates for Smooth Repayment Transition

This year, NASFAA also focused its advocacy efforts on relief for federal student loan borrowers currently in repayment and the related issue of ED's significant task of transitioning nearly 43 million current federal loan borrowers back into successful repayment. The pause on payments, interest accrual, and collections activity due to the ongoing pandemic went into effect in March of 2020, shortly after the pandemic started, and it has been extended twice during the Trump and Biden administrations. The most recent extension of these provisions is set to expire January 31, 2022. In response, NASFAA has [called on ED](#) to develop a roadmap and timeline for the transition back into repayment that prioritizes borrower communication and provides additional flexibility for those borrowers who are still struggling because of the pandemic. NASFAA has also been [proactive](#) in making sure that when the time comes for the repayment pause to end, ED is prepared to do so, and of equal importance, borrowers are informed well in advance of that date of any steps they need to take to ensure they enter repayment smoothly.

Research and Grants

NASFAA Evaluates the CARES Act Relief Fund Rollout and Implementation

Generous funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation assisted NASFAA, in collaboration with NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education and MDRC, in examining what worked well and what did not for postsecondary institutions in the rollout and implementation of the CARES Act Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund. The July 2021 [report](#) offers financial aid policy considerations to streamline any future federal emergency aid efforts and five recommendations for existing emergency aid programs.

Grant Supports Delivery of Technical Assistance Related to COVID-19

The same grant also helped NASFAA to both continue assisting members with technical needs related to HEERF II and HEERF III and complete additional member surveys related to COVID-19. In late May 2021 and September 2020, NASFAA [re-surveyed members](#) on how the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted the number of professional judgment requests they received. These surveys were a follow-up to our June 2020 survey, and will continue to inform discussions with Congress and ED on what financial aid offices may experience in 2021-22 and the assistance they may need. In June 2021, both [University Business](#) and [Inside Higher Ed](#) referred to NASFAA's survey report in their news coverage.

Multi-paper Series Explores Enhancing FAFSA Efficiency

Funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation allowed NASFAA to commission a 10-paper series exploring ways to make the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the overall federal student aid process more efficient and streamlined for applicants and their families. Groups from Center for American Progress, Center for Law and Social Policy, Century Foundation, National College Attainment Network, Seton Hall University, University of Michigan, and Urban Institute authored these 10 papers. NASFAA staff reviewed the recommendations and ideas presented in each paper and identified 13 that specifically aligned with the association's policy and advocacy work. After the NASFAA Board of Directors reviewed and approved the recommendations, the association published the 13 recommendations in an [executive summary](#).

Existing Short-term Postsecondary Programs Analyzed

Generous funding from the Lumina Foundation gave NASFAA, in partnership with Advance CTE and the Association of Career & Technical Education, the opportunity to examine the current national landscape of short-term postsecondary programs to learn more about what they offer, who they serve, and how their graduates fare in the workforce. The [full report](#), published in fall 2020, shared the challenges institutions face in enrolling students, challenges students face paying for these programs, and proposals to extend Title IV student aid, including Pell Grants, to short-term programs.

Student Aid Reference Desk Redesigned

In April 2014, NASFAA launched a tool, available exclusively to its members, known as the Student Aid Index. A precursor to the Student Aid Reference Desk, the Index provided financial aid administrators across the nation with quick access to the regulations and legislation they needed to do their jobs. In July 2020, NASFAA received a generous grant from Educational Corporation Management (ECMC) Foundation to redesign this tool with an overarching goal of providing a resource that simplifies research for organizations, associations, think tanks, members of Congress and their staff, and scholars who study or advocate on the intersection of college access, success, and student financial aid. After many months of development and content collection, NASFAA launched the new, publicly available [Student Aid Reference Desk](#) platform in February 2021. We regularly add newly published bipartisan reports, update features on the site, and work with [our partners](#) to ensure the Reference Desk supports the work of the larger community. Funding from ECMC will allow us to continue to make improvements to the tool and further our marketing efforts in the 2021-22 membership year.

Additional Grant-funded Work

NASFAA received a grant from Arnold Ventures to develop policy recommendations to 1) address the underlying flaws in the current student loan repayment system that have led borrowers into financial hardship, and 2) underscore the benefits of a strong self-help federal loan program. NASFAA will engage with subject-matter experts and form a coalition to strengthen the final report and recommendations, set to be published in winter 2022.

NASFAA received subgrants from the following groups for work that will continue into the 2021-22 year:

- National College Attainment Network (NCAN), through their funding by the Joyce Foundation, to explore ideas for verification improvement;
- National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), through their funding by the Lumina Foundation, to [reimagine college admission and financial aid systems](#) to better promote racial equity in U.S. higher education; and
- American Institutes for Research (AIR), through their funding from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Budget Services, to review and provide feedback on their [borrower-based dynamic microsimulation model](#) of the repayment of federal student loans.

Benchmarking Work Updated With CUPA-HR Data

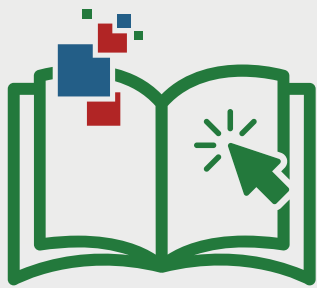
Due to the onset of COVID-19, NASFAA staff decided not to administer the survey used to update our biannual Benchmarking Report on salaries, staffing, and financial aid campus relations in 2020. Instead, we worked with data from the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) to produce the [2021 NASFAA Benchmarking: Salary Update Brief](#), which contained updated financial aid-related salary information. NASFAA will resume data collection for its biannual benchmarking report, scheduled for publication in 2022.

Assistance to Displaced Students Completed

Since early 2015, NASFAA and several other organizations have assisted students to navigate their options after their college and career schools closed while they were enrolled or shortly after they withdrew. Through this work, with generous funding by the Lumina Foundation, NASFAA created and maintained [NextStepsEd](#), a site where affected students could submit requests for help with financial aid questions and more. Grant funding for this project ended in December 2020, at which time NASFAA closed the ticketing portion of the website. The information website will remain available to students in perpetuity, and NASFAA will continue to update it with new and relevant information as needed. This project helped more than 5,000 students in navigating their options regarding closed school federal loan discharge, Universal Borrower Defense, and Federal Pell Grant eligibility restoration.

2020 NASFAA National Profile

NASFAA updates the National Student Aid Profile each year to examine the state of the Title IV programs. As in prior years, the [2020 National Student Aid Profile](#) included new data from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Federal Student Aid "FSA Data Center" on repayment status, loan status, delinquency status, and the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.








Student Aid Reference Desk™



Looking for something student aid-related?
The Ref Desk's robust search functionality can help you find it — **fast!**

In July 2020, NASFAA was awarded a grant to redesign, rebrand, and expand its central hub of financial aid information, formerly called the Student Aid Index. Filled with direct links to federal regulation, legislative text, Department of Education guidance, and analysis from policy organizations, institutions, and researchers focused on student access and success in higher education, the Student Aid Reference Desk — Ref Desk, for short — is your one-stop shop to find what you need, when you need it.

Why Use the Ref Desk Instead of a Search Engine?

-  **We vet the resources so you don't have to.** NASFAA staff review submitted content before adding it to the Ref Desk to ensure it's relevant and bipartisan.
-  **Trending Topics help you stay in the know.** Quickly see what other users have searched for most frequently in the previous 30 days.
-  **Suggested Topics** help you easily spot terms NASFAA staff have flagged as timely or that have recently had new resources added.
-  You'll find **continuously updated expert data**, straight from the source. Check back often for links to new resources and guidance.
-  It's **easy to browse**, for those times when you need an answer but aren't quite sure how to frame the question. The Ref Desk's top-level terms include a range of topics to browse, from Cost of Attendance to Expected Family Contribution to Verification, and many more!

Head to www.StudentAidRefDesk.org today to find what you need — **fast!**

Communications

NASFAA remains dedicated to increasing knowledge of timely issues, and 2020-21 saw no shortage of news to communicate. This year, NASFAA members and countless students and families across the country found themselves still navigating the choppy waters, obstacles, and financial challenges brought about by the pandemic. In addition, a new administration in the White House introduced significant changes in the field. Through it all, NASFAA staff remained at the helm, keeping a steady hand on the wheel by deciphering and sharing the latest guidance from the Department of Education (ED), providing regular updates regarding COVID relief funding, and creating a forum for members to discuss what was going on in their offices and with their students.

"Membership in NASFAA is by far the most important professional development resource available to financial aid administrators, and receiving NASFAA's Today's News in our inboxes each weekday morning is the most beneficial tool," Samantha Veeder, associate dean of college enrollment, director of financial aid at the University of Rochester, told NASFAA. "It provides us with updates from NASFAA and the Department of Education, but it also includes references to industry-related articles and resources. It's basically a 'one-stop shop' for all of our regulatory and professional needs that are critical to successfully doing our jobs. In today's environment, more than ever, Today's News and the COVID-19 webinars and Q&A are invaluable."

NASFAA uses the *Today's News* email newsletter, the NASFAA website, "Off The Cuff" podcast, and four social media channels — Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram — as its main vehicles to communicate with members. But in spring 2020, when members needed a fast means to receive the latest student aid information related to the pandemic, NASFAA created the "[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Web Center](#)." Throughout 2020 and 2021, we continued to enhance the web center to include key articles and statements from NASFAA staff and leadership, links to NASFAA's in-depth Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) reference pages, relevant AskRegs Knowledgebase questions and answers, and much more.

Today's News

A key feature of *Today's News* is original, NASFAA-developed content targeted to the specific interests of financial aid professionals. This year, NASFAA-authored news articles about rapidly changing guidance on complex pieces of legislation dominated the most-read original articles.

10 Most-Read Original Articles for 2020-21

1. [Working Students and New Graduates Eligible for CARES Act Unemployment Benefits](#) (119,627 pageviews)
2. [NASFAA Deep-Dive: Changes to Federal Methodology, Other Student Aid Changes From Spending Bill](#) (23,241 pageviews)
3. [Congress Releases Bipartisan Year-end Spending Deal, FAFSA Simplification, COVID Relief, and Other Student Aid Provisions](#) (14,797 pageviews)
4. [ED Issues HEERF III Guidance, All Grants Now Include DACA, Undocumented, and International Students](#) (12,899 pageviews)
5. [Report: Low-income Students Cannot Afford 95 Percent of Colleges](#) (11,913 pageviews)
6. [Millions of Additional College Students Now Eligible for SNAP Benefits Through Coronavirus Relief](#) (10,023 pageviews)
7. [Students Face Obstacles, Lack of Motivation in Transition to Remote Learning Amid Pandemic, Report Finds](#) (9,101 pageviews)
8. [Tax Break for Employer-paid Student Loan Contributions in COVID Relief Bill Spurs Debate](#) (8,576 pageviews)
9. [ED Announces Distribution Details for \\$21 Billion in Additional HEERF Aid](#) (8,359 pageviews)
10. [ED Announces Additional Reporting Requirements for CARES Act HEERF Funds](#) (7,576 pageviews)

Media Engagement

NASFAA works year-round to maintain strong relationships with key reporters who cover higher education and student aid, ensuring the media and public continue to recognize NASFAA spokespersons as a trusted source for reliable information. Regularly appearing in the press not only establishes NASFAA staff as subject matter experts, but it also serves as yet another way for NASFAA to elevate issues that matter most to its members.

In 2020-21, NASFAA:

- Published an [opinion article](#) on student loan debt forgiveness,
- Issued [21 press releases and statements](#),
- Reached out to key reporters to share information and member perspectives, and
- Responded to unsolicited reporter inquiries on a wide range of topics.

A total of 128 original articles in the trade and national press [quoted or mentioned](#) NASFAA in 2020-21 — an average of nearly 11 articles per month. NASFAA saw the most media coverage in April 2021, with mentions or quotes in 14 articles, in publications such as *The Wall Street Journal* and *Money*, focusing on issues ranging from student loan repayment to higher education stimulus relief funding and the White House’s American Families Plan proposal.

Social Media

Social media serves as a key medium for NASFAA to engage with members and keep them informed with timely news coverage. All of NASFAA’s social platforms saw an increase in followers in 2020-21.

- LinkedIn garnered significant growth, with 1,724 new followers and a 5% increase in engagement rate over the previous year. We attribute this growth to ramping up our promotion of news articles, professional development, and timely resources on the platform.
- Twitter is our main social media platform for disseminating information regarding events, new reports, and everything NASFAA is involved in. In addition to reaching members, it has also been a primary source of interaction with the public, other associations and organizations, and higher education institutions. Our Twitter following grew by 574 in 2020-21, and it now exceeds 15,000 followers.
- Facebook receives a significant amount of traffic for breaking news as well as reports, projects, papers, and member-focused content like our “MVP” spotlights. This year, the number of followers grew by nearly 100, bringing the total to 9,878.
- Instagram sees steady growth each week. The 212 new followers during the period pushed us over the 1,000-follower mark by June 30, 2020.

“Off The Cuff” Podcast

NASFAA’s “[Off The Cuff](#)” podcast engages the financial aid community in lively conversations about current events and federal higher education policy. Coverage of the global pandemic dominated podcast topics this year, with discussions about HEERF, reporting requirements, and the effects of the pandemic on student aid administration nationwide.

The podcast also extensively covered two key issues: the effects of the presidential election and change in administration on the financial aid community and ED, and the merits of debt forgiveness and the payment pause for borrowers with federal student loan debt. Top-performing episodes featured members discussing the impact of federal relief packages and changes to student aid policy on their operations.

NASFAA.org

Coming off the five-year anniversary of our new website, NASFAA took this year as an opportunity to clean up and streamline some of its web content. To improve NASFAA members’ user experience on the website, staff focused on three content projects:

- Expiring outdated web content to improve website efficiency.
- Creating a new “[Membership](#)” section in the site navigation. This new hub makes everything related to NASFAA membership more accessible, with information on how to join, renew, and update membership as well as get involved and stay connected with other members.
- Creating a new “[News](#)” section in the site navigation, which is now the home of *Today’s News* newsletter issues, weekly episodes of NASFAA’s “Off The Cuff” podcast, COVID-19 web center resources, and NASFAA’s press releases and recent media appearances.

NASFAA plans to make many more site improvements in the coming year to further enhance user experience and functionality.

Five Most-visited Pages on NASFAA.org

July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021

- [NASFAA.org](#) home page (406,210 pageviews)
- [COVID-19 HEERF Funds Reference Page](#) (212,960 pageviews)
- [AskRegs](#) landing page (139,071 pageviews)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Web Center](#) (88,472 pageviews)
- [Today’s News](#) (81,228 pageviews)

NASFAA Business Services

Blue Icon Advisors and the Standards of Excellence Review Program

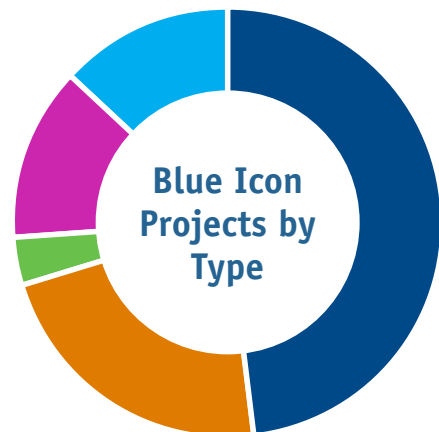
Blue Icon Advisors completed its second successful year, while the Standards of Excellence (SOE) program completed its 23rd year, with both receiving high praise from clients and independent consultants. The most popular Blue Icon projects continued to be general consulting—on anything from financial aid system optimization to helping schools implement modular programs—followed closely by helping schools write policies and procedures for federal financial aid administration. The SOE program continued to offer both in-person and remote reviews during the 2020-21 cycle and completed 19 reviews, which included five reviews previously postponed due to the pandemic.

On July 1, 2021, Blue Icon began administering the SOE program. The purpose of the SOE program and the value schools receive will not change with Blue Icon. A team of currently practicing financial aid administrators will still conduct SOE reviews and provide a holistic evaluation of schools' financial aid administration. The change will benefit NASFAA members who inquire about services from SOE and Blue Icon. Going forward, schools will be able to submit one request for information, have one point of contact, and receive one comprehensive proposal with multiple options.

One challenge Blue Icon still faces is the need to expand its team of consultants to perform the important consulting work schools want and need. We are constantly looking for new independent consultants and have projects that can fit many needs and skill sets. To inquire about becoming an independent consultant, contact blueicon@nasfaa.org or visit the Careers page at BlueIconAdvisors.com.



Public 2-year	25.9%
Private 4-year and above	33.3%
Public 4-year and above	20.4%
Private 4-year only	5.6%
Organization	5.6%
Graduate/Professional	5.6%
Public 4-year only	3.7%



Consulting	48.1%
Policies & Procedures	22.2%
Training	3.7%
Interim Leader/Staff	13.0%
Coaching	13.0%



Do you have
what it takes to
be a **Blue Icon**
consultant?



Blue Icon Advisors, NASFAA Consulting, is always looking for seasoned professionals, like you, to join our team of independent consultants.

Blue Icon contracts with independent consultants to perform work for school clients by matching the needs of the school with the expertise of the consultant. This opportunity may be a good fit for you if you have:

- ✓ At least five years of experience in administering Title IV federal financial aid.
- ✓ A demonstrated ability to analyze problems and communicate creative and thoughtful solutions.
- ✓ The ability to take direction, but also be a self-starter.
- ✓ Thorough knowledge of Title IV student financial aid regulations and the higher education landscape. Preference given to applicants with NASFAA credentials and/or the FAAC® designation.
- ✓ Experience with financial aid operations, automation, and/or implementing corrective action plans.
- ✓ A background working with major financial aid management systems, such as PeopleSoft, Banner, PowerFAIDS, Colleague, WorkDay, or Regent.
- ✓ Excellent oral and written communications skills.

Want to Learn More?

To see examples of projects independent consultants have been asked to perform and learn more about how to apply, head to https://www.nasfaa.org/blueicon_careers.

Please note, independent consultants are not Blue Icon employees. Assignments for independent consultants do not provide full-time work. Work may take place on-site or virtually (via email, phone, or video), depending on the needs of the school. Since work may take place during the week, independent consultants must take time off from work, if currently employed.

Here is what some of our clients and consultants say about **Blue Icon and SOE:**

Consulting

"Blue Icon worked with us to determine how to best meet our consulting needs by listening to our challenges and what we were trying to achieve. Once the staff understood our needs, they provided a range of options to meet our timeline, desired outcomes, and budget. Our Blue Icon consultant and staff executed the project plan as planned and always strived to go above and beyond expectations. We would not hesitate to work with them again!"

Robin Randall, vice president for enrollment management, Mount Holyoke College

Program Review Response Team

"I cannot say enough good things about Blue Icon's Program Review Response Team. They were extremely knowledgeable, while being friendly and professional throughout the process. I highly recommend schools use Blue Icon to prepare for their program review."

Scott McFarland, director of financial aid, Central Wyoming College

Interim Leadership

"Blue Icon Advisors provided an interim financial aid director to UNC Pembroke, and she has been terrific. Her training is superior! The staff are now doing processes that were previously only handled at the associate and director level. I cannot say enough good things about our experience."

Lois Williams, associate vice chancellor for enrollment management, University of North Carolina Pembroke

Custom Training

"Blue Icon's customized training helped get our new team members up to speed quickly so we don't feel like a "new" office. I also participated in new director group coaching, which gave me invaluable tips to build the office and my confidence as a leader."

Ozie Ratcliff, director of financial aid, Jackson State University

Policies and Procedures

"As a unique system of colleges with individual needs, an efficient project plan was developed and delivered that would help accomplish our main objective: the creation of a single policies and procedures manual for all twelve institutions. I have worked with Blue Icon's dedicated team of consultants from project inquiry and development through procurement, and into project implementation, and have nothing but high regard for their outstanding level of commitment to quality work."

Steven J. McDowell, associate vice president for financial aid services & Title IV compliance, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities

New Director Group Coaching

"I have thoroughly enjoyed being a part of this group and will take lots away from it. All of the concepts were very eye-opening and will allow for us to make simple changes quickly. I would say, this has been one of the most effective training groups I have been a part of."

Carlos Villarroel, associate director of financial aid, Portland Community College, June 2021 new director group coaching participant

Let's Talk

"It's vitally important yet rare to engage in a nationwide forum with community college peers by which to share common concerns and creative solutions."

Anne M. Moore, director of student financial services, Berkshire Community College

System Optimization, Utilization, Training

"Our project with Blue Icon Advisors went smoothly. There was some initial hesitation from some, but the consultants' knowledge and non-threatening approach put everyone at ease. The final report we received is allowing us to lobby for additional resources we need to run more efficiently. We look forward to working with Blue Icon again."

Joseph Greene, vice chancellor of finance & administration at Johnson & Wales University

SOE Review

"The SOE review helped us refocus and see things we couldn't see for ourselves. It also allowed us to get some departments to come back together and see how they are related to financial aid compliance."

Joe Myers, executive director of financial aid, Motlow State Community College

Blue Icon Independent Consultants

"I feel very supported working as an independent consultant for Blue Icon. I use the 'Scope of Work' Blue Icon provides for each project to understand the deliverables and hold myself accountable."

Sarah Everitt, independent consultant

"I love the autonomy but also appreciate having a project manager available to help keep things on track. I don't know if there is anything else Blue Icon could do to support me as an independent consultant."

Jerry Martinez, independent consultant

SOE Peer Reviewers

"I love being a SOE peer reviewer as it gives me the opportunity to help my colleagues in the field be in compliance, but also potentially improve a process or customer service at their institution. I truly enjoy getting to know the other reviewers and those who work at the various institutions I visit, and find I often find something that will improve a process at my own university."

Betsy Johnson, SOE peer reviewer

"Performing a review is an energizing experience that allows me to give back to the profession that has been so good to me. It also allows me to continue my own growth, having the opportunity to identify the new and creative ways in which institutions implement Title IV regulation as well as assist in areas where institutions may be struggling."

Vickie Crupper, SOE peer reviewer

Professional Development and Institutional Compliance

The 2020-21 year continued to be challenging for our members with the ongoing impact of the pandemic on students, families, and campuses across the nation. A change in the presidency, shifts in roles within the Department of Education, and changing policies also created new avenues for institutions to navigate. Through it all, NASFAA increased and sustained support to its members with solid and timely training initiatives, compliance tools, and direct member support via its AskRegs service. Members utilized training and resource options at higher percentages compared with the prior year.

AskRegs was the most utilized NASFAA benefit in 2020-21. Our members used the existing knowledgebase and asked specific questions with pandemic-related topics fronting the list of inquiries. NASFAA webinars, both planned and pop-up, also provided significant support to the membership, with average attendance jumping to 2,500 per webinar. NASFAA staff rose to the challenging circumstances and provided members with what they needed, when they needed it.

Highlights of Training & Regulatory Assistance

[AskRegs](#) continues to be the driving force in member engagement with NASFAA. The search of existing Q & As along with the option to seek direct guidance from NASFAA staff reached record levels in the past year with

- 2,057,336 knowledgebase views (yes, that's more than two million views!),
- 7,174 member questions submitted, and
- 99% of questions receiving a response within three business days.

[NASFAA Webinars](#) serve a critical need for timely information and immediate responses to regulatory concerns, hot topics, and industry-specific professional development. The 2020-21 year saw record attendance levels and high satisfaction scores, with

- 80 webinars held,
- 2,673 as the average number of registrations per webinar, and
- High marks in all areas — for example:
 - "Relevant Content" scored 4.68 out of 5
 - "Presenter Effectiveness" scored 4.61 out of 5
 - "Overall Audience Satisfaction" reached 98.7%.

[NASFAA U](#) represents the best of the best as a training option for our members. The deep dive into topics with both synchronous and asynchronous learning, real-time assessment, and downloadable resources gets high marks from participants.

This year saw

- 10 online courses presented,
- An average of 107 participants registered per course,
- Verification as the most popular course,
- An average participant satisfaction score of 4.5 out of 5, and
- An 86% online course pass rate.

[NASFAA's Compliance Engine](#), the "hidden gem" within NASFAA Tools, continues to grow in popularity. Once members discover its power, they return frequently to evaluate their performance and ensure policies and procedures are current and maximized to full potential.

In 2020-21,

- 2,427 users created self-evaluation checklists,
- The most often used individual checklist was COVID-19, with 607 checklists created, and
- 2,097 users created policies and procedures manuals.

[NASFAA Self-study Guides](#) are a financial aid administrator's best friend. What Webster did for the dictionary, NASFAA does for Title IV regulations. This series is the "how-to" for aid administration and chunks the "what" into valuable "how-to's" with assessment built in. These guides create the bridge from the requirements to practical application.

This year,

- 874 schools and 2,623 individuals used Self-study Guides;
- The most popular guides were Verification, Student Eligibility, and Overview of the Financial Aid Programs; and
- 21 state and regional associations purchased NASFAA training materials, which include NASFAA Self-study Guides.

Certification and Credentials

Certified Financial Aid Administrator® Program

The 2021 fiscal year marked the second year of [NASFAA's Certified Financial Aid Administrator®](#) Program. Since this program's launch at the 2019 National Conference, 814 applications have been submitted by qualified practitioners at 607 schools across the country. By the end of the fiscal year, 272 financial aid administrators in all six regions and 46 states had earned the FAAC® designation.

NASFAA's Certified Financial Aid Administrator® Program is now accredited. In April 2021, this program met the qualifications of the Credentialing Quality Standards (CQS) of accreditation in both operations and psychometrics. The CQS accreditation evaluates the quality and defensibility of certification programs.



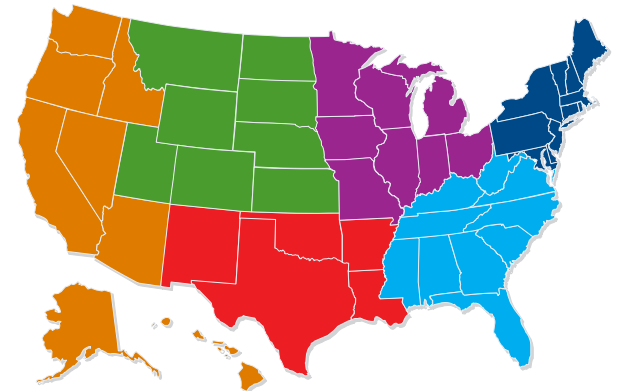
Credentialing

[NASFAA's Professional Credentials](#) program continues to grow in popularity. By the end of this fiscal year,

- 23,601 credentials were earned or renewed, with 6,783 of those credentials earned in 2020-21;
- 7,281 professionals had earned at least one credential;
- The credential program pass rate was 89%; and
- 170 top credential earners had earned all available NASFAA Professional Credentials.

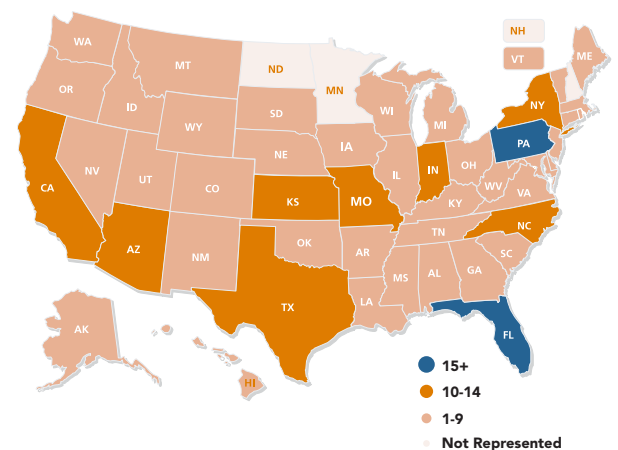
Combined with experience in the field, NASFAA credentials help ensure knowledge in each topic area is current and remains relevant. Credentials also serve as excellent preparation for progressing toward becoming certified. Of the top credential earners, 40 now also hold the FAAC® designation awarded through NASFAA's Certified Financial Aid Administrator Program. Of the 272 individuals who have been certified in this program since inception, 99 financial aid professionals earned their FAAC® in 2020-21.

Certified Financial Aid Administrators®, by Region



Region	Number certified from inception to June 30, 2021	Percent increase since June 30, 2020
SASFAA	68	78%
MASFAA	58	38%
EASFAA	48	54%
WASFAA	41	36%
RMASFAA	30	114%
SWASFAA	27	50%

Certified Financial Aid Administrators®, by state (as of June 2021)



#WHYCERTIFY



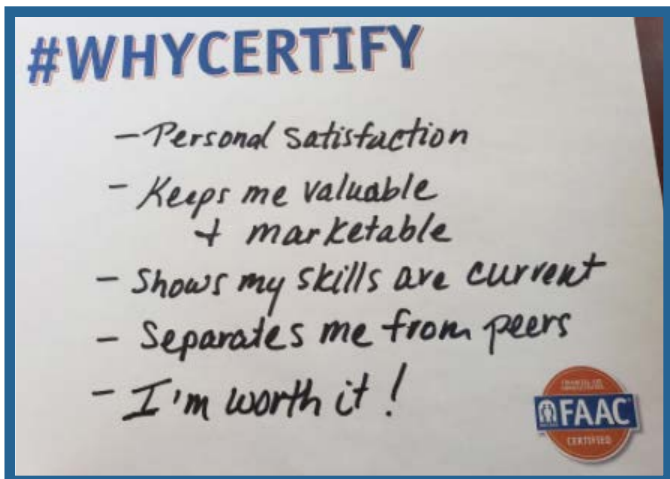
Sharon Oliver



Christina Tangalakis



Tony Erwin



Laura Meek

NASFAA salutes the financial aid professionals who stepped out of their comfort zones to become certified. Why is certification important to these leaders? A few of our participants offered their thoughts this year:

#whycertify

"Why did I seek out [the FAAC®] designation? Because my commitment to our work helps open the doors of a brighter future to our students and I want to share my experience and knowledge with others."

Daniel T. Barkowitz, assistant vice president of financial aid / veterans affairs, Valencia College

"I believe that the establishment of the Certified Financial Aid Administrator® was a crucial step to elevating the profession and establishing the importance of our roles within each institution. I have personally been able to leverage my financial aid expertise in a way that brings value to Grantham University and I have seen first-hand how beneficial financial aid expertise can be throughout the organization."

Lindsay Bridgeman, interim president and vice president of student financial services, Grantham University

"We work in a highly-regulated industry where knowledge matters and I am proud to demonstrate my own mastery of the information by having earned the FAAC® designation after over 25 years of experience as an aid administrator."

Craig Slaughter, director of financial aid, Kenyon College



Diversity Leadership Program

NASFAA's Diversity Leadership Program (DLP) supports the association's ongoing [commitment to diversity and inclusion](#). Each year, six financial aid professionals from marginalized and underrepresented groups — one from each region — receive a portfolio of benefits plus mentorship and guidance to support development as a financial aid association leader at the state, regional, and national level.

DLP seeks to advance the careers of participants; help NASFAA and the regional associations develop a strong core of talented, motivated leaders from marginalized and underrepresented groups; and provide these individuals with support, access, and opportunities for leadership. In August 2020, the Center for Association Leadership (ASAE) recognized DLP with its [2020 "Power of A" Silver Award](#).

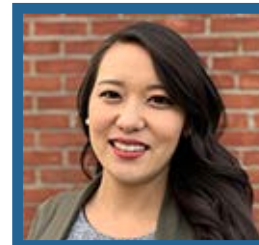
The DLP Selection Committee chose the members of the [2020-21 class](#) from among a field of 70 applications. See the links below each photo to learn more about each member of this year's class, and watch *Today's News* for information on applying for future DLP classes.



[Alex DeLonis](#), director of financial aid, Wabash College (MASFAA)



[Sharmain Lazard-Talbert](#), financial aid advisor - Connect Program, Southern University at Shreveport (SWASFAA)



[Mika Lim](#), associate director of compliance, Northeastern University (EASFAA)



[Jayson Matlock](#), financial aid & wellness coordinator, Southern Utah University (RNASFAA)



[Ernesto Nery](#), financial aid director, Merritt College (WASFAA)



[Courtney Thompson](#), director of financial aid, Lenoir-Rhyne University (SASFAA)

National Conference

NASFAA's National Conference is the student aid community's premier annual event for building knowledge; learning the latest from peers, NASFAA staff, and Department of Education representatives; and networking with others in the field. Keeping the health and safety of our NASFAA conference attendees and staff at the forefront, we decided to host a 100% virtual conference in June 2021. As a thank you to members for their continued support, we offered a low, institution-wide registration fee of \$99 and made registration exclusive to institutions that intended to renew their NASFAA membership for 2021-22. The conference garnered over 400 first-time attendees and received kudos across the board for its engaging content, critical information, and effective delivery methods.

NASFAA looks forward to seeing members at the [2022 National Conference](#) in Austin, TX, June 26-29.

Kudos From National Conference Participants

"What a WONDERFUL virtual NASFAA Conference. Thanks so much for offering it at one low cost for ALL our staff and making the recordings available. . . . I did miss seeing everyone in person, but this was the next best thing to being there."

"This was so valuable — excellent, detailed, and even inspirational information from our association leaders and from our Department of Education partners. Thank you!"

"NASFAA promotes critical thinking and is open to discuss, review, investigate, defend, clarify all opinions, new ideas, and other relevant topics that come up within the membership, our industry, and nation. Thank you NASFAA for all you do. Excellent conference!"

2021 National Conference Session and Event Participants

Conference sessions (including pre- and post-conference events)	Number of attendees*
U.S. Department of Education Update	3,487
Opening Session — From Disruption to Evolution: How Campuses Are Changing Post-pandemic	3,481
Blurred Lines: The Intersection of Financial Aid and Financial Wellness Education	2,581
Ensuring Equity and Access Across All Underserved Student Profiles	2,507
NASFAA U Course: Return of Title IV Funds	2,320
Pre-conference Diversity Session: Working to Eliminate Bias in Aid Administration	2,287
NSLDS reporting and the National Student Clearinghouse	2,274
2020-21 Reflections, Passing the Gavel, and Where We're Headed on Public Policy	1,927
Pell for Incarcerated Students: What You Need to Know	1,852
Financial Aid Options for Competency-based Education: What's Best for Your Institution?	915
Post-conference Diversity Session: Under-resourced Schools	566
Graduate and Professional Schools Town Hall	552
Post-conference: New Aid Administrator Open Q&A Forum	325

**This lists shows the number of participants online for each session; it does not reflect the many cases where multiple staff viewed sessions together or post-event viewing of conference session recordings.*



INVEST IN YOURSELF IN 2022

Ready to elevate your skills, your knowledge, and your career? We've got two great in-person conferences coming up in 2022 designed to help you do just that.

NASFAA 2022 LEADERSHIP & LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE & EXPO

Location: The Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C.

Dates: February 14-16, 2022

If you are a financial aid administrator who wants to grow professionally, expand your network, and become a leader on campus, in your association, or in your profession, this learning opportunity is designed for you. Take your pick of five pathways:

- Association Leadership
- Compliance Management
- Strategic Enrollment Management
- **Succession Planning: Building Your Bench** 
- **FAAC Forum** 

Learn more at <https://www.nasfaa.org/leadership>.

NASFAA 2022 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Location: Austin Convention Center in Austin, TX

Dates: June 26-29, 2022

Nearly 2,300 student aid professionals from across the nation attend the NASFAA national conference each year to network, share best practices, and receive up-to-date information on the student aid programs from financial aid veterans.

In 2022, we're pleased to welcome author and science writer David Epstein as our opening session keynote speaker. Epstein has made it his mission to uncover the keys to achieving high performance in any domain, and to debunk popular myths along the way. Merging stories from the worlds of sports, business, medicine, and education, Epstein sheds light on the paths to peak performance and is sure to get the conference off to an invigorating start.

Learn more at <https://www.nasfaa.org/conference22>.

NASFAA Awards

Each year, the NASFAA Awards Committee selects individuals and groups to honor with NASFAA awards recognizing exceptional achievements and excellence in the field. The board of directors ratifies all selections before the national chair announces the awards at the annual National Conference. Details about each award and recipient appear in our June 24, 2021, [press release](#).

This year, NASFAA recognized **Dr. William A. Irwin**, director emeritus of financial aid at Lock Haven University, with the highest honor the association can bestow on a member: [The Lifetime Achievement Award](#).

NASFAA honored **Brenda Hicks**, director of financial aid at Southwestern College, with the [Allan W. Purdy Distinguished Service Award](#), which NASFAA bestows for significant contributions in the furtherance of the association's goals.

G. Michael Johnson, emeritus director of financial aid at Columbia Gorge Community College, received the [Meritorious Achievement Award](#), which recognizes an individual who has made one or more significant contributions to NASFAA or the profession.

Jaime Ramirez-Mendoza and **Tiffany Jones**, from The Education Trust, received the 2021 [Robert P. Huff Golden Quill Award](#), recognizing exceptional contributions to the literature on student financial aid, for their December 2020 brief, "[Using Professional Judgement in Financial Aid to Advance Racial Justice & Equity](#)."

NASFAA presented its six [Regional Leadership Awards](#) to individuals from each region who have exhibited high integrity and character, shown creative leadership, and inspired and encouraged others to actively participate in professional development.

- **EASFAA** – **Kristi Jovell**, director of financial services, Middlebury College
- **MASFAA** – **Kristin Bhaumik**, associate director, University of Michigan
- **RNASFAA** – **Ken Kocer**, director of financial assistance, Mount Marty University
- **SASFAA** – **Zita Barree**, director of financial aid, Hampden-Sydney College
- **SWASFAA** – **Lauren Jackson**, director of financial aid, Northwestern State University
- **WASFAA** – **Ashley Munro**, associate director of financial aid, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Western Governors University received NASFAA's [Gold Star Award](#), which recognizes innovative ideas in the financial aid arena, for its program, "[Responsible Borrowing Initiatives](#)." This program focuses on helping students understand loans and encourages them to borrow only what they need.

Leadership Symposium

Since 1971, NASFAA’s leadership conference has offered intensive preparation for NASFAA members who hold leadership positions and those preparing to assume such positions. Over the years, we’ve modified the conference title and expanded the content, but the purpose of the conference remains the same: to deliver knowledge, perspective, and insight into issues facing current and future financial aid leaders.

The 2021 virtual event featured expert presenters from the field delivering sessions on compliance management, the current state of student aid administration, and strategic enrollment management. An average of 90 participants attended each of the 10 sessions, with an overall satisfaction rating of more than 97%.

We’re looking forward to welcoming new and current financial aid leaders at the [2022 Leadership & Legislative Conference & Expo](#) from February 14 – 16, 2022.

Overall Satisfaction Averages, 2021 Leadership Symposium

Satisfaction: Excellent/Good, Strongly Agree/Agree, or Yes	Average Score
Did you find this webinar useful?	95.67%
How would you rate the overall quality of the webinar content?	96.75%
How would you rate the effectiveness of the presenter(s) in this format?	98.67%
The webinar provided me with meaningful insight into the work I perform or that of my colleagues.	97.83%
Based on your experience, would you recommend future NASFAA webinars to your colleagues?	98.50%
Overall average	97.48%

A Few Quotes From Symposium Participants

“This is the first NASFAA Leadership Symposium I’ve attended, and I’ve already learned so much information that I’m hoping our board can implement in the future.”

“Justin and team — you are our touchstone with regard to aid, advocacy, and information. I greatly appreciate you and this opportunity to grow and learn.”

“This was a fascinating and comprehensive review of a really complicated topic. Art [Coleman] did an incredible job of making this information useful and actionable, in just 90 minutes!”

“[I] always enjoy NASFAA sessions. Always well prepared. Can’t wait to participate in person sometime soon.”

“I will be implementing additional processes learned from this session. Thank you!”

“It was nice to hear the various perspectives from multiple schools.”



Membership

The constrained institutional budgets and enrollment disruptions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic led to some concern that institutions would have less time and money to dedicate to professional association membership and training opportunities. But time and time again, members told us NASFAA resources were more essential in this time of crisis than ever before.

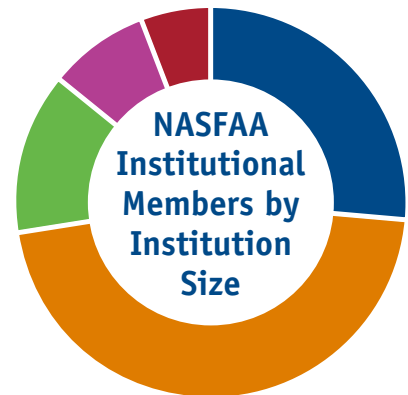
“Through advocating on our behalf, in its interpretation of current circumstances, and with its training and development initiatives that directly impact the work we do, NASFAA rises to the challenges we face daily,” Scott Cline, vice president of enrollment management and auxiliary services at the California College of the Arts wrote. “The return on investment to the leadership of our institutions is many magnitudes larger than our membership dues. There is no organization I’d rather have in my corner right now than NASFAA.”

“There is no organization I’d rather have in my corner right now than NASFAA.”

In the end, we were delighted to see membership retention rates hold steady at nearly the exact percentage as the previous year. In fact, in 2020-21, NASFAA had 2,752 institutional members — the highest number of members since 2015-16. The member retention rate came in at 97.5%, just 0.1% below the previous year but still well above [association-sector](#) averages. The NASFAA Board of Directors held dues steady yet again in 2020-21 to encourage new memberships and renewals. NASFAA continues to exceed its membership projections due to higher-than-projected retention and recruitment rates and membership dues package upgrades.



	Number of schools	Percentage of member institutions
Community Colleges	818	29.7%
For-profit	236	8.6%
Graduate/Professional	115	4.2%
Nonprofit	1,053	38.3%
Public 4-year	530	19.3%
Total	2,752	100.0%



Number of students	Number of schools	Percentage of member institutions
0-999	732	26.6%
1,000-4,999	1,280	46.5%
5,000-9,999	380	13.8%
10,000-19,999	208	7.6%
20,000 and above	152	5.5%
Total	2,752	100.0%

The Dallas Martin Endowment for Public Policy and Student Aid

NASFAA created the [Dallas Martin Endowment \(DME\) for Public Policy and Student Aid](#), honoring NASFAA President Emeritus A. Dallas Martin Jr., to promote and support the next generation of student aid advocates. Each year, NASFAA selects an upper-division undergraduate or graduate student with a special interest in financial aid policy or research for a summer internship spent fully immersed in NASFAA advocacy and/or research. Since its inception in 2012, the program has brought on 10 student interns to work with NASFAA's policy and federal relations team.

This year's intern, Richard Davis Jr., is pursuing a master's degree in public administration at Louisiana State University. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Richard conducted his internship remotely. But, as you'll read in the summary article below, he didn't allow the public health limitations to slow him down. Richard made the most of his internship and achieved a number of goals, including understanding how to leverage research and data to inform advocacy. Here's what Richard had to say about his experience as the 2021 DME Policy Intern.



2021 DME Intern, Richard Davis Jr.

My Top Five NASFAA Projects as the 2021 DME Policy Intern

By Richard Davis Jr.

Having the opportunity to intern with NASFAA has been one of the best professional experiences of my life. I was first introduced to state higher education policy as a senior in college, and as I matriculated to graduate school, I really wanted to explore and learn more about the challenges and opportunities associated with higher education policy at the federal level. Even though my internship experience was fully remote due to the pandemic, I am leaving with a deep sense of appreciation for the financial aid profession and a heightened passion for advocating for under-resourced students and communities. Read on to learn about five of my favorite experiences as NASFAA's 2021 Dallas Martin Endowment Policy Intern.

Pell Restoration Working Group

My most impactful experience of my internship was working with Rachel Gentry, NASFAA's assistant director of federal and state relations, to garner feedback and build consensus among the association's Pell Restoration Working Group. Throughout this process, I learned about the numerous challenges experienced by incarcerated students navigating the financial aid process and the opportunities associated with the reinstatement of Pell eligibility, and gained a greater respect for the implementation phase of the policy process. I also got to work on compiling the working group's report and recommendations that will soon be shared with the financial aid community to assist with enacting this new policy. Back home in Louisiana, we have some of the highest rates of incarceration in the country, so I am pleased that the federal government has acted to restore Pell Grant eligibility to justice-impacted individuals and am looking forward to seeing the positive results this change brings to students.

Federal Relations and Advocacy

Throughout the summer, I had the amazing opportunity to participate in NASFAA's Advocacy Pipeline, an initiative to connect financial aid professionals with their members of Congress. In addition to meeting with folks from Utah, I was able to connect with financial aid professionals and congressional staff from my home state of Louisiana. I really enjoyed speaking about the challenges facing students in Louisiana, especially as a result of the pandemic. It was also eye-opening to hear what financial aid administrators are dealing with on the front lines of our institutions as they work to support and advise today's students on how to pay for college.

Committee for Education Funding (CEF)

Over the course of the summer, I was able to attend the Committee for Education Funding's weekly meetings to learn and discuss the current events impacting funding across the education continuum. It was so great to engage in robust discussions with so many passionate professionals and organizations dedicated to increased access in and support for education. To my surprise, later in the summer, my supervisor recommended that I participate as a panelist at CEF's annual budget briefing webinar to speak about the importance of President Biden's historic budget proposal. As the sole panelist representing higher education, I shared a student perspective and advocated for several of the financial aid community's top funding priorities, including doubling the Pell Grant, increasing campus-based aid funding, and investing in student support services and Minority-Serving Institutions. Even though I was nervous, I really enjoyed the opportunity to discuss the challenges that students across the country are facing and the opportunity that Congress has to address them.

Connecting with Former DME Interns

At the beginning of my internship, I realized that I was the tenth Policy Intern that NASFAA had brought on since the DME Internship Program began in 2012. As I worked through the summer, I wondered what the former interns have been up to and what advice they would have for me. I spoke with my supervisor, Rachel Gentry, who loved the idea of connecting with these professionals, interviewing them about their time since NASFAA, and compiling these conversations into an article to share with the Association. Over the course of the summer, I worked to connect and interview NASFAA's former interns to learn more about their professional journeys and current work, and was able to publish this article to share their perspectives and insight with NASFAA and future interns.

Research, Data Analysis, and Legislative Tracking

Going into my internship, one of my key goals was to learn how to effectively leverage research and data to become a better-informed advocate. I had an opportunity to work closely with Megan Walter, one of NASFAA's policy analysts, to learn how to track and summarize legislation making its way through Congress. It was so interesting to read the varying types of legislative proposals for higher education and their potential impacts on students and campuses. I also had the chance to work with Charlotte Etier, NASFAA's director of research and grants, on two projects: finding publications, articles, and other resources to improve the Student Aid Reference Desk, and updating the data for NASFAA's 2021 National Student Aid Profile. I am excited to see the Profile finalized and published later this fall, and am honored to have contributed to this important, renowned publication.

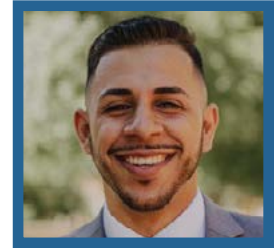
Where Are They Now? Reconnecting With NASFAA’s Former DME Policy Interns

Since 2012, NASFAA has brought on board a total of 10 interns to contribute to our work of promoting student access and success in higher education. These interns have gone on to make meaningful contributions to the financial aid profession, the broader field of higher education, and society as a whole. Some have continued to work in education policy and research, others have continued to advance NASFAA’s values of promoting equity and access in careers outside of higher education, and a couple even found their way back to NASFAA as full-time employees.

To commemorate this 10-year milestone, we checked in with seven of our former interns to discover where life has taken them since the end of their summer with NASFAA and collect advice for future NASFAA interns. Read about these talented professionals and the impact they are making on the world in [this Today’s News article](#).



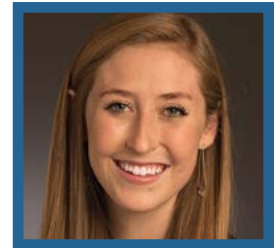
2021
Richard Davis Jr.



2020
Muhammad Kara



2019
Maylene Rodriguez Scott



2018
McCall Hopkin



2017
Brianna Hayes



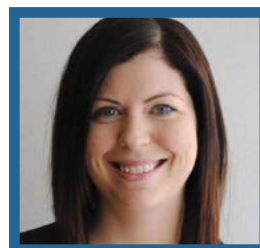
2016
Janette Martinez



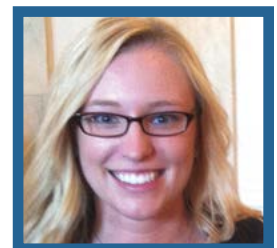
2015
Angel Flores



2014
Blondeen Philemond



2013
Charlotte Etier



2012
Margot O’Meara

2020-21 Dallas Martin Endowment Donors

NASFAA is deeply grateful to all DME donors from inception to today. The following groups and individuals contributed in 2020-21:

Platinum: Donations from \$500 to \$999
Justin Draeger

Gold: Donations from \$100 to \$499
Cambridge Focus, Inc.

Silver: Donations up to \$99

Maureen Chisholm	Daisy Cordero
Verna Hazen	Pamela Hughes
Warrick Jubber	Teresa Meehan
Wayne Montgomery	Cindi Patterson
Kianna Spivey	William West

Visit the [DME page](#) to see a list of donors from inception or to lend your support.

Volunteers

NASFAA's volunteers lend their dedication, knowledge, experience, and creativity to the association's many efforts and achievements. The following are NASFAA's 2020-21 working groups, task forces, and committees, and their leaders. Please also take a moment to view our [full list of volunteers](#) and join us in thanking them for their dedication and service.

Advocacy Pipeline

NASFAA staff led

Association Governance Committee

Paula Luff, Ball State University, chair

Awards Committee

Paula Luff, Ball State University, chair

Certified Financial Aid Administrator® Program Commission

Kathy Bialk, University of Kentucky, chair

Daniel Barkowitz, Valencia College, past chair

Shannon Crossland, Texas Tech University, chair-elect

Conference Program Task Force

Ashley Munro, University of Alaska Fairbanks, chair

Emily Osborn, Northwestern University Chicago

Campus, chair-elect

Diversity Leadership Program Mentors Group

Scott Skaro, United Tribes Technical College, chair

Ethics Commission

S. Kay Lewis, University of Washington, chair

Examining Implicit Bias in Financial Aid Policies and Procedures

Tarik Boyd, Norfolk State University, chair

FAFSA Simplification Implementation Working Group

Gail Holt, Amherst College, chair

Financial Affairs Committee

Keith Williams, Michigan State University, chair

Kelly Morrissey, Community College of Rhode Island, vice chair

Graduate/Professional Liaison

Christopher Pollard, The George Washington University

Leadership and Legislative Virtual Symposium

NASFAA staff led

NASFAA Associate Advisory Board
Cecelia Dwyer, College Ave Student Loans, chair

Nominations & Elections Committee
Paula Luff, Ball State University, chair

"Off The Cuff" Podcast Participants
NASFAA staff led

Pell Restoration for Incarcerated Student Working Group
NASFAA staff led

Policy Rapid Response Network Task Force
NASFAA staff led

Publications Editorial Board
NASFAA staff led

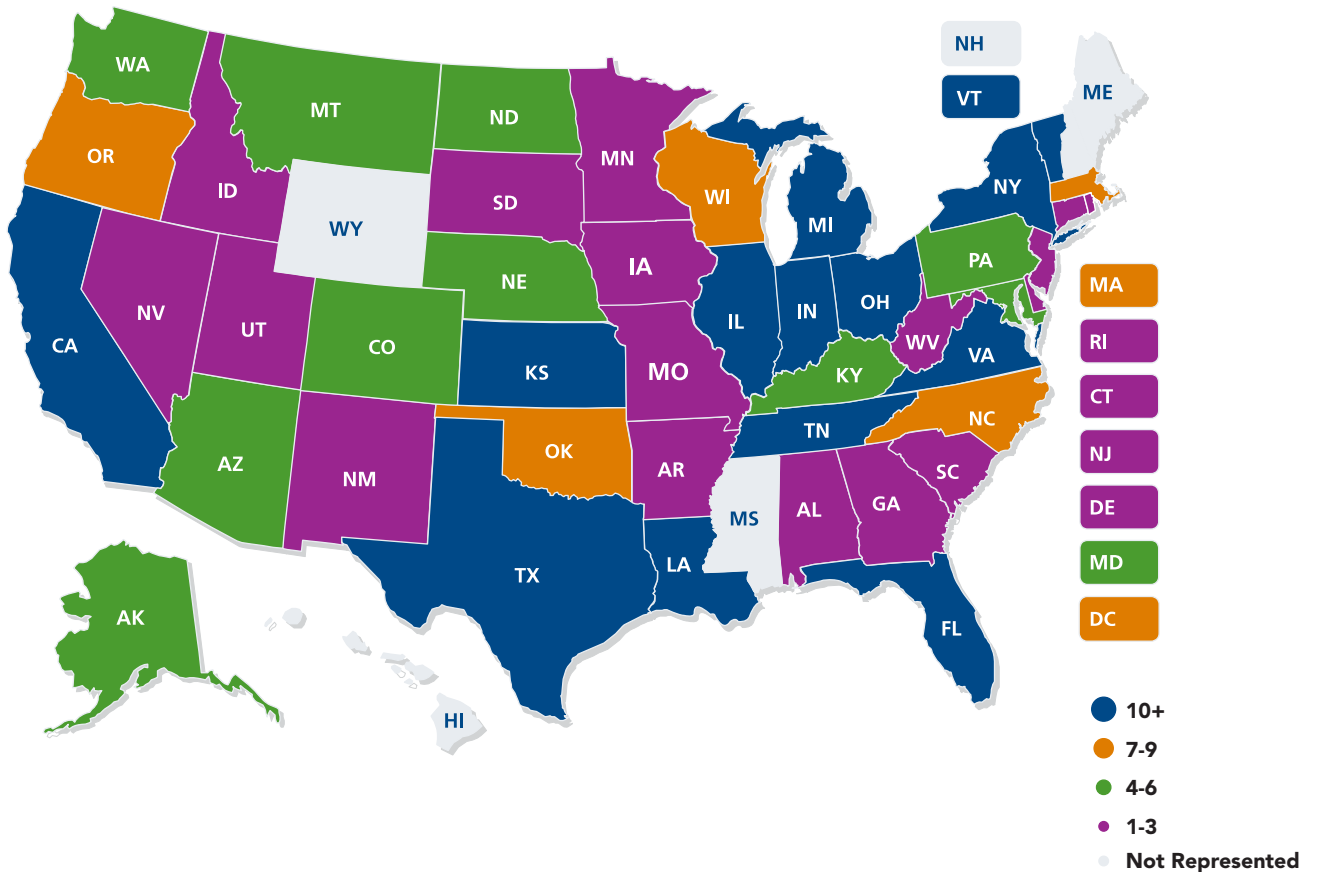
Selection Committee: Diversity Leadership Program
Scott Skaro, United Tribes Technical College, chair

State Advocacy Task Force
NASFAA staff led

Test Development Volunteers
NASFAA staff led

Under-resourced Schools Thought Force
Andrew Hammontree, Francis Tuttle Technology Center, chair

2020/21 Board Members and Volunteers, by State



Finance

As the 2020-21 NASFAA Board of Directors and Financial Affairs Committee navigated a second pandemic year, they again stayed nimble and met regularly to shore up the association's financial position and deploy NASFAA funds strategically for investment in member services. The board also tasked a group of volunteers with creating a working definition of what NASFAA would consider an "under-resourced" institution and suggest some ways that, when possible, NASFAA might in the future use a portion of our strategic reserves to support such schools.

"Even during this most atypical time frame, I am happy to once again let you know that **the overall financial picture for our national association remains very solid.**"

At the Annual Business Meeting, held virtually on May 25, 2021, Treasurer Keith Williams reported to the membership that "even during this most atypical time frame, I am happy to once again let you know that the overall financial picture for our national association remains very solid."

Over the course of the 2020-21 fiscal year, the association continued to use various tools at its disposal to bolster revenue and ensure stability, including the receipt of a second federal Paycheck Protection Program loan and ongoing cost containment measures. NASFAA management has continued to reexamine all existing NASFAA contracts, made cuts wherever possible, deferred some development projects, and trimmed other operational and personnel expenses with a focus on maintaining the core operations of the association.

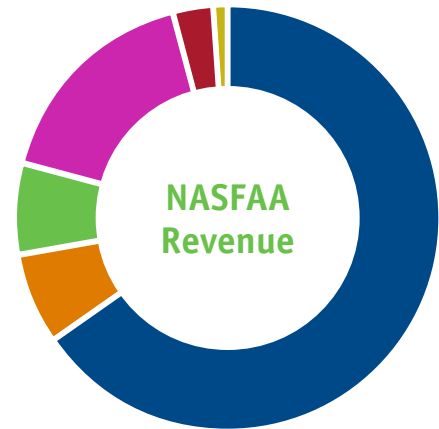
To ensure the health and safety of participants and in light of the travel restrictions and budget cuts many schools have instituted, it's fair to say that no one was surprised by the cancellation of the in-person 2021 National Conference in National Harbor, MD. This year, the staff had more time than in 2020 to plan and present a comprehensive, "soup-to-nuts" virtual program, which resulted in a very popular online event this past June. Williams reported that — as a huge show of solidarity and thanks to the entire membership for continued support of the organization as it navigated a second pandemic year — NASFAA's board opted to set the 2021 virtual conference registration at the exceptionally low price of \$99 per institution. Members expressed appreciation for this tangible recognition of the incredibly tough year they have faced.

Likewise, NASFAA made the February 2021 NASFAA Leadership Symposium virtual. The association split the event into two tracks (*Association Leadership and Leadership Strategies and Realities*), and more than 140 people attended online. Williams noted that, from a budget standpoint, this conference was once again self-sustaining.

The chart to the right demonstrates that NASFAA invested the majority of its resources in membership services in 2020-21, with just 15% of total operating expenses attributed to overhead or administrative expenses. This outlay is significantly less than the nearly 26% average for “general and administrative expenses” cited for organizations of NASFAA’s size, according to historical benchmarks published by the American Society of Association Executives.

NASFAA expended the remaining 85% of operating funds on mission-focused work, including public policy and advocacy initiatives, training efforts, communicating with members, and new program development.

As one would expect given the cancellation of our premier in-person event, revenues in the “conferences & meetings” area were again lower than normal, dropping from 23% of total revenue in FY 2019 (pre-pandemic) to 7% in FY 2020 and 5% in FY 2021. Expense percentages of the total tracked similarly, decreasing from 13% of total FY 2019 expenses, to 7% in FY 2020, to 5% in FY 2021.



Membership Dues	\$5,321,248	65%
Conference & Meetings	\$398,806	5%
Grants & Research	\$409,170	5%
Training & Programs	\$1,587,219	20%
Publications	\$2,399	0%
Advertising	\$375,199	5%
Other	\$44,434	1%
Total	\$8,138,475	



Membership Support	\$961,203	14%
Advocacy	\$936,693	14%
Administrative & General	\$1,009,134	15%
Communications & Web Expenses	\$1,175,951	17%
Conference & Meetings	\$337,008	5%
Training & Programs	\$2,071,677	30%
New Program Development	\$370,466	5%
Total	\$6,862,132	

The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) provides professional development for financial aid administrators; advocates for public policies that increase student access and success; serves as a forum on student financial aid issues; and is committed to diversity throughout all activities.

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