

# Monograph

A N A S F A A S E R I E S

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Practical Information for Student Aid Professionals

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## Research Tools, Tips, and Resources for Financial Aid Administrators

*What is research? How can financial aid administrators get started on research projects? What resources are available to help answer research questions quickly and accurately? How can your research efforts assist your institution's policy makers? This monograph provides research tools, tips, and resources to help financial aid administrators undertake research tasks. The report also provides instructions for administrators who want to build research databases and strategies for publicizing the results of your research efforts.*

**I**magine the following scenarios: The president's office calls you to request demographic information on financial aid recipients at the campus and nationally; a survey on campus trends in student financial assistance arrives in the mail; a campus official wants your analysis of a potential change in federal financial aid regulations. Of course, all of these requests for information arrive simultaneously and require immediate response. Sound familiar?

Whenever we complete a survey, respond to a request for information about student financial aid programs, or assess how a regulatory change might impact our students or our institutions, we are essentially "doing research." The challenge in today's financial aid office is that—in addition to an already expanded set of duties and responsibilities—we are asked to do more research more often, and usually to do it faster, in greater detail, and with no additional resources to devote to the effort. Increasingly, financial aid administrators need to know how to respond to requests for information, data, and analysis in a timely, cost-effective, and efficient manner.

### What is Research?

Many aid administrators understand the importance of research but tend to shy away from these duties. We imagine the challenging tasks that are sometimes included in more structured and sophisticated research efforts. We think about such things as developing formal hypotheses, doing exhaustive reviews of past research and literature, and collecting and then analyzing myriad data using any number of



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detailed statistical tests or procedures. We get turned off by thoughts about multivariate regression analysis, t-tests, degrees of freedom, random variables, control parameters, measures of central tendency, etc. However, research doesn't have to be onerous or complicated, and increased involvement in research is one way aid administrators can increase their contribution to students, other campus administrators, and groups off-campus. One excellent definition of research is provided by Jerry Sheehan Davis, formerly the Vice President of Research for Lumina Foundation for Education, in the NASFAA publication *Student Aid Research: A Manual for Financial Aid Administrators*: "In the broadest of terms, research is the simple act of carefully observing some thing, situation, or phenomenon in order to learn more about it and better understand it. If one can look carefully and objectively at some phenomenon and see it as it is, one can do research." The possible contributions that aid administrators can play in their research efforts is conveyed by Dr. Dallas Martin, president of NASFAA, and Joseph A. Russo, Director of Student Financial Aid at the University of Notre Dame, in NASFAA's *Student Aid Research* manual:

*Financial aid administrators who know how to conduct research can respond quickly and accurately to information requests, thereby strengthening their roles on campus.*

[If] financial aid staff take the time to project reporting requirements and consider how such data can be utilized for other purposes, they will discover how easy it is to produce value-added "action" research that enhances their contribution to their institutions and students. Time and effort spent on such planning is minimal when compared to the added benefits to be derived. Data compiling and reporting procedures will soon take on added importance within the aid office, yielding results that go further than simply a response to another governmental report. Data gathered can easily be converted for use in institutional planning and resource allocation. This process can identify trends and characteristics affecting students who are well served or not well served by the institution's financial aid policies and practices. It also enables the institution to evaluate whether its goals and mission are being met. A final benefit of systematically compiling, analyzing, and reporting such data is that others will increasingly rely upon the financial aid office when making their decisions, thereby elevating the stature and value of the office and its staff.

Financial aid administrators who know how to conduct research can respond quickly and accurately to information requests, thereby strengthening their roles on campus. Their research efforts generally answer the "what, where, why, how, and when" questions asked by upper management, but also can:

- ✓ Help better manage aid offices through increased knowledge, increased responsibility, and increased control.
  - ✓ Address staffing and operational needs.
  - ✓ Address certain activities and resolve problems.
  - ✓ Change negative attitudes and beliefs.
  - ✓ Help assess the impact or results associated with various financial aid policies, procedures, and practices, or help evaluate new proposals.
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Financial aid administrators also may believe that their research topics have to be “specialized” or “complex” in order to have any value to the profession. However, almost any research topic can be interesting if it provides answers to questions that are important and useful to you or others on your campus. Some administrators may want to find out the opinions of fellow members about membership dues, collect historical data on trends in salaries of financial aid administrators by state or region, or assess the impact of pending legislation. Finding the answers to these questions requires research of one kind or another. Here is a list of other possible research topics:

- ✓ Effects of loans and work on student persistence.
- ✓ Impact of undergraduate debt on decisions about graduate education.
- ✓ Use of technology in aid offices.
- ✓ Early awareness and planning for postsecondary education.
- ✓ Economic, social, and cultural benefits of higher education.
- ✓ Enrollment management.
- ✓ Effects of tuition discounting on institutional health, enrollment, and student persistence.
- ✓ Need analysis theory.
- ✓ New strategies for meeting the needs of students.
- ✓ Non-traditional education (NTE), including distance learning.

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When research opportunities are presented to (or, more likely, thrust upon) financial aid administrators, many may think they are just too busy and that there are already too many demands on their time. Most aid administrators are busy maintaining order and structure in the aid office while contending with new regulations and students who expect—and truly need—immediate help. There just doesn’t seem to be enough time for the “luxury” of conducting research.

However, in the process-oriented environment of a financial aid office, there is a significant volume of research data that already exists and is readily accessible. The success of aid offices is often directly related to having a research base in place that can be accessed and utilized effectively.

Research efforts take a variety of forms, and can result in any number or types of end products—from answers to surveys to written reports (annual and otherwise), graphs, charts, tables, frequency distributions, and histograms, or building original databases. Aid administrators do not have to be experts or proficient in sophisticated statistical techniques or technical aspects of research in order to satisfy the research needs of their individual institutions. Research tasks are important, however, and aid administrators need a basic understanding of how to start these projects, the sources of data needed to answer questions, and ways to publicize results.

## Getting Started

So, where and how do we begin? It often helps to be proactive on campus: If you find yourself always struggling to respond to unexpected research requests, you may benefit from establishing—with other department representatives on campus—procedures for responding to information inquiries. In NASFAA's *Student Aid Research* manual, Harvey Grotrian, past NASFAA Board Chair and Director (now retired) of Student Financial Aid at the University of Michigan, suggests getting a sense of the issues on your campus by meeting with other departments to establish their information needs and the various ways these might be satisfied. Often, current financial aid literature can serve your needs (the NASFAA *Annotated Bibliography of Student Financial Aid*, available on the Web at <http://www.nasfaa.org/LinkLists/Bibliographymenu.asp>, is a good starting point). Another resource is colleagues at other postsecondary education institutions.

It is also very important to understand that you are not alone in your efforts to conduct research. Other individuals or groups on campus—including graduate students (as part of research projects or dissertations), the school's institutional studies or research office, faculty members (as part of their own research or class projects), as well as outside vendors—might help you in your research efforts. NASFAA and other higher education associations are also available to offer advice and data. The financial aid office often can take the lead role in collaborative research efforts, providing access to data (except, of course, confidential student records) and other information without having to bear the full responsibility for responding to inquiries.

## Finding the Answers

When responding to general institutional inquiries, most aid administrators can rely on data in their financial aid office records. However, financial aid administrators who need to research industry-wide issues, such as national trends in postsecondary education, may be in the dark about the availability of information on such topics. Aid administrators often ask two questions about getting national data: What is the cost of obtaining additional information? Is it difficult to access large and complex databases? Such concerns contribute to the anxiety that many aid administrators feel about undertaking research.

Fortunately, information to answer many research questions is available free of charge from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and The College Board, or for a nominal fee from other sources. Tables 1 and 2 list publications focusing on historical trends in higher education and specific financial aid programs. NCES's three statistical compilations—*Digest of Education Statistics*, *Projection of Education Statistics to 2013*, and *Condition of Education*—provide information on recent trends in postsecondary education. The *Digest* gives historical trends in postsecondary enrollments, degree attainment, and post-college outcomes (such as employment rates of college graduates and annual earnings of degree recipients). *Projections of Education Statistics* provides estimates of projected educational enrollment, achievement, and expenditures to the year 2013. Both the *Digest* and *Projections* are updated annually, and can be accessed at NCES's Web site (see Table 1). The *Condition of Education* summarizes the "important developments and trends in education using the latest available data," according to the NCES Web site. The most recent edition of this report uses 40 indicators to compare and contrast characteristics of students from different

**Table 1.**  
**Publications with General Information on**  
**Trends in Postsecondary Education**

Publication	Author/Publisher	Description	Available From (Web Site):
<i>Digest of Education Statistics, 2003</i>	U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics	Annual compilation of enrollments, revenues, expenditures, and degrees conferred by postsecondary education.	<a href="http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005025">http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005025</a>
<i>Projection of Education Statistics to 2013</i>	U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics	Provides estimates of projection in educational enrollments, degrees conferred, and expenditures of postsecondary education institutions.	<a href="http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004013.pdf">http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004013.pdf</a>
<i>Condition of Education, 2005</i>	U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics	Uses 40 indicators to measure the health of elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education.	<a href="http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005094.pdf">http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005094.pdf</a>
<i>Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2004-05</i>	U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census	Provides information on federal appropriations for financial aid, number of degree recipients, and earnings by educational attainment.	<a href="http://www.census.gov/prod/www/statistical-abstract-04.html">http://www.census.gov/prod/www/statistical-abstract-04.html</a>
Current Population Survey Reports	U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census	Series of reports provide data on enrollment and degree completion by state; earnings and economic returns; and other topics.	<a href="http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/educ-attn.html">http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/educ-attn.html</a>

countries, regions, backgrounds, and types of schools. The *Conditions of Education* may be accessed at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005094.pdf>.

One of the most widely used sources of information on tuition and fee charges and financial aid is The College Board's two research publications, *Trends in Student Aid* and *Trends in College Pricing*. These documents provide ten-year trends in changes in sources of financial assistance and charges for tuition, fees, and other costs of attending postsecondary education. The most recent editions of these reports are available for free from The College Board's Web site at [http://www.collegeboard.com/prod\\_downloads/press/cost04/TrendsInStudentAid2004.pdf](http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/TrendsInStudentAid2004.pdf) and [http://www.collegeboard.com/prod\\_downloads/press/cost04/041264TrendsPricing2004\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/041264TrendsPricing2004_FINAL.pdf) (see Table 2).

Each year, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) produces the *Pell Grant End of Year Report*. This report provides annual updates on Federal Pell Grant recipients, including their average award

**Table 2.**  
**Publications with More Specific Information on  
 Federal and State Student Financial Aid Programs**

Publication	Author/Publisher	Description	Available From (Web Site):
<i>Trends in Student Aid and Trends, 2004 and Trends in College Pricing, 2004</i>	College Board	These two annual reports provide, respectively, 10-year trends in college financial aid from all sources (federal, state, institution, and private) and tuition and fee charges.	Both reports are posted on the College Board's Web site ( <a href="http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/TrendsinStudentAid2004.pdf">http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/TrendsinStudentAid2004.pdf</a> ) and ( <a href="http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/041264TrendsPricing2004_FINAL.pdf">http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/041264TrendsPricing2004_FINAL.pdf</a> )
<i>Federal Loan Volume Update</i>	U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education	Quarterly report shows the number of borrowers and amounts borrowed under the FFEL and Direct Loan programs.	Reports up to fiscal year 2003 are available from <a href="http://www.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/opeloanvol.html">http://www.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/opeloanvol.html</a>
<i>NASSGAP Annual Survey Report</i>	National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs/New York Higher Education Services Corporation (NYHESC)	Annual report shows states' expenditures for need- and non-need-based grants and allocations for the Leveraging Educational Assistance Program (LEAP).	Copies of the report from 2003-2004 and prior years may be obtained from <a href="http://www.nassgap.org/viewrepository.aspx?categoryID=3">http://www.nassgap.org/viewrepository.aspx?categoryID=3</a>
<i>Pell Grant End of Year Report</i>	U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education	Annual report on the number of Pell Grant recipients, by institution type, family income, and expected family contribution level.	The 2003-2004 report is posted at <a href="http://www.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/pell0304.pdf">http://www.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/pell0304.pdf</a> . Reports from prior years are also available.
<i>Federal Campus-Based Programs Data Book</i>	U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education	Annual report on the Perkins Loan, FSEOG, and FWS programs. Data include the annual federal appropriations, total funds awarded, number of recipients, and average awards for each program.	The report for 2004 is available from the Web site <a href="http://www.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/databook2004/index.html">http://www.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/databook2004/index.html</a>

amounts, family income levels, expected family contribution levels, institutional types, and other characteristics. The latest report is posted on OPE's Web site at <http://www.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/pell0304.pdf>.

The OPE Web site also links to the *Federal Campus-Based Programs Data Book*, which provides detailed information on the Federal Perkins Loan, Federal Work-Study (FWS), and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant

(FSEOG) programs. This publication shows the annual federal allocations (by institutional type and state), number of recipients, and average awards for each of the three campus-based programs.

OPE's Web site also contains the *Federal Loan Volume Update*, which shows the numbers of borrowers and amounts of PLUS, Stafford Subsidized, and Stafford Unsubsidized Loans borrowed through the Federal Family Education Loan and Direct Loan programs. These reports are updated quarterly.

The National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP) annually publishes its *Survey Report*, which shows state appropriations for need- and non-need-based state grant programs, as well as federal appropriations for the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership program. The most recent report and reports from prior years are available from the NASSGAP Web site at <http://www.nassgap.org/viewrepository.aspx?categoryID=3>.

While published reports are useful, there are occasions when aid administrators will want or need to “get their hands dirty” and use raw data to answer specific, unique financial aid questions. Table 3 provides a short list of data files, mostly free of charge, useful for analyzing trends in college enrollment, finances, and financial aid programs.

Data that show trends in fall enrollment, degree completion, and institutional revenue and expenditures at individual institutions can be generated by using NCES's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). IPEDS data are based on annual surveys that must be completed by all postsecondary education institutions that participate in the federal student financial aid programs. The NCES Web site, <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds>, allows users to download the data from each of the surveys. Users can then use any statistical software (SAS, SPSS, Microsoft Access, etc.) to manipulate the data for their individual use. For even quicker use, NCES also provides a College Opportunities On-Line (COOL) Web site (<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool>) that allows users to get basic enrollment, tuition charges, and degrees conferred data for all postsecondary institutions in the IPEDS database. This Web site allows users to get information for individual schools, schools in a state or region, or by enrollment size.

Another widely used source of information is NCES's National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS). Under NPSAS, NCES surveys postsecondary institutions and students to collect more detailed demographic, financial aid, and other information about higher education. These data can be used to calculate cumulative student loan debt and other data on “hot” topics in financial aid. NCES has developed Windows-based software, called the Data Analysis System (DAS), that can be used to generate tables from the NPSAS data set. The most recent DAS and instructions on how to use it can be downloaded from the NPSAS Web site (shown on Table 3). Users should have access to Microsoft Excel or some other spreadsheet software to generate tables from the DAS.

*With a bit of effort and ingenuity, aid administrators can use on-campus databases for answering simple and complex financial aid-related inquiries quickly.*

## Building an On-Campus Financial Aid Database

Many financial aid offices have established databases with student-specific financial aid data. With a little bit of effort and ingenuity, aid administrators can use these databases for answering simple and complex financial aid-related inquiries quickly. However, aid administrators who establish and use these databases to answer research inquiries should make sure students' privacy and confidentiality are protected at all times.

**Table 3.**  
**Data Sets for Trends in**  
**Postsecondary Education and Student Financial Aid**

Data Set	Source	Data Collected	Available From (Web Site):
Annual Survey of Colleges	College Board	Annual tuition and fee prices for undergraduate and graduate students by institution.	Not available on the Web. Must e-mail Renee Gernand at the College Board at <a href="mailto:rgernand@collegeboard.org">rgernand@collegeboard.org</a> . Cost is \$750 for undergraduate and graduate data.
Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)	U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics	Annual institutional surveys on college enrollments, finances, institutional financial aid, and degree completions.	Data may be downloaded from <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds">http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds</a> . Data for individual institutions is available from <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool">http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool</a>
National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS)	U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics	A triennial survey of college students, their families, and their postsecondary education institutions. NPSAS collects information on the amounts, types, and sources of financial aid by race/ethnicity, income, gender, and other student characteristics.	The NCES web site ( <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/das/">http://nces.ed.gov/das/</a> ) provides instructions on downloading the NPSAS datasets and producing tables. Data tables may be produce by using the Data Analysis System (DAS). Most recent NPSAS data are for 2003-2004.
Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS)	U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics	BPS is a sub-sample of NPSAS. It includes students who are first-time beginners at postsecondary institutions. This longitudinal survey will track the students' progress through higher education.	NCES Web site ( <a href="http://nces.ed.gov/das/">http://nces.ed.gov/das/</a> ) gives instructions on downloading the BPS datasets and producing tables. Most recent data are for students beginning in 1996.

At most campuses, these databases are created in either Microsoft Access or Microsoft Excel. FTP (file transfer protocol) and on-campus network computer access allow aid administrators to build and update student record data files and connect these files with their campus' computer networks. To establish or update these databases, aid administrators should have their campus computer center send a "flat file" that contains their institution's data. A flat file is a text or comma-delimited file that can be transferred into Excel, Access, or other spreadsheet or database software you use on campus. Network or FTP access is necessary to obtain the data from your campus' central computer network.

Depending on the level of sophistication that is desired for this database, the specific data elements to include in a database can vary. However, we recommend the following variables, which are often the subjects of research-related inquiries:

- |                          |                       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| ♦ Social Security Number | ♦ Institutional ID    |
| ♦ Aid Year               | ♦ Last Name           |
| ♦ First Name             | ♦ Middle Initial      |
| ♦ Zip Code               | ♦ Gender              |
| ♦ Race/Ethnicity         | ♦ College             |
| ♦ Department             | ♦ Major               |
| ♦ Class                  | ♦ Level               |
| ♦ Dependency Status      | ♦ Parent Contribution |
| ♦ Student Contribution   | ♦ Cost of Attendance  |
| ♦ Original Need          | ♦ Unmet Need          |
| ♦ Resources              | ♦ Aid Fund Number     |
| ♦ Aid Total              | ♦ Aid Term 1          |
| ♦ Aid Term 2             | ♦ Aid Term 3          |
| ♦ Aid Term 4             | ♦ Aid Term 5          |
| ♦ Aid Term 6             | ♦ Residency           |
| ♦ High School GPA        | ♦ College GPA         |
| ♦ Total Hrs Attempted    | ♦ Total Hrs Earned    |
| ♦ Professional Judgment  | ♦ FAFSA Date          |

If you need to establish or update a student-record database in your office, first contact your institution's computer department and ask for a flat file that contains the relevant information and variables you think you will need to answer research questions. Depending on your institution's student information system, the computer department may need to "mine" data from several sources or academic departments. This may require additional programming from your campus' computer center to build the flat file. However, it is important to emphasize that this additional programming will enable the financial aid office to do more of the reporting that the computer department might currently deal with on an ad hoc basis.

Second, your database should be set up so that it can be used for current and future research needs. Therefore, it is vitally important to document every record and variable in the database. Working with the computer center, be sure to put in writing which data elements were "mined," how the extract was built, how to go about moving the files around so you can get to them, and exactly how to import the records into Microsoft Access or other software you plan to use. Always follow the same documentation process as various reports and queries are developed. Remember to update the documentation on a yearly basis to account for changes in file structure, data element coding, and other adjustments.

Last but not least, develop a written policy that makes the process legitimate and recognizable as "official" office data. In setting up the database, it may be helpful and cost effective to see if students can help with this project as part of a practicum or other degree requirement within their majors. Students in the business, educational research, computer science, information technology, and public

administration programs might be particularly interested in assisting in building these types of databases.

Once the data are in Microsoft Access or other database software, they can be easily manipulated. Microsoft Access allows users to put data into queries and reports. Using Access, financial aid administrators can select, sort, build sub-files, and export the data to other formats such as Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. Excel and many other spreadsheet software programs allow users to perform various statistical functions, such as calculating average award amounts by dependency status.

For a demonstration of the institutional database built by Virginia Tech, interested financial aid administrators may contact Barry Simmons at [simmons@vt.edu](mailto:simmons@vt.edu).

## An Example of Using Research to Answer Media and Other Requests

While providing the available Web sites and other information that can be used to answer research questions may be helpful, it may be even more powerful to illustrate how one institution has used research to respond quickly and easily to requests for information from the media, campus leaders, students, and others. In this section, we highlight some of the resources and data tools used by the financial aid staff at Purdue University in West Lafayette, IN, to answer the numerous requests they receive.

Every year when the official student loan cohort default rates are published by the U.S. Department of Education (ED), many institutions receive phone calls from newspaper reporters and requests from upper administration for comparative data. In anticipation of these requests, Purdue University has compiled several charts using information available on ED's Web site at <http://ifap.ed.gov/IFAPWebApp/currentDFMaterialsPag.jsp>. At this site you can search among all Title IV institutions to obtain their cohort default rates for the three most current years. Purdue University has used the information from this Web site to compile about 15 years of data that compares its default rate with the national average, and about nine years of comparative data for peer institutions. The Web site also contains the Federal Perkins Loan Cohort Default Rate Booklets (Orange Book), from which you can construct similar comparative data for this loan program.

To answer many of the numerous other data requests received from the media and other sources, Purdue has established and maintained a Data Digest, which is available on the Office of Institutional Research's Web site (<http://www.purdue.edu/DataDigest/>). A committee was formed in 2000-2001 to bring the data holders at the university together to develop this resource document. Published annually, the Data Digest contains comprehensive information about all aspects of the institution. For example, it has enrollment by gender, degree status, ethnicity, and residency. It also contains information about faculty and staff, research-related information, comparative data with peer institutions, and student financial aid data that includes all forms of financial assistance at the institution.

Although the Data Digest does not answer every question, it is referred to often so that inquirers might examine its contents for other data needs. Many of Purdue's peer institutions also compile similar sources of data. This information is used often for comparative purposes. Other schools' Web sites are also assessed to see if they provide useful information.

Purdue University also receives a number of inquiries about Federal Pell Grant recipients at the institution. The aid office is ready to answer nearly all of these questions without much research. Along with other frequently used resources,

historical Pell Grant figures are available at the FinAid Web site (<http://www.finaid.org/educators>). This data is used to compare the number of Pell Grant recipients and average awards at Purdue with the national averages from 1991-1992 to the present. Purdue also annually constructs a table that shows Pell Grant recipients by residency status; tuition and fees for full-time undergraduates; the percentage of tuition and fees covered by the average Pell Grant at Purdue; and the percentage of tuition and fees covered by the maximum Pell Grant for one year. A third table shows a ten-year history of Pell Grant recipients at Purdue University. This table contains: the total Pell Grant dollars received by Purdue undergraduates, the average Pell Grant award, total undergraduate enrollment, and the percentage of undergraduates with Pell Grants for each academic year. For more information on these tables or other uses of research to answer questions at Purdue University, contact Bonnie Joerschke at [bcjoerschke@purdue.edu](mailto:bcjoerschke@purdue.edu).

## Student Aid Resources Available from NASFAA

Aid administrators may also use the numerous research tools and publications available from NASFAA's Web site. NASFAA also provides grant funds for aid administrators and other researchers who want to undertake research projects, and suggests strategies that aid administrators can use to publicize their research results.

### NASFAA's Research Resources on the Web

NASFAA has a wide variety of resources available to help you conduct research. NASFAA's Web site provides excellent resources that can help you develop your research ideas. In the "Student Aid Research Center" area of the Web site (<http://www.nasfaa.org/SubHomes/ResearchHome/Index.asp>) you will find:

- ✓ A wide variety of research articles, including summaries of recent research reports.
- ✓ An on-line annotated bibliography on financial aid topics.
- ✓ Links to other research Web sites such as The Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse (ERIC) and the National Center for Education Statistics.

### Sponsored Research Grant Program

Additionally, financial aid administrators who need funds to conduct research may be eligible to receive a grant from NASFAA's Sponsored Research Grant Program. This program supports research on topics in student financial assistance and related matters. Many award recipients have used the funds to complete theses, dissertations, or other projects needed to complete degree programs. Grant funds are awarded semi-annually; proposals are reviewed in March and September of each year. Proposals are evaluated by NASFAA's Research Committee at its fall and spring meetings. Award notification takes place following each meeting. Through the NASFAA Web site, (<http://www.nasfaa.org/LinkLists/sponsoredgrnt.asp>), you can access additional information on the Sponsored Research Grant Program, a copy of the grant application, and a list of previous grant recipients and their research topics.

*Aid administrators may also use the numerous research tools and publications available from NASFAA's Web site.*

## NASFAA's Research Manual

In 1997, NASFAA published *Student Aid Research: A Manual for Financial Aid Administrators*. This useful publication provides basic information that can help you begin to formulate research ideas and includes chapters on survey research, compiling financial aid data, and national databases. If you do not already have a copy of this important research publication, you can find ordering information on NASFAA's Web site.

### Publicizing Your Research Results

An important part of conducting research is sharing your expertise, insights, and findings with your colleagues. One way to share your research expertise is through publication of your results in NASFAA's *Student Aid Transcript* and *Journal of Student Financial Aid*. *Transcript* articles focus on how current financial aid issues affect financial aid professionals, students, parents, and postsecondary education institutions. Articles also feature professional development issues, such as the effects of technology on the financial aid office, leadership and management skills, and improvements in training. Recent articles in *Transcript* have discussed the administration of race-based scholarship programs, student loan debt and debt management for graduate and professional students, community service and America Reads programs, and ethics in the financial aid profession.

The *Journal of Student Financial Aid* is the only nationally peer-reviewed journal on student aid policy and related matters. *Journal* articles should address a position or perspective on student aid policy or other topics important to financial aid administrators and the higher education community. Included are research articles, statistical summaries, and issue papers. Recent reports in the *Journal* have focused on default management issues at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the distribution of institutionally funded financial aid to middle- and upper-income students, and the effects of financial aid on persistence and degree attainment.

Because the *Journal* and *Transcript* have a circulation of more than 5,000 financial aid professionals, articles in these publications often inform debates on higher education and student financial aid policy. More information on the *Journal* and *Transcript* may be obtained from Linda Conard at NASFAA ([conardl@nasfaa.org](mailto:conardl@nasfaa.org)). The *Journal's* "Guidelines for Authors" is provided on NASFAA's Web site at <http://www.nasfaa.org/Annualpubs/Journal/Vol34N1/GuideLinesForAuthors.PDF>.

NASFAA members who seek additional opportunities to conduct and publicize research may also discuss their ideas with Kenneth Redd, NASFAA's Director of Research and Policy Analysis ([redk@nasfaa.org](mailto:redk@nasfaa.org)).

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