



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Haley Chitty
Assistant Director for Communications
(202) 785-0453, Ext. 150
ChittyH@NASFAA.org

News from NASFAA

Volunteering Can Jump-Start Your Financial Aid Career

Washington, D.C. (July 2007) – Volunteering for state, regional, and national financial aid associations is the best way to jump-start or take the next step in your financial aid career, according to current and past association leaders speaking at the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrator’s Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.

Speakers at the luncheon stressed the importance of volunteering and developing mentor relationships at the Diversity Leadership Connections Luncheon held by NASFAA’s Leadership Development and Professional Advancement Committee. These practices strengthen state, regional, and national associations, which strengthens the entire financial aid profession, and also help younger financial aid professionals develop valuable skills, network, and take the first steps to becoming a leader in the financial aid profession.

The luncheon featured success stories from diverse financial aid professionals who rose to leadership positions in the financial aid profession thanks to increased involvement in association activities which led to formal and informal mentoring. All the speakers stressed the importance of volunteering as a first step in advancing their careers in financial aid.

Janet Dodson, the 2006-07 NASFAA National Chair, stressed the importance of professionalism during her tenure as National Chair and said that getting involved with the state, regional, and national professional associations is key to improving the financial aid profession.

“We are a profession and we are passionate about education and the students we serve,” Dodson said at the luncheon. “We need to do a better job of letting people know about what we do, so stay involved, or get involved at state, regional, and national level.”

Leadership Development and Professional Advancement Committee Chair Thelma Ross, the associate dean for student services/director of financial aid at Lincoln University, stressed the importance of mentoring to develop future association leaders.

-more-

“Opening Doors of Educational Opportunity”

Ross introduced the luncheon speakers noting that their involvement in financial aid associations was inspired by other aid administrators and now the speakers were inspiring others to become more involved.

“Guiding, Inspiring, and Growing (GIG) that is what we’re about,” she said. “That is what we will continue to do for one another.”

Continuing in this tradition, Ross asked attendees who were not active in their associations to stand. She then asked association leaders in the audience to contact those standing to get them involved with association activities.

Current and former financial aid leaders from different regional associations told their stories of how they became leaders in the financial aid profession.

Zina Haywood, the executive vice president/provost academic and campus affairs at Gateway Technical College and former president of MASFAA, began her career in financial aid as a Federal Work-Study (FWS) student. She said that informal mentors encouraged her to volunteer with professional associations which gave her leadership experience leading other volunteers.

“If you can lead volunteers you can lead anybody because they don’t have to be there,” she joked.

Her volunteering and leadership created many opportunities to advance her career. She noted that she didn’t even have to apply for her last three jobs; instead she had been approached with the job opportunities because people knew her through her leadership roles.

Kay Soltis, director of financial aid at Pacific Lutheran University in the WASFAA region, said that she did not advance in her career on her own and recognized that many people helped guide and encourage her. She stressed volunteering as a great way to get training and guidance.

“As I volunteered more and more, I remembered the people who brought me along and have encouraged others to volunteer so they can also move up,” she said.

Dwight Horsey, the acting associate vice president for student affairs at Millersville University in the EASFAA region, spoke about how mentors helped him overcome his aversion to working with people and excel in the financial aid profession. When he became involved in the Pennsylvania association he wondered why the same people continued to lead the association. When he complained that there were not any new leaders, he was asked to become involved and change that trend. So he did.

-more-

Mariko Gomez, the director of financial assistance at Texas State University at San Marcos in the SWASFAA region, said that you need to take risks to further your career.

“You can’t simply sit with your coworkers,” she said. “Sit with people you don’t know. Break away from your comfort zone.”

She said she was encouraged to pursue leadership roles because after taking the risk of volunteering other leaders made her feel welcome. Gomez also stressed the importance of taking advantage of opportunities.

“Once leadership asks you for something you have to deliver the goods,” she said. “Be active at meetings and do your homework.”

She also encouraged financial aid professionals to get to know other volunteers as a way to learn new ideas and broaden professional horizons. Those who have advanced to leadership roles should continue to reach out to future leaders and promote others in your region and across the country, according to Gomez.

Concluding the luncheon, Michael Bennett, the 2007-08 NASFAA National Chair stressed that association membership should not be experienced from a distance.

“We need to connect. Reach out and start a relationship with others to give them a start. Mentor and let yourself be mentored,” He said. “We are crying out for new leaders and this is the way to cultivate future leaders.”

By Haley Chitty, Assistant Director for Communications, NASFAA. Haley may be contacted at ChittyH@NASFAA.org.

The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) is a nonprofit membership organization that represents more than 13,000 financial aid professionals at nearly 3,000 colleges, universities and career schools across the country. Based in Washington, D.C., NASFAA is the only national association with a primary focus on student aid legislation, regulatory analysis, and training for financial aid administrators. Each year, members help more than 8 million students receive funding for postsecondary education. In addition to its member Web site at www.NASFAA.org, the Association offers a Web site with financial aid information for parents and students at www.StudentAid.org.

[Editor: A photograph of the author is available for download online:

Low Resolution - www.NASFAA.org/Subhomes/MediaCenter/HaleyChittyPhoto-LowRez.jpg

High Resolution - www.NASFAA.org/Subhomes/MediaCenter/HaleyChittyPhoto-HiRez.jpg]