



From First Conference to Lasting Connections: Navigating NASFAA 2026

June 3, 2026



NASFAA Webinar

From First Conference to Lasting Connections: Navigating NASFAA 2026

Table of Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Slides | 1 |
| NASFAA 2026 Resources | 21 |

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June 2026



From First Conference to Lasting Connections: Navigating NASFAA 2026

June 3, 2026



1

Webinar Housekeeping – Welcome!



Audio is streaming - select the "CC" icon to display captions



Download the handout(s)



Submit your questions



Visit links & resources



Chat with attendees



Complete the survey



2



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June 3, 2026

Agenda

- Welcome Messages
- First-Time Attendee Reception & Mentor Program
- Conference Highlights
- Innovation Hall
- Preparing For the Conference
- Networking
- Next Steps – what happens after?
- Q&A



Today's Moderator:
David Downing
NASFAA Staff Liaison
First-Time Attendee Task Force



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3

Welcome!



Heidi Carl
NASFAA 2025-26
National Chair
Purdue University



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Video Message



Melanie Storey

President & CEO
NASFAA



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5

Poll Question

How long have you been working in financial aid?

- <1 year
- 1- 3 years
- 3-5 years
- 5-10 years
- More than 10 years



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6



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June 3, 2026



First-Time Attendee Reception & Mentor Program

8

First-Time Attendee Taskforce Chair



Wendi C. Owens, FAAC®

*Sr. Director of Graduate & Professional Financial Aid
University of Miami*



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9



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First-Time Attendees' Kick-Off Networking & Welcome Reception

- Monday, June 29
12:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.
- Location: Maryland AC
- Network with other First-Time Attendees
- Light food & refreshments
- Meet your mentor
- Have fun!
- **RSVP by Friday June 5**



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10

Passport



- Pick up at the Kick-Off Event or the First-Time Attendee Booth
- Participation is optional
- Submit proof of completion at the First-Time Attendee Booth **before July 1 at 3:00p** (Innovation Hall close)
- Completed Passports=entry into prize drawings!
 - Grand Prize- Free registration to next year's 2027 NASFAA Conference
 - Additional gift card prizes
 - Winners will be contacted within 1 week after the conference
- Keep your Passport as a fun conference souvenir



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11



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June 3, 2026

First-Time Attendee Booth

- Your go-to hub for support, connection, and fun throughout the conference!
- Booth will be open when the Innovation Hall is open
 - Monday, June 29: 5:45p-7:30p
 - Tuesday, June 30: 9:30a-4:15p
 - Wednesday, July 1: 8:00a-3:00p
- Pick up Buttons and Passports if you could not attend the kick-off event.
- Bring completed Passports here to enter into the prize drawing.



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What is a conference mentor? Do I want one?



- Not just for new aid professionals
- Will be matched based on region, sector, or school type
- Help you throughout the conference (if you want it)
- A new financial aid friend!
- Connect as often or as little as you want!



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June 3, 2026

Your To-Do List

- ✓ RSVP for the First-Time Attendee Welcome Reception
- ✓ Request a Mentor
- ✓ Join the NASFAA Slack Conference Community
at: nasfaa.org/nasfaa_conference_community_interest_form



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14



Conference Highlights

15



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Dana Kelly

*Vice President of Professional Development &
Institutional Compliance*

NASFAA



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On-Demand Webinar: NASFAA 2026 National Conference: Your Insider's Guide and AMA Session



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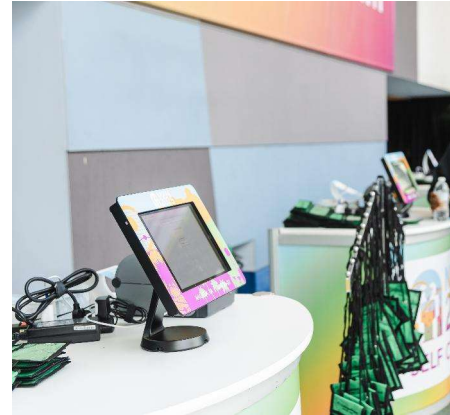


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June 3, 2026

Conference Check-in

- Self-Service Check-in Kiosks
- Registration Hours
 - Monday, June 29
7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
 - Tuesday, June 30
7:45 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
 - Wednesday, July 1
7:45 – 10:30 a.m.
- Don't forget to grab a swag bag!
That's where you'll find the lanyard
for your name badge.



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18

NASFAA App

- Stay on top of your schedule with the NASFAA app!
- Receive real-time updates & notifications
- Will be available in the app store on June 10th



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19



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June 3, 2026

DJ Pre-Shows

- Prior to each general session, we'll kick off with a high energy pre-show with DJ Shawna!
- Monday, June 29
3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, June 30
7:45 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.
- Wednesday, July 1
7:45 a.m. – 8:10 a.m.
- Thursday, July 2
8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.



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20

60th Anniversary Celebration

- Celebrate 60 years of NASFAA during the evening of Wednesday, July 1.
- Dress: Festive cocktail attire encouraged. Think elevated evening wear—cocktail dresses, chic separates, or a sharp jacket—with a touch of sparkle for a speakeasy-inspired celebration.



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June 3, 2026

Meet Your Match

- You'll also find a numbered pin in your swag bag.
- Attach the pin to your lanyard and be on the lookout for other number matches at the conference.
- If you find a match, visit the College Ave booth in the Innovation Hall to be entered into a prize drawing.

NASFAA 2026 60TH ANNIVERSARY
Meet YOUR Match
GAME

Bring your **MATCH** to the College Ave (#200) booth to be entered into our prize drawing.

Multiple matches are possible with multiple chances to win! The more matches you make, the more entries you will earn for the prize drawing.

MADE POSSIBLE BY
College AVE
www.collegeave.com

How to Play

- Attach the match button to your neck wallet.
- Look for your MATCH throughout the conference (those with matching buttons).
- Come to the College Ave (#200) booth to be entered into a drawing to win these prizes:

NASFAA 2027 National Conference Registration
Amazon gift card

*Limit one prize per person. Winners must not be present to win and will be notified via email.



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22

Golden Ticket

- Golden Tickets will be hidden throughout the Innovation Hall!
- If you find one, bring it to the NASFAA Booth to claim your prize.
- Please note: one prize per person.



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Innovation Hall

24

Associate Member Advisory Board Chair



Stephanie Wells

*Director of College Relations
Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority, MEFA*



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Innovation Hall

- Meet with 70+ Exhibitors
- During Breaks: Grab Coffee & Snacks
- Explore NASFAA Lounges
 - 60th Anniversary Champagne
 - 60's-70's Photo
 - 80's Gaming
 - 90's Coffee
 - 2000's Relax & Recharge

Lounge Sponsors



nasfaa.org/innovation_hall



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26

Innovation Hall Hours

- Monday, June 29: 5:45 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. (Welcome Reception)
- Tuesday, June 30: 9:30 a.m. – 4:15 p.m.
- Wednesday, July 1: 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Platinum Sponsors



Gold Sponsors



Silver Sponsors



nasfaa.org/meet_exhibitors_sponsors26



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June 3, 2026



Conference Prep, Networking, & Next Steps

28

First-Time Attendee Taskforce Member



Celena Tulloss, FAAC®

*Assistant Vice President and Executive Director
Auburn University*



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29



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Pre-Conference Prep

- Set conference goals
 - Are there specific learning objectives for you/your office/institution?
- Research the agenda and types of sessions
 - General sessions vs tracks aligned with NASFAA's Financial Aid Administrator [Competency Model](#)
 - Laws, Regulations, and Compliance
 - Customer Service
 - Technology, Research, & Data
 - Business of Education
 - Leadership
 - Professional/Career Development
 - Also: Graduate & Professional Issues and Business Solutions tracks



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30

Plan Your Attack

- Breakout sessions
 - "Must haves" vs "would be interesting..."
 - Have a Plan B if a session is full or not what you were expecting
 - Venture into new territory and be actively engaged
- Don't forget to add other events and activities
 - Preconference Perspectives of Belonging, Welcome Reception, 60th Anniversary Party, Innovation Hall themed lounges
 - Plan "on your own" meals/activities ahead of time or sign up via app
 - Don't forget to talk with vendors; they can be valuable contacts for you, too
- Download and use the conference app!



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31



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June 3, 2026

The Practical



Comfortable walking shoes



Water (reusable bottle), snacks, gum and/or mints



Backpack or purse
(grab a bag from a vendor table!)



Layered clothing, sweater, or jacket



Laptop/iPad/etc. – *don't forget chargers!*



Notebook & pens
(another vendor table item)



Business cards
(lots of them!)



Don't forget to set your out-of-office replies



An open mind & positive attitude



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32

Networking Without Nerves

- What's your conference personality?
 - Introvert, extrovert, ambivert, or omnivert
- Research attendees
 - Consider who you want to connect with and learn a bit about them ahead of time.
- Find similar colleagues
 - By location, type of school, Student Information System, etc.
 - Your fellow first-timers are a cohort!
- Practice your "elevator pitch"
 - Craft a 30-second intro about who you are, what you do in your office, and throw in some personal tidbits.



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33



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June 3, 2026

Networking

- Prepare conversation starters
- Leverage social media with attendees, speakers and update your own profile
- Arrive early, find a friendly face, and don't focus on your phone!
- Exchange contact information
 - Focus on quality, not quantity



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34

Networking Opportunitites

- Meet up with a First-Time Attendees walking and running group at the 5k to complete the event together! (Must be registered)
- Watch out for coffee and lunch break opportunities to join other first-timers and their mentors for coffee in the innovation hall or lunch nearby to the event.
- Trivia Night & Top Golf!
- More networking opportunities are on the way; we encourage you to keep an eye on the NASFAA Conference Slack Channel and your email!



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June 3, 2026

Post-Conference Challenge

Three x Three Takeaways:

- List top **three** takeaways from each of your top **three** sessions and contact **three** new colleagues you met at conference

Recap sessions

- See NASFAA's [Post-conference ROI Worksheet](#) to help organize and evaluate what you got out of the conference.

NASFAA also provides:

- [Benefits of Attendance Worksheet](#);
- [Additional Tips](#);
- [Professional Development](#)



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36

Video Message: Former First-Timer



Sarah Freestone, FAAC®

*Director of Financial Aid
Drake University*



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37

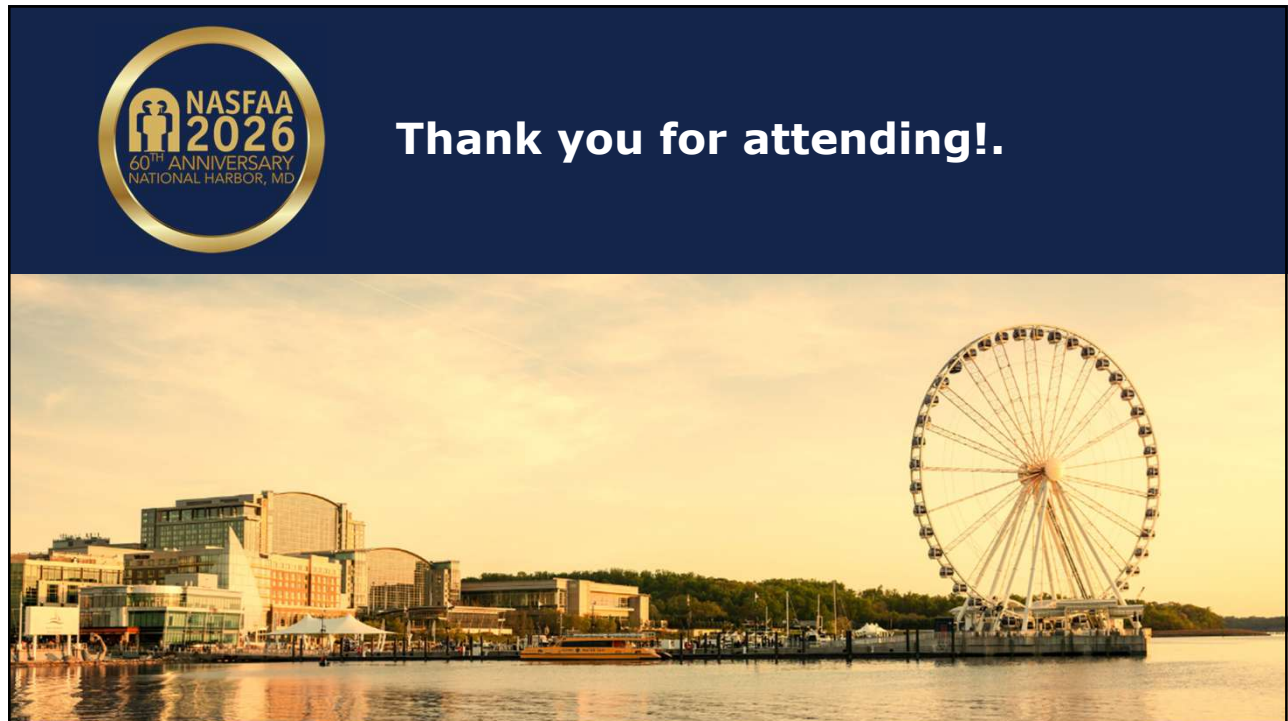


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June 3, 2026



38



39



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June 3, 2026

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

NASFAA.ORG/VIRTUAL

- Exclusive to NASFAA members
- Streamlined programming to bring you the most up-to-date and important information on student financial aid
- Cash Management Credential Training

 **NASFAA
2026
VIRTUAL SUMMIT
JULY 13-16, 2026**

40



NASFAA 2026 Resources

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June 3, 2026

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)

- Conference Site: <https://www.nasfaa.org/conference>
- First-Time Attendee Hub: <https://www.nasfaa.org/first-timers>
- Welcome Reception RSVP & Request a Mentor Form: Complete by Friday, June 5th:
https://www.nasfaa.org/first_timers_form
- Meet You Match: https://www.nasfaa.org/meet_your_match
- Golden Ticket Scavenger Hunt: https://www.nasfaa.org/golden_ticket
- Innovation Hall: https://www.nasfaa.org/innovation_hall
- Join the NASFAA 2026 Slack Community:
https://www.nasfaa.org/nasfaa_conference_community_interest_form
- NASFAA On-Demand Webinar: *NASFAA 2026 National Conference: Your Insider's Guide and AMA Session*, April 16, 2026: https://www.nasfaa.org/nasfaa_2026_webinar

What's next?

Please join us for the 2025-26 NASFAA Webinar Series

NASFAA's live webinars bring you the latest information, hot off the press, and allow you to actively engage with NASFAA staff and featured presenters from government, partner organizations, and fellow aid administrators.

All webinars begin at 2:00 pm ET, unless otherwise noted, and last 60 to 90 minutes. Archives are usually available after the webinar for purchase; these archives are also free to webinar package purchasers.



Webinar Schedule for 2025-26

| Topic | Air Date |
|---|-------------------|
| What's New in Federal Tax Information (FTI) | July 23, 2025 |
| Enrollment Reporting | September 3, 2025 |
| What is the DLP? An Overview of NASFAA's Diversity Leadership Program* | September 9, 2025 |
| 2026-27 FAFSA Update | October 15, 2025 |
| Blue Icon Advisors, NASFAA Consulting: Hot Topic* | October 28, 2025 |
| Academic Calendars in Action | December 10, 2025 |
| Policy Update Webinar* | December 17, 2025 |
| Verification: 2026-27 (Extended Edition) | January 13, 2026 |
| Top AskRegs for PLUS Loans | January 21, 2026 |
| Inside the Private Loan Marketplace: A Conversation with Industry Leaders | February 4, 2026 |
| Pell Grant Eligibility Changes & Accountability for Low Earnings Outcomes: Takeaways from the OB3 AHEAD Committee | February 6, 2026 |
| Professional Development Panel: Career Pathing in Financial Aid | February 18, 2026 |
| Strengthening Student Support: Connecting Financial Aid, Student Affairs, and Mental Health for Holistic Success | March 18, 2026 |
| Return to Title IV: New Regulations Effective July 1, 2026 | March 25, 2026 |
| Blue Icon Advisors, NASFAA Consulting: Hot Topic* | April 7, 2026 |
| Graduate and Professional Community Update* | April 22, 2026 |
| What's New in Consumer Information | May 6, 2026 |
| Annual Business Meeting and Policy Update* | May 13, 2026 |
| TRA Hot Topic | May 27, 2026 |
| NASFAA Quiz Show: Test Your Financial Aid Knowledge | June 10, 2026 |

*Free to members, does not require purchase of the webinar package.

**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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