

NASFAA's "Off The Cuff" Podcast - Episode 190 Transcript

Intro:

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Justin Draeger:

Hey, everyone. Welcome to another edition of Off The Cuff. I'm Justin Draeger.

Allie Arcese:

I'm Allie Arcese with our communications team.

Megan Coval:

I'm Megan Coval with our policy team.

Jill Desjean:

And I'm Jill Desjean also with the policy team.

Justin Draeger:

I want to give a shout out to our sponsor this week, AwardSpring. Thank you very much for your sponsorship. Go out and check out their website, linked in the show notes. Welcome back, everybody. We have got a full agenda for you today. Before we get into this, I have a question for the NASFAA staff. You guys recently filled out a teleworking survey, right? For NASFAA. There's one question I was sort of surprised about that I saw in the staff survey, which was... A lot of organizations are doing this. How often, ideally, would you like to work in the office? That was sort of the general question. Do you remember what you answered for that, Megan?

Megan Coval:

I feel like there was an option that was like a split. Like two to three days in the office or two to three at home. And I think that's what I picked.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. Like 90% of the staff actually... As I've seen, like Harvard Business Review studies and other associations that we coordinate with, that's sort of like what most people are saying. Mostly work from home, come into the office for special meetings, strategy, external meetings of course, and things like that. But, Allie, do you remember what you answered to that question?

Allie Arcese:

I think I also said like three days a week or so. And I remember we talked about this a couple of weeks ago. I would like to go in the office. I know we can go in right now, but that's not why I want to go in, to just like sit there by myself. I want to go in when I can bother other people.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. So, Allie, you responded that you wanted to be in the office more often than not in the office, and you were actually one of the few people who said that, and so I wanted to give you kudos for saying it. But also sort of... Really? Is that true? You'd rather be in the office than not in the office?

Allie Arcese:

So, obviously I'm having a different perspective now with a child on the way, and I feel like if I have to go back to work and I have to pay for childcare either way, I don't want to be in the house when someone else is here watching my kid.

Justin Draeger:

So it's the childcare situation. So you're thinking of having a caretaker in-house.

Allie Arcese:

I don't know. We're running the numbers but if I am full-time working from home and I still have to pay for childcare, then what's the point of working from home?

Megan Coval:

I am with you. If I had kids here, I would feel different.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. And we have other staff who also have in-house care for their kids. And when the parents are home at the same time the caregivers are there, it is like a whole other dynamic as the kids get older. They know mom and dad are around, they're going to behave differently. So, that I get. Okay. That makes sense to me. I just wondered about that because you live out by me now, so our commute isn't by any means short into the office. And, Jill, I think you were on the side of yeah, occasionally come in for special meetings and whatnot, but we don't have a lot of foot traffic necessarily at the NASFAA office.

Jill Desjean:

Yeah. I miss being in the office. I don't miss getting there. Just the time that I've picked up and being able to get my kids places afterschool, life is just so much less complicated for me now. That would be hard to give up. But I would rather be in the office.

Allie Arcese:

Although the Metro commute can be kind of soothing, depending on the time of day you get on. If you get a seat and you can just sit there and zone out for 40 minutes.

Justin Draeger:

When Metro is actually running, that's true. I do have fewer stories about interactions I have with people now that I'm not riding Metro, because there is a good portion of just ill social behavior on Metro. But I agree with you... the commute time. But, Jill, you used to literally run into the office, like jog into the office.

Jill Desjean:

Yeah. Not every day but sometimes.

Justin Draeger:

That's legit. That is legit.

Jill Desjean:

You bike.

Justin Draeger:

For every pedal, I'm moving like 10 feet. And you're literally jogging. That's not even comparable.

Jill Desjean:

I know but my distance is much shorter.

Justin Draeger:

All right, well, I'll take it. Yeah. It's equal. It's the same. Okay. All right. Well, we're going to see. I feel like people are getting vaccinated, things are starting to open back up. D.C., the traffic is back. I'm in once or twice a week but I don't know. I feel like it's getting exciting. And I know a lot of people on campus have sort of been going in because they have a lot of one-on-one meetings, foot traffic, people... It's a little bit different setup. I think we're turning a corner. All right. We have a lot to talk about. Allie, let's first start with member comments. We get anything from last week?

Allie Arcese:

Yes, we did. So the question last week was, "What's something that you hate that you have to pretend that you like?" We've got quite a few answers. Andy Fogle said, "Don't worry, Megan, nothing could be as egregious as Justin saying he's not a fan of Oprah," but he agreed with you... He said he never liked Seinfeld but he was forced to binge watch it a year ago and after a few episodes, he thought it wasn't as bad as he had imagined. And after one season, he liked it. Darcy Johnson says that she agrees with all of the things that everyone said last week, especially Megan and Owen. Another that she would add is the expectation that you must get together with family for holidays.

Justin Draeger:

Oh. Hear, hear.

Megan Coval:

That's a good one.

Jill Desjean:

That is a good one.

Justin Draeger:

I don't know if any family are listening to this podcast. I love them but there is-

Allie Arcese:

There are some holidays I could have gone without.

Justin Draeger:

Well, it's also a whole thing. There's something about staying home too. At what point have you earned the, "I'm going to be home for this holiday." You know what I'm saying?

Allie Arcese:

Yeah. This one is an anonymous submission. This person said, "Things I hate, but I'm supposed to love. I know I will get hate mail if you say my name. I hate Fleetwood Mac's music. I know I'm supposed to like it but there is something about Stevie Nicks' voice that reminds me of nails on a chalkboard."

Justin Draeger:

Wow.

Allie Arcese:

And they said, "I feel free now."

Justin Draeger:

Well, we lifted that-

Jill Desjean:

I like this person.

Justin Draeger:

Was that you, Jill? That wasn't you.

Jill Desjean:

I will admit I do not like Stevie Nicks' voice and I think the only Fleetwood Mac song that I really enjoy is the one that Christine McVie sings. That was not my submission but I will back this person up and I'll take the hate mail.

Allie Arcese:

One more from Susan Bogart. She said that her mind instantly wandered back to when she was in college and a small class all had dinner at their professor's house. It was lovely until she brought out the rhubarb pie, which we all ate with smiles and all hated.

Allie Arcese:

I lied. This will be the last one. This was an interesting one. Renee Swift said, "Jill, you are kindred spirits in terms of mice. I squirmed in my seat, listening to your harrowing tale. I'd still be hospitalized if that would have been me."

Justin Draeger:

I also shared that story with Deanne, Jill.

Jill Desjean:

Okay. Good.

Justin Draeger:

That was a classic. Yeah.

Allie Arcese:

She said as far as stuff that she hates and forces herself to somewhat participate in, is listening to people's home improvement projects in gross detail. There's a lot of nodding and smiling happening in those conversations.

Megan Coval:

That's a good one.

Jill Desjean:

That is a really good one.

Justin Draeger:

That is a very good point, yes.

Jill Desjean:

Now I'm feeling self-conscious because I definitely told you, Justin, about... Although, I wouldn't say that was home improvement. It's like home fix the hole in my ceiling-

Megan Coval:

Saving. Home saving.

Justin Draeger:

I don't mind. I didn't feel like that crossed the threshold of please stop talking about this issue. So we're good. It's okay. All right. Well, members can keep sending us feedback on any part of the podcast, but let's jump right into our agenda. Megan, this last week, the secretary was traveling around, right? And he was doing so with the vice-president and I guess public service loan forgiveness came up, which continues to be a hot topic. You want to catch us up?

Megan Coval:

Yeah. He was on the road this week and earlier in the week was at a community college. And then he also spoke this week at the National Education Association. And during his remarks there, public service loan forgiveness came up and he basically indicated that it is a priority for him and the administration to make the program better. He said he knows they can do better, that 98% of applicants who didn't get forgiveness is really problematic. We heard James Kvaal say last week, the nominee for undersecretary, that it was going to be a priority of his. And I think this is really the first time on the record, at least, we've heard the secretary talk about it.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. And I assume this came up because he was visiting schools and one of the primary beneficiaries, or hoped for beneficiaries, would be teachers who are very concerned about not being able to qualify for this program.

Megan Coval:

Yeah, that's right. The NEA, obviously the National Education Association... I believe they were a part of a group, along with some other major unions, that recently called on the administration to focus on the program and even to go so far as to basically wipe out debts for these borrowers who did not get forgiveness.

Justin Draeger:

Remind me, the Biden administration has a plan, right? This would, I assume, require a legislative change but they do want to alter public service loan forgiveness in some way.

Megan Coval:

Yes. We have seen the Biden administration talk about this before and they touted it on the campaign trail as part of their higher ed proposal that they would consider looking at some sort of rolling forgiveness for public service loan forgiveness, versus waiting the whole 10 years. Maybe every two or three years that you served, you would get some portion of your loans forgiven. So no specific details on that yet, but that might be something that we could also see in the budget that will come out next month. The full budget.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. I think that makes a lot of sense, this idea of rolling forgiveness, forgiveness as you go through the program, because the 10 years wait and see approach obviously is fraught with operational challenges.

Justin Draeger:

We on staff, we meet with graduate students quite a bit. And I just met with some from Elon University, a private small school in North Carolina, this last week. And one of the very first questions... We kind of show up, we do these seminars, we talk to them about public policy. One of the very first questions from one of the graduate students was, "Am I going to actually qualify for public service loan forgiveness?" And you have to cite the fact that like 98% of people who have applied are rejected and some of those are rejected because they don't actually meet the requirements. But a good number, too many, would have met the requirement, but they didn't have all the paperwork or they didn't have the annual employment certificate. And this was a program originally championed by the lion of the Senate, Ted Kennedy. So created with the best of intentions that operationally has just not been good. So we have to do something to fix this.

Megan Coval:

Yeah. And it also, thinking earlier about how it folds into all the other debt forgiveness conversations and...

Justin Draeger:

Right.

Megan Coval:

Yeah. But I think we can expect to see more on this.

Justin Draeger:

Hey, Megan, so that's more on the back end of loans. Let's move to the front end. It seems like we're starting to see some real proposals on what quote unquote free college might look like, which has been a big talking point, but a little short on details. What do we got for us this week?

Megan Coval:

Yeah. So this week we actually saw a bill introduced that would make college free for both two year and four year with certain caveats. And that was the College For All Act that was introduced by Senator Bernie Sanders and Representative Pramila Jayapal from the House. Within this big conversation, this is, at least within this new Congress, the first piece of legislation that we've seen.

Justin Draeger:

So what is it? Is it free college for all? Is it free college by sector? Is it free college for certain students? How do they break it out?

Megan Coval:

Yeah. This, I would call the shoot big free college bill, if you will. So this has free community college tuition for everyone and then free tuition for public colleges and universities and MSIs for those making less than 125K. And it also doubles the Pell Grant. So we're seeing a few different proposals in here.

Justin Draeger:

What's the funding source for the community college, public schools, and MSIs? Is it federal dollars or is it supposed to be a partnership between the federal and the state?

Megan Coval:

Yeah. It's set up as a federal-state partnership, where the Feds would contribute 75% and then look to the states to fill in the remaining 25%.

Justin Draeger:

Any Republican co-sponsors or all Democratic right now?

Megan Coval:

All Democratic right now. Yeah. It'll be interesting to see if they pull any along. Again, there's a lot in here. I think if it were maybe more narrowly tailored to community colleges, for example, that may be a different ballgame on the hill in terms of getting more support.

Justin Draeger:

Before we get into the sector piece of this, let me ask you a question about that federal-state partnership. And I don't know if they got into this level of detail, but would states opt in? Like the Feds would be offering this program, the states would opt in, and together they'd cobble together enough

financing to make college free for those students at those specific institutions? Or I assume the Fed isn't requiring states to do something here.

Megan Coval:

We are actually digging into this bill. It's 70 pages long. So we're working through it right now. It just came out yesterday. So we will have those answers and much more on Monday in today's news.

Justin Draeger:

Okay. We'll be on the lookout for that. You know, one question I have about this is... In somewhat of a despicable, if I'm not being generous, and maybe expected if I'm being generous, way... We have reports of at least two states where the legislatures are looking at reducing or capping state appropriation by the same amount that schools received in CARES Act funds. This is the sort of games that states often play when you increase federal investment, they then turn back state investment. So in practicality the schools or the states haven't lost, but meanwhile the investment that was meant to boost is blunted by the fact that the state's reducing an appropriation by the same or some amount that is close to that amount. So this is where the federal-state partnerships are good in theory and then sometimes in practice, don't always turn out the way we expect them to.

Megan Coval:

Yeah, that's a really good point.

Justin Draeger:

Let me ask you another question. So this sounds pretty close to what President Biden was talking about during the campaign, this idea that it would be free college for the community college, people attending public schools... But it strikes me as sort of a sector turf war that might go on here. Why public schools, not private schools? Student aid has always been student focused. So doubling the Pell Grant would obviously be for students who attend any eligible institution, but why the focus just on public schools?

Megan Coval:

Yeah. And I think even more why the focus on community colleges, because I'm pretty sure that we'll see from the Biden administration a proposal that is just free community college tuition, not even public. I think that's been a focus of his on the campaign trail and the new administration. Then you have Dr. Jill Biden's interest in community colleges and really just the role that they play in communities and kind of giving second chances, as James Kvaal said last week in his hearing. And I just think that's where they feel that the money will make the most difference, in terms of moving the needle.

Justin Draeger:

And if you're a four-year school, I think you could look at least part of this as saying if people have total and free access to community college, those are pipelines into our institutions. On the other hand, if I'm a private open access institution... I'm not talking about a private selective that has a multi-billion dollar endowment here. I'm a private open access institution with not a significant endowment. Why am I being left out of this equation? So I suspect there's going to be a bit of controversy here as this starts to be debated.

Megan Coval:

Yeah. I think in an ideal world, if you're either representing a four year school, for example, you would just like to be supportive of the community college piece and double Pell and perhaps even debt forgiveness. I think what everyone's coming to realize is these three big ticket items are all very expensive and it's unlikely that all three are going to be achieved. And so I think it's sort of fair to think that we might be in a place where we're like, is it double Pell or is it free tuition? Maybe not, hopefully not, but I think you do have to think about it like that.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. We can't take the spicket that's been open for the last 12 months and assume that that's going to continue into perpetuity.

Megan Coval:

Yeah.

Justin Draeger:

All right. Well, we'll continue to watch that and we'll look for the article on this bill in today's news soon. All right, Allie, it seems like we have a new report out, I think, from the Government Accountability Office about who's receiving HEERF funds and how it's helping them. You want to catch us up?

Allie Arcese:

Yeah. So this is a new report from the Government Accountability Office on HEERF funds that institutions received from the CARES Act. So this is HEERF one, the very first round of funding. As of November 2020, the GAO found that the department had awarded \$6.19 billion to roughly 4,800 schools that applied for emergency student aid funds through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund. It also found that, overall, the average grant amount per student was \$830. Schools had drawn down overall about 90% of the HEERF student aid funds. About 70% of schools had drawn down all of their student aid funds. And 24% had drawn down at least half of their funds as of November.

Justin Draeger:

And just to be clear, this is all about the first tranch, right?

Allie Arcese:

Yes. There's nothing in here about HEERF II or HEERF III.

Justin Draeger:

I do know that there's starting to be some questions about how quickly schools are spending HEERF II. As I recall, though, they still have a year, right? The idea was that this need would continue for several months. So it's not that schools have to have spent their money by this semester or term.

Allie Arcese:

Right.

Justin Draeger:

So they have some time. Okay.

Allie Arcese:

Yeah. And this was also like the smallest tranch of funding, if I'm remembering that correctly. Yeah. It was \$14 billion overall with half required to go to students through grant aid.

Justin Draeger:

Right. And it was the first one in terms of wholly new.

Allie Arcese:

Logistics. Yeah. So it kind of makes sense that there would be a bit of a lag.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. Okay. So now schools are squarely focused on HEERF II. And do we have any additional details, Megan or Jill, on HEERF III?

Jill Desjean:

No.

Justin Draeger:

Okay.

Jill Desjean:

And no timing. No sense of when we'll get them.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. Our last conversations with the department were that they are really trying to be super clear about guidance with the funds before the funds are released. Which, obviously, is appreciated by schools who experienced whiplash 12 months ago when the CARES Act came out and we had shifting student eligibility requirements. So we'll keep our eyes and ears open. All right, Jill, let's talk about what's going on in the world of AskRegs. What are schools asking about this week?

Jill Desjean:

Sure. Got a great question from a school asking, "and we award HEERF II or HEERF III student grants for summer housing if the student is not enrolled in the summer?" And the answer is yes, but those housing costs would have to be determined by the institution to be emergency summer housing costs that have arisen due to coronavirus. And that's because there were two allowable uses of HEERF funds for use as student grants. The first is to cover any component of the student's COA. But, of course, if the student's not enrolled in the summer, they don't have a summer COA. So that would not apply. The other use that you'd have to revert to in this case would be to cover emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus. So that's where you'd have to make that link between the summer housing and an emergency cost that arose due to coronavirus.

Justin Draeger:

Does it make any difference if the student is coming back in the fall or has indicated they're coming back in the fall or anything along those lines?

Jill Desjean:

Well, as we discussed last week, you got to be really careful about that because you cannot condition the receipt of these funds on the student's future enrollment. It wouldn't matter, but you also cannot say, "Oh, sure. As long as you're coming back for the fall, we'll cover your summer housing."

Justin Draeger:

What about a student who graduated in the spring? I assume that there's no emergency funds left for them in the summer then.

Jill Desjean:

Yeah. You can actually award emergency grants to students after they've ceased enrollment for any reason. So withdrawal, graduation, anything. So there's nothing preventing the school from giving them the grants for summer.

Justin Draeger:

And could a school, just as they've done previously, like they've blocked granted money to students during the regular term... Could they do the same thing and assume that students who meet these criteria that the school has identified have emergency housing needs over the summer and just block grant funds?

Jill Desjean:

Yep. They can do that. As long as there is no condition that the student had to be enrolled.

Justin Draeger:

Jill, this last week also FSA announced the retirement of FSA IDs. Can you catch us up here?

Jill Desjean:

Yeah. So the FSA ID is still a thing, but ED has found, between improvements to studentaid.gov website and improvements to the myStudentAid mobile app, fewer applicants are using that fsa.ed.gov website to create their usernames and passwords to allow them access to things like the FAFSA, promissory notes, loan counseling. So ED has decided to retire the fsa.ed.gov website effective this Sunday, April 25th. So from the 25th on, anyone who tries to visit the fsa.ed.gov website will get redirected to studentaid.gov and there they will get their FSA ID that they can use for these other sites.

Justin Draeger:

I remember in the past there was a lot of confusion with FSA ID. Some of that might've been because parents and students were co-creating or parents were creating them on behalf of students. Then there was reset password issues where people had to reset. Am I correct in a lot of that has been ironed out or is this still sort of a bit of a cluster for students and families? I'm not hearing it as often, I guess.

Jill Desjean:

Yeah. I can't add much there. I'm not hearing as much either. It's been long enough since I've been at a school, that those issues have just sort of faded in my memory. But it's true. We used to hear a lot of complaints about it and we don't as much anymore. So hopefully the issues that were there have been ironed out.

Justin Draeger:

Okay. And I know if our member institutions or college access professionals are experiencing any challenges or seeing them that they will definitely let us know. Anything else here, Jill?

Jill Desjean:

Yeah. I don't think I mentioned that FSA will be redirecting the FSA ID website for a year. So if schools have got print publications and they've got a publication schedule, they can rest assured that they don't need to be doing anything right now. You should probably update websites as soon as you can but if you've got a publication schedule and you're worried about things being outdated, the site will still redirect for a year.

Justin Draeger:

That's great.

Jill Desjean:

At least a year.

Justin Draeger:

And much appreciated to FSA.

Jill Desjean:

Indeed.

Justin Draeger:

Okay, good. Thank you very much. Allie, this week... Is it volunteer appreciation week? I've lost track a little bit here. Help me out.

Allie Arcese:

This is National Volunteer Week.

Justin Draeger:

National Volunteer Week. Okay. And I know we're doing some things to recognize the many volunteers that help at NASFAA.

Allie Arcese:

So yeah, if you have volunteered with NASFAA, you should have gotten an email and probably you saw in today's news this week that we have a new feature where you can go and print out certificates in recognition of your volunteerism.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. And that got me thinking about all of the volunteers that we've worked with through many, many years. Our question this week for "What Was That?" is really some of your favorite memories about volunteering on staff or volunteer experiences at NASFAA. Megan, let's start with you. What do you got?

Megan Coval:

Not one specific experience, but I several times have gone out to the RMAFSA Summer Institute. And that is totally my favorite thing and also my favorite place to see volunteers in our profession in action. It's a week long, it's intensive for the students who are in it, but the folks that run it are just so devoted and so fun and really make it special. And I've had a lot of great experiences out there. And I always, always leave there feeling very heart warmed by it because they just put so much time into it. And I love it.

Justin Draeger:

It's been a while since I've been the RMAFSA Summer Institute, the Rocky Mountain Region Summer Institute, but it is a great experience. And I don't know but the last time I was there, they were staying in dorms. I don't know if they're still doing that or if they've moved it to a conference or hotel venue. But I do remember the first time I went and I stayed in a dorm. I think they gave me one pillow and one sheet and I was like, "Oh my God, this is a wake-up call."

Megan Coval:

I've stayed in a dorm a couple of times and it really takes you back. And you eat in the dining hall-

Justin Draeger:

Now, that part I've always been on board with, because my favorite part about living on campus was the all-you-can-eat food in the dining hall.

Megan Coval:

Yeah. So they're just super fun. And I just remember distinctly they always play this game called Minute to Win It one night, you have to do these little things. And like one night they had me guest host and I just ended up on all fours in a dress. And I just distinctly remember that but... I love it. They're so fun.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah.

Megan Coval:

So shout out.

Justin Draeger:

Love those events. All right. How about you, Jill?

Jill Desjean:

I've had the pleasure of working with a lot of volunteers as a liaison to some task forces and working groups. One time I had to go back to watch a recorded Zoom meeting... This is pre-pandemic, but we met by Zoom and had recorded it because I didn't remember a conversation, wanted to see it again. And I was looking at myself and I was pointing all of the time. And this is a thing that my husband says that I do. He's like, "You don't just say, 'Can you take out the garbage,' you point at the garbage can." And so I watched it and I was horrified. I'm like, "Oh my God, he's right." So I asked Megan Walter, who was my other liaison. I'm like, "Hey, do you notice in meetings that I'm pointing all the time?" She's so nice, she

wasn't just going to be like, "Yeah." She's like, "You are really expressive with your hands." I apologize to all of our volunteers who I point at.

Justin Draeger:

You don't mean it to be aggressive. You're just-

Jill Desjean:

No.

Justin Draeger:

...animated. You're expressive. I'm with you. When I speak in public or even in Zoom, I also wave my hands around a lot. I don't in the podcast because I've trained to just keep my hands at my side so I'm not thumping the desk anymore, but yes, I've knocked water off of a pedestal when I'm speaking, I've knocked my phone off. The other day I accidentally hit the mute button while I was presenting and just kept talking and nobody could hear me. So I appreciate your expressive and I'm sure our volunteers do as well too.

Jill Desjean:

Even when they're getting pointed at.

Justin Draeger:

I will say, pointing at someone in this day and age does seem very aggressive.

Jill Desjean:

It does.

Justin Draeger:

You're pointing at things, though, not at people. When my wife, or others... It's usually Dionne though. When she starts pointing at me, it feels very like, "Put that away."

Jill Desjean:

Yeah. That's what my husband's like. He's like, "Why you always pointing?"

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. Just go ahead and holster that.

Jill Desjean:

Yeah. I'm going to work on it.

Justin Draeger:

All right. How about you, Allie?

Allie Arcese:

Well, I've really enjoyed some of the volunteer events that we've done through NASFAA as part of our holiday party when we volunteered at the food kitchen at the men's shelter. Also back in the day when we used to do the advocacy pipeline in person. Tagging along for those is always fun.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. I agree. You just mentioned the soup kitchen that we did last year. I will always remember that we were volunteering, preparing meals and washing dishes and stuff for a homeless shelter. And there was a guy, another volunteer, but he volunteers there all the time. And he came in and I was washing dishes and he was just... I was doing a lot of things wrong. And he was like right on top of me the whole time. And as the day went on, more and more NASFAA staff started filtering away from the washing station and it was just me. And, boy, this guy was having none of it.

Allie Arcese:

Hey, they have a system.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. They had a system, all right. Yes. And I was not keeping up.

Allie Arcese:

Those are some fun NASFAA memories. And back in high school, the youth group at my church, one thing that we did every Christmas was go caroling at one of the senior living homes nearby. And that was always heartwarming to see them perk up a little bit.

Justin Draeger:

As we were coming up with the agenda today and we were thinking about volunteers, I have a lot of good memories of volunteers and a lot of the good projects that we've done over the years from developing HEA recommendations to getting into need analysis and loan issues. It's really nice to be part of an organization... So we have like 45 people head count on staff, but then you multiply that out and you have like hundreds of people who volunteer and help us develop things and execute programs, and this is the community part of NASFAA that I absolutely love. I was thinking about the best times I've had with volunteers are usually after the work is done or during breaks when we go out. And, Megan, you might've been there but I never forget the time we went... Where was it? Remember a place we used to always go?

Megan Coval:

The Hamilton.

Justin Draeger:

Yes, The Hamilton. So we went down to The Hamilton, which, if you've never been, there's a series of these restaurants. There's The Lincoln, The Hamilton-

Megan Coval:

And Clyde's.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. And we went there and our previous national chair, Craig Munier, was there and a bunch of other folks. But Craig ordered a salad and he could not let it go and the waiter kept bringing out salads for everyone except Craig. And every time the waiter would come... He'd reached for the salad and be like, "Is that my..." And then it would go to someone. And so by the third time he reached out and I reached out and grabbed his hand and was like, "Don't do it, man. Just don't. It's not for you."

Justin Draeger:

And he looked at me and he registered what I was saying, but he couldn't stop the words from coming out of his mouth. And he was like, "Sir, is that my salad?" ...And this fits Craig to a T.

Megan Coval:

But did they bring it?

Justin Draeger:

Eventually. But it was not that time. But this fits Craig to a T because when he gets something, a public policy thing or... He is tenacious about it and, damn it, he was going to get that salad that day. But that's the sort of stuff that I've had countless times with volunteers. And I love getting to know these folks in a non-work environment where it's so fun.

Megan Coval:

I remember at The Hamilton, too... It's the only place I've ever seen them but they have a whole menu of boozy milkshakes.

Justin Draeger:

Right. Where it's a milkshake but with alcohol.

Megan Coval:

And I think everybody was like, "What? Yes." It was chocolate or root beer floats or whatever. I have a distinct memory of that being a very fun hit there too.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. Well, we are looking forward to the day, hopefully not too far into the distance, when volunteers will be back in Washington, D.C. with us and up on Capitol Hill and over at the White House. There's too many memories to recount, but we really appreciate all the volunteers at NASFAA and the community that they build here. And I know, for all of us, it's just such a pleasure to be a part of a really large network of people who care about social justice and students and equal opportunity for education. So thank you to all of you.

Justin Draeger:

So if any of our listeners here have favorite memories of volunteerism, impact of their volunteer work, or stories about your volunteer work here at NASFAA, we'd love to have you send them in and maybe we'll read them on the air. Thank you, everybody, for listening to Off The Cuff. Remember to subscribe, tell a friend, and we will see you again next week.

Intro:

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