

NASFAA Off the Cuff – Episode 122 Transcript

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

Allie Bidwell: I'm Allie Bidwell on our communications team.

Jill Desjean: Jill Desjean with the policy and federal relations staff.

Rachel Gentry: Rachel Gentry with the policy and federal relations team.

Justin Draeger: Welcome, everybody. Today we're going to be talking about the massive reauthorization bill that's been introduced in the House of Representatives. We have some FSA updates. We have some interesting financial advice that a member sent to us we want to talk about, and we have another listener question. Before we get to all that, Allie, do we have any member feedback from last week?

Allie Bidwell: Yeah, we got a little bit. So first, we'll go to John Garcia from Michigan State University's Law School. He said, "Another great episode. Thank you." Thank you, John.

Justin Draeger: Is that all the feedback is?

Allie Bidwell: Yeah, I just stopped there.

Justin Draeger: Great. Thank you, John.

Allie Bidwell: Nothing else. No, he said, "He doesn't have any special kitchen items, but I was born in 1966, just like NASFAA. The Super Bowl was born then, too, with the Green Bay Packers taking the championship." A little fun fact.

Justin Draeger: Did we fact check that?

Allie Bidwell: We'll say I did not.

Justin Draeger: Okay. I just, in the corner recess of my mind, what Super Bowl did we just celebrate? I guess he's right because we are in the fifties so, for Super Bowls. Okay. All right, good. Good enough.

Allie Bidwell: Okay. And then, so you guys might remember last week we talked, our listener question was do you have any weird or specific kitchen things that you only use for specific purposes? So I have my bacon plate, and Justin has his dirty butter skillet.

Justin Draeger: Nothing dirty was in there. I cover it every week so-

Allie Bidwell: His unwashed butter skillet.

Justin Draeger: ... the food gets tastier the longer the week goes on, as you can imagine. So go ahead.

Allie Bidwell: Well, Lisa Hopper from National Park College says, "I must be extremely weird because I have several special-use kitchen gadgets." So she also has a microwave plastic pan with three T-shaped racks that hold the bacon and let the grease drip off. She only uses it for bacon. It sounds like it was made for bacon, which is a little different than mine.

Justin Draeger: You're not supposed to put plastic in the microwave, are you? That's not good. I think there's cancer stuff related to that.

Rachel Gentry: You can put somethings that are plastic. Like heavy-duty Tupperware.

Justin Draeger: No.

Jill Desjean: No.

Rachel Gentry: Never mind.

Justin Draeger: You are never supposed to.

Allie Bidwell: Oh, I think I make-

Justin Draeger: Do you know how your Tupperware starts to absorb the food when it's in the microwave? That's the, it's also leaching-

Allie Bidwell: I think I definitely-

Jill Desjean: It's absorbing the plastic.

Justin Draeger: It's leaching plastic.

Allie Bidwell: I definitely microwave a lot of things that should not be microwaved then.

Rachel Gentry: Agreed.

Allie Bidwell: But she also has a metal, large round pan that sits in the floor of her dark pantry, and it holds potatoes and onions. She also has a gadget that is round with eight sections. Oh, so this is the thing that you core an apple with. So she said, "If Justin can have a buttery pan, then it's got to be okay to have our gadgets."

Allie Bidwell: And I will just tack on, this was not submitted, but David Downing, who just joined the NASFAA staff from Arizona State University, I met him yesterday. He

was in the office, and we were talking about this specific question, and he said that he has a popcorn bowl. So you can use the bowl for other things. Just like I use my bacon plate for other things, but if you're making popcorn, it has to be in that bowl. If you're making bacon, it has to be on that plate.

Justin Draeger: I wish I would've been there for that because the popcorn bowl, is it like a, does it have movie theater decorations or-

Allie Bidwell: No, but I'll say I had the same thing at my mom's house growing up. There was one bowl that we always put the popcorn in if we were watching a movie together as a family or made popcorn, it was always in this one bowl.

Justin Draeger: Yeah, I had time to think about this over the last week. I think my, I grew up living with my grandparents, and my grandmother used to use a tied-off pantyhose to store onions.

Allie Bidwell: I feel, yeah, I guess that makes sense because it would keep them from flaking off. Right?

Justin Draeger: Yeah. And I also think you could stuff a lot in there. Like it was an expandable bag, you know what I'm saying? Because they're stretchy.

Rachel Gentry: As it was intended.

Justin Draeger: Yeah, there you go. So I'm not super familiar with the product, but only in an onion sense. So do we have any other feedback?

Allie Bidwell: That was it.

Justin Draeger: Okay. We also got some comments on Twitter, so this just obviously generated a lot of passion from the community and-

Allie Bidwell: Yeah. People were up in arms.

Justin Draeger: Let's get into the biggest news of this last week, which was the House Democrats on Tuesday, late morning, released the College Affordability Act, which is the culmination of a lot of months of work. This was a reauthorization bill, so for those who aren't familiar, because it's been 11 years since we've had a reauthorization, we sort of use reauthorization colloquially to describe what is supposed to be happening every five to six years where the entire Higher Education Act is reviewed by Congress. Some programs are eliminated, some are changed and some are reauthorized. This bill was released after the, it's sort of fashioned after the Aim Higher Act, which the Democrats released in the summer of 2018 when they were not in the majority, but it contains a lot of updates, and I think it's fair to say there's a lot of things in here that members will like. Jill, do you want to catch us up on just some of the provisions?

Jill Desjean: Sure. Yeah. There were some changes to student eligibility. The selective service requirement is still required, but there is language that says anyone who fails to register is not ineligible for aid. Eligibility is extended for dreamer students. The drug conviction ineligibility provision is removed. Students can get aid now for, students who are incarcerated can receive aid, and students can also receive aid for short-term programs. So those are some big expansions to eligibility.

Justin Draeger: On the short-term programs. Everybody's talking about this. Were there any restrictions on the short-term programs or was it... I imagine Democrats are concerned about this being misused in some situations.

Jill Desjean: Fly by operations. Yeah, 150 to 600 credit hours and eight to 15 weeks were the limitations on it. And then there are other things about, the program has to be on the WIOA eligible training provider's list and a bunch of other very picky details.

Justin Draeger: Okay.

Jill Desjean: Go out of what we intend to get involved-

Justin Draeger: To try to make sure that this is a, yeah, it doesn't go off the rails.

Jill Desjean: Yeah, that you can't just start a two-hour coding bootcamp and get a Pell grant for it, I guess. Yeah, so speaking of Pell grants, more Pell dollars and expanded eligibility. There's a \$500 increase to the Pell Grant. The Pell lifetime eligibility used has been increased from, would be increased from 12 to 14 semesters and also would extend eligibility. If you didn't use up all your LAUs as an undergraduate, you could use it for post-baccalaureate study.

Justin Draeger: Yeah, that seems really, I mean that's a really big departure from BEOG and Pell Grants.

Jill Desjean: Yeah, without a doubt.

Justin Draeger: So these would be able to, used for graduate studies, obviously. I got a question yesterday. I was doing a virtual conference for the Idaho Association. They asked, "Could this be used for a teacher who is trying to get their teaching certificate, post-baccalaureate?"

Jill Desjean: Yeah. Yeah. I think they would. It's for your first post-baccalaureate program.

Justin Draeger: Okay. What about a student who had already received a bachelor's and wasn't pursuing post -- I guess the question is definition of post because they're not, what if they weren't doing graduate work, but they were doing another bachelor's?

Jill Desjean: Right. Does post mean after or does it mean-

Justin Draeger: After only programs more than-

Allie Bidwell: Or like in addition to.

Jill Desjean: Exactly. Right. So I'm not sure if it was after your first baccalaureate, then sure. If it meant post in the sense of something greater than your undergraduate degree, your baccalaureate degree, then I guess not.

Justin Draeger: So something we flag and we'll go back and talk to the committee about.

Jill Desjean: We will look into that.

Justin Draeger: Other provisions?

Jill Desjean: Yeah. Let's see. There's a lot of FAFSA simplification. One -time FAFSA for Pell-eligible students-

Justin Draeger: And that's full implementation of one-time FAFSA. Right? That's not like experimenting with it or-

Jill Desjean: Right. Right. Yeah. No check to see if it works. Just have at it.

Justin Draeger: Right. So obviously we, the one-time FAFSA, a lot of our members support this. Others have concerns just about trying to keep track of different cohorts of students. Our higher education committee of 50, who were charged to be forward-thinking, they actually proposed a one-time FAFSA. So this is something I think we're looking for engagement and feedback on the membership from, and certainly the board of directors will be reviewing as well. I think we were kind of thinking maybe you could do some sort of experiment with this, but there are some implementation challenges with a one-time FAFSA.

Rachel Gentry: Also, on the higher education committee of 50, I just remember this, Charlotte hammering this, they did not propose a one-time FAFSA. They proposed a multi-year FAFSA but not, they couldn't come to consensus on one-time. And Charlotte, I'm saying that because Charlotte has been very specific about that.

Justin Draeger: No, no, no. That's good to know. So it wasn't a one-time FAFSA, it was a multi-year FAFSA. This is partly semantic, but partly it's just building in a backstop. So you wouldn't fill out a FAFSA once and then 10 years from now, it's still the same FAFSA.

Rachel Gentry: Right.

Justin Draeger: Yeah, no, yeah, that makes sense.

Rachel Gentry: Anyways-

Justin Draeger: What about with campus-based programs? Anything new there?

Jill Desjean: Yeah, so the base guarantee will be eliminated over a five- year period. And so beyond that, the allocation formula would be based just on the fair-share formula. The fair- share formula is revised for SEOG and work study, as well as for the new Direct Perkins Loan, which is a new campus-based program that we can talk about in a minute. The formula would essentially give equal weight to the institution's share of total Pell Grant recipients and to the institution share of total undergraduate need, would be the way that the fair-share formula got determined?

Jill Desjean: The new Perkins loan, this new campus-based Perkins Direct Loan, would have a bit of a base guarantee. It would be based on Perkins loans awards that the institution made between years 2012-13 and 2016-17, so their minimum allocation would not be less than the average of their awards that they made in those years.

Justin Draeger: Those loans would not be held by schools though. These would be made up of institute, or would they be held by schools? They're direct loans. Right.

Jill Desjean: They're Direct Loans. Right. So they wouldn't be held by schools.

Justin Draeger: So collections repayment is all made through the Direct Loan program.

Jill Desjean: Yeah. Seems to be that way.

Justin Draeger: The terms and conditions of repayment are the same as the Direct Loan program?

Jill Desjean: Yeah. So it would have the same terms and conditions as the Direct Unsubsidized Loan, except that the interest rate and the annual and aggregate limits would be the ones that were under the now-expired Perkins loan programs.

Justin Draeger: Yeah, so it's a direct loan program in how people repay. The benefits are the same as the Direct Loan program. So if you qualify for PSLF you'd-

Jill Desjean: Yeah.

Justin Draeger: Okay. But it has a different interest rate.

Jill Desjean: Yeah.

Justin Draeger: Yeah. I don't know about that. I like the idea of schools being able to leverage some more funds for their students, and I think a lot of schools will, who have missed the Perkins loan and the gaps that it's created for their students, will welcome this. But if we're going to make it simplified, then having a different

interest rate, I don't know about that one, so we'll have to see how that progresses. But, good news. They brought back a form of Perkins for schools that are looking to fill that gap. Anything else in campus-based?

Jill Desjean: Yeah, lots of changes in work-study. A much larger focus on work-based learning. They have removed the seven percent community service spending requirement, but they have added two new requirements. So there is a requirement that three percent of funds go to exceptionally needy students employed in work-based learning during a qualified period of non-enrollment. And seven percent has to go to compensate students employed in work-based learning programs, generally.

Justin Draeger: So some, those are good goals, but I wonder are there any waivers in place for schools that couldn't meet those?

Jill Desjean: Yeah, so similar waiver provisions to the seven percent community service under the existing law.

Justin Draeger: There's some accountability metrics in here. I think one of the questions I've been asked the most as I've been starting to travel and go to different association meetings is what about skin-in-the-game? Now there aren't really skin-in-the-game proposals in here, but there are additional accountability metrics schools would be held to.

Jill Desjean: Yeah. Yeah. So schools would not get an SEOG or a work-study allocation if for two of the past three years, the institution enrolled less than seven percent Pell recipients. There's a new cohort default rate called the adjusted cohort default rate that is a little different from the existing one. It factors in the percentage of students who borrow and it counts loans and non-mandatory forbearance for more than 36 months as defaulters.

Justin Draeger: So conceivably this would help students that are currently seeking an exception to their default rate because of low borrower participation rate. They no longer have to actually seek it. It's built into the rate.

Jill Desjean: Exactly. It's built into the formula. Yeah.

Justin Draeger: Okay. And then there's also a repayment rate metric?

Jill Desjean: On-time repayment rate metric. Yeah.

Justin Draeger: And how does that impact an institution or is it program level?

Jill Desjean: Institution level.

Justin Draeger: Okay. Conceivably, if they don't meet the repayment rate metric, then there's also an appeal process just like in the default rate process.

Jill Desjean: Right.

Justin Draeger: This bill is, well, how many pages is this? 1,100? 1, 200?

Rachel Gentry: 1,165. I looked it up yesterday.

Justin Draeger: It's like that.

Rachel Gentry: I had a presentation, and I wanted to give the caveat that still it's over a thousand pages. I haven't read every page of it, but we're working on it. I hope that's right. Maybe 67. I don't know.

Jill Desjean: It's heavy.

Rachel Gentry: It's heavy.

Justin Draeger: Well, Jill had to go pick up a paper copy.

Jill Desjean: Yeah, it was heavy.

Justin Draeger: Yeah, this was one of the scenarios where, in order to keep the bill locked down, they did not want digital copies out before it was released. So we received a heavy paper copy. You, thankfully, went and got that for us and brought it back, and you don't have like permanent back damage.

Jill Desjean: My neck's a little stiff, but I think I'm going to be okay.

Justin Draeger: All right. Yeah, you'll be all right.

Jill Desjean: I'll let you know.

Justin Draeger: But so, we can't cover all of this right here. And if this bill were actually close to being passed, we would probably do a whole webinar on provisions in the bill, but there's a bit of a road ahead for legislative activity. I'm curious, when it was released, what were some of the reactions that you all saw out there?

Allie Bidwell: I have one that I thought was interesting. I saw in Forbes, and this is related to the new cohort default rate metric in the bill. This is from Preston Cooper from AEI, the American Enterprise Institute. So he says, "This bill's version of the CDR does not simply measure the share of students who are in default. As we know, it would take into account the share of students who borrow." So, for instance, if a college had a CDR that was 16%, using the current definition, but only 50% of students borrow, its new cohort default rate would be 8%, which would be under the threshold for any sanctions. So he said that, "This amounts to a special exemption for colleges with a low participation rate in the loan program. The thinking behind this is flawed. Even if only a subset of students at an

institution borrow, their outcomes still provide a useful signal about the quality of education on offer."

Justin Draeger: Disagree. Yeah, I don't think default rate in any way is a good signal of quality of an institution. Maybe at one time it was, but it's more of an ax. It's not a scalpel. And so, I think it says more about the population that a school is serving and maybe their own college readiness. But for a community college that's open access, they don't have a selective admissions process. So the idea that most people aren't borrowing, I think, is germane to their ability to offer all the other Title IV programs. Any other reactions?

Allie Bidwell: Terry Hartle from the American Council on Education said in Inside Higher Ed that Democrats would have to grapple with how to pay for the bill as well as controversy over a bigger federal role in higher education. And his quote was, "They've got some good ideas in here, some that are bad and some that are just plain ugly."

Justin Draeger: The good, bad, and the ugly. On that note, who was in that... That was a movie.

Jill Desjean: Clint Eastwood?

Justin Draeger: Clint Eastwood. That's right. The good, bad and the ugly.

Allie Bidwell: That's just a guess.

Justin Draeger: I've heard that recycled many times in DC, but Rachel, I'm curious. Did Mr. Scott, who's the chairman of the committee, did he say anything about-

Rachel Gentry: Yeah, so one of the things that Chairman Scott said, just a reminder, it was his staff who drafted this legislation. He introduced the bill. He kind of said that lawmakers across the political spectrum should be able to support this package because it's sensible. I think I have his direct quote. He said, "We believe this modest approach can actually pass and become law." Sort of referencing that this could be passed in the Republican-held Senate and the White House, and I think there are some folks that are definitely really supportive of this bill, but even some folks that are on the left, more progressive-leaning groups have been critical. It doesn't go far enough. You have folks on the right saying good things about it, saying bad things. So I mean maybe-

Justin Draeger: The estimates that I saw were around \$400 to \$450 billion. Right?

Rachel Gentry: Yeah. In that ballpark.

Justin Draeger: So that's what Mr. Scott is calling a realistic, modest package.

Allie Bidwell: And I'll just say right away, too, that Representative Virginia Fox, who's the ranking member on the House education committee, former chairwoman, she

right away said, "The bill does not address the underlying issue of exploding college costs. Instead of promoting unworkable partisan bills, we ought to work together to support students' access to affordable postsecondary education that will prepare them to enter the workforce with the skills they need for lifelong success."

Rachel Gentry: He did kind of, I think, point a finger slightly at the other side, saying this legislation achieves all of these important goals that he had mentioned earlier while spending a fraction of the cost of the GOP tax cut. So he definitely sort of was saying, this is, had we not had those tax cuts, this wouldn't be a problem at all. So I think there's sort of two layers to this sort of, this is a modest bill that could be passed-

Allie Bidwell: More modest than the Aim Higher Act.

Rachel Gentry: Yeah, and I think it's fiscally, in his eyes, but also some of the provisions in it, I think, is what I was referencing earlier.

Justin Draeger: So I'm trying to, people get lost in the billions. Let me, if we were to try to paint a perspective here, okay. People running for president, Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders have both proposed higher education plans that would cost over a trillion dollars. Former Vice-president Joe Biden has proposed a plan that would cost around \$750 billion. This plan's coming in around \$400 to \$450 billion. So it's more modest than any of the people running for president.

Rachel Gentry: Certainly.

Justin Draeger: But \$450 billion is still a lot of money.

Rachel Gentry: That's a lot of money.

Justin Draeger: That's a lot of money to come up with. And so, presumably, as this moves through the legislative cycle, and especially if it ever went up against a bill that comes out of the Senate, which would be held by Republicans, a lot would be shaved or adjusted. Here's the thing where I sort of feel like they can't win because conservatives, of course, blast it for costing this much money. But then, as you mentioned, some of the more progressive, far leading progressive folks were saying things like, "It's awfully hard to get excited about only a \$500 increase in the Pell Grant program."

Rachel Gentry: Right. So it's sort of like they can't win, like folks on the right aren't happy.

Allie Bidwell: Right after Biden comes out in his proposal and proposes doubling the next Pell Grant.

Rachel Gentry: Right. Well, Justin something that I thought was interesting that I think I've heard you say sometime over the past two weeks is, in 2008, then-Senator

Obama proposed a few thousand dollar increase to the Pell Grant, and that was seen as-

Justin Draeger: Radical.

Rachel Gentry: ... extremely progressive and radical, and now we're talking about the most conservative of the Democratic candidates are proposing doubling it. So I think that just sort of shows where the-

Justin Draeger: Polarization.

Rachel Gentry: ... party is moving. He actually, he did say, I think this was in the press conference when the bill was released that, Chairman Scott said that his framework is a quote down payment on tuition-free college. So, I think that's kind of a nod maybe to this movement happening in the party and this somewhat popular push for free college, kind of saying, "We're not going the whole way, but we're moving in that direction."

Allie Bidwell: Well and just college costs becoming a more mainstream issue, especially with regard to elections and things like that.

Justin Draeger: The more and more Americans it touches, the more and more it becomes a mainstream issue. So even as we get into free college though, I think we're going to find a lot of intra, maybe left-leaning progressive breakdowns, because are we talking about free college for community college level? Are we talking about any public school? What do you do with the privates? Like this is where you take a concept, but then when you start talking about huge federal investment dollars, people, there are winners and there are losers. And I just think there's going to be a lot of debate happening, even within the Democratic party about how these funds would be allocated.

Rachel Gentry: Yeah. I think it's already happening. You've seen Mayor Buttigieg saying, "I want to target dollars towards the neediest students, so I don't necessarily support free college for all because there are folks who are able to pay their way through without needing tuition-free." So I think it's already happening to an extent. But I think this just kind of highlights the difference in a campaign proposal that is exciting to get voters excited versus when you're actually putting pen and paper and creating bills.

Justin Draeger: It feels a little bit like... Our association governance committee, there are NASFAA members who come in and they help us create strategic plans, and they were looking at some things last night. We were here late, and they were looking at some of our advocacy, and what it feels like is we have all of these things we've worked on that are a part of this bill. This big piece of legislation, in a lot of ways, contains all sorts of smaller bills that, Rachel and Jill and the policy team, that you guys have been working on for a long time. So it's not like nothing is happening. The little things we work on make it into these big bills,

but we sort of have this log jam where we have all these things we want for our advocacy goals.

Justin Draeger: But until we actually have a vehicle for reauthorization, they're just sort of sitting there. So it's awfully hard to talk about anything the presidents are talking about, doubling the Pell Grant. Yeah. Yahoo. That would be great. But we're just trying to make it through this reauthorization. We have a whole thing that needs to happen before we can talk visionary goals about free college for everybody. That's nowhere in this reauthorization, and I don't know that it will be. So, next steps, where this is heading, this'll go to committee, and Rachel, it sounds like we could conceivably have a committee markup.

Rachel Gentry: That's what we're hearing is, before the end of the October work period, the committee will mark it up, and then Chairman Scott, his goal is to have it passed on the House floor by the end of the year. With a Democratic majority that is definitely feasible, or I should not say that it's definitely feasible. You never know what's going to happen, but it sounds like that's the committee's roadmap moving forward is markup by the end of the month.

Justin Draeger: Every front page right now probably has something about President Trump and the impeachment inquiry. The thing about that is that work is happening in certain committees, not our committee, so our committee actually has some bandwidth to tackle this. The other thing about impeachment is because there's so much happening in committee, the House floor has room to tolerate votes like this, and so-

Rachel Gentry: I was just talking about that with a virtual presentation yesterday. That's one of the implications that's sort of tangentially related to this whole impeachment inquiry is the other committees that aren't doing impeachment-related investigations are going to possibly have a little bit more time to get their legislation some attention and-

Justin Draeger: So we actually could see this passed in the House.

Rachel Gentry: We could see it pass in the House, which would be a move in the right direction, I suppose.

Justin Draeger: That's right. It's fits and starts. All right, moving on. Oh, I should also add, we do have a web center that's being set up, and we are publishing more in-depth links. The policy team will be issuing...

Rachel Gentry: Joelle did a really a high-level overview hitting on all the big parts, and over the next couple of days and weeks, our policy and federal relations staff will be writing more in-depth articles starting Friday with Pell Grants and other grant programs and just taking a deeper dive into all the specific sections.

Justin Draeger: Great. All right. Moving on. FSA, sounds like they're doing some reorganizing. Allie, you want to catch us up?

Allie Bidwell: Sure. So last week, we actually talked about the career fair that the Department of Education had been holding, people questioning the number of staff that FSA, had in particular. And late last week, Politico came out with a story that Mark Brown, who is the head of FSA, apparently sent out an email to FSA staff with a 44-minute video saying that FSA is reorganizing, expanding staff, saying that the office has plans to expand to up to 1,500 employees by the end of the 2021, in the fiscal year '21 proposed budget. So during fiscal 2019, the office was expected to employ 1,350 people according to budget documents, Politico reported.

Justin Draeger: Just like a week or two ago. Didn't they have like a whole job fair outside their office? Did you guys see this? Yeah.

Rachel Gentry: I vaguely remember that. There's been a lot happening.

Justin Draeger: Instead of asking, I'll just say it. So about a week or two ago, FSA had... I'm glad. Are you playing dumb? Did you go to the job fair? You just don't want to say?

Rachel Gentry: You caught us. We went.

Jill Desjean: Can I bring CAA back into this?

Justin Draeger: Yeah.

Jill Desjean: CAA allows or authorizes ED to create a covert ops unit.

Justin Draeger: Oh, right. Yeah.

Rachel Gentry: Jill's going out for it.

Jill Desjean: Definitely, when the job fair happens for that, I want to be at work undercover.

Justin Draeger: You want to be a secret shopper.

Rachel Gentry: If there was anyone on our staff though, that I think would successfully do that. I think it would be you, Jill.

Jill Desjean: Really?

Rachel Gentry: Yeah.

Jill Desjean: Thank you. I take that as a really high compliment.

Justin Draeger: Everybody thinks you're really shady.

Rachel Gentry: That's not what I meant. I meant that you're so nice. I think that those are the best people to do covert ops-

Allie Bidwell: Unassuming.

Rachel Gentry: ... you know? It's like no one would ever suspect sweet Jill to be undercover.

Justin Draeger: Oh, I would. Yeah.

Rachel Gentry: All right. Well, I have more faith in you, Jill.

Jill Desjean: Thanks, Rachel. I appreciate that.

Justin Draeger: Sometimes I wonder.

Rachel Gentry: I'll send you any postings I see.

Justin Draeger: Sometimes I'm in meetings, and I look at Jill. I think, "I wonder if she's even working for us right now." No, I'm joking.

Rachel Gentry: Jill, I'll review your resume if you'd like.

Jill Desjean: Thanks.

Justin Draeger: But FSA had this whole job fair, and so yeah, they're very aggressively looking to staff up. I think this is pertinent just because one of the things I hear often on the road is federal trainers and their availability and whether they can travel and concern about back-filling for people who have left FSA, and what I would say is, every indication we're getting... I know there was a time where it seemed like there was a lot of belt tightening. The indications were getting from General Brown, who's the chief operating officer at FSA, is that they are very much committed to partnering with us in our regions, in our states, and they are not looking to leave any of our organizations or our membership hanging. So that's good. All the data and what we're hearing sounds like it's lining up with that.

Allie Bidwell: And I'll just say, too, any details about proposed reorganization is still TBD. So we don't have any additional information on that yet, unfortunately.

Justin Draeger: Fantastic. We'll keep our eyes on the ball there. Let's continue on with... A listener, one of our listeners sent us some advice from Dave Ramsey, who I think is sort of like a financial guru.

Allie Bidwell: Yeah. So John Bender on Twitter just sent us a question saying he thought it would be interesting to hear us discuss a [recent appearance](#) by David Ramsey who said that, basically, students should go to the college they can afford rather than focusing on their dream school, not necessarily going into debt. So one of the quotes from his speech, David Ramsey said, "We're not against you going

anywhere you want to go to school as long as you pay for it, and don't justify, you know, where you go and rationalize it based on stupid stuff. You don't want to be stupid about education. It's kind of oxymoronic."

Allie Bidwell: And he cited an example of someone who recently called into his radio show who wanted to go to the University of Mississippi, Ole Miss. And she basically justified it by saying that she liked the campus. So he sort of responded to that and said, "She's going to be \$40,000 in debt because the campus is pretty."

Justin Draeger: Zing. First of all, I've been on the Ole Miss campus. It is pretty, it's a gorgeous campus. And I've been on their football field, which is also gorgeous. Yeah, I don't... So here's the thing about David Ramsey, and I don't know if he said this or not, but his whole thing is about getting out of debt and staying out of debt and not taking on new debt. And I don't know that he actually said this, but if it's in line with previous things he said, this idea that you should never go into debt, I just think is, it's sort of a good thing to keep in mind but also just doesn't hold true in every situation.

Justin Draeger: So, I went into student debt, student loan debt, and if I had waited until I'd saved enough money to actually pay for that out-of-pocket, I would've missed a serious number of opportunities professionally that have made me better off than if I had just been saving money. So I think he... We always talk about it in terms of affordability is one of the things, it may be one of the main things people should be considering. But it obviously can't-

Allie Bidwell: But it's not the only thing.

Justin Draeger: Yeah, it can't be the only thing.

Allie Bidwell: We're humans. We have certain connections to different things. And before we get too deep into this, I'll just say, he had a couple of recommendations. He was speaking with the author of an upcoming book, Debt-Free College, Anthony O'Neal. And so their recommendations were, one, go to a community college as an option. I'm not going to go too deep into these. Two, go to a public in-state school. Three, live at home. Four, chase down scholarships, which are all valid options, but not for everyone.

Justin Draeger: Yeah, I think they should be considered by everyone. So I just, if I'm taking this to heart, I'm thinking of my three children. One of my children I could very much see doing a community college and then going into a four-year. Another one of my kids is definitely headed towards a four-year, live in the dorms. That's the experience they're going to want, and then the third, I don't even know. My third child, they might not do a traditional college. So I just think that these are all good suggestions and things people should take in mind, but I don't know how you apply them to everybody.

Allie Bidwell: I think it's a matter of going in eyes wide open. Thinking back to when I was applying for and getting ready to go to college, I strongly considered staying home and going to San Diego State, which is a great school or going to community college and weighing my options against going up to northern California to Berkeley where I ended up going. And in the end, I felt a stronger connection to that school. I felt like I could have some opportunities there that I might not have at other schools and knew that that would probably mean taking on more debt, and it would cost more in the end. But I knew that and was comfortable with that going in.

Justin Draeger: Right. I also think, I made a decision based on affordability. Affordability played this much of a role when I was looking at undergrad schools and an even larger role when I was looking at graduate schools. So the weight I gave certain elements also changed over time. So I was more comfortable taking on debt at one level versus another.

Justin Draeger: All right. So if people, other people have reactions, please do send them along. Listener question. Do we have one for our listeners this week?

Allie Bidwell: Yeah. So I think this week we're going to go with what would you do differently if you knew no one was judging you?

Justin Draeger: This could be professionally. This could be personally. We don't want to know the illegal things people would do or do we?

Allie Bidwell: Up to you. Let me know it's off the record.

Justin Draeger: Do you have anything illegal that you would want to do? I'm not trying to change the question, but...

Allie Bidwell: No, I think I would-

Justin Draeger: Nobody's judging you. You would dance like nobody's watching. Did you get that toast at your wedding?

Allie Bidwell: To dance like nobody's watching?

Justin Draeger: Yeah. Didn't you ever hear that?

Allie Bidwell: I don't think that's like a wedding-specific toast.

Justin Draeger: What is that? Oh, I use it at everything. Retirements, weddings, funerals.

Allie Bidwell: But I think I would sing more openly because I love to sing in the shower.

Justin Draeger: Do you have a go-to song? I sing the same song all the time.

Allie Bidwell: I don't have a go-to song. There's like certain songs that if I see them at karaoke, I'll maybe do that.

Justin Draeger: Well, you sing in the shower. Pascal's the only other person around. Why wouldn't you sing? Oh, you meant just other than the shower.

Allie Bidwell: Like out in public.

Justin Draeger: Oh. All right.

Allie Bidwell: We went to karaoke last weekend with some friends, and I just had this moment where I was belting out the song that we were singing, and then I messed up, and there was a pause in the music, and I just like belted out the wrong words in total silence, and I was like, "God, I need to go home."

Justin Draeger: So I saw, recently, a little meme, video meme, and it was about people who are at concerts, and they're videotaping the concert, but they're also singing along. But all the phone is picking up is them singing so terribly. That's sort of like-

Allie Bidwell: That's me a little bit.

Justin Draeger: All right. What do you got, Jill? What would you do if nobody was judging?

Jill Desjean: I would wear flat shoes all the time. I don't like people to know I'm short, and so I tend to wear these really awful, big shoes.

Justin Draeger: I feel like, I don't feel like people are judging your height though.

Jill Desjean: They're not like, "Oh my God, she's short. That's bad." But they're, it's kind of just, they treat you like a, like less than.

Justin Draeger: Really?

Jill Desjean: They treat you like a child.

Justin Draeger: Oh, no.

Jill Desjean: Yes.

Justin Draeger: Is that true? Oh. I'm sorry.

Jill Desjean: I may just have a persecution complex.

Justin Draeger: Okay. Listen, do you remember a time in the gym? I don't know if I ever clarified this. We were down in the gym together. Okay. And you were bringing back a mat. I was over by the weights and doing some stuff, and you had to cross my path to put up a mat. Do you remember this?

Jill Desjean: I do.

Justin Draeger: And you went to hang up the mat, and I grabbed it, and I was like, "Oh, I'll get that for you." And you thought it was because I thought you were too short to put the mat back. The truth is, did I ever tell you this?

Jill Desjean: You didn't want me to knock your phone over.

Justin Draeger: Yeah. My phone was magnetically attached to the thing so I could keep track of my reps, and I just thought, I was more worried about your clumsiness than-

Jill Desjean: Your height.

Justin Draeger: Your height. I was like, "Oh God, I don't want her to knock my phone."

Jill Desjean: This girl's a yutz. I don't want her to break my expensive phone.

Rachel Gentry: Which would you prefer, the short or the clumsy?

Justin Draeger: But you were wearing flats in the gym.

Jill Desjean: I always wear flats in the gym.

Justin Draeger: I have not seen anybody-

Rachel Gentry: If you can work out in heels, that's impressive.

Justin Draeger: I think if you can walk and stand in heels, that's pretty impressive. So all right, Jill would be with doing flats. Rachel, what you got?

Rachel Gentry: So I think, I love going out to eat. I love eating nice foods, but I really, really like ordering chicken fingers at restaurants. And I feel like when you go to a kind of nice restaurant, people judge you if you're like, "Can I have the chicken fingers?" I have actually been made fun of for it. And so it's not that I don't ever get them, but sometimes if I'm at a restaurant with a group of people and yeah, probably not a chicken nugget kind of crowd. So I'm going to get-

Justin Draeger: I hear you.

Rachel Gentry: ... so I would just order chicken fingers at every restaurant.

Justin Draeger: Preach.

Rachel Gentry: I don't care where I am.

Allie Bidwell: Yeah. Sometimes you just have a craving for that. It's like comfort food.

Rachel Gentry: Thank you all for your validations.

Justin Draeger: I love chicken fingers.

Allie Bidwell: Same thing with fish and chips.

Rachel Gentry: They are so good. Even when they're bad, they're good.

Justin Draeger: Yeah. And there's no bones.

Rachel Gentry: Right. So eating-

Justin Draeger: And breading is usually fine-

Rachel Gentry: I love it.

Justin Draeger: ... and I'm with you.

Rachel Gentry: Yeah. But I do feel like you get like-

Justin Draeger: You're a child.

Rachel Gentry: ... a bit of a judgmental look. Yeah.

Jill Desjean: Would you get them, even if they were on the kids menu?

Rachel Gentry: I tend to stay away from that. But I would consider it, for sure. It wouldn't be out of the box, it would be in the cards.

Allie Bidwell: Especially if you don't know, if the other menu items are confusing, let's say, you know you're going to be safe with chicken nuggets.

Rachel Gentry: Yeah.

Justin Draeger: Yeah. Mine's very simple. And if you've been listening to the show for a while, it's predictable too, which is I'm not a big fan of the dress clothes. I think that men's clothing is not functional in terms of heat and cold. I think we've talked about this ad nauseum, so yeah, I would dress for the weather and it would be more casual. That would be my, if I didn't have to wear a suit in July, I would consider it a new day for men everywhere.

Allie Bidwell: Even if you were going to the Hill.

Justin Draeger: Totally, yes.

Allie Bidwell: Is that socially acceptable?

Rachel Gentry: I had thought about that before. What if we all just agreed to dress casually, like everyone was like, we're just dressing casually for the rest of forever.

Justin Draeger: I think it started out West because in California, nobody's wearing suits anywhere, very few people, and DC is a holdout. Probably DC and New York, because New York, they actually care about fashion and stuff, but in DC, I don't think it's fashion driven, I think it's tradition.

Rachel Gentry: It's expectations.

Justin Draeger: Yes. Yes, yes. Anyway-

Rachel Gentry: Maybe we could try it out at NASFAA and see if it catches on.

Justin Draeger: I don't feel disrespected when I see somebody talking to me in casual clothing. I don't think, "Boy, I'd feel more respected if my loan officer had a, my bank loan officer had a tie on." I don't think that.

Rachel Gentry: They're more relatable if they're just wearing normal clothes, too.

Allie Bidwell: Do you, as the president of NASFAA, feel like if you saw someone on staff wearing jeans on a Tuesday, do you feel like it's unprofessional?

Justin Draeger: I mean, I would definitely give them a stern talking to. No, of course not. I don't care. I want them because of the judgment I want. If you're meeting with a Congressperson or somebody.

Allie Bidwell: Right. Or if we have-

Justin Draeger: No. I think you're part of the movement. If you wear jeans on a Tuesday, I'm thinking, "Yes. Allie's part of the movement. We're going to get this. We're going to get this to where it needs to be."

Rachel Gentry: Good to know.

Allie Bidwell: Yeah. I'm happy to be a leader in this movement.

Justin Draeger: Thank you for your solidarity.

Rachel Gentry: Can I say one more thing before you finish?

Justin Draeger: Is this about the chicken tenders? Is it about chicken nuggets?

Rachel Gentry: It's unrelated. What? No, it's not about chicken nuggets. It's unrelated. Last week, we had a group of members in town for an advocacy pipeline, and Heather from Vanderbilt was there, and she reminded me that the college admissions movie came out on Saturday. So, Heather, if you're listening, we'd

love to hear your feedback, but also anyone else. I'm just curious and going to watch it soon, but I just felt like we needed to circle back.

Allie Bidwell: I need to go watch it.

Justin Draeger: Oh, good. I thought you were going to say something about Heather and how I was dressed casually because, as they were coming back, I was leaving in my bike gear-

Rachel Gentry: Yes, she commented. No, just kidding.

Justin Draeger: ... and it was uncomfortable for me, but I don't know how uncomfortable it was for-

Rachel Gentry: I could tell you're trying to dart out before they came back, but I just kept talking to-

Justin Draeger: Yes, it was this skin-tight outfit that was a little weird.

Rachel Gentry: It's okay. You seemed relatable.

Justin Draeger: Yeah. Right.

Allie Bidwell: What if we turned this into a brown bag lunch where we play the college admissions movie in one of the conference rooms?

Justin Draeger: Maybe for the holiday party, but that's a ways away. How do you even get Lifetime movies? Are these available online?

Jill Desjean: I'm sure.

Rachel Gentry: I'm going to look into my cable subscription and see.

Justin Draeger: You have a cable subscription?

Rachel Gentry: It came with a packet. It was cheaper than just the Internet. They got me.

Allie Bidwell: Watch the college admission scandal, lifetime.com, mylifetime.com.

Rachel Gentry: They're just giving it away for free. That's where Lifetime is. Well, anyways, Heather, let me know what you think.

Justin Draeger: I don't know if I'll make it to the, I think I'll have the odds of me making it all the way through it go up if we watch it together. Maybe we can fast forward through some parts.

Allie Bidwell: Yeah.

Justin Draeger: Do you think there'll be any financial aid administrators in this movie? In terms of, depicted-

Rachel Gentry: I think they might make a cameo.

Justin Draeger: Okay. All right. Well, remember to subscribe. Tell your friends. Let us know the thing you would do if nobody was judging and we'll get back to you next week.