Hey everybody, welcome to another edition of “Off The Cuff.” I'm Justin Draeger.

I'm Jill with the federal relations and policy team.

I'm Megan Coval with the policy team.

And I'm Rachel Gentry with the policy team.

We were just commenting before we started here. I have this pet peeve where our ... First of all, my printer in my office broke, and then I asked you to print something yesterday and your printers broke too.

And they can't get it to print in the hallway either. Printers never work.

That's green. That's very green. Because you can't print it all and then I'll print for both of us. So I don't like the double sided and our printer defaults to that. And for big stacks of paper, yes, like a bill that's a thousand pages I would do front to back. But on three to four pages, I don't like the front to back and I always feel like something's missing. And you printed something off for me when we were up on the Hill for a thing together. It was front to back, probably?

Probably. But I remember going back and forth of like, okay, he's going to be reading in front of a group, so he might want to just flip it, but it's wasting paper.

I tell you, part of its habit, but when you're speaking, okay, imagine you're speaking, you're going off notes. This is like moving a sheet of paper over is less disruptive than.

Yeah. And then if they fall.

And then if the pages aren't numbered, then you're like, I have no idea where I am right now. So anyway-

But you, this is an observation that I made the other day about you, but fits here too, you used to do all this on the iPad.

I did.

And now-

Well, at some point it's how many devices do you want to carry around?
Megan Coval: But instead of the computer.

Justin Draeger: Instead of the computer. Yeah. I don't know.

Megan Coval: You're just switching it up.

Justin Draeger: Yeah, I am switching it up. I am a paper person at heart.

Megan Coval: Yeah, same.

Justin Draeger: I do love trees though. And I also love oxygen. So I don't know, but the double sided is throwing me for a loop. All right, how worried on a scale of 1 to 10 are you of the coronavirus? Jill, you're married to a doctor who must be talking about this nonstop?

Jill Desjean: Yeah. His primary concern is with the stock market.

Justin Draeger: Oh really? Okay.

Jill Desjean: Which is driving me insane. He has told me that I should not be as worried as I am, but I'm a bit of a worrier.

Justin Draeger: Worrier. So where are you 1 to 10, you're at a nine?

Jill Desjean: 16.


Jill Desjean: I worry about everything.

Justin Draeger: There's a neurosis underlying some of that...

Justin Draeger: How about you, Megan?

Megan Coval: I am shockingly at a one and I'm-

Justin Draeger: Is it because you're just so busy, you're not really informed on the matter?

Megan Coval: I feel moderately informed. I probably could be doing more, but I worry a lot about things and for some reason it's just not-

Justin Draeger: Not worried about this.

Megan Coval: No.

Justin Draeger: Rachel?
Rachel Gentry: Yesterday morning I was a one to two, and today I am at or above a 10.

Justin Draeger: Very concerned. But you also do... Well, you all three do public transportation.

Rachel Gentry: I wore my gloves on the bus today. I was like, I will not touch anything.

Justin Draeger: Latex?

Rachel Gentry: No, just my regular gloves. I haven't got to that point.

Justin Draeger: Well, latex you can throw away.

Rachel Gentry: I listened to a couple podcasts when I was getting ready this morning and it-

Justin Draeger: So, it's fair to say the President's press conference did not set you at ease last night.

Rachel Gentry: He's not concerned.

Jill Desjean: He's at a one.

Rachel Gentry: He's at a one and he should be at or above a 10.

Justin Draeger: The CDC seems much more concerned. Let me ask you, so I posted, we have an open Q&A in our staff newsletter. So somebody was asking, what are we going to do if the coronavirus starts to spread? And the CDC actually has a lot of information on it. We're going to talk about the coronavirus, how it's actually disrupting some study abroad programs in a little bit, but I find this, I don't know, depending on who you are, this might be comforting or not, but for the death, the fatality rate, for people under the age of 10, which two of you have kids under the age of 10, is zero. No fatalities for children.

Justin Draeger: And then if you go up to that, 10 to 19 is 0.2%, so it's not even 1%, it's 0.2. And then for 20 to 29 year olds it's 0.2. For 30 to 39 year olds, it's 0.2. And then for 40 to 49 year olds, some of you in this room it-

Jill Desjean: Thanks for the look.

Justin Draeger: Some of us in this room, it's 0.4% so doubles, but still less than a percent. So Jill, are you worried for you or your kids?

Jill Desjean: No, it's a global thing.

Justin Draeger: You're just worried about the global-

Jill Desjean: The facts don't help. It's just more I worry about people's behavior.
Justin Draeger: How society starts to breakdown.

Jill Desjean: Yeah. I definitely think about the ends of times a lot.

Justin Draeger: People rush to the store.

Jill Desjean: Like when it snows a half an inch here, that makes me nervous. Not because I think something bad will happen with snow, but that we might not have any milk because all my neighbors bought it.

Justin Draeger: Right. I always think about going back to the play, Julius Caesar. People are smart, but groups of people are really stupid, and so especially when they get into mob mentality. The good news of the coronavirus, I guess if you're under 50, is that the fatality rate is less than a percent. If you're over 50, 50 to 59 it's 1.3, which is still pretty low. And then even there, there's underlying complications. 80 years or plus 15%. That's no good.

Megan Coval: That's rough.

Justin Draeger: That's rough. But overall, and when I posted, we had a question from the staff, I posted an answer in the all staff about we'll be fine, facts over fiction, or facts over fear. Let's focus on what would happen if the DC government or the CDC declared something, would that make you feel better or worse? Or no change?

Jill Desjean: No change. Like I said-

Justin Draeger: It did nothing for you. My message had no impact.

Jill Desjean: No, not that. Like I said, I can rationalize and just be like, I know the facts, this is fine, but-

Justin Draeger: But I'm still worried.

Jill Desjean: I just have this underlying-

Justin Draeger: Concern. Did it make either of you feel better or no change? You are at a one, so maybe it made you... Did you go from a five to a one?

Megan Coval: Yeah. Your message just completely-

Rachel Gentry: Yeah, she said that yesterday.

Justin Draeger: Really set you at ease.

Megan Coval: No, but I think I think it was comforting to know that we're committed to following the federal guidelines.
Justin Draeger: Instead of, you will come to work no matter a pandemic.

Megan Coval: If the Metro is not running, you'd be like, how do you plan to get in here today?

Justin Draeger: Get here.

Rachel Gentry: It made me be more like, Oh this is a thing. I think that was maybe what kick started my delve into the internet to learn how bad things are.

Justin Draeger: You weren't concerned until you saw that. I'm not super concerned, but despite what the President said last night, the director of CDC basically said, it's not if, it's when. All right, we have some listener feedback from this last week. Allie's off. She's covering a hearing today. So we do have some policy questions in here that I'm hoping Jill, you might be able to help us with. One of them from Shara Goodson. She has a question about the Annual Student Loan Acknowledgement. She wants to know whether a new borrower who's entering their freshman year in 2021 will be required to do this acknowledgement, seeing as they might, or likely don't, have loans.

Jill Desjean: Yes.

Justin Draeger: Does not matter?

Jill Desjean: Doesn't matter.

Justin Draeger: So they would just acknowledge, I have no loans.

Jill Desjean: Yeah. First disbursement. You get an average for the institution that you are planning to attend on the acknowledgement, instead of your personalized balance if you don't have a debt balance. So that would be for first-time borrowers, either first time students or anybody.

Justin Draeger: But they still have to check the box.

Jill Desjean: They still have to acknowledge that they've seen that and go on.

Justin Draeger: Another question here from Brittany Zieger, who asks, who can we talk to about combining, she says, the EC, the MPN, and the student loan acknowledgement all into one document? And why hasn't this been suggested before?

Jill Desjean: I think it's because the annual student loan acknowledgement is annual, and the EC and the MPN are not. So I don't think there would be a way to, unless you want to make all of those annual. Plus, the MPN is a contract, there's probably weirdness with incorporating other stuff into that, which is probably why EC and MPN are different.
Justin Draeger: Yeah. If they get rid of the serial nature of the MPN, I suppose maybe you could combine those two things then, but right now you would de facto be making everything annual. Trista Kaeser also wrote in and said something about information overload, which we've talked about. Will this actually make a dent? So more to come on all of that.

Justin Draeger: We also received several responses to our question last week about how people sign their emails off. William Max sent something in that said he likes to put, have a Smurfy day.

Jill Desjean: Does everybody know who the Smurfs are? Is that generational at all? Or does everybody know?

Justin Draeger: Joelle, do you know who the Smurfs are? I guess everybody does. I was trying to reach from between generations here and yes.

Megan Coval: I guess they're always happy, too. Is that right?

Justin Draeger: I don't know.

Megan Coval: I think if you want them to have a Smurfy day-

Rachel Gentry: Except for Grumpy.

Justin Draeger: There's a Grumpy Smurf?

Rachel Gentry: There's a Grumpy Smurf.

Justin Draeger: I thought that was a dwarf.

Rachel Gentry: I forgot about that.

Jill Desjean: I think there's a Grumpy Smurf too.

Rachel Gentry: There's a Grumpy dwarf too.

Jill Desjean: Yeah, I think.

Justin Draeger: We also have some questions here about, is FSA, speaking of FSA data, which we talked about in the last podcast, somebody wrote in, Ben asked, do we know why ED no longer publishes lifetime cumulative default rates? Do you have any insight into that?

Jill Desjean: I don't know that they made a conscious decision not to do it. It's a dead link and there have definitely been a lot of dead links on the FSA website.
Justin Draeger: So, we don't know if this an IFAPP issue or... Because all of 2017 IFAPP notices are also missing. So we don't know if this-

Jill Desjean: I was able to find the data in the FY 2021, the budget request justification documents, it's tucked away in there, so if we can put that link maybe in the podcast notes so people can see it. But overall, they categorize it's the cumulative lifetime default rate by loan type and for each loan type, they're all lower than they were for last year.

Justin Draeger: All right. We also talked a little bit about new borrower defense data that was released last week. Pearson asked, do we know if any of the approvals of the department's offering on borrower defense claims are coming from schools that are still open or are they all closed schools?

Jill Desjean: We don't know for sure. I checked with our researcher Charlotte, and she said that she had not seen data about borrower defense discharges approved for schools that are open. Certainly not a listing of that or anything. She didn't know if they'd be willing to share that. So don't think that data is out there.

Justin Draeger: Okay. Let's circle back to the coronavirus for just a minute. There were several reports this last week about schools, I guess more specifically study abroad programs, that are being disrupted now that we have other countries like South Korea, Italy, Japan, that are experiencing outbreaks. And I suppose we've gotten some questions from members. Jill, you want to catch us up?

Jill Desjean: Yeah. We heard from NYU this week that they're closing their Florence campus for at least a month. We heard from another institution that they've got a program in South Korea who is bringing its students home. They hadn't yet started their studies, but they're bringing them home. And another school with programs in Rome that is contemplating what they're going to do. And so this raises a host of issues.

Justin Draeger: Some of those programs, were they able to transition them into online programs or no?

Jill Desjean: Not always. It's still early days, but one of the schools that we heard from said essentially these students had not yet started their program in Rome. I think it was the Rome program. I could be wrong about that. They hadn't started their program wherever they were. They'd paid tuition. There was no declared emergency by the country that they were, the school just made the call to pull them out. So the students were on the hook for tuition. The tuition was insured, but not under those conditions because no emergency had been declared.

Jill Desjean: So the students were on the hook for tuition and fees. They had to pay for their transportation back and classes had already started at their US campus and they couldn't get into classes. So the school is looking at an R2T4 calculation for 100% of the funds while the student has incurred a bunch of educational expenses.
Justin Draeger: But the educational expenses are all billable to the school?

Jill Desjean: Presumably. Although with study abroad, I guess they could have been a partnership with third parties.

Justin Draeger: A partnership. Because you would think the school could just say, we’re going to waive these fees, unless the school is then out money to whoever the host country is or partnership school might be.

Jill Desjean: We didn’t get those details.

Justin Draeger: I assume there’s questions about academic progress too.

Jill Desjean: Right, yeah, if the students had already started and they essentially have to withdraw from those classes because they can’t keep taking them when they’re not there anymore, and they can’t do it online, then they would not be meeting SAP.

Justin Draeger: Any other questions that we’re getting from schools right now?

Jill Desjean: Basically just schools wondering if there’s going to be any regulatory relief from ED, similar to what they do in natural disasters that happen here. U.S.-based.

Justin Draeger: So with natural disasters what happens? Do they get R2T4 relief?

Jill Desjean: Yeah, schools might get an extension on the timeframe, they might not need to calculate it.

Justin Draeger: Part of this then is the fact that even if a disaster has not been declared here at home, or in that geographic area, these are students who are study abroad, is there precedents for disasters when they’re study abroad students?

Jill Desjean: Not that I could find. Everything that I could find was U.S.-based. And in fact, the language from the law that ED uses does refer to the President declaring a disaster in any of the U.S. states. It’s pretty specific to this country. So this does seem like potentially uncharted territory.

Justin Draeger: We have questions over to the Department of Education. As soon as we have answers, we’ll go ahead and publish those in Today’s News and update our AskReg’s Knowledgebase. In the meantime, where are we collecting questions from members that we haven’t thought of?

Jill Desjean: The policy email box, policy@nasfaa.org.

Justin Draeger: Okay, so if there’s something we haven’t covered that people have questions on, they can go ahead and send them there and we’ll make sure those get in front of the Department of Education. Thanks, Jill.
Justin Draeger: So on Tuesday night we had the however many Democratic that the... I lost track on how many we've had now, but a Democratic debate between those who are still left in the race. Did you guys all watch, or at least watch snippets?

Rachel Gentry: I did. I watched snippets and Amy Klobuchar had a line about higher ed.

Justin Draeger: Yes, they mentioned, I think I heard HBCUs has come up in the first half hour. I have to admit, it's such a circus anymore that I can't watch the whole thing. But I was doing other things around the house that night. But I did hear Amy Klobuchar, who's the Democratic senator from Minnesota, she discussed briefly her higher ed plan. She stated that it will not pay for "rich kids going to college." This is the divide, right? So we've got some people who will continue to have some sort of need analysis in their subsidy, whether that's a front end, backend, or both, loan forgiveness or grants, and others who say it's total loan forgiveness and free tuition.

Justin Draeger: Klobuchar also specifically highlighted the need to look at the needs of the economy and then put incentives in place to allow individuals to pay back loans. So this alignment between postsecondary education and the job market.

Justin Draeger: Even in her plan though, she does talk about this need to make one year and two year degrees free, and then she started talking about loan programs that would go into rural areas specifically for medical students, which is something we've talked about in this podcast before about if you're a doctor getting public service loan forgiveness because you work in a rural hospital that's nonprofit versus a doctor who serving rural patients who were for profit, why does one get loan forgiveness and the other not, solely based on the tax status of the entity? So anyway, that was I think largely it on higher education.

Megan Coval: Yeah. Warren mentioned briefly that she wanted to forgive debt, that’s her proposal, and maybe that was what Klobuchar was responding to, but didn't take up a whole bunch of time.

Justin Draeger: You're right. It's a circus, so they were all jumping on top of one another in terms of talking. I don't know. It's hard to hate on the moderators because I don't know how you could control this mess.

Megan Coval: I don't know either. I was thinking about that. And then there's five of them. Five moderators.

Justin Draeger: That was a lot.

Megan Coval: So, even just keeping track amongst themselves of who... I assume they just have these huge playbooks of questions, who's going, keeping it fair, or trying to. I don't know.
Justin Draeger: It's hard to listen to. I feel like when you get down to two or three... Remind me, in 2016, or not, yeah 2016, in the Democratic debates, when we got to this point, around Super Tuesday, was it just Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, or maybe there was a third too, but it just doesn't seem like there was this many people still in it.

Megan Coval: There was a third, wasn't there?

Justin Draeger: Maybe there is until they hang through Super Tuesday and then it really narrows.

Megan Coval: That's a good question. We should look that... Yeah, it seems-

Justin Draeger: I just don't remember. Maybe I was just more insensitive to the circus that is these debates.

Megan Coval: Well they definitely last time were not as circus-like as this time.

Justin Draeger: I don't remember it being a circus.

Megan Coval: I don't think so.

Justin Draeger: It's like listening to my children bicker, which I don't tune in to television to get what I already get at home.

Megan Coval: And then they all just so eagerly raised their hands. It just reminds me of, me, me, me.

Justin Draeger: It feels demeaning to me.

Megan Coval: Kind of.

Justin Draeger: You're a sitting senator and they all have their hands raised for every question. And then the name check thing. If somebody mentions the name, if that's the case, why don't I just keep mentioning my own name? Has anybody thought about how to exploit these rules? Talk about yourself in the third person and then name check yourself. Just keep the time. Who are these consultants? Listen, I'm available. I can help.

Rachel Gentry: I do remember-

Megan Coval: Well, I... Yeah, go ahead.

Rachel Gentry: I do remember the Republican primary having a lot of people on the stage. So I feel like we saw something similar on the Republican side in 2016.
Justin Draeger: Yeah, the Democrats got down to two pretty quickly, and the Republicans, you're right, they had 20. I cannot believe that these debates generate any change in voter behavior whatsoever. Do you think they change anything at all?

Rachel Gentry: I think they put people on the map early on who people may not have heard of. But other than that, I don't think they change anything.

Megan Coval: Or they change it among a certain population of voter.

Justin Draeger: Of the wings of the party.

Megan Coval: All the people that were going to vote anyways are going to vote and they might be waffling between like Klobuchar and Buttigieg.

Justin Draeger: Who are in the middle.

Megan Coval: Who are in the middle.

Justin Draeger: And then you might have the Warren/Sanders wing, which are more progressive. So maybe there.

Megan Coval: But I don't know that it brings over new people to the side. I don't think it's bringing over any people who are on the fence about-

Justin Draeger: I don't know how you get anything substantive out of that. It just feels to me like a gauntlet that we just put people through to see if they're going to screw up, and then how bad they're going to screw up, and maybe that erodes support. But as far as winning supporters, it seems like a tall order in a debate like that.

Justin Draeger: Secretary DeVos is up on Capitol Hill right now. She's testifying and defending the latest President Trump's budget proposal. Megan, you want to catch us up?

Megan Coval: Yeah, so this is happening right now, and Allie is covering. She's before the House Appropriation Subcommittee on labor, health, human services, and education. So the subcommittee that handles all of our issues. And this is a normal part of the budgetary process to have the Cabinet Secretary come up in defend, as you said, what is in the budget. So it started-

Justin Draeger: To that end, Mr. Cole, who is the ranking member, he's from Oklahoma, or where's he from? I'm sorry.

Megan Coval: He's from Oklahoma.

Justin Draeger: Oklahoma. I find him to be a very reasonable person. He's been supportive of Pell Grants, of student aid programs, basically. He actually seemed to buy the Secretary at the beginning of the hearing a little bit of room by saying, "I know
you don't create this budget. This comes from OMB and you have to defend it." Which is true.

Megan Coval: It's interesting. That was a-

Justin Draeger: Because you felt like he was parting from the President or the party line?

Megan Coval: I think just seeing a member give her cover. I think he knows how a lot of these hearings go for her. Usually very partisan. She's a very polarizing figure. And I think that was his way up front of, he was talking to her, but he was also talking to everybody else in the room.

Justin Draeger: The biggest example of this was probably the Special Olympics debacle. Was that last year or two years ago?

Megan Coval: Last year.

Justin Draeger: So they proposed unfunding Special Olympics, or at least a significant cut, which the Secretary apparently opposed, but was overridden by the accountants over at OMB. And she was the one who took the hit. Actually been in there for two years running, or maybe even three, but nobody picked up on it, and then she took a lot of heat over it, even though she apparently opposed it from the beginning. She just had to defend it.

Rachel Gentry: And then they changed it. So there was that whole thing too. But that wasn't in the budget this year.

Justin Draeger: Undermining your cabinet is just good management. That's management 101.

Megan Coval: We all left to come in here and tape this, but it was a pretty fiery hearing so far. And it had only been on about an hour or so.

Justin Draeger: Mr. Cole also gave some legs to FSA reform, which was in the budget. He didn't think the subcommittee was the place to debate it, but said he was very interested in that. Rosa DeLauro, who is the Chairwoman of the Committee, talked pretty passionately about mostly K-12 issues, but certainly gave a nod to student aid. I think she closed her opening remarks by saying this budget will not happen, period. These cuts are not going to be enacted. Which is true. Congress has rejected them every year. All right, anything else on the hearing?

Megan Coval: Okay, so related to hearings this week there was a pretty terse exchange between ED's General Counsel, Reed Rubinstein, and the Chairwoman of the House Oversight Committee, Rep. Carolyn Maloney from New York. The House Oversight Committee has been trying to get the Secretary up to testify on a whole lot of different issues related to Title IX, borrower defense, oversight of student loans, and the Secretary has said that she's not coming up. And so they
threatened to subpoena her and in response, the department wrote a very lengthy letter, and with some pretty heated language in it.

Megan Coval: So in the letter Mr. Rubenstein, who is the attorney, said the threat of subpoena provides, "Strong reason to believe the demand for the Secretary's testimony has nothing to do with good, fair, and constitutional process." So really just calling them out, saying this is all political.

Megan Coval: And he also said, which I thought was interesting, started the letter by saying, "since the secretary took office, the department has received, on average, 1.8 congressional information requests per day." And according to the letter he said that the department has responded to over 95% of those and is working to fulfill the other 5%.

Megan Coval: So he's basically shooting down this narrative that the Secretary is unavailable and never responds to Congress. But it got crazy because Chairwoman Maloney also accused her of not coming to the Oversight Committee, but instead campaigning for the President. So saying, "You can go out and do that, but you can't come here to the committee." So this is, I feel like, reaching a whole new level.

Justin Draeger: Yeah, it's hard to imagine a scenario where Congress actually subpoenas the Secretary of Education. I do wonder... I don't know. Here's a question, but does anybody keep track, and does C-SPAN report out, how many people watch specific hearings? Because I wonder, do you think the viewership, or the clips that get picked up and then reverberated out through news, do you think that that spikes with Secretary DeVos?

Justin Draeger: If you were to ask the average person, I think we did this on the podcast once, but if you were to ask the average person, name as many cabinet officials as you can, they might be able to name Bill Barr, William Barr, the Attorney General. They can probably picture Steve Mnuchin. Maybe they'd be able to name him. But I bet Secretary DeVos would be the one person almost everybody could say.

Justin Draeger: I just wonder if there is something to the idea that there is coverage, there is exposure, for the lawmakers when the Secretary of Education comes to Capitol Hill.

Megan Coval: I think that's probably right.

Justin Draeger: Senator Warren said in the debate Tuesday night, she said again that her Secretary of Education will have been a teacher at some point. Secretary DeVos herself has become fodder on the Democratic ticket. So polarizing is right. So what's the story? Is she going to come or what?

Megan Coval: I don't think so. They were calling her up for March 3, and they were also making the point that she had this long-established conflict with something else
that day. But one thing I noticed when I was following all of this though, is that there's a new hashtag that some Democrats are using for the President. Have you guys seen it? It's #POTUS is President of the United States, this one is #IMPOTUS. Have you guys seen it?

Rachel Gentry: Impeach POTUS.

Justin Draeger: Is it impeach POTUS?

Megan Coval: Yes. I had to Google it.

Jill Desjean: I haven't seen that.

Megan Coval: So, you guys knew it already.

Jill Desjean: No, I hadn't seen it.

Justin Draeger: So what is this a play on impotence?

Rachel Gentry: That's what I thought. But no, it's about impeach?

Megan Coval: No, it's impeach-

Justin Draeger: But is it supposed to be a double entendre?

Megan Coval: I think you could take it that way.

Rachel Gentry: Whatever makes him look bad.

Megan Coval: I just was like, IMPOTUS? What?

Jill Desjean: Interesting.

Megan Coval: But that's the level to which we are at.

Justin Draeger: Debasing ourselves. Okay. So people can look for a full writeup on the hearing in Friday's Today's News. Moving right along. This last weekend there were some upgrades to the studentaid.gov website. Rachel, you want to catch us up?

Rachel Gentry: Yeah. So this weekend ED completed a wave of upgrades that included three different, or three new, components. So one was a loan simulator that is expected to replace the current repayment estimator that will be retired after this new simulator is implemented. It will combine borrower reported information. So borrowers and students can report family income and makeup through a series of questions that they'll be asked to answer, along with loan data from FSA. And it basically just allows borrowers to test drive which repayment plan would provide them with the options that are best for them.
Rachel Gentry: So it might be the lowest monthly payment, the fastest payoff term, the lowest amount paid overall, and just will give borrowers an opportunity to see what works best for them based on their repayment goals.

Rachel Gentry: The next component of this new wave of upgrades is make a payment pilot program. So this is a program that will allow borrowers to make loan payments directly on studentaid.gov. So it's currently available only to borrowers whose loans are serviced by Great Lakes or Nelnet. And ED wrote that it eventually plans to open the program to all direct loan borrowers. So the idea behind it is helping FSA meet a goal of making studentaid.gov a one stop shop for all borrowers.

Rachel Gentry: And then the last component of these new upgrades is an aid summary. So this is a dashboard that displays information about all of the student's Title IV aid that they've received and will allow students to really just view detailed information about each individual grant and loan and aid payment that they've made. So they'll see information on their remaining eligibility for direct loans for Pell Grants, IASG, and then they'll also be able to see their progress in the number of qualifying payments they've made towards PSLF.

Rachel Gentry: One component that I thought was particularly interesting about this is in ED's announcement, they said that financial aid administrators and call center support will have limited access to the student view from the NSLDS Professional Access website. So financial aid folks will be able to see some of the content that students are seeing. It won't be quite as detailed as what the students, from the student side, is available, but they said in the future that they're hoping to provide financial aid administrators with a more detailed view that's more consistent with what students are seeing.

Justin Draeger: Right. Because they can track down all this information themselves on the backend through NSLDS anyway, so just being able to see the dashboard would be a lot more helpful. Kudos to the department.

Megan Coval: Yeah, I was just thinking, obviously there are times when there are some frustrations and I'm thinking about all that stuff, but I feel like with this NextGen staff and these tools, they've come out and pretty much on time and I think there's been a lot-

Justin Draeger: They're focus has been primarily on the borrower's, student's, side for now and they're going to be turning their attention to the school side here in the coming years.

Rachel Gentry: I think it does go with the narrative of NextGen, of making it all one place, user friendly. I have friends who don't know who their servicer is, so the idea of being able to say this is a federal loan and I can make my payments on studentaid.gov is pretty logical, I think.
Justin Draeger: Right. Great. So one thing that caught my attention this last week in the news, this was in *The Washington Post*, it gets down to guilty pleasures. Senate Minority Leader, Chuck Schumer has a guilty pleasure which he spent approximately $8,600 on in the last five years. Do we have a clip here of Senator Schumer?

Chuck Schumer: I love Junior's Cheesecake so much. It's the best cheesecake in the world. It is made in Brooklyn. I've been going to Junior's since I've been a little boy, and it's my guilty pleasure.

Justin Draeger: $8,600 for Junior's Cheesecake. Have any of you had Junior's Cheesecake before?

Megan Coval: Yeah.

Justin Draeger: Is it good? Is it that good?

Jill Desjean: It's good. I'm pretty sure they use a sponge cake for the base, which is-

Justin Draeger: So, it's not a Graham Cracker?

Jill Desjean: Yeah, and I don't like that. I could be wrong. I'm almost positive it's Junior's that does that.

Justin Draeger: I wonder if that makes it more moist or something.

Jill Desjean: I don't know.

Justin Draeger: Okay, well now I'm interested.

Jill Desjean: I remember the one that I'm thinking of, the cheesecake itself was very good, but I was like, no, not a cake base.

Rachel Gentry: You wanted a graham cracker crust.

Justin Draeger: Well, any listeners from New York want to educate us on this, or send us one, we will definitely try it and see what it's like.

Jill Desjean: Or send us one.

Justin Draeger: But I was doing the calculations. Over five years, so the cheesecakes there are $43.95, so if you take five year's worth of cheesecakes at $8,600 that's about one and a half cheesecakes per week. That's a lot of cheesecake.

Jill Desjean: He doesn't look it.

Justin Draeger: Well, so he goes on to say that he's giving them out mostly as gifts.
Jill Desjean: That’s nice.

Justin Draeger: That is nice.

Rachel Gentry: I would love to get a cheesecake

Justin Draeger: $45 is a lot for a cheesecake

Rachel Gentry: How big is this cheesecake? Is this a large?

Justin Draeger: Look, I’m totally ignorant on this. So again, anybody has a Junior’s-

Rachel Gentry: Same.

Megan Coval: I just went to Junior’s a month ago, when we were in New York.


Megan Coval: All of their cakes were very big.

Justin Draeger: So, they were big cakes.

Megan Coval: So I imagine it’s probably a-

Justin Draeger: Sizable cake.

Megan Coval: Yeah. I think so.

Justin Draeger: This got me thinking though, $8,600 in five years. You could buy a car. You could buy an entire automobile for that amount. Is there any food you would spend $8,600 on over five years? You love that much, that whether you’re eating it or giving it away, this would be your go to gift?

Megan Coval: It would probably take me 30 years, because it’s so cheap, but I love, I couldn’t do without, Egg McMuffins. That’s my favorite. But think what I could do with $8,000 worth!

Justin Draeger: You could feed the world.

Megan Coval: I could.

Justin Draeger: You could feed the world for five years.

Rachel Gentry: There’s nothing that’s decadent and expensive that I would spend that much on, but I would say Bojangles when I was living in North Carolina.

Justin Draeger: What is that?
Rachel Gentry: Have y'all had Bojangles?

Justin Draeger: No.

Jill Desjean: No.

Justin Draeger: Is that a barbecue place?

Rachel Gentry: Oh my gosh, I'm going to bring you some biscuit. No. It's biscuits. It's the best biscuits.

Justin Draeger: Biscuits?

Rachel Gentry: It's a North Carolina thing.

Justin Draeger: An entire store of biscuits?

Rachel Gentry: Well, no, it's fast food.


Rachel Gentry: It's a fast food chain.

Megan Coval: Like Popeye's?

Rachel Gentry: So they do, it's chicken and biscuits. It's country home cooking, but it's the best biscuits.

Justin Draeger: So they have these up here?

Rachel Gentry: There's one in Union Station, but it's not that good. When I go back to North Carolina, it's like, all right, how many times are we're going to eat at Bojangles?

Justin Draeger: All right, well, the next time you go home, bring us back some biscuits.

Rachel Gentry: I will.

Justin Draeger: We'll try them. Jill, do you have any food that you would-

Jill Desjean: I eat a lot of chocolate chips.

Justin Draeger: Really?

Jill Desjean: Yeah.

Justin Draeger: The unsweetened, partially sweetened?
Jill Desjean: No, they're sweetened.

Rachel Gentry: Just out of the bag?

Jill Desjean: Yeah. I put them in my oatmeal in the morning. And I just learned a new use for them from one of our other policy analysts.

Justin Draeger: What's that?

Jill Desjean: I dropped some in my coffee the other day and I was like-

Justin Draeger: Shut up.

Jill Desjean: Didn't drop. I put them in by mistake.

Justin Draeger: It's like when people say, it fell into my drink.

Jill Desjean: I wanted to put them in my oatmeal, put them in my coffee by mistake. It was like, "Megan, I'm off today. I just put chocolate chips in my coffee." And she was like, "Dixon does that all the time." Sometimes I eat them for a snack.

Rachel Gentry: That sounds like a good idea.

Jill Desjean: I eat a lot of chocolate chips. I don't think I could eat $8,600 worth.

Megan Coval: Dark chocolate or milk chocolate?

Jill Desjean: Semi sweet and sweet.

Justin Draeger: That would be a bizarre gift for people though. Just packages of chocolate chips.

Jill Desjean: I wouldn't give them away. Yeah. No. This would just be-

Justin Draeger: It would just be for yourself.

Jill Desjean: Yeah. I would make them chocolate chip cookies.

Megan Coval: That's true. They're so versatile, that bag of chocolate chips.

Jill Desjean: Right.

Justin Draeger: You haven't made any for the office, but you would.

Jill Desjean: I haven't. I've got a bunch in the freezer, if you guys want some tomorrow.

Justin Draeger: Dude, this last week I brought in those cupcakes and then the same day Cordia brought in pastries, and by the end of the day there was a solid dent in all of it.
Megan Coval: I went in to get a cupcake and I was like, that apricot pastry, it looks pretty good. So that’s what I ended up with.

Justin Draeger: So, you didn't go for the cupcake.

Megan Coval: No, I didn't want it to turn my mouth blue because it was bright blue icing.

Justin Draeger: That was an NASFAA blue.

Megan Coval: Which is beautiful, but not for lipstick.

Justin Draeger: All right, so thanks everybody for listening and remember to subscribe. Send us your comments and tell a friend.