

NYSFAAA

Connection



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New York State Financial Aid Administrators Association | www.nysfaaa.org
Laura Worley, Citibank Student Loans -Editor
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Recent Stops on the Presidential Tour...

By Dave Canaski, NYSFAAAA President

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"Oh, the places you'll go..." - Dr Suess

The past few months were definitely not what I bargained for when I decided to run for NYSFAAAA President. (Well, more accurately, when Bill Mack called me and twisted my arm into running, but I digress...) We have definitely been wandering in some uncharted territory... But looking back, who could have anticipated this two years ago? Many people have thanked me for the long hours of work I put in over the past few months, but a close friend reminded me recently that even if I hadn't been NYSFAAAA president, I still would have been unable to tear myself away from this battle. I admit it, I've been alternately frustrated, elated, heartbroken, hopeful, enraged, despondent, and exhausted... and I've loved every minute of it. So, I'd like to share a few things I've learned on this journey, and to say "Thank You"

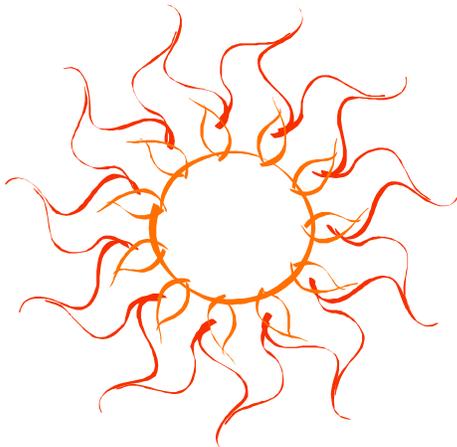
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Don't get discouraged!

By Ann Barton, NSLP and past NYSFAAAA President

I wanted to take this opportunity to write to each of you to ask that you not get discouraged with all the negative publicity our industry is receiving. Each of you do a wonderful job of caring for your students and you need to remember that as we get blasted from every angle. I know it is discouraging to read every day of more regulations being placed on us that hinder the job we are trying to do for our students – but always remember, the students need you – they need you to be their advocate. To me the most discouraging thing in all of this mess is that no one is considering what will happen to students, especially the neediest of our population, those from low income families who depend on our guidance to get them through this process. Hold your

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for trusting me to be your leader through this difficult time...

When the news of this “investigation” by the Attorney General first broke, we were winning. The AG came out hard - and the press and public opinion weren’t buying it. However, this is where I learned - **LESSON ONE: The press is NOT your friend - ever.** Even if they like you and think the whole thing is boloney, that’s not news. Scandal, on the other hand, is news. So, while most in the press didn’t find this story interesting enough to write about, 90% of the press we did get was bad. Even with that, public opinion remained on our side and people continued to trust us.

As the days went by, I was feeling pretty good, until the day that three of our colleagues nationwide were discovered to have benefited from lucrative stock options with one of their preferred lenders. This is when I learned - **LESSON TWO: Sound bites are more powerful than facts.** This was the day public opinion turned on us, and the press along with it. This is the same principle used in advertising. People can only grasp one simple thought from a sound bite/commercial. Suddenly everyone understood what had previously been hard for them to grasp. “Oh, I get it, Financial Aid people are taking bribes!” They got the message that day - loud and clear.

Which brings me to the next reality... **LESSON THREE: Politics is about getting re-elected - nothing else.** In my many trips to Albany, I started to learn something. Everyone listened very politely to the list of problems that SLATE would cause for schools and (more importantly) for students... and they cared... but generally not enough to actually do something about it. You see, the juggernaut was moving, and most politicians have no stomach for being a hero. Most knew the original SLATE was bad law, but they figured they could blame the disastrous consequences on the AG (or the other party) when re-election time comes. Standing in the way of SLATE was potentially political suicide, and it seems no one in Albany has the guts for that...

Except, maybe a few... From my observation, the Senate (Republican controlled) passed the original SLATE with all of its flaws. I think they were inclined to give AG Cuomo exactly what he asked for and let him fall on his face. Then they would fix the law later and gain the political advantage. The Assembly Higher Education Committee was a little closer to the action (Democrat controlled - same party as the AG) and was at least a little concerned that there might be fallout from letting a bad bill through. But there were some who defied the stereotype in my previous paragraph and stood up to be counted. Among these was Assemblyman Cahill from New Paltz. He was well prepared and asked very tough questions of the AG’s representatives in the hearings. Thus **LESSON FOUR: One person can still make a difference.** Assemblyman Cahill’s efforts (along with Assemblywomen Glick and Lifton) caused the Assembly Committee to take a deep breath and slow this thing down. This forced the AG to come to the table and negotiate a few things, and suddenly NYSFAAA got the meeting with the AG that we had been denied for almost a month.

Well, how did this Assemblyman know what tough questions to ask? It seems that one of our colleagues had spent extensive time briefing him on the problems with the SLATE bill. Which leads us to another lesson... **LESSON FIVE: Sometimes it IS “who you know” that’s important.** Our connections that NYSFAAA members have cultivated through our years of working in Albany

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and locally really paid off for us. Even our Republican contacts were quietly reassuring us that they would address our problems through “chapter amendments” after the bill was passed. It turns out that there are a lot of powerful folks in Albany who know us and trust our integrity.

So, how did a small handful of inexperienced adventurers navigate this rapidly-changing landscape? It wasn't easy. On my first visit to Albany, I realized that I really didn't know the customs or understand the language. I was a stranger in a strange land. I needed a local guide, a “Sherpa” if you will...to take me through the wasteland and to the peak. Thankfully, I had two of these people. One is a long-time NYSFAAA Associate member with significant “insider” experience in Albany. The second was an attorney/lobbyist that NYSFAAA hired. I was soundly criticized by many of the “old-timers” for hiring the lobbyist, and I accept the criticism; but I honestly believe that we would not have prevailed without his help. Thus **LESSON SIX: Desperate times call for desperate measures.** NYSFAAA had never seen a crisis like this, and hopefully we never will again. I checked with our regular attorneys before going ahead, and consulted with the Executive Council, but at the end of the day the decision to potentially violate our own constitution was my responsibility. But I'm no hero. I knew that if we won, I'd be forgiven; and if we lost, my actions would be the least of NYSFAAA's problems.

And that brings me to my final lesson, **LESSON SEVEN: Sometimes a small group of dedicated people can change the world.** There were many people who helped with this process, from going to Albany, helping to draft/edit documents, and making phone calls, to simply giving me advice, encouragement, and emotional support. Many served actively and are worthy of praise. Some had to work in secret because of their day-jobs. Many more worked quietly behind the scenes and will probably never be recognized for their efforts. However you served, from sitting side-by-side with me in front of an Assembly committee to simply saying a little prayer for those sitting there, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

There is much work left to do, and the Executive Council and Committee Chairs will roll up their sleeves and dig into it at the June meeting. The Governor's signature on a revised SLATE will allow us to put this dark chapter behind us and work to re-build the respect and trust that we had earned prior to this unfortunate series of events. I am proud to represent a group of such dedicated, hard-working and ethical professionals as the Financial Aid community in New York. I thank you for giving me the honor and privilege to do so.

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head up high, keep a smile on your face and continue to work on behalf of your students. Your reward is seeing your students graduate. Look at pictures from your campus graduation ceremonies this year and keep that thought in mind – without the fine work you have done, some of those students would not have been walking across that stage.

Remember, leaders are people with a positive outlook on life – keep thinking positive thoughts. Hang in there – this, too, shall pass!

College Goal Sunday – February 11, 2007 – Medaille College

By M. Price II, Buffalo site coordinator, College Goal Sunday

College Goal Sunday held its first statewide event on Sunday, February 11th. Medaille College was host for the Buffalo site location from 1:00 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. The program was funded through a grant from the Lumina Foundation administered through the New York State Financial Aid Administrator's Association (NYSFAAA). The event was staffed with volunteers from the local financial aid community who assisted nineteen families with the completion of the online FAFSA and the online TAP application. Medaille's Admissions Department also provided student ambassadors and staff members were available to answer questions. Student participants who completed the program were entered into a drawing for door prizes including college scholarships, college brand apparel, and other miscellaneous items donated from community merchants.



2007 HESC Loan Symposium-Mark Your Calendar!

Please mark your calendar for the *3rd annual HESC Loan Symposium*, which will be held in Saratoga Springs on September 19 and 20. Last year's event attracted over 225 school and lender colleagues.

During this year's event, New York State colleges and lenders will be offering loan topics that are of general interest to the financial aid industry. The training event is open to all NYSFAAA members. Visit www.hesc.org for registration and program details.

Mark Your Calendars for the Upcoming NYSFAAA Conferences:

- Annual Conference **2007** in New York City, October 14-17
- Annual Conference **2008** at the Adams Mark, Buffalo October 21-24
- Annual Conference **2009** at The Saratoga, October 27- 30
- Annual Conference **2010** at the Adams Mark, Buffalo October 19-22

Shape your financial aid staff into a strong team

By Chansone Durden, TG Account Executive Team

The fuel for a strong financial aid office is teamwork. Deadlines can be short, demand in the form of student questions high, and staff to handle work at a premium. To make the most of their resources, financial aid offices need to train their teams to work as a unit.

Ideally, a strong financial aid office creates its own energy - a spirit of mutual support based on respect and a desire to help. To foster that energy and to set a high standard of performance, you'll need to establish a clear path for each member of your staff and for the group as a whole.

Pathway to unity

In setting a training plan to shape your team into a more cohesive group, consider each area listed below. Keep in mind that your staff may need more or less time to become an effective team given the varied skill sets of each member.

- **Evaluate and train:** If you have a formal evaluation tool for testing the regulatory knowledge of your staff, compare scores across the team and consider training to address weaknesses. Mentoring by team members who have a high degree of regulatory knowledge may be a good idea. Also, you may want to look closer at personality tests that help you gauge the personal style of each team member.
- **Assign roles and responsibilities:** Though financial aid offices often stress cross-training, it's good to consider assigning oversight roles to more experienced staff members and apprentice roles to those new to the profession. You may want to rotate jobs - intake versus paperwork.
- **Create an environment of trust and eliminate fear:** Good performance often comes as a matter of wanting to give your best. You can create a workplace that gets the most out of your team by opening up lines of communication and making it a habit to gather feedback on office practice. Make it clear that no negative fallout will occur because of honest feedback.
- **Handle conflict quickly:** Don't let things simmer between staff members; deal with issues head-on so that conflict does not breed potential future aggression. You'll want to ensure an atmosphere of mutual care as much as possible, which means ironing out conflict immediately.
- **Set a common vision:** Make clear what you expect from the team in the short- and long-term, and define a way to achieve those goals, whether through training or by working one-on-one with team members. Whether your team buys into your vision is important to achieving your goals.
- **Reward the team:** When you start seeing results in terms of better teamwork - they just completed their first peak season together, for example - it's time to show you value that effort with a reward. This could come in many forms: a formal in-office celebration, small bonuses, or even certificates - whatever conveys that sense of making goal.

To learn more

If you're looking to research literature on team-building, you'll find a large range of books on the topic. Here are a few suggested titles:

- *The Team Building Tool Kit: Tips, Tactics, and Rules for Effective Workplace Teams* by Deborah Harrington-Mackin
- *Succeeding As A Self-Managed Team* by Richard Y. Chang and Mark J. Curtin

Chansone Durden is an Account Executive Team Manager with TG serving schools in NYSFAAA. You can reach Chansone at (800) 252-9743, ext. 2513, or by e-mail at chansone.durden@tgslc.org. Additional information about TG can be found online at www.tgslc.org.

Reminder: Aggregate Loan Limits Unchanged Under HERA

Although the Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005 mandates an increase in *annual* limits for Stafford loans effective July 1, 2007, *aggregate* education-loan limits remain unchanged.

USA Funds®' policy advisers note that aggregate loan limits remain as follows:

Student Classification	Loans Included	Aggregate Loan Limit
Dependent undergraduate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined subsidized and unsubsidized Stafford-loan funds. • The outstanding balance of SLS and Direct Stafford loans. • Any portion of a Consolidation loan attributable to one of the above types of loans. 	\$23,000.
Independent undergraduate, or dependent undergraduate whose parents are unable to borrow a PLUS loan.		\$46,000. No more than \$23,000 of this amount may be subsidized Stafford-loan funds.
Graduate or professional.		\$138,500. No more than \$65,500 of this amount may subsidized Stafford-loan funds.

The sum of Stafford loans included in a Consolidation loan continue to count toward the student's aggregate loan limit, despite the fact that they are included in the new loan.

USA Funds' policy staff, at askpolicy@usafunds.org, can provide additional information about loan limits under the HERA, and answers to other Federal Family Education Loan Program-policy questions.

NYSFAAA Leadership Team 2006-2007

[David Canaski](#), President, Director of Financial Aid, SUNY Cortland

[Judy Miladin](#), Past President, Director of Financial Aid, Cayuga Community College

[Joan Warren](#), 1st Vice President, Associate Dean for Financial Aid, The Juilliard School

[Maria Barlaam](#), 2nd Vice President, Director of Financial Aid, Manhattanville College

[Nancy Teodecki](#), Secretary, Assistant Director of Financial Aid, SUNY Upstate Medical Center

[Marilyn Faller](#), Treasurer, VP, Student Finance, Berkeley College

[Janet S. McGrath](#), Region 1 Council Representative, Director of Financial Assistance, Trocaire College

[Andrea Mason](#), Region 2 Council Representative, Financial Aid Counselor, SUNY Geneseo

[Sharon Karwowski](#), Region 3 Council Representative, Ass't Director of Financial Aid, Tompkins-Cortland CC

[Brenda Wright](#), Region 4 Council Representative, Director of Financial Aid, SUNY Albany

[Heather C McDonnell](#), Region 5 Council Representative, Director Financial Aid, Sarah Lawrence College

[Angela M VanDekker](#), Region 6 Council Representative, Asst. VP Student Financial Services, Fordham Univ.

[Sheryl L Mihopulos](#), Region 7 Council Representative, Director, Student Financial Services, Adelphi Univ.

[Kerry L Lubold](#), Region 8 Council Representative, Assistant Director of Financial Aid, SUNY Plattsburgh

Is Graduate-Level Education Receiving Enough Attention?

By Justin Draeger, Assistant Director for Communications, NASFAA

Washington, D.C. (April 2007) – The U.S. education system is made up of more than just undergraduate schools, yet lawmakers, business leaders, and college presidents are speaking out about the dwindling emphasis, funding, and access to graduate-level education.

Graduate education is the backbone of American competitiveness and innovation. That was the message – and the title – of a legislative forum held recently in Washington, D.C. by the Council of Graduate Schools. Several lawmakers turned out for the event, along with university presidents and business leaders, to discuss what is seen as a stagnant U.S. graduate-level education system, at least in comparison to other developed nations.

While the number of scientific papers published by Americans has remained fairly constant over the last decade, the number of scientific papers published outside of the United States has risen by more than 30 percent. More and more developing nations are investing substantial amounts of money in their graduate schools, illustrated by the fact that South Korea produces about the same number of doctorates as the United States, but with a population that is only about the size of California, Oregon, and Washington combined.

“There’s a lack of understanding of the absolutely essential role of graduate education,” said Ohio State University President Karen Holbrook.

Undergraduate schools, community colleges, and trade-schools should remain an integral part of this discussion, as lawmakers emphasized that everyone involved in primary, secondary, and postsecondary education has a responsibility to give more credence to access and participation in graduate education.

Congressman Ruben Hinojosa, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness, stated that the push to get more students into graduate-level education was a “kindergarten to college” effort. “People need to be told that they have the ability to go to college,” said Hinojosa.

Hinojosa also emphasized the need for more funding from the federal government at all levels of higher education, calling it “shameful” that the budgets at public primary and secondary schools are made up of only 7-8 percent of federal dollars.

Hinojosa restated his commitment to begin and finish reauthorization of the Higher Education Act this year to increase college access through additional federal dollars. Congressman Rush Holt, Chairman of the House Appropriations Select Intelligence Oversight Panel also stressed loan forgiveness and increased scholarships to ensure that students could financially “make it” to graduate and doctorate levels.

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Temple University President Ann Weaver Hart reminded participants that the federal government is the largest single provider of higher education funding and that those monies must be targeted towards US public policy goals, specifically to ensure that the United States is providing enough access to graduate-level education.

Participants focused on several target populations, including minority and first-generation college students, as a potential “goldmine” of future graduate students.

“Most Americans have little idea about the potential of minority students,” said Hinojosa. He went on to explain how his region in southern Texas had gone unnoticed by employers, schools, and legislators for several years. But now, after more than a decade of work, his congressional district has become a large contributor to the both the Texas and U.S. economy.

These target populations require proactive solutions according to the University of Houston System Chancellor G. Jay Gugue.

“We’re seeing that first-generation college students are ‘debt averse,’” said Gugue, arguing that we must find increased funding sources to tap into U.S. populations that have historically been underrepresented.

Despite many of the troubling statistics about the lagging education system and apparent lack of competitiveness in the world, the forum illustrated that there’s still hope The United States has the largest economy in the world and many agree that our higher education system remains the envy of developed nations. The United States is still the home of the largest global corporations, many of which spawned out of graduate school research projects, such as Google and Genentech.

As policymakers, business leaders, and higher education officials and stakeholders – including financial aid administrators – unite to advocate for increased funding, access and participation in graduate-level education, we will remain at the forefront of global innovation and competitiveness according to Debra Stewart, president of the Council of Graduate Schools.

The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) is a nonprofit membership organization that represents more than 12,000 financial aid professionals at nearly 3,000 colleges, universities and career schools across the country. Based in Washington, D.C., NASFAA is the only national association with a primary focus on student aid legislation, regulatory analysis, and training for financial aid administrators. Each year, members help more than 8 million students receive funding for postsecondary education. In addition to its member Web site at www.NASFAA.org, the Association offers a Web site with financial aid information for parents and students at www.StudentAid.org.

Members on the Move . . .

NYSFAAA like to wish a fond farewell to **Bernice Anson**, Director of Financial Aid at Erie Community College who is turning in her keys as of June 2, 2007 after 25 years in financial aid. Bernice plans to spend her time between Folly Beach, SC and Hamburg, NY. Bernice has dedicated a great deal of time to the financial aid community through her work at ECC, NYSFAAA & SUNYFAP. She will be heartily missed by those who benefited from her mentoring and friendship. Congratulations Bernice!

The Rockland Community College Financial Aid Office welcomes **Susan Twomey** as its newest member. As a faculty member she will serve in a counselor position. Susan comes to RCC from Mount St. Mary College.

Congratulations to **Howard Leslie** from Monroe College for becoming a first time grandfather. Isaac Richard Leslie was born on Feb 7, weighing 8 pounds 3 ounces.

Shane Rauh will be a Manager of School Solutions for Student Capital Corporation, starting on April 2007. His territory will include schools in regions: NYSFAAA Regions 3, 4, 5 and 8.

Paula Carlson, senior vice president of Education Assistance Commission has been elected the Mapping Your Future Board of Directors.

To contribute to The NYSFAAA *Connection*, please contact

[Laura Worley](#), Editor or [Vince Scalise](#), Assistant Editor

Below is the schedule for the NYSFAAA Webletter. If you have an article to submit please do so by the deadline date indicated.

Edition	Articles due	Posted to site
Winter	January 25	February 1
Spring/Summer	May 25	June 1
Fall	September 25	October 1

Submissions for The NYSFAAA *Connection* can be in any of the following formats:

- Microsoft Word via e-mail attachment (preferred)
- e-mail text
- paper
- disk
- photographs can be e-mailed or sent as hard copy. Hard copy photos submitted will be returned.