



NYSFAAA

Connection

Winter
2009

The first full day of
Spring arrives
3/20/2009!

New York State Financial Aid Administrators Association | www.nysfaaa.org
 Laura Worley, Citibank Student Loans -Editor
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Letter from the President

By Curt Gaume, Canisius College

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I wish to begin my remarks by expressing my thanks and appreciation to Heather McDonnell for serving our association as its President for the past year or so. As we all know, Heather stepped into her position as President in some very trying times. The greatest challenge NYSFAAA faced was dealing with the recently enacted SLATE legislation. It was her calming and soothing leadership style that took us through this period when we as financial aid professionals felt attacked, discredited, betrayed and definitely hurt by the false accusations of misconduct. After Dave Canaski fought so hard and tirelessly to assure that NYSFAAA was truly represented in the writing of the SLATE law, Heather gracefully took us through the healing period.

As some of you may know, Heather and I have a history that goes back at least 17 years. I was serving my second term as Treasurer when Heather began her first year as President. At that time, she was unable to complete her term as President but returned to us last year in that

Please see *President's Letter* on page 2

Energy Saving Tips

By Anne Baron, AFC, National Student Loan Program

With cold weather approaching, how about a few great energy saving tips from Bankrate.com:

- ✓ Get a home energy audit every couple of years—your power company offers them.
- ✓ See if your energy company offers rebates for energy saving equipment at home.
- ✓ Add more energy efficient insulation to your attic... try resistance rating of R21-R30.
- ✓ Install a programmable thermostat to assure that temps stay low when you are away from home—set it to kick in 30 minutes before the family returns home.
- ✓ Lower your water heater 10 degrees—no lower than 120.

Please see *Energy Tips* on page 3

President's Letter from page 1

office. She has been a close friend over the years and this past year an excellent mentor to me as President Elect. Yes, we in the financial aid profession regardless how many years we have been around, we still need to be mentored and be mentors to others. Heather, I look forward to your wise guidance as you serve out your tenure with NYSFAAA as Immediate Past President.

For those of you who were able to attend the 40th Anniversary Conference this past October, we were treated to an excellent meeting by Region III in Buffalo. Many thanks go out to John View and Bill Cheetham who provided excellent leadership as the co-chairs of the conference. Gina Soliz and Darrin Rooker, the Program Chairs, assembled an excellent program with a wide range of subject areas and topics. All of the committee chairs and committee volunteers provided us with a wonderful 40th Anniversary conference. Faced with changing times, and restricted budgets NYSFAAA needs to review the length and structure of our conferences in the future. Shortly, the Executive Council will take up a discussion of future conferences.

At the Conference in October, the Five Year Strategic Plan 2009-2014 was approved. Through the excellent leadership of Irv Bodofsy and the hard and tireless work of the committee, NYSFAAA has a plan to move forward through the next five years. This is a living document that needs to be put into action. The Executive Council will be working on an implementation plan over the next five years. It is a blueprint for the future.

Once again, NYSFAAA this Fall has successfully completed another year of school counselor workshops as an outreach activity to school counselors. Kathy Michalski the statewide chairperson for School Outreach Committee has done an excellent job in coordinating the workshops. Special thanks are extended to HESC for finding additional financial support through the Challenge Access College Grant program to fund a shortfall within the NYSFAAA budget. One of the greatest challenges NYSFAAA faces is the lack of financial support from traditional sources, namely our lending partners. Peg Stearns is doing a great job in writing grant proposals to obtain funding for NYSFAAA. She has submitted the first of two grant proposals to gain financial support from the Challenge Access College Grant. If we are successful, these funds will assist us in accomplishing our outreach projects as well as training efforts in the regions.

NYSFAAA this spring will be providing financial aid information to our admission and high school counselor's colleagues in a partnering with NYSACAC at their 2009 Spring Regional Forums across the state. Given the national economic crisis our nation is facing, NYSACAC looking to us as financial aid professionals for our insight into the future of funding higher education.

NYSFAAA has a number of challenges facing it over the upcoming years. We know we have to find different sources of funding to continue and expand the great work we do in our outreach and training efforts. We are blessed with youthful and energetic leadership in our officers and Executive Council regional representation. The strength in an organization like ours is not the financial wealth but much more in the human resources that comes to NYSFAAA through the members who volunteer their time and most importantly their expertise. If we are to continue to be the great association as we have been for the past 40 years we need you. Trust me; great things are accomplished over time by taking small steps. All you have to do is take the first one.

Energy Tips from page 1

- ✓ Ask your energy company if they have “energy saving programs” whereby your appliances, etc are shut down for short bursts of time during peak times.
- ✓ Keep drapes and blinds closed most of the day to keep warmth inside.
- ✓ Hook your TV, stereo and other electronics up to a strip that can be turned off when items are not in use.
- ✓ Set thermostat at 68 for daytime and turn it down to 58 at night...dress warmly!

Try some of these ideas and you'll only notice it on your bill!

College Goal Sunday – Region 1

By Ambrose Price, Citizens Bank

Planning is almost complete for College Goal Sunday 2009. The event will be held at three locations throughout Region I. The Buffalo event on Saturday, February 7, 2009 at the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. and will be in conjunction with the 1st annual Buffalo Public Schools Scholarship Fair an event that showcases organizations promoting education and career opportunities as well as scholarship opportunities. Concurrent interest sessions focused on student development will be offered on resume writing, planning and saving for college, interviewing skills, and other related topics. See www.buffaloschools.org for more information. Falconer High School will host the Jamestown event on Friday, February 8, 2009 from 1:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m. Finally, a new location in Niagara Falls at Niagara Falls High School will take place on Tuesday, February 17, 2009 from 1:30 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. A well deserved round of applause to the financial aid community for their dedication and commitment as your volunteerism makes these community oriented events successful. Go to www.collegegoalsundayny.com for more information.

Mark Your Calendars for the Upcoming NYSFAAA Conferences:

Annual Conference **2009** at The Saratoga, October 27- 30
Annual Conference **2010** at the Adams Mark, Buffalo October 19-22

Check NYSFAAA.org regularly for scheduled
trainings & events in your region.

Taxes: Make them work for your students

By Tasha McDaniel, Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation

Taxes make almost everyone cringe. Help make this year's tax day a more positive experience by brushing up on education tax benefits. Sharing information on the ins and outs can help you make sure your students and families claim everything they are eligible for.

According to the IRS, over 16.3 million taxpayers were able to reduce their taxes through one or more education tax benefits in 2006. There are two different types of benefits: credits and deductions. Credits directly reduce the amount of taxes paid and deductions directly reduce taxable income.

Hope Tax Credit

The Hope credit offers up to \$1,800 per student. It covers tuition and fees—100% of the first \$1,200 and 50% of the next \$1,200—and can be used for the first two years of undergraduate education. Independent students, families claiming dependent students, and married students are eligible when their income is between:

- \$48,000 and \$58,000 for single tax filers
- \$96,000 and \$116,000 for married filers filing jointly

No credit is received for:

- Single filers with an income exceeding \$58,000
- Married filers filing jointly with an income exceeding \$116,000
- Married filers filing separately

Families can claim a separate Hope credit for each student who qualifies. For example, a family with two dependent students in their first or second year of college can claim up to \$3,600 in Hope credits. To claim the Hope credit, use IRS Form 8863.

Lifetime Learning Credit

The lifetime learning credit offers up to \$2,000 for each year you pay for college. It covers 20% of the first \$10,000 of tuition and fees paid by the family. The credit is available for those who are not eligible for the Hope credit and is applied when income is between:

- \$48,000 and \$58,000 for single tax filers
- \$96,000 and \$116,000 for married filers filing jointly

No credit is received for:

- Single filers with an income exceeding \$58,000
- Married filers filing jointly with an income exceeding \$116,000
- Married filers filing separately

The credit can be claimed only once per tax return, which means the credit is always \$2,000, even for families with more than one dependent student. It is also available for less than half time study to acquire or improve job skills and can be used by graduate and undergraduate students for an unlimited number of years.

Tuition and Fees Federal Tax Deduction

The federal tax deduction for tuition and fees can reduce your income by up to \$4,000. Students and families can claim the deduction if they pay qualified education expenses of higher education, they pay the education expense for an eligible student, or the eligible student is themselves, their spouse, or a dependent student for whom they claim an exemption on their tax return. Qualified education expenses include tuition and fees required for enrollment or attendance at an eligible postsecondary institution. To claim the deduction, complete form 8917 and submit it with Form 1040 or 1040A.

Student Loan Interest Deduction

The federal deduction for student loan interest offers up to a \$2,500 deduction. Independent students, families with one or more dependent students, and married students may be eligible for this deduction during any year in which they paid interest on a student loan. The deduction is available for both undergraduate and graduate students, and students must have been enrolled at least half-time in a degree program. The maximum deduction is reduced when income is between:

- \$55,000 and \$70,000 for single tax filers
- \$110,000 and \$140,000 for married filers filing jointly

No credit is received for:

- Single filers with an income exceeding \$70,000
- Married filers filing jointly with an income exceeding \$140,000
- Married filers filing separately

Qualified education expenses include: tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, transportation, and other necessary expenses.

For more information about education tax benefits, consult IRS Publication 970 or contact Leigh Bove, your Great Lakes marketing representative.

New Federal Regulations Affect Student Loan Provisions for Military Service

BY Ed Gonzales, USA Funds

Federal regulations published Oct. 23 include new provisions and revisions to existing provisions affecting certain military personnel and veterans. These changes are effective July 1, 2009, but lenders may implement the changes earlier than that date.

- **Post-Active Duty Student Deferment** – New regulations clarify that a borrower who was serving on active duty on Oct. 1, 2007, or began a period of active duty service after that date, is entitled to the new post-active duty student deferment. Some of the eligibility criteria are amended, as follows:
 - The borrower must be enrolled at least half time. Eligibility for the post-active duty student deferment ends on the date that the borrower ceases at least half-time enrollment or 13 months following the end of the borrower's active duty service or any applicable grace period. Previous rules did not stipulate the level of enrollment necessary to qualify for the deferred period.
 - The period of active duty must have been at least 30 days.
 - The regulations further clarify the definition of qualifying active duty with respect to National Guard service to be any of the following circumstances:
 - Active duty at the state level, if that duty is served under an order by which the governor activates the National Guard, and the state pays for the Guard activities.
 - Active duty at the state level when that duty is served as full-time National Guard duty ordered by the governor of a state with the approval of the president or U.S. secretary of defense, and the federal government pays for the Guard activities.
 - Active duty by a full-time permanent employee of the National Guard only if that employee is reassigned to active duty as noted above.

A borrower who is a member of another reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces is not further defined.

If a borrower qualifies for both a military deferment and a post-active duty student deferment, the 180-day period of post-mobilization military service deferment and the 13-month post-active duty student deferment run concurrently.

- **Military Deferment** – A lender is permitted to grant a military deferment based on its confirmation that the borrower has received a deferment on a loan held by another lender, by a school participating in the Perkins Loan Program, or under the William D. Ford Direct Loan Program. If the lender grants military deferment without having documentation of the borrower's status, the deferment must be granted for no more than 12 months from the date that the initial qualifying service began.
- **Military Forbearance** – A lender is required to provide a period of forbearance for certain borrowers who serve in the National Guard. If the borrower qualifies for a post-active duty student deferment but, because of the type of service rendered, does not qualify for the military service deferment, the lender is required to provide a period of forbearance. The lender must grant the forbearance in increments of 12 months or less, depending on the borrower's eligibility. Borrowers are eligible for this forbearance if engaged in active duty service at the state level – if that service meets any of the following criteria:
 - Active duty at the state level, if that duty is served under an order by which the governor activates the National Guard and the state pays for the Guard activities.
 - Active duty at the state level when that duty is served as full-time National Guard duty ordered by the governor of a state with the approval of the president or U.S. secretary of defense, and the federal government pays for the Guard activities.

The borrower must have served for a period of at least 30 consecutive days beginning on either of the following:

- The day after the grace period expires for a Stafford loan that has not entered repayment.
- The day after the borrower ceases at least half-time enrollment on any Federal Family Education Loan Program loan that is in repayment.

If you have questions about these new provisions, send an e-mail to USA Funds[®] policy advisers at askpolicy@usafunds.org.

Using Communication to Develop a High Performance Operation

BY Leonard Gude, Vice President, Financial Aid Solutions, Regent

What distinguishes a high performance operation from others? What are the reasons for its consistent excellence in performance? This is the second in a series of six articles which will outline actions that you can take to move your operation forward and increase your stature within your organization. To read the first article in this series, "How Does Defining Purpose Help You Develop a High Performing Operation", [click here](#)

Communication. Once you have clearly identified your operation's purpose, you must effectively communicate that purpose to everyone involved so that it can be well understood and implemented as needed. As a leader, one of your most important tasks is to communicate effectively. It is important that you project a professional image as you communicate with others.

Sender. The audience's perception of your competence and credibility can be negatively affected by misspelled words, disjointed arguments, rambling sentences, and poor grammar, layout, structure and appearance.

Example: The purpose of the office of financial aid is to assist students and prospective students in obtaining the financial resources necessary to enroll in the institution so that they can complete their educational program and enter the workforce.



Audience. Instead of attempting to communicate to all constituencies with a single message, customize and personalize the message to your audience. Why should they listen? How is it relevant to them? Customers, supervisors, coworkers and employees long to be treated as special and important individuals.

Message. In organizing your message, make sure that it is clear and concise. Don't attempt to address multiple issues. Focus on a single topic or issue and keep it short.

In the opening statement, you should answer the question as to "why it is important to me" (your audience)? If you don't catch their attention in the first statement, they are unlikely to continue reading or paying attention to what you have to say.

Next, you should summarize or concisely articulate the issue or problem that needs to be addressed. In doing so, avoid using acronyms and be careful to explain terminology or details that the audience may not understand.

Now that you have their interest, you should communicate what action should be taken. Be specific as to who, what, when, where, why and how. Also insure that they understand any consequences of not responding in a timely manner.

Finally, provide them with contact information. You should offer to provide additional details or include them as appendices, URLs, or attachments.

Delivery. The vehicle that you use to convey the message to the audience is often as important as the message itself. Today, there are many options to utilize to deliver your message. Should it be verbal, letter, email, Internet or text message, video or a combination of these mediums? Again, which of these vehicles is your audience most comfortable with using? While email works well for students in their 20s and 30s, younger students may prefer text messages and older students may prefer letters.

Feedback. This is the probably the most important step in the communication process. Without feedback, how do you know if the message was received, read and understood. Have others review and edit your work. Check the grammar and spelling. Read aloud what you have written. Do they understand the message that you are attempting to convey? How effective is your delivery vehicle? What percentage of the audience received your message? What percentage of them responded to it?

Summary. This may sound like a lot of work but the return is worth the investment. It is not often that you get a second change to persuade the audience, so it is critical that you get it right the first time when you contact them.

Blogging about money and life: Personal blogs tackle financial issues that matter to students

BY Tamara Carter, TG Regional Account Executive

Blogs aren't only for spreading the latest celebrity gossip and staying current with the newest fashion trends. Many bloggers write about serious issues and share personal experiences and advice that can be useful to a wider audience.

Personal finance is a popular subject on many blogs. It's also an important subject for students, and they can learn from the information and tips discussed on many personal finance blogs. Because students are more likely to get information from their favorite blogs rather than the daily newspaper, financial literacy educators might want to guide their students to some of these blogs.

From budgeting tips to advice on how to live more frugally, personal finance blogs cover a wide-variety of topics that students can take to heart. Most are written in a casual tone, and the content is relatable, useful, and often entertaining.

These blogs are typically maintained by average people with common money problems – not by financial gurus with loads of cash. Some are written by recent college graduates or current students. After reading these, students might be inspired to write about their own personal finances as an effective way to help keep their finances in order and maintain their money goals.

Below is a list of seven of the most-visited personal finance blogs on the Web and the titles of some popular posts from each.

The Simple Dollar – Financial talk for the rest of us

www.thesimpledollar.com

According to its author, The Simple Dollar is for people fighting debt and bad spending habits while building a financially secure future and still affording a latte or two. The blog is an exploration of personal finance from the perspective of a reformed spending maniac that realized he needed to get a grip on his money.

Popular posts:

- *The Road to Financial Armageddon*
- *31 Days to Fix Your Finances*
- *Battling the Convenience and Cost of Fast Food*

Get Rich Slowly – Personal finance that makes cents

www.getrichslowly.org

Get Rich Slowly – recently named most inspiring money blog by *Money* magazine – is devoted to sensible personal finance. The author shares stories about debt elimination, saving money, and practical investing. Readers will also find links to personal finance tools and articles.

Popular posts:

- *Building a Personal Finance Library: 25 of the Best Books About Money*
- *Alternatives to Cable Television*
- *The Power of Yes: A Simple Way to Get More Out of Life*

Blogging continued from page 7**My Money Blog**

www.mymoneyblog.com

As the name suggests, this site is about the author's money – how he makes more of it, tries to spend less of it, and invests it. The author has been documenting his progress toward financial freedom since 2004.

Popular Posts:

- *100 Credit Card Sign-up Bonuses*
- *Top Online Savings Accounts*
- *Best Rewards Credit Cards*

Grad Money Matters – Musing about money matters

www.gradmoneymatters.com

The author started blogging soon after graduating when he or she was struck by the realization that in the real world, money matters.

Popular posts:

- *What I Do to Live Frugally*
- *How to Properly Pay Down Your Credit Cards*
- *11 Things You Do Not Learn in School*

Blueprint for Financial Prosperity – Earn more. Save more. Live more. Enjoy more.

www.bargaineering.com/articles

Blueprint for Financial Prosperity is a personal finance blog where the author discusses all kinds of money matters. Readers will enjoy the posts from this personal finance novice who struggles to understand some complex and confusing financial topics.

Popular posts:

- *2008 Tax Rebate Stimulus Package Explained*
- *Your Take: Your Best Money Saving Tip*
- *How To Deal With Job Rejection*

Wise Bread – Living large on a small budget

www.wisebread.com

Wise Bread is a community of bloggers that can help its readers live large on a small budget. Among other things, the blog claims to help readers discover career and money-making ideas that'll add zeros to their bank account, and general adulthood know-how their parents forgot to tell them.

Popular posts:

- *Six Horrible Financial Products You Should Avoid*
- *Treasury Bills for Ordinary Folks*
- *Our Worst Financial Mistakes and What You Can Learn from Them*

Members on the Move . . .

Buffalo State College welcomed Christine Vukman as a Financial Aid Assistant in October 2008. A graduate of Buffalo State’s Student Personnel Program, Christine had previously worked in the Financial Aid Office at Daemen College.

David Garelick, formerly with Citibank has started a new company Collegiate Productions (collegiate-productions.com). Good Luck Dave!

Kelley Robinson, recently of TERI, has joined the staff at The Sage Colleges as Associate Director of Financial Aid.

Samantha Veeder is the new Director of Financial Aid at Nazareth College, replacing the recently retired Bruce Wooley. We wish them both the best in their new adventures!

Sean Hudson, formerly of D’Youville College is now Assistant Director of Financial Aid at Canisius College.

Blogging continued from page 8

Neville's Financial Blog – Tracking the road to financial success from the age of 22 (now 25)
www.nevblog.com

The author, a recent college graduate, originally started this blog for the sole purpose of keeping track of his financial goals and status. He uses the blog to reflect on financial events in his life and often tries to help others learn something new.

Popular posts:

- *Advice to a Soon-to-Be College Grad*
- *How Gas Prices Do and Don't Affect My Life*
- *What It Costs to be Alive*

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