



NYSFAAA *Connection*



New York State Financial Aid Administrators Association | www.nysfaaa.org
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President's Message

**Keep your face always toward the sunshine and shadows
will fall behind you." Walt Whitman**

By Daniel M. Tramuta, Associate VP for Enrollment Services, SUNY Fredonia

As I now complete my 19 month into my two-year term as your President I continue to be amazed by the dedication and volunteerism that so many of our members put forth toward the spirit and mission of NYSFAAA. With nine trips and counting to the Albany/NYC/Long Island area over the past year I can truly write that I am one lucky President to have been so fortunate to be able to work with our executive officers, regional council members, regional chairs and members, committee chairs, and past-presidents during this journey. You've carried me on your backs and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the opportunity to have been able to serve along side you.

In spite of the inherent landscape challenges around us, NYSFAAA continues to push onward and upward. After having come off a terrific statewide conference last October at the Turning Stone Conference Center in Verona, NY, our membership is flourishing. For the 2nd consecutive year overall membership is up – an overall increase this year of almost 11% (146 members) from 2011-12 to 2010-11, approaching almost 1,400 total members.

We have seen record membership growth in Region 6 (New York City) and can most certainly point directly to the "return on investment" (ROI) that both our members and their institutions are seeing for their membership fee. Specifically, with both terrific strategizing along with last summer's purchase of the Go-to-Live meeting software, our Statewide Training Committee will have delivered (8) training sessions of high value with record attendance during the past year. I need to both acknowledge and

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thank our 2nd Vice President, Howard Leslie, along with Vera Senese, and Beth Post-Lundquist and the rest of the **Statewide Training Committee** for all of their time and effort relative to statewide training. The training that has been delivered to the membership over the past (18) months has been both unprecedented and fantastic.

NYSFAAA is also in the midst of a “**web redesign**” and in early June 2012 will launch a more attractive, branded, user friendly and functional web based platform with customized micro-sites tied to training, conferences, social networking, etc. to the membership. In addition, social media continues to be a strong focus of the **Technology and Innovation Committee (TIC)** in the networking and promoting of training events, etc. The number of NYSFAAA members utilizing Facebook and Twitter continues to increase each and every day so if you haven't yet signed up please do!

The **State Government Relations Committee (SGRC)** was directed by the President several months ago to develop and distribute a **TAP State Grant Reform Survey** to our membership to collect and evaluate feedback from the financial aid, student account, registrar and academic advising areas within all sectors as to how we might be able to improve the overall administration and transparency of the TAP program. The corresponding NYSFAAA copyrighted TAP "White Paper" that has come out of that exercise entitled “**The Need for Reform of the New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)**” has now been shared with the membership. I have since met face to face with members of the NYS Senate and Assembly in the Legislative Office Building (LOB) in Albany to discuss this project and they are in possession of this TAP Reform "white paper" document as well. Many thanks to our SGRC Co-Chairs, Dan Sistarenik, Sue Mead, and Bill Cavin along with the rest of the committee for their terrific work with this project.

The **Nominations & Elections Committee** has been hard at work identifying candidates for three executive officers positions (1st VP, 2nd VP, and Secretary). The final voting results should be posted to the membership in late May.

The planning for our annual **NOVICE Training** program has been finalized for several months. The training will take place from June 2-8, 2012 at SUNY Brockport. The cost for this week long training is \$580.00 which includes NYSFAAA membership, training materials, lodging, and meals. Many thanks to Lisa Simpson and Lisa Papke along with our large and small group trainers for their time and efforts tied to this important training venue.

In regards to NYSFAAA Conference 44; our annual statewide conference will be held in Saratoga, October 9-11, 2012 at the Saratoga Hilton, Saratoga Springs, NY. The conference theme, “On Track for Excellence” promises to continue the high quality program and format that NYSFAAA members have been accustomed to.

In closing, whether you are a new or veteran NYSFAAA member, I urge you to attend a meeting and/or volunteer for a committee. If you're not yet a member, I ask you to please consider joining NYSFAAA so that we can achieve even greater success.

Have a great summer everyone ~ Dan

Members on the Move . . .

Dawn Langdon at Hobart & William Smith has been promoted to Associate Director of Financial Aid. Way to go Dawn!

Katrina Delgrosso, formerly with Syracuse University is now the Senior Educational Manager at the College Board. Good Luck in your position Kat!

Access Group is pleased to welcome Karen Blankenburg as the newest addition to their Sales and School Services Team. Welcome back Karen!

Pace University is proud to announce that Janice Hilbrink, Director of Endowed Scholarships and Stephanie Biscow, System Analyst have been chosen to co-present at the NASFAA Conference taking place in Chicago in July! The title of their session is "Changing Times, Changing Ways, How to Improve Financial Aid Service through Professional Training and Technology!" Congratulations - make us proud!

NYSFAAA Election Results

On behalf of the NYSFAAA Elections Committee, I am most pleased to be able to announce the results of our recent elections. We had a large and very excellent slate of candidates. With 412 members voting, the results are:

First Vice President - Janice Scheutzow, Nazareth College
Second Vice President - Jane Gilliland, Alfred State College
Secretary - Kathleen Flaherty, SUNY Oswego

Congratulations to our new officers whose terms will begin at the fall conference. A special thanks to all who ran for office for their willingness to serve NYSFAAA in this way.

Dear Colleagues,

This is my last issue as editor of the NYSFAAA Connection Webletter. I am stepping down. I would like to thank all the NYSFAAA President's that I had the privilege to serve, all the members who have contributed articles and information over the years, and the vendor's communication staff who could always be counted on to provide excellent informational articles. I most especially would like to thank Mr. Vince Scalise for whose collaboration and friendship I could not have fulfilled this role for the last 13 years! Thank you Vince!

Best Wishes to all! ~ Laura Worley

Farewell my friends . . .

Sadly, this will also be my last edition of the NYSFAAA Connection Webletter. For the past 13 years, I have worked closely with my good friend Laura Worley and many NYSFAAA past-presidents and colleagues to assist in pulling this together. Without the support and friendship of those people, this would not have been possible. It has truly been an honor to serve the membership of NYSFAAA. In addition to no longer working on the Webletter, many of you know that I will be exiting the industry at the end of July. After 18 years in the industry, it is the friendships forged and the memories made that will be with me always and I thank each of you for those.

Best Regards!! ~ Vince Scalise

Novice Training Workshop 2012

By Dan Hunter, Emeritus, Buffalo State College, Novice Training Small Group Leader

We welcomed almost one hundred people to our financial aid family (which includes everyone affiliated in the student financial aid process) in June, 2012.

NYSFAAA, once again, (actually it has happened 42 times since the organization has begun), has presented the annual NYSFAAA Novice Training Workshop. This year it was held June 2-8, 2012 at facilities of the SUNY Brockport. Special thanks are extended to the members of the financial aid family from region II, who assisted at registration and provided a bag of goodies for each participant. This year's workshop was co-chaired by Lisa Simpson, NYSHESC and Lisa Papke, Genesee Community College. The group was welcomed by J. Scott Atkinson, President-Elect of NYSFAAA.

The participants came from every corner of our state including one person from a neighboring state and were divided into nine (9) small groups led by the following persons: Dan Hunter, Emeritus, Buffalo State College; Kerry Lubold, SUNY Plattsburg; Curt Gaume, Canisius College; Mark Stevens, Pace University; LaSonya Griggs, SUNY Upstate Medical University; Maria DeInnocentis, Marymount Manhattan College; Pat Johnson, Syracuse University; Tanya Patterson-Stanley, New York College of Osteopathic Medicine and Perry Brown, College of Westchester. The small group sessions follow a large group presentation on the major aspects of the financial aid profession. This allows for a discussion of the presentation and an opportunity to ask any questions or concerns regarding the topic presented.

Large Group presenters include Heather McDonnell, Sarah Lawrence College; J. Scott Atkinson, President Elect of NYSFAAA, SUNY Brockport; Michael Fraher, Vassar College and Jim Hanley, NYSHESC along with being our audio-visual coordinator. These folks are to be lauded for their devotion and for the time spent in preparing the numerous presentations.

The nine groups were gathered together into three groups for the Novice Olympics. This activity was led by Michael Williams, SUNY Central Administration and was assisted by Lisa Papke. Activities included Spam Toss, Egg Toss, Frisbee Golf, Foul Shooting, Volleyball, Ping Tac Toe, Double Trouble and Pictionary. The participants

can explain the games. There was a tie for overall first place and both teams were awarded a gold medal, which we believe has only happened twice in the many years of the workshop. A silver medal was awarded to the other team.

Each evening there was a chance to network and enjoy some refreshments. A couple nights included dancing and an evening of karaoke.

The most important thing is the participants should be welcomed into our family as they begin their careers in our profession. For some of us old timers, it is satisfying to see that the new members are dedicated to using their new found knowledge, and willing to carry on in our profession and serve their students.

We hope to see them at the upcoming NYSFAAA activities and hope everyone will welcome them into our family with a financial aid hug.

It was a great NYSFAAA Novice Training Workshop.

It is with extreme sadness that we announce the passing of Jack Joyce. Jack passed away in February 2012 at the age of 67.

Jack Joyce worked for the College Board since 1986. Prior to that, he was the Director of Financial Aid at SUNY Stony Brook and Lesley College in Massachusetts. Jack was a mainstay in the NYSFAAA organization for many years, conducting training sessions at conferences, regional meetings and Novice Training.

Besides Jack's immense knowledge of financial aid, his sense of humor was invaluable to our field and a welcomed additional during many trying times in financial aid.

NYSFAAA Region 3 Support Staff Workshop

By Rose Hartson, Assistant Director of Student Financial Aid, USC The Business College

The annual Region III Support Staff Workshop was held on May 25th, 2012 at LeMoyne College. Participants attended from LeMoyne College, Upstate Medical, Faxton St Lukes Radiology, Cayuga Community College, Syracuse School of Law, Syracuse University, SUNY Oswego, Onondaga Community College, Cornell University, TC3, Colgate University and Utica College.

Rose Hartson is the new Chair of the Support Staff Workshop Committee succeeding Annette Broski who had chaired the committee for several years. Committee members are Bonnie Rooker of Cayuga Community College, Sue Tripp of Herkimer Community College and Amy Connors of Syracuse University.

Katrina Delgrosso from College Board presented 'What's new! What's happening!' in financial aid. Attendees were given information relating to changes on the FAFSA, IRS Data Retrieval, verification, Federal Pell Grant and loan updates as well as information relating to financial aid for veterans.

Anne Barton from Inceptia presented a 'Time Management' session. Participants were given concepts on what to do now, what to plan now as well as several tips that are critical to success in time management.

Laura Worley of Discover Student Loans presented 'Learning to Listen'. Attendees were given an assessment that helped each identify their own particular listening-related behavior. The group then shared experiences from their offices and how they handled them.

2012 was the first year a Financial Aid Bingo was held. Words or phrases often heard in a financial aid office were used. Several small prizes were handed out and many new things were learned.

The day was not only a learning session but a way to bring folks from various schools together to learn something new and perhaps learn from each other.

TIP:

Need help getting feedback from your colleagues? Don't bother with endless email chains and listservs! The Technology and Innovation Committee is here to help with all of your survey needs! Whether it is for NYSFAAA Regional meetings or individual committees, the TIC is here to help with our Survey Monkey expertise.

Contact us at nysfaaatic@gmail.com to see how we can help!

The 3-year cohort default rate comes with a silver lining — loan rehabilitation

Ben Loya, TG Regional Account Executive

This past February, the Department of Education (ED) released the first draft 3-year cohort default rates (CDRs). Meanwhile, official 3-year rates won't be available until September, and the first set of CDRs on which sanctions could be based won't be released until September 2014. Many schools are already worried about the increase in their CDRs, however, and for good reason. Trial 3-year data provided by ED indicates that all school sectors will experience a surge in rates, with some schools seeing a rate hike of up to 90 percent. That kind of increase could expose some schools to serious consequences, including a loss of eligibility for federal student aid.

The 3-year CDR doesn't bring all bad news, however. With the longer monitoring period, loan rehabilitation can have a positive impact on a school's CDR. Remember that a borrower can rehabilitate, or bring a loan out of default, by making nine on-time monthly payments during a period of 10 consecutive months. The loan is then sold to a lender, and the default is removed from the borrower's credit history.

How does this help a school's CDR? If the borrower rehabilitates the loan before the end of the cohort default period, the borrower is not in default anymore and so not included in the school's CDR calculation. Even better, the borrower once again becomes eligible for federal aid after the sixth consecutive payment, meaning he or she could potentially return to school to complete a degree or certificate. (Keep in mind, however, that borrowers can renew eligibility only once.)

Helping borrowers and cutting default

Until the 3-year CDR was introduced, loan rehabilitation wasn't something that could feasibly affect a school's rate. Now, borrowers who default in the first year of repayment have time to meet rehabilitation requirements within the three-year CDR window,

How can schools use loan rehabilitation to help their borrowers and mitigate default? Here are some tips for integrating loan rehabilitation into your school's default prevention plan.

- **Identify borrowers with defaulted loans** — With each CDR notification, ED provides schools with the Loan Record Detail Report, or LRDR, an itemized listing of borrowers, including borrowers with defaulted loans. Download and use this information electronically.
- **Develop a communication campaign** — Use LRDR information to create a communication campaign for defaulted borrowers that outlines the process and the benefits of loan rehabilitation. Consider contacting borrowers via mail, email, and phone, with messages that reinforce each other. Some things to cover in your communications:
 - Borrowers will need to establish a loan rehabilitation agreement with the guarantor or collection agency that holds the defaulted loans.
 - Borrowers will need to stay in touch with their guarantor or collector throughout repayment, especially if they change their mailing address.
 - Borrowers can benefit greatly from loan rehabilitation and from establishing healthy repayment habits. The removal of default from a borrower's credit history can be invaluable — an improved credit record means easier access to credit later on if borrowers wish to borrow for a car or house mortgage.

You can also use LRDR information to help your default prevention efforts in other ways. For example, analyze the data on your defaulted borrowers, looking for common factors which may have predisposed borrowers to default. Do certain majors contribute a disproportionate number of borrowers in default? Did many borrowers withdraw without giving notice? How was their academic performance? You may be able to use this information to help *current* students who share such characteristics by offering academic and career support to students at greater risk of defaulting in the future.

Getting Your Hands DRT-Y: Reflections on Year Two of the FAFSA and IRS Data Retrieval Tool

Linda Peckham, Senior Training Strategist, Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation and Affiliates

When Norman Caito first learned of the requirement that aid applicants pull their IRS data into their 2012-13 FAFSA data online, he was encouraged. "I was thrilled with the concept that I'd be able to review accurate application data early in the awarding cycle," said Caito, Director of Financial Aid Operations and Services at the University of San Francisco, "At USF, verification of application data is critical to our mission of getting the right funds to the right students."

The process is enabled by the Data Retrieval Tool (DRT), which was designed to pull actual tax return data into the FAFSA to make it easier on families to complete the application—and to ease the verification process for aid administrators. Although the DRT was available in the 2011-12 application cycle, it was not mandatory. Effective with the 2012-13 processing cycle, the Department of Education adjusted the verification requirements to include that certain elements from the FAFSA could *only* be verified with DRT data, or through the use of an official IRS tax transcript submitted by the applicant.

Caito and other aid executives have learned the hard way that the regulation may have had the best of intentions—to simplify verification processes and reduce potential financial aid fraud—but its implementation has been challenging. Successful adoption of the process has required patience and out-of-the-box thinking, as well as some labor-intensive work-arounds when families are unable to successfully transfer their IRS data to the FAFSA.

Leslie Limper, Director of Financial Aid at Reed College, shares Caito's observations. "Verification is very important here at Reed, so we communicated the new information about the DRT to families early and encouraged them to use it."

Limper discovered that most families in her applicant pool followed their instructions faithfully and were happy to comply with the new process. However, continued snags between the IRS, the Central Processing System, and sometimes even the U.S. Postal Service resulted in process failures and lag times that have impacted aid offices' ability to review and verify information in a timely manner. Limper adds: "The things we found out about how to really make this process work, we learned on our own. As a result, we've been adjusting our processes and dates all year long to accommodate families and the processing challenges we've encountered."

Susan Fischer, Director of Student Financial Aid at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, says the new process has presented a new "balancing act between administrative burden and good customer service to families." Her team spent many hours revising processing and verification requirements at the beginning of the year to ensure that their office could meet processing deadlines and help families with the new approach. "We are dancing as fast as we can," says Fischer, who cautions fellow aid administrators to find the most efficient way to verify data and disburse aid prior to the academic year.

According to Caito, Limper, and Fischer, some of the most common problems that families encounter with the DRT include:

- IRS data not being available for transfer within the 2-3 calendar days that had been promised (thus FAFSA processing was delayed).
- Delays in receiving IRS transcripts when requested because of address match issues.
- DRT or transcripts not being available to those who owed money to the IRS for 2011.
- Delays in the availability of either the DRT or the transcript request for taxpayers who filed towards the end of the cycle in April.

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To reduce some of the administrative burden caused by processing delays, the Department of Education recently adjusted its guidance to allow schools to use paper tax returns to verify data for filers “who have unsuccessfully attempted to use the DRT or obtain a transcript” until July 15th. But many schools are continuing to ask families to use the tool or the transcript anyway. “The process is here to stay and we’d rather have families stay on this path whenever possible,” says Heather McDonnell, Associate Dean of Financial Aid and Admissions at Sarah Lawrence College.

Thinking ahead to next year, aid colleagues suggest the following tips to help better prepare your applicants for the DRT or transcript request process:

- Clearly explain the DRT process to parents on your initial verification document or institutional application and ask them to “check off” which process they intend to use (DRT, transcript request, or non-tax filer status). Use this data to help track application results in your FAMS system and send targeted follow-up messages to families as needed.
- Remind parents that the DRT or transcript request process works faster if they file their tax returns electronically, rather than by paper.
- Inform joint tax filers that the IRS will only recognize data transfer requests from the filer whose name is first on the tax return and/or whose IRS PIN is being used to identify the IRS record. As an example, if the mother is helping the student file the FAFSA, but is not listed first on the parental joint tax return, and attempts to access and complete the IRS data transfer site, the IRS will neither recognize nor approve the data transfer.
- Remind families that although FAFSA guidance indicates that the DRT or the transcript should be available around three weeks after they have filed, this timeframe is extended towards the end of the federal tax deadline in April. If FAFSA filers wait until April to file their returns, they can expect that the DRT or transcript request will take up to six weeks to process.
- Explain that when requesting a paper transcript, the filer’s mail address must exactly match what the IRS system has on file. In cases where the postal service has abbreviated addresses or the filer has moved, the IRS may delay sending out a transcript until the issue is resolved.

**Please join us in Saratoga
44th NYSFAAA Conference
October 9-11, 2012
The Saratoga Hilton
Saratoga Springs, NY**

***More details to follow. Mark your
calendars.
You won’t want to miss the great
program & fall foliage in the
Adirondacks!***

