



ALABAMA ASSOCIATION OF FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

# AASFAA Newsletter

[www.aasfaaonline.org](http://www.aasfaaonline.org)

Spring 2010 Edition, March 18, 2010

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Andy Weaver, President 2009-2010



Greetings AASFAA Colleagues! As we approach this year's spring conference, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has dedicated their time and energy to making this year a success for AASFAA. With all the changes and uncertainty in our profession, not to mention the time demands from our

offices, it is a great deal to ask of everyone to assume responsibilities and leadership roles. Even so, everyone has come together this year to continue to make our association great and fulfill our mission of providing training and collaboration to our membership. Thanks to you all.

Due to the ongoing financial situation in the state, it was decided that we would offer a one day drive in meeting in the fall and traditional conference in the spring. The fall meeting was held October 9 at Auburn University Montgomery (AUM). Featured presenter was Mike Roberts from the Department of Education. Mike presented several sessions including federal update, year round Pell, and Direct Loan transition information. Thanks to Mike, and to AUM for hosting the event.

As AASFAA president, I have had the privilege of representing our association at numerous SASFAA events. I would like to express my gratitude to Keith Reeves, SASFAA president, for his support of AASFAA and for his tireless efforts at making sure our voices are heard at NASFAA and at the federal level.

This year's spring conference is shaping up to be one of the most exciting in memory. We are returning to the

absolutely gorgeous setting of Guntersville State Park Lodge. The Lodge has been refurbished and offers a quiet, peaceful setting in one of the most beautiful areas of Alabama. I hope everyone has the opportunity to attend. Conference information is available and registration is open online at [www.aasfaaonline.org/docs/toc\\_conferences.html](http://www.aasfaaonline.org/docs/toc_conferences.html).

As we gather to learn what's new and what will be expected of us in the future, it's also important that we pause and reflect on what we have accomplished in our professional careers. The spring conference will give us all a chance to gather as a close knit group of friends and colleagues and share our experience and collective wisdom.

Last, I would like to thank everyone who showed their care and support following the tragedy on my school's campus February 12, 2010. The outpouring of concern was incredible. AASFAA truly is my second family.

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# PAST PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Charles Markle, Past President 2009-2010



The AASFAA Nominations and Elections Committee met in Montgomery, Alabama, on Tuesday, March 2, 2010 in the offices of the Alabama Student Loan Program. The purpose of the meeting was to consider nominees and select candidates for AASFAA elective office for 2010-2011. Past Presidents of

AASFAA currently active in the financial aid profession were invited to attend and served as the Nominating Committee.

The committee is pleased to present the following candidates for AASFAA office for 2009-2010:

**President-elect:** Vicky Adams  
Jacksonville State University

Marcus Byrd  
Alabama A&M

**Vice President:** Trina Smith  
Calhoun Community College

Sharon Williams  
Lawson State Community College

**Treasurer-elect:** Belinda Duett  
Huntingdon College

Lane Smith  
Samford University

A statement of candidacy and a picture of each candidate will be on the AASFAA website very soon. Voting will begin online a few days before the upcoming spring conference. The AASFAA Spring Conference will be held at Guntersville State Park April 6 – 9, 2010.

I hope you are making plans to attend the conference this year. Each candidate will be given three minutes at the business meeting to present his or her statement of candidacy.

See you in Guntersville!

# PRESIDENT-ELECT'S REPORT

by Amanda Sharp, President-Elect 2009-2010

I attended the SASFAA Conference held February 21-24, 2010 in Louisville, Kentucky. There were also several AASFAA members who served either on the Conference Committee or volunteered in other capacities at the conference and I would like to thank each of them for volunteering. The Conference Committee did an excellent job of providing the membership with a variety of sessions. SASFAA was

fortunate to have seven trainers from the Department of Education presenting sessions on a wide range of topics. We had a good discussion on topics of special interest to AASFAA members at the Alabama state meeting. One of the highlights of the conference was the presentation of the SASFAA Distinguished Service award to Dee Talley in recognition of her dedication and service to SASFAA and to higher education.

# VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Vanessa Kyles, Vice President 2009-2010

As Vice President of AASFAA, I am pleased to announce that the New Aid Officer's Workshop planned for the spring conference will be full of information for any attendee who has two years or less experience in financial aid. You are probably thinking to yourself that in this year of sweeping changes that the two-year experience requirement could be interpreted as any and all of us! However, this session is limited to the newest members to the financial aid profession. Professional development is the key to keeping our colleagues in compliance with federal regulations. The program will be taught by Dee Talley of UAB, Sharon Williams of Lawson and myself, Vanessa Kyles of Jefferson Davis. Combined, we have more than sixty-five years of financial aid experience. So,

mark your calendars for April 7, 2010, and plan to join us for a very busy four-hour workshop. We plan to cover the verification process, student eligibility, cost of attendance and much, much more. There is no extra cost for this specialized training. We need an accurate count of all who plan on attending this session, so don't forget to indicate your participation in this session when you register for the conference. We are all thankful for the one-day meeting (that was very well attended) held in the fall. Hopefully, going to one conference a year, will allow more people to be able to attend this spring. We all are looking forward to seeing you all at the beautiful Lake Guntersville in April.

# TREASURER'S REPORT

by Kevin Ammons, Treasurer 2009-2010

With the AASFAA Fall Workshop and the SASFAA Conference all behind us, the AASFAA Spring Conference is just weeks away. If you have not registered, please visit [www.aasfaaonline.org](http://www.aasfaaonline.org) in order to complete the registration form. The conference fee is \$200. Your \$15 annual dues will be added to the

charges if not already paid for 2009-2010. Please be sure to thank each of our exhibitors for his/her efforts within our association. Their support is appreciated.

# AASFAA NEWS

by Dr. William Wall



## Policies and Procedures

Because of changes in the marketplace, this committee may be recommending changes in the vendor/sponsor and membership fees so as not to drive folks away from participating in our Association and conferences. It has come to our attention that at least one other SASFAA state

charges \$75 for membership and \$1000 for vendors. Our charges are twice that amount.

## AASFAA'S Legacy Scholarship

Instead of awarding five scholarships this year, AASFAA will award one scholarship that will be announced at our upcoming conference in Lake Guntersville. The name of the institution selected will be chosen from among persons registered at the conference.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by Sam Casarez

## **How do students make financial decisions? Creating a relevant financial literacy program based on student need**

It's no secret many high school and college students lack adequate money management skills. This growing problem has led financial aid administrators to wonder how best to meet one of today's most pressing challenges—preparing students for the expensive lessons that go along with college life. For many in this field, financial aid is about more than putting together solid aid packages for students; they must also anticipate that the students and parents walking through the financial aid office doors may be unprepared for the financial decisions they are about to make.

The financial aid office has been among the first to see the stressful impact that today's economic challenges are having on parents and students. Discretionary spending is down among teens and young adults, and yet nationally, students are leaving college campuses overextended and overburdened with credit card and student loan debt. The challenge is to help students and parents understand that budgeting is crucial, now as much as ever. To accomplish this goal, schools must use methods beyond traditional entrance and exit counseling.

## **Surveying students key to creating effective financial literacy training**

As the economy changes, more students are turning to student loans to pay for college. According to the credit bureau Equifax Inc., borrowing has risen more than 25 percent in the last two years. Many in the financial aid industry worry that more students will graduate with heavy debt but without the financial skills to properly manage that debt. To help, some higher education institutions, including the University of Texas (UT), are studying how students make financial decisions.

A 2009 survey conducted by a UT student audit team asked high school, undergraduate, and graduate students to identify who or what most influences their financial decisions. Most responded that parents were the most likely influencers, with this influence decreasing as the respondents got older.

The team anticipated, correctly, that parents represent the driving force for influencing students. This influence remains a factor for today's generation of students, despite their plugged-in lifestyles. The team was surprised to find that the Internet did not greatly influence decision making. Rather, students turn to it primarily as an information source.

## **Determining how to build a program that works for your school**

Knowing where students are looking for financial information represents an important first step toward implementing a financial literacy training program. Schools can accomplish this goal through a wide range of approaches: the important thing is to find out what students need and want from such training.

According to the UT survey's authors, schools should start by measuring students' money management skills once they arrive on campus. Many students aren't aware of the full range of options available for paying for college. Knowing what students do or do not know makes it easier to provide financial literacy help at the earliest possible opportunity.

Once a school has a firm grasp on their students' level of financial literacy, the key is providing strong financial literacy resources. Creating and implementing a financial literacy curriculum, however, can seem like a daunting task. But a school doesn't have to reinvent the wheel in order to address the educational demands of its particular student body. While drafting useful financial literacy messages can be complex, help is available. Counselors planning a program have a wide variety of teaching options to choose from, including workshops, online courses, traditional classroom-based academic courses, individual counseling, student mentor programs, and content developed by other schools and institutions. Financial literacy symposiums are being arranged more frequently through nonprofit organizations, and they offer unique perspectives and creative ideas on educating students and parents on personal money management, budgeting, and credit card debt.

In the last few years, many campus financial aid offices have implemented financial literacy programs to teach students responsible spending behaviors. Schools should take a look at existing programs to help generate ideas, especially if those programs cater to similar student populations. Blog entries and discussion groups are widespread on the Web, and many financial aid administrators post their own money management programs online for others to use freely. Finally, many nonprofits provide thorough financial aid training programs that can be tailored to meet a particular school's needs; given current budgetary restraints, these programs can provide an effective means for schools to make a difference in their students' financial lives.

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# LENDING MATTERS

by Sherry Hildbrand and Charles Brantley

## Reminder for schools transitioning to William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program about entrance and exit counseling requirements

Schools transitioning (in full or in part) to the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan (DL) Program may be undergoing several changes in their processes to accommodate the change in programs to disburse federal student loans.

As with FFELP, students receiving a direct loan are required to complete entrance counseling for Stafford and Grad PLUS Loans before receiving the first disbursement and exit counseling upon withdrawing, graduating, or ceasing at least half-time attendance at the school. Schools can continue to use Mapping Your Future's Online Student Loan Counseling (OSLC) to meet requirements, though schools need to take some additional steps to fully meet regulations, such as providing school-specific information in entrance counseling and providing average indebtedness and DL servicer information for exit counseling.

Information about regulatory requirements for entrance and exit counseling is in the OSLC User's Guide at [mappingyourfuture.org/oslc/ugregulations.htm](http://mappingyourfuture.org/oslc/ugregulations.htm)

## Discover

Discover announced that the Discover brand remains on top of the credit card category for the thirteenth consecutive year, finishing in a tie for No. 1 in the 2010 Brand Keys Customer Loyalty Engagement Index®.

"Discover has evolved from a credit card business to a direct banking and payment services company by maintaining its focus on serving our customers," said Carlos Minetti, executive vice president of Cardmember Services and Consumer Banking. "Trust in

our brand transcends across multiple credit and non-credit products, so a loyal Discover cardmember knows they will get the same great service and rewards from us regardless of whether they are making a purchase, opening an online savings account, investing in a certificate of deposit or taking out a Discover Student Loan."

"Customer service is a major focus at Discover and is taken seriously by all of our well trained and dedicated employees."

*Charles Brantley, Relationship Manager for Discover Student Loans, was recognized with the entire School Relationship Team at the company's annual President's Plate award ceremony in Chicago, IL. The Award was for excellence in promoting the Discover Student Loan program to schools which began in July 2007.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

AASFAA Spring 2010 Conference ----- Perdido Beach Resort, Orange Beach, AL	April 6-9, 2010
SASFAA New Aid Officer Workshop ----- Clemson University, Clemson, SC	June 13- 18, 2010
NASFAA Annual Conference ----- Denver, CO	July 18- 21, 2010