In October, I was honored to be a guest at four state conferences: IASFAA (Idaho), WFAA (Washington), NAFAA (Nevada), and CASFAA (California). I filled you in on Idaho and Washington last month, so this month I get to talk about Nevada and California.

Nevada’s conference was held in vibrant, glittering Las Vegas, and it was heartening to see “Las Vegas Strong” emblazoned on buildings and billboards and my favorite dining establishments bustling so soon after the tragedy that struck just weeks before. I enjoyed presenting the WASFAA update and a general session on advocacy for my Nevada colleagues. The conference was cozy and friendly, and I thank NAFAA President Anthony Morrone and his team for making me feel so welcome.

Next up was CASFAA in beautiful Monterey. I started my financial aid career just up the road at UC Santa Cruz, and CASFAA was the first professional conference I ever attended, so it felt like a long-overdue homecoming. I attended the pre-conference Community College Breakfast, and it was fascinating to observe the similarities and differences between Oregon and California community colleges and our financial aid challenges. The conference officially kicked off with a powerful opening speaker, Ryan Smith, Executive Director of Education Trust--West. He spoke about achievement gaps for students of color and low-income students in California and the important work being done to close those gaps. The conference was jam-packed with sessions, and a Native American dance group gave a stunning performance at dinner the final night, followed by CASFAA's traditional dance party. Special thanks to CASFAA President Daniel Reed and his team for their hospitality.

In November, I had the fun and rewarding experience of serving as a faculty member for the Jerry R. Sims Management and Leadership Institute (JRSMLI) in Portland, and then ran across the hall to lead WASFAA’s fall Executive Council meeting, stopping in to visit our MLI attendees whenever I had a meeting break. It was exciting to engage with some of WASFAA’s bright emerging leaders while simultaneously working with some of our most loyal and long-standing Executive Council members to move our association forward, and I really enjoyed having the two groups meet and greet during our shared reception.

Once MLI and the Executive Council meeting ended, I drove home from Portland and spent two nights at home before flying to Washington, DC to observe NASFAA’s fall board meeting. It’s always fascinating to observe the work of our national association up close and personal, and to get the up-to-the-minute Washington insider updates on student aid issues. I even made a few comments from the peanut gallery! While I was in DC, I was invited to the Senate building to have a conversation...
with Senate HELP (Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions) Committee staffers on FAFSA simplification in preparation for an upcoming November 28th Senate hearing. While I wasn’t selected to testify at the hearing, it was an honor to be interviewed, and I appreciated the opportunity to talk about removing barriers to college access for needy students with key higher education policy advisors on Capitol Hill.

This very moment, WASFAA Fall Training has already made its way through Alaska, Washington, Nevada, and Oregon, and is headed to Arizona, California, Idaho, and Hawaii next. For more information on this affordable one-day event, go to https://www.wasfaa.org/docs/toc_training.html. Topics include NASFAA University material on student eligibility (you can earn a NASFA credential!) and creating magic in the financial aid office through excellent customer service. We’ve been getting great feedback so far—if our trainers are headed to your state soon, I hope you’ll be able to attend! Many thanks to co-chairs Sarah Everitt and Thalassa Naylor and to their committee members for all their hard work in bringing this important professional development opportunity to you.

Last but not least, I sincerely hope you’ll attend WASFAA’s annual conference, which will be held in charming Boise from April 22-24. Conference co-chairs Nicole McMillin and David Shook are hard at work attending to every detail. Keep up with the details at the conference mini-site: https://www.wasfaa.org/docs/conferences/2018/index.html

So it’s true—six trips, seven weeks! I’m grateful for the wonderful, enriching experiences I’ve had these past seven weeks, and I’m equally grateful to be home with my family and catching up in the office for the next two months before NASFAA’s annual meeting of regional presidents in DC.

I wish you a beautiful holiday season, and I’ll catch up with you again in 2018!

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REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

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DECEMBER FREE TRAININGS

WASFAA is pleased to share web-based training opportunities for financial aid administrators provided by our industry partners. Topics range from financial aid compliance to helping students managing debt and repayment. These training and informational sessions are available to you free of charge. Click here for more detailed information on the sessions offered and the registration links.
I cannot believe that we are already into the last month of 2017. The Communications Committee would like to wish everyone in our WASFAA family a very Happy Holidays and a Happy 2018! We will be taking a break from the newsletter for the month of January and will return in February. I hope that you enjoy receiving the newsletter each month and do not miss us too much in January. Don’t forget to save the date for the WASFAA conference in April and if you are not following WASFAA on Facebook it would be a great opportunity to like us! Please feel free to continue to send us your thoughts and feedback to communications@wasfaa.org. If you would like to contribute to the February newsletter, please send your articles or submissions to communications@wasfaa.org by January 20th.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE
Sun Ow • Nicholas Dehaan • Ashley Coleman • Eli Herr • Wendy Olson • Adrienne Garcia-Specht • Dana Pride

WASFAA SOCIAL MEDIA
Stay up to date with all things WASFAA on your favorite social media platforms.

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WASFAA EDITORIAL POLICY
WASFAA welcomes all views and invites submissions of articles, essays, photographs or information of general interest to all members. Submissions should be brief and should not advertise specific products or services. Submissions may be edited. It may not be possible to publish all articles submitted. Opinions expressed in the WASFAA Newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily of WASFAA, its members or the institutions represented by the authors. Email items for publication to communications@wasfaa.org.

WASFAA TRAINING COMMITTEE UPDATE
The WASFAA Training Committee has been hard at work delivering this year’s WASFAA Fall Training - Reimagining the Financial Aid Experience. The training was inspired by Theodore Kinni’s customer service book, Be Our Guest and explores ways in which financial aid professionals can create magic on their campus. The training is highly interactive and also includes a NASFAA U Course on Student Eligibility. Over one hundred and thirty colleagues have participated at six different sites so far! There are still four sites left – check https://www.wasfaa.org/docs/toc_training.html for a site near you!

WASFAA President-Elect Ashley Munro presents to WASFAA colleagues at Fall Training in Spokane, WA

NEWSLETTER ADS
Newsletter ads are a great way to advertise your products and services, and the newsletter will be published electronically on a monthly basis.

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NEW ACRONYMS REGARDING PRIVACY AND DATA SHARING: FERPA, PTAC AND PII

by Tami Sato
WASFAA Federal Relations Chair

Information on the FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), privacy provisions in the HEA (the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended) and the Privacy Act, along with new guidance on what is improper release of government held student information can be found at the PTAC (Privacy and Technical Assistance Center) website: https://studentprivacy.ed.gov

Below is a summary of conditions for the disclosure of PII, or Personally Identifiable Information from education records that can be released to third parties.

What are the exclusions:

• Electronic FAFSA data can be used only to determine financial aid eligibility, and for the awarding and administration of Title IV funds, state aid, and institutional aid programs.
• FAFSA/ISIR data can be released if it is de-identified (using specified procedures) or provided in aggregate format. This does not require student consent under FERPA rules.
• Allowed in guidance is release of PII for independent audits, the Department, accrediting agencies and other state and local education agencies without written consent.
• Disclosure is allowed for outsourced institutional services or functions that have been contracted to a third-party by written agreement.

What is not allowed:

• Electronic FAFSA data cannot be shared with third parties, including scholarship providers, housing agencies, and tribal funding agencies.
• Unless there is a legitimate educational interest, disclosure of PII cannot be made to other institutional offices or departments.
• PII from NSLDS is prohibited to non-governmental researchers, policy analysts or marketing use.
• Directory information that would not generally be considered an invasion of privacy can be disclosed but an annual notice to students that informs them but also provides an opportunity to opt out.

The big change for most schools is the one regarding FAFSA data. Institutions may not release a student’s FAFSA or ISIR data and related award information that has not been de-identified. This is EVEN if the student provides a signed release. The student can be provided the information, and ONLY the student can provide the data directly to the requesting party. This was discussed at a recent WASFAA council meeting because of the effect on providing information to private scholarship organizations. Private funding providers will have to allow receiving forms and information from the student.

Possible solutions, which are being discussed with legislators and U.S. Department of Education officials, include creating a process to designate certain entities or kinds of entities that can receive FAFSA data (which the HEA would currently allow), or providing a way for the student to release the information to third parties (which might require a statutory change). If you have other ideas or methods to comply with private funding requests, let your WASFAA Federal Relations Committee member know or email tsato@ketchum.edu

WASFAA NOMINATIONS & ELECTIONS UPDATE

During its November meeting in Portland, the WASFAA Executive Council approved the list of nominees whose names will appear on the ballot for the election of 2018-19 officers. We will soon select members to serve as President-Elect, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer-Elect, and Representative-at-Large for Ethnic Diversity. The Nominations & Elections Committee would like to thank all of the WASFAA members who agreed to be nominated.

If you are an active WASFAA member, check your email for the ballot that was recently emailed to you to vote.
Millennial student loan holders are willing to give up voting in the next two presidential elections, ride-sharing apps, and more to have their debt forgiven, a new survey reveals.

The number of people with student loan debt is staggering. According to the latest numbers from the U.S. Department of Education, 42.3 million Americans are paying back $1.33 trillion in federal student loan debt. Lenders are collecting payments on another $64 billion in private student loans.

A survey of borrowers by the Federal Reserve puts the median student loan debt balance at $17,000, with monthly payments of $222. Even with many options to refinance student loans, student loan debt can be suffocating for those who are struggling to make payments each month.

To see just how badly people would like to be rid of their student debt, we conducted a survey asking respondents what they would be willing to deal with in order to have their student loans forgiven. Whether it was giving up something they love, or dealing with something they don’t, the results were very interesting.

To read the full article, visit: https://www.credible.com/blog/survey-millennials-student-loan-debt-forgiveness/
A FIRST-TIMER’S GUIDE TO FSA

by Ashley Coleman
Assistant Director, University of Oregon

The 2017 Federal Student Aid (FSA) Training Conference was held November 28 through December 1 at the Swan and Dolphin resort in Orlando, FL. I was lucky enough to be one of the four staff from the University of Oregon that had the opportunity to attend the conference this year – my very first FSA.

I’ve spoken to coworkers about what the FSA Conference is like before, but there is nothing like experiencing it yourself. About 6,000 financial aid professionals attend each year, making it the largest training opportunity for the financial aid community. Department of Education trainers present each session for administrators from schools that receive Title IV funding. The conference is meant to give you the latest updates on changes, enhance your knowledge and skills, allow you to network with other professionals, and have one-on-one access to federal trainers. If you have never been, here are some tips and tricks for your first FSA:

Before You Go

1. **Book your room as soon as the room block opens.** The conference hotel will be booked extremely quickly. There are overflow hotels available, but you may have to shuttle to the location. Staying on location allows you to go back to your room during lunches and breaks and get a break from the crowds. This year the room block opened in late July and I booked the first day it was open.

2. **Book your flight early.** Chances are that other financial aid professionals in your area will be traveling on the same flights as you, and flights can get full – especially since the conference is right after Thanksgiving.

3. **Don’t forget to register for the conference.** Registration is free. About a week before the conference, you’ll receive an email with a barcode that can be scanned at the registration area during check-in, so be sure to print the email or have it available on your phone (along with a photo ID). At check-in, you’ll receive a magnetic name badge and a printed program. You must wear your nametag at all times.

4. **Review the program ahead of time.** You’ll need a plan of attack to attend all the session you are interested in. Crafting a schedule is like a game of sudoku! First I marked all sessions that I was interested in, then I listed all the times those sessions were available – each session is offered three times throughout the conference. Then it was time to see how I could fit all the sessions into the available timeslots. It took some time, but it all worked out. Breakout sessions are offered in two offset timeslots with about 20 minutes between sessions, so be sure that you are reviewing every other line of the schedule when picking your sessions. It’s a good idea to pick some backup sessions in case your session is full. I heard stories in past years of attendees not being allowed in sessions due to a full room, but I personally did not experience that myself this year.

5. **Check out the PowerPoints.** A tentative agenda will be posted to the website well in advance, but the PowerPoints for each session are posted a week before the conference. I suggest downloading the PowerPoints to your device ahead of time if you would like to follow along in the session because the Wi-Fi at the hotel may be spotty.

6. **Download the conference app.** The CrowdCompass AttendeeHub app is available on the App Store or Google Play Store. Add the FSA Training Conference event and you can build a personalized schedule, search for attendees, get food suggestions and maps of the facilities, review individual sessions, and more. The app will also notify you of any changes to the schedule in real time at the conference.

7. **Pack snacks.** This year the schedule allowed for a designated lunch break, which was great, but it also means there is a rush to get food during that time, especially at nearby restaurants. There were grab-and-go options available which can be convenient or you could try to munch on snacks until dinner.

8. **Pack business casual clothes.** My university doesn’t have a dress policy, so our office dresses pretty casually. I was surprised to see so many attendees dressed up in business wear. Also, don’t forget to bring layers. While
sunny Orlando was 80 degrees outside, the meeting spaces were extremely chilly!

At the conference:

1. **Try to plan some fun into your schedule.** I booked my flight to arrive early so I could go to Universal Studios and Disney World prior to the conference. Try to explore the city you’re visiting. Sessions end by 4-5pm, so you have plenty of time to network with friends over a nice dinner.

2. **Arrive to the registration desk early.** You’ll pick up your name badge and program here. The line right before the first general session was huge! You don’t want to miss something while waiting in line.

3. **Attend all general sessions.** The general sessions are where the latest and greatest news will be released, like the announcement of the myStudentAid app that is scheduled to be released in spring 2018 which will allow students and parents to complete a FAFSA on their mobile device. The main general session space will be crowded, but I preferred to watch the livestream in one of the overflow spaces and stretch out.

4. **Arrive early to breakout sessions.** To get the best seat, arrive early. The aisle seats will fill up right away, which means you’ll have to ask others to move so you can sit in the middle of the aisle. You may also run the risk of not being allowed in the session if all chairs are filled.

5. **Attend the newcomer’s session.** It will give an overview of the conference with some tips. You may even meet someone new.

6. **Attend the hands-on sessions.** I attended both the hands-on NSLDS and COD sessions, and I learned some new things about both systems. Be sure to bring your token. Computers are set up where one or two attendees go through practice exercises, or you can choose to just watch from the back of the room. I attended these basic sessions the last two days of the conference, and the room was not at all crowded like they were earlier in the conference.

7. **Follow conference happenings on Twitter.** You can follow FSA, or just search for the conference hashtag of #fsatc2017 to see other attendees’ thoughts on general sessions, advice for which breakout sessions were helpful, and to provide some humor.

8. **Use the resource center.** The resource center offers an Ask-a-Fed booth where you can ask any question you like during a one-on-one session. Other attendees such as loan servicers, NSLDS, COD and more are there to answer your questions.

9. **Take notes during the sessions.** I wrote down quite a few questions that I would like clarification on from others in my office when I returned. If I didn’t write them down I would certainly forget them. It’s also nice to share what you learned with your colleagues when you return.

10. **Watch the sessions you didn’t get to attend.** All sessions are video or audio recorded and can be viewed on the FSA conference website.

11. **Complete the evaluations.** It’s important to share your feedback on individual sessions and the conference in general. I was emailed the overall evaluation the day the conference ended. You can also complete evaluations on the mobile app.

I hope this article was helpful to you if you are thinking about attending the FSA Training Conference in the future. The 2018 conference is scheduled for November 27-30 at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta.
From November 7th to the 9th, there were 21 energetic participants at JSMLI in the beautiful Benson Hotel in downtown Portland, Oregon. The faculty of Helen Faith, Jim Brooks, Scott Cline and Lauren Patterson did a great job leading the group through wide ranging topics of financial aid leadership and management. We even had one participant from Chicago, Illinois who happened to be visiting Oregon and decided to join us. During the time that we were meeting the WASFAA EC was also meeting across the hall. This allowed Helen and Scott to participate in both. We then had an evening reception that allowed our participants to meet the board members to learn about being active in WASFAA. At the end of JSMLI WASFAA President Helen passed out JSMLI participation certificates as Pomp and Circumstance was played on someone’s phone! If you have the chance to participate or be a faculty member at JSMLI I highly recommend it. It is a great place to learn about managing and leading in a very complex profession. It is also a great place to share each other’s management experience and to meet leaders in our profession.

The training sessions, led by experienced leaders like Jim Brooks, Doug Severs, Helen Faith, Lauren Patterson, and Scott Cline, were well-delivered and appropriately relevant for the up-and-coming leaders in the room. I particularly enjoyed the discussion panels that allowed participants to ask questions of the faculty in an informal way; the conversation that ensued from these panels was enlightening. In addition, there were two specific sessions that were most helpful for me. First, the session about institutional culture (led by Jim Brooks) provided me some great tips for navigating culture, including how to identify the key players and how to work to build trust on campus by getting to know others. A key takeaway from the talk was to be patient and intentional when learning and navigating culture. The subject of the second most helpful session was human resources and employee management (led by Lauren Patterson), which covered tips for recruiting, job descriptions, interviews, onboarding, and managing difficult employees. A key takeaway for me was related to hiring the right people – Lauren made the statement that technical skills can be taught, but core behaviors can rarely be changed through training. This will provide a helpful lens when assessing potential new hires for my team.

Perhaps the most rewarding benefit of this event for me came through the connections, conversations, and stories shared with my peers from across the west coast. I learned about different team structures, individual responsibilities and challenges similar and dissimilar to my own, and I was encouraged by the mutual experiences we shared around meals and in group discussion. Furthermore, I made a few new friends that I hope to keep in touch with for years to come! With that said, I would highly recommend the MLI to other rising financial aid leaders, and I personally hope to attend or contribute to more trainings like this in the future.
Karen Ash  
Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships  
Clackamas Community College

My experience at the WASFAA Management and Leadership Institute was energizing! I was very honored to be offered the opportunity to attend this event. Recently stepping into a director’s position, this conference helped to lay the groundwork of where I need to focus my attention for the next few months; focus on EVERYTHING! I began my path in financial aid 12 years ago at a small private school as a counselor and soon moved to a large public university as an Assistant Director. After moving to Oregon, I found my way to the community college sector, first as a financial aid advisor and now as a director.

What a task we have as leaders. But what exactly does leadership mean? What does it look like? This was one of the first questions that was posed to our group of fearless leaders-to-be. And we all had different answers, in fact, so many answers that we ran out of space to write them all down. Empowerment, transparency, drive, passion, positive attitude, respectful, providing tools, and effective communication were just a few key phrases shared. We talked about our institutional goals; mission, vision, core values, and strategic directions. Do you know what your institutions goals are? I will have to admit, I had to go back and reread them. And even when I did, I had to ask myself, what role do I play with my college’s mission and values? Our faculty had the answer for us. Our role as leaders is to be the bridge between institutional decision makers and staff. To develop a vision and find out what is working and what is not. Talk with your team and find out what they see is a benefit and what is challenging. Talk with your upper administration, your students and your community. And then look back to your leaders. Why do you remember them? What was it about them that impacted you? Have you learned how to demonstrate and give back those same qualities? How are you developing your staff and building morale? And that my friends, was just the first afternoon!

We continued to talk at dinner while making new lifelong friends. Networking at its finest. We talked about where we have been, what path we are traveling, and where we are trying to go. And we talked more the next day. How do we define the culture of our institutions? Who do we talk to to learn about the culture? And once we do learn all of that, how do we start the planning process of EVERYTHING? With a team of people of course. Are you building your team to be successful? Are you capitalizing on strengths? Do you collaborate with your team?

And now, let’s talk about the money. Have you reviewed the budget yet? Do you know what’s in your budget? Do you have enough funding? And don’t forget the scholarships; the application process and how you plan to determine the population you want to reach to have the biggest impact. I don’t know about you, but I’m still trying to figure out my strategy creation. Could someone please tell me where I need to go and how do I get there? So far, the only answer...
I have heard is “Change takes time, you are turning a big ship”.

Our last day held the biggest question. What type of leader do you want to be? As I started looking through my pages and pages of notes, phrases started to pop out at me that I did not fully realize I wrote down. Things like, you will never encounter something that you have not already experienced, leadership isn’t dependent upon position, reach out to others, reflection and confirmation strengthen understanding, don’t say no as it’s an honor to be asked to serve.

So, I thank each of the wonderful faculty members for asking all of these questions and helping me to look within and see what type of leader I want to be and the wake I’ve created. And to see what my wake reveals about me. Without this amazing experience, I don’t think the opportunity to realize such a deep reflection would have been possible. I certainly would not have asked myself so many questions. I have realized this, that I would like my wake to be positive, respectful, passionate, empowering, and giving. And thank you, to all my new friends. Thank you for sharing your stories, expressing your ideas on how to help each other, and asking others for opinions. Each of you have helped me began my new path.

Institute time was a short two mornings and two afternoons long with a pace that moved quite quickly. Even with the full schedule, we had time to network including a reception with the WASFAA Executive Council. Each faculty member presented on specific topics, facilitated group learning activities, and offered relevant advice. The experience was challenging but the environment proved to be an ideal setting to learn, process, share, and ask questions. As I take time to reflect on my experience, I can firmly say that the MLI faculty genuinely imparted their personal path through management and demonstrated their gift of leadership. They are indeed empowering leadership examples. There are many that work in management but few that are true leaders.

I am taking home inspiration, knowledge, and motivation. I was inspired by Lauren’s “Boss vs. Leader” analogy and her talk on “The Next Phase”. I now know what a succession plan is and that I need one. I also have a better idea of what leadership qualities make a difference. Combine inspiration with knowledge and you can’t help but be motivated. I am, more than ever, motivated to pursue higher education to move me from aspiring to director. To sum it up MLI was awesome! Thank you for including me.

Congrats to our scholarship winners! Additional JRSM-LI Participants will be highlighted in future newsletters

STATE NEWS

OASFAA
Mark Diestler, OASFAA
President
Senior Associate Director of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships
University of Oregon

I hope everyone is enjoying the fall. It has been another busy year for financial aid, as I write this update here are some recent items to note for our community on the federal level:

- DRT is back online (for 18-19 only) with new, more secure features and the data is ‘masked’ for applicants.
- Year-Round Pell was reinstated beginning 17-18, but we still don’t have a Q&A from FSA yet for needed addition-
al guidance.
• PTAC (ED) has confirmed previous guidance that the HEA does not allow schools to share data from the FAFSA with a private outside agencies (such as scholarship providers), even with written authorization by the student.
• 18-19 FAFSAs are available and being filed, using 2016 tax data.
• Corrections are closed down for 16-17, making 399s (cross year conflicts) a bit easier to handle.
• And I liked this one so much from my last update – I’m putting it in here again: A hidden gem for 18-19 verification, which has 4 very important words added – ‘except for dependent students’ under confirmation of non-filing from IRS.
  Q: What does that mean?
  A: For 18-19, schools will no longer be required to collect IRS non-filing letters for dependent student who did not file and were not required to file a 2016 IRS income tax return. A signed statement (e.g. verification worksheet) and W2s, as appropriate, will be sufficient documentation. We will still need them for parents and independent students, but I know this is big news for our school and our population of students.

And at the state level:
• OASFAA has been extremely busy this year. I would like to thank all of our wonderful volunteers for all that they have done and continue to do.
• We successfully transitioned to a new web provider, Memberclicks. You can check out our new website here: http://www.oasfaaonline.org/
• We have had 3 full Executive Council meetings so far this year. Unlike some state organizations we have a very large EC, about 30 volunteers, a mix of elected positions and appointed committee chairs.
• Summer Drive-In and FA 101/201 were both well attended and covered some great topics.
• Our 50th Anniversary Annual Conference will be held January 31 – February 2, 2018 at Salishan Resort. Our conference committee has been working very hard all year long to get ready for this event. I think it will be one for the ages.
• We will be taking a vote of the membership at the annual conference to revise our constitution and by-laws to offer both individual and institutional membership options (we currently only offer individual).
• Oregon Promise, a state grant that helps cover most tuition costs at any Oregon community college for recent high school graduates and GED recipients, is in 2nd year of the program.
• Oregon recently passed a bill (SB 253) that will require institutions of higher education to provide to each applicable student information detailing amount of education loans received, amount of tuition and fees student has paid to institution, estimate of total payoff amount of ed-

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NAFAA
Anthony Morrone
NAFAA President
Director of Financial Aid at Nevada State College

As the fall season comes to a close and winter draws near, with the promise of a new year cresting on the horizon, we look forward to spending time with family and friends this holiday season. This is a chance to celebrate our achievements, mourn our losses and share our hopes and dreams for the future. In Nevada, we’ve had our share of both victories and tragedies in 2017, and we’ve stood together in celebration and in grief. While we continue the process of healing the wounded and grieving for those lost during the events of 1 October, it is also important to focus on the positive outcomes of this past year.

Members of the Nevada Association of Financial Aid Administrators were able to do just that at the annual conference, held October 19-20 at the Gold Coast Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas. Bruce Honer, FSA Trainer and recipient of the 2017 NAFAA President’s Award, did much of the heavy lifting by presenting on four regulation-dense topics, plus a federal update. We were also honored to have WASFAA President Helen Faith present to the membership on the important role of advocacy in our profession, and what you can do no matter where you sit in the aid office. Meanwhile, Nicole McMillian of the WASFAA Training Committee presented NASFAA’s material on SAR Comment Codes, and NASFAA Vice President Megan Coval gave an update from “Inside the Beltway” by phone. Of course, break times allowed for some great conversation, as well as an opportunity for those from across the state to meet in person, sometimes for the first time after months or years of emailing and phone calls.

This wasn’t the only opportunity to get together for high qual-
ity training in Nevada this fall. WASFAA held fall training sessions in both Las Vegas and Reno this year, with nearly 50 attendees across the two sites. Participants benefitted from learning NASFAA U’s material on Student Eligibility, along with the opportunity to take the credential test, plus WASFAA’s original material on Reimagining the Student Experience (à la Disney). If you missed out, rumor has it that some of the content may be offered as part of the WASFAA 2018 Conference this April in Boise, so stay tuned as more information becomes available.

Finally, a quick update on the Nevada Promise Scholarship, which I first reported on in the July newsletter. As of the application’s close on Nevada Day (October 31), more than 12,000 high school seniors had submitted an application to participate at one of the state’s four community colleges. Created by the Nevada Legislature this summer, the program provides last-dollar funding to cover mandatory registration fees not paid by other gift aid. Students must participate in mentoring and perform 20 hours of community service prior to entering college, with additional mentoring continuing once enrolled at the college. According to Dr. Thom Reilly, chancellor of the Nevada System of Higher Education, “The Nevada Legislature’s investment in this program will create an incredible domino effect that will not only improve the lives of these students, but future generations as well.”

We will end on that high note, along with my best wishes for safe and happy holidays! Hope to see you next year in Boise!

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**THE PINE STAYS GREEN IN WINTER...WISDOM IN HARDSHIP**

-Norman Douglas