Aloha All!

It is hard to believe that my year as your WASFAA President is coming to an end. It has been an honor to serve, and I sincerely thank all of you for your support, encouragement, advice, hospitality, and friendship! The year has been an amazing experience for me and the opportunity of a lifetime. You are an awesome group of professionals who make WASFAA a very special association.

Through all my travels around the country this past year, the one constant that I have come to appreciate is just how special WASFAA is! We may not be the political power house on the National stage, but you are all, hands down, the ‘coolest of the cool’!! WASFAA continues to be an outstanding organization because of its volunteers and members. I encourage all of you to actively participate in your association - be it as a moderator for a conference session, a member of the Training Committee, working on the Federal Issues committee, a State President, an officer of the Executive Council or President of WASFAA – I promise, the rewards are 10 times greater that the effort!

It has been a very productive year for the 2013/2014 Executive Council and it was my privilege to work with an outstanding group of professionals. We started the year with a new 3 year Strategic Plan and have made excellent progress towards achieving our key goals. Early in the year we took time to make sure that our goals as Officers, State Presidents and Committee Chairs were in line the core values of the Strategic Plan. We have spent some time this year redesigning and updating many of our report templates that will make it easier to collect the year end data we use to document our progress. Fiscally, we are in excellent shape, having come in well under budget without tapping into our asset reserves. I’m pleased to report that we have a balanced operating budget for 2014, without relying on asset reserves. I am proud of the efforts by all of our committees in keeping their expenses down, and our key revenue streams of Conference, Fund Development, SDB Summer Institute and JRS Management and Leadership Institute have been very successful. One of our core values in WASFAA is to provide training for our membership and our Training Committee has been hard at work. They presented a very successful, in person, Fall training throughout our region and a series of Spring Web Casts are on the way. They have also added a new section to our web site: “Professional Development Resources for WASFAA Members”, creating a library of past training available on demand to our membership.
President's Letter (continued)

The last of the State conferences I will be attending will be a special one for me. Rather than flying 6000 miles and traveling for 4-5 days, I will sleep in my own bed, get up with the sun, take a leisurely drive over the mountains and arrive in time for breakfast. The PacFAA Conference will be held March 31 – April 01, 2014 in Honolulu, Hawaii. I am looking forward to having the opportunity to meet the folks from all the schools represented in the PacFAA region – wait a minute, I already know them well, at least most of them!! Still, it will be a wonderful opportunity to thank them for their unending support during the past year – they are a great bunch of friends! I'm especially looking forward to hosting Craig Munier, NASFAA National Chair who will also be attending on his first visit to Hawaii. I’ll do my best to make sure that he has a few stories to take home with him!

We just finished the WASFAA annual conference at the Silver Legacy Resort in Reno, Nevada. Sandi Guidry, our Conference Chair and her entire committee worked hard all year long to put together an amazing conference focusing on our theme "Creating Connections–One Student at a Time." I’m so happy to have seen so many of you there.

I also want to mention that the Sister Dale Brown Summer Institute will held June 22-27, 2014 at the University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada. Again this year, we will be offering three tracks; Basic, Intermediate and Clock Hour. This year we will be presenting the NASFAA Core program, with an added benefit to participants – those completing the program will be allowed to take NASFAA Certification Exams at no charge! I know that Nichole Doering, Chair for SDBSI is really excited and has put together a great group for faculty. For more information, contact Nichole at ndoering@razzledazzlecollege.com.

Lastly, my term as president ended when I passed the gavel at our annual business meeting on Tuesday, April 15, to Kevin Jensen our 2014-15 WASFAA President. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has served on the 2013-14 Executive Council and all the committee members for volunteering. You all are amazing people and have made this year a wonderful and truly memorable experience for me. Thank you!

The year ahead is likely to be a challenging year for our profession as we begin to deal with Reauthorization and WASFAA will be under excellent leadership with our incoming President, Kevin Jensen. I am extremely proud to turn over the leadership to Kevin and know that he and his incoming Executive Council will work hard to further the goals of WASFAA and our membership.

Aloha Nui Loa

WASFAA Executive Council

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<td>Frank Green</td>
<td>Travel Institute of the Pacific</td>
<td><a href="mailto:green@tiphawaii.com">green@tiphawaii.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>President-Elect</td>
<td>Kevin Jensen</td>
<td>College of Western Idaho</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kevinjensen@cwidaho.cc">kevinjensen@cwidaho.cc</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Past President</td>
<td>Jack Edwards</td>
<td>Stanford University</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Edwards_jack@gsb.stanford.edu">Edwards_jack@gsb.stanford.edu</a></td>
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<td>Jeff Scofield</td>
<td>University of Hawaii- Hilo</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jscofiel@hawaii.edu">jscofiel@hawaii.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Mindy Bergeron</td>
<td>John F Kennedy University</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Bergeron@jfk.edu">Bergeron@jfk.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Terri Eckel</td>
<td>Yavapai College</td>
<td><a href="mailto:terri.eckel@yc.edu">terri.eckel@yc.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDAC Chair</td>
<td>Oscar Verduzco</td>
<td>Heritage University</td>
<td><a href="mailto:verduzco_o@heritage.edu">verduzco_o@heritage.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segmental Rep at Large</td>
<td>Nichole Doering</td>
<td>Razzle Dazzle College</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ndoering@razzledazzle.com">ndoering@razzledazzle.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Member Rep at Large</td>
<td>Luhui Whitebear</td>
<td>Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Luhui.whitebear@grandronde.org">Luhui.whitebear@grandronde.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>AK President</td>
<td>Phong Moua</td>
<td>Alaska Pacific University</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pmoua@alaskapacific.edu">pmoua@alaskapacific.edu</a></td>
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<td>AZ President</td>
<td>Ed Wagner</td>
<td>EDMC</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ewagner@edmc.edu">ewagner@edmc.edu</a></td>
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<td>Orange Coast College</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mmoser@mail.occ.cccd.edu">mmoser@mail.occ.cccd.edu</a></td>
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<td>PacFAA President</td>
<td>Cathy Bio</td>
<td>University of Hawaii – Maui College</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cbio@hawaii.edu">cbio@hawaii.edu</a></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:merlrox@isu.edu">merlrox@isu.edu</a></td>
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<td>NV President</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:suzet.petersen@oit.edu">suzet.petersen@oit.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA President</td>
<td>Monique Theriault</td>
<td>Cornish College of the Arts</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mtheriault@cornish.edu">mtheriault@cornish.edu</a></td>
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Note from the Editor

Ashley Munro
Communications Committee Chair
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Its spring! That means that you’ve made it through another year. Congratulations! Enjoy your hard-earned summer. Go on vacation, take a long weekend, or clean your office now. There are only a few short months of summer between you and another fall!

I loved the opportunity to see so many of you at the WASFAA Conference in Reno. As part of the Communications Committee, I have the opportunity to read your article submissions, blog postings and Facebook statuses. We’re lucky to live in a time and place where we can stay connected, but nothing beats communicating face-to-face! Enjoy my article on page 12 of a non-FAFSA Vacation.

I hope that you enjoy reading this spring issue of the newsletter. The Communications team has worked hard to collect a variety of articles to provide some training opportunities and a chance to keep you informed about WASFAA.

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Ads (PDF’s) should be emailed to

Sun Ow, Fund Development Chair,
Sow@glhec.org

Summer Institute

University of Nevada-Reno June 22-27, 2014.
With 2013 in the rearview mirror, CASFAA is off and running with a vibrant new Executive Council, a group of individuals that includes both seasoned and new volunteers from a variety of segments, all bringing a wealth of knowledge, dedication and enthusiasm!

I’m excited as I look forward to 2014 and the variety of events on the horizon – and I’m pleased that only three short months into the year, we’ve got a lot of major events under our belt already!

March was busy for our organization, with a number of annual activities taking place: CASFAA’s State Issues Chair, Angelina Arzate of Palomar College, did a phenomenal job along with Linda Williams, CCCSFAAA 2014 President-Elect, in organizing our annual Day at the Capitol in Sacramento. We had a great turn-out with aid administrators representing every segment within the state; discussions were led by Diana Fuentes-Michel, Executive Director of the California Student Aid Commission as well as numerous State Assembly and Senate aids. After a lunchtime presentation by Debbie Cochrane of TICAS, small groups broke-out to meet with a variety of Assembly and State legislators and aids to advocate on behalf of our students and offices. It was an exciting, informative and valuable day!

While a majority of the EC were meeting in Sacramento, our President-Elect, Sunshine Garcia, Federal Issues Chair Scott Cline, Treasurer Lindsay Crowell and Secretary Denise Pena were able to travel to Washington DC for the NASFAA Leadership Conference and Legislative Symposium. Many thanks to WASFAA for coordinating a great round of office visits on the Hill.

Lastly, March saw the return of Jim Briggs, ‘The Tax Detective’ and his annual, wildly popular training series on everything from personal and business Federal taxes to verification and conflicting information. Kudos to our 1040 Workshop Chair Kim Thomas and our Training Chair Rhonda Mohr for coordinating these insightful presentations!

Although March was eventful, CASFAA has plenty up our sleeve for the remainder of 2014; be on the look-out for web and in-person training opportunities brought to you by our Segmental Representatives throughout the summer and don’t forget to update your calendars with the NEW dates for CASFAA’s annual conference!

2014 will see our organization returning to the Anaheim Marriott with pre-conference activities Saturday, November 1 and an exciting opening session to kick off the conference Sunday, November 2 through Tuesday, November 4.

The program committee is already hard at work putting together a schedule of sessions worthy of our members’ time and resources. And, once again – conference fees will NOT be going up this year and include membership, meals, receptions and a variety of networking opportunities. If you haven’t been to a CASFAA Annual Conference lately, what are you waiting for?!

We hope to see you in Anaheim this Fall!

CASFAA State Reports

Lynne Garcia
CASFAA President
Director of Financial Aid
Corinthian Colleges

CASFAA Report

SEASONS OF CHANGE

Join us November 2–4, 2014, at the Marriott in Anaheim, California

Get involved in association activities.
Discuss the latest financial policy issues.
Learn how to take a leadership role.
Network with peers, policymakers and other educational partners.

The premier networking event for financial aid professionals. Register today.
Fiscal Planning Committee Report

Wendy Olson
Director, Whitworth University
Fiscal Planning Committee Chair

The Fiscal Planning Committee had its fourth meeting for this year in conjunction with the February Executive Council meeting that took place February 20-21 in San Diego, California. As usual there was plenty to talk about. Here are a few of the key issues.

- Our 2013 fiscal year (which corresponds with the calendar year) ended in the black. We did not need to use any of the funds that we hold in reserve for rainy days/emergencies. This was attained through strong membership support and keeping costs down for the year by our committee chairs and both presidents who served during that time (Jack Edwards and Frank Green).
- Our fiscal records were reviewed by accountant, Tracy Corta, from Idaho. He found everything to be in order, but did suggest that we make sure that our total funds at Bank of America not exceed the FDIC limit for guarantee. Mindy Bergeron, Treasurer, will be taking steps to remedy this.

- Our federal taxes for 2013 will be prepared by Tracy Corta. We don’t plan to request an extension for filing.
- Mindy Bergeron, Vice President Jeff Scofield and I will be reviewing our insurance policies and make sure that we have the proper coverage at reasonable rates.
- The fees for the Sister Dale Brown Summer Institute were reviewed and recommended to the executive council for approval.
- WASFAA continues to be a fiscally sound organization that is managed well with a very capable Treasurer.

Training Committee Report

Look for registration to open soon. $20 site registration fee.

During WASFAA’s Fall Training workshops and webcasts, participants requested additional training focused on basic rules for calculating Return of Title IV Funds when students withdraw. In response, the WASFAA Training Committee is offering R2T4 Processing via webcast, developed and presented by WASFAA volunteers who are experienced financial aid professionals.

During this training, you will:
- Review regulations related to R2T4, including how to calculate completion percentages;
- Explore sample calculations performed using the federal software;
- View sample R2T4 calculation worksheets;
- Examine deadlines and processing requirements; and
- Learn about available resources.

Issues related to R2T4 calculations continue to top the list of the most common audit findings. Join us for this training to help reduce your risk of audit findings and help ensure your withdrawn students are receiving the amounts and types of federal financial aid for which they are eligible.

Webcast Information

The webcast will be offered once:
- Monday, May 19 at 1:00pm (Pacific)

The person who registers for the webcast will be considered the “site registrant” and will receive all communications related to the webcast, including login instructions. Other staff members are welcome to participate in the webcast along with the site registrant.

Register for this webcast at least 24 hours in advance. Training materials will be forwarded by email to each site registrant approximately 24 hours before each webcast. The webcast will be recorded and made accessible to paid registrants for approximately six months.

Once registration opens, be sure to register early… and bring a friend!
Clock Hour Caution: The Difference 5 Minutes Make

Nicole Doering
Razzle Dazzle College
Representative at large

Many certificate or occupational programs are measured in terms of clock-hour requirements. Often in these programs, a student spends their day not just in a structured class setting, but is getting practical experience on a clinic floor with client services. Rather than in class for an hour block three times a week, students in these programs are essentially “full time,” 8 hours/day. So it makes sense that schools would have a break-time policy. And this is where 5 minutes could get you in trouble, with both the Department of Education AND your students.

A clock hour is defined as: “a 50- to 60- minute class, lecture, or recitation in a 60-minute period.” (FSA HB 2-26). Makes sense, right? Now think about what your break policy is for your students. It has been my experience that most schools handle breaks the way most businesses do. One 15 minute break in the morning and one 15 minute break in the afternoon. The problem is that in doing this, technically there are 2 hours in the students’ day that by definition aren’t completed according to the definition of what a clock hour is by the Department of Education.

I know, I know ..... “What does it matter?” you’re asking. And yet it does. Recently I attended a training event where we were discussing clock-hour stuff and there was a representa-

tive from another school who explained that they’d just had a Program Review from the Department of Education. And the program reviewer caught this very thing. For years and years they’d granted a morning break of 15 minutes and an afternoon break of 15 minutes. And the auditor essentially “erased” 2 hours from each students’ day because of it. Current students about to graduate found out they had many more hours to go. The school even had to go back a year and get graduates to come back in and complete the hours that technically didn’t count because of 15-minute breaks. Can you imagine? The paperwork alone makes me cringe, but can you imagine those conversations with students and graduates? It couldn’t have been pretty.

You’ve always taken 15 minute breaks and had a Program Review and passed with flying colors you say? Lucky you, you dodged a headache. Like with any audit, it often comes down to who you get. Some auditors pick at the teensiest of details and others tend to just focus on the big stuff. You might get lucky, but why risk it? Let the lessons of this school be a good reminder for you to make sure that your break policy for your students lines up with what the Department of Education has said a clock hour is. Keep your student break at 10 minutes and you’ll be good to go.

Summer Institute

WASFAA is pleased to open registration for the Sister Dale Brown Summer Institute 2014. Important information is provided in the links below, so please be sure to check them for SI details. Should you have additional questions, please contact Nichole Doering at ndoering@razzledazzlecollege.com or at 208-465-7660.

Summer Institute will be held at the University of Nevada-Reno June 22-27th. We are pleased to be offering 3 training opportunities for attendees this year:

Basic Track (June 22-27), Intermediate Track (June 25-27) & Clock-Hour Track (June 25-27). The WASFAA website has more information about the various tracks, agendas and answers to your FAQs!

You can read up about Reno by looking at the blog archives from this spring.
Interest is the cost of borrowing money. It begins to accrue, or add up when loan disbursements are made or credit is issued. Be it interest earned on a personal savings or checking account or interest accruing on federal student loans, private student loans, personal loans, or credit cards, it’s important for students to understand interest, how it affects them, and how to stay on top of it. The following are some tips you can offer students on how to use credit in the most advantageous way.

What Do the Terms Mean?
Understanding the definitions of common interest-related terms is important. The most commonly used terms are principal, interest rate, and capitalization.

- **Principal**: The actual amount of money borrowed.
- **Interest Rate**: The amount charged by a lender to a borrower for the use of assets, expressed as a percentage of the principal.
- **Capitalization**: Any unpaid interest added to the principal. Unpaid interest is often interest that accrues during times when payments are postponed, (e.g., grace periods, forbearances, or deferments). Capitalization of interest can occur at the time a loan enters repayment for the first time or after a temporary suspension of payments.

How Does it All Work?
The amount of interest that will be paid depends on:

- The amount of money borrowed (i.e., the principal).
- The rate at which interest is charged (i.e., the interest rate).
- Whether the government pays the interest during periods of in-school enrollment or deferment.
- The length of time taken to repay the loan.

How to Reduce Interest Paid
There are ways to reduce the amount of interest to be repaid.

- Make payments when not required (e.g., during in-school, deferment, or periods that postpone payments). Doing this can avoid interest capitalization, which reduces the overall amount to be repaid.
- Enroll in Auto Pay, which often times reduces the interest rate charged.
- Pay more than the minimum monthly payment. Doing this may cover the accrued interest amount, and directly reduce the principal balance.

How to Calculate Interest
The amount of interest that accrues (accumulates) on loans from month to month is determined by a simple daily interest formula. This formula consists of multiplying the loan balance by the number of days since the last payment, times the interest rate factor.

Visit the Financial Student Aid (FSA) website to learn more about how interest is calculated.

Interest Rates
It’s important to keep finances healthy for many reasons. Bad credit can have a negative effect on interest rates charged on loans and/or credit cards. For example, if a lender checks a potential borrower’s credit report and finds the borrower has a record of missing payments, that lender may decide to deny credit for the customer or charge a higher interest rate for the loan than they would for a customer who has a clean credit report. A credit history in good shape can save money by allowing borrowing at lower interest rates.

How to Stay on Top of Interest
The best ways to keep interest charges from getting out of control are to:

- Keep overall healthy finances reflected in credit ratings to ensure interest rates on loans and/or credit cards will be low.
- Pay more than just minimum payments each month so those payments go toward the principal of a loan and not just the interest every month.

Interest that Helps
There is also interest that actually adds revenue to an account. Most financial institutions pay interest on accounts like certificates of deposits (CDs), checking accounts, money market accounts, and other types of savings accounts. The basic concept is the same—the interest rate applies to the principal—but in this case, the accrued interest is added to the overall amount of your savings (versus being added to the overall amount of a loan that must be repaid).

Interest paid on certain types of loans (e.g., student loans and mortgages) is often tax deductible. Students can always talk to a tax consultant to learn how to make interest paid on student loans benefit them.
Counseling vs. Collections

While a college education remains the primary driver of future financial success, the loans that are often required to attain a degree have created an unmanageable debt burden for students, alumni, and, ultimately, schools.

For students, college loans are as much a necessity as textbooks and late-night cram sessions. Yet between freshman and senior years, paying back those student loans is often the last thing on their minds. Upon leaving school, too many students are unprepared for the reality of loan repayments and unaware of the consequences of delinquency and default. The problem is only getting worse: National trends show that delinquency rates have risen six years in a row, with more than 600,000 borrowers defaulting on their student loans in the past three years.1

As a result, more and more colleges and universities are beginning to feel the impact as well. Rising Cohort Default Rates (CDR) are becoming an acute problem across the country, and the impact is deepened by the recent change to how CDR is calculated. Going from a 2-year to a 3-year formula raised the stakes for institutions of higher learning, and loan default rates are now the highest they have been in nearly 20 years.2

The question now facing many college administrators is how best to address the issue of CDR. Schools need to choose whether to chase default through increased collections activities, or to take a proactive approach that effectively addresses the debt, delinquency, and default cycle over the long term.

Collections:
A reactive approach to a recurring problem

As CDR numbers continue to rise, so does the knee-jerk reaction to increase collections. In 2012, collections on federally backed student loans were $12 billion, 18% higher than the previous year.3 There is a convenient logic to this approach. Default simply means people aren’t paying their loans, and the easiest way to get more people to pay is to knock on more doors, figuratively speaking. If they still don’t pay? Knock again. And again. And again.

Chasing defaulters may provide some short-term gains against CDR. But over the long term, employing a strategy of collections on defaulted loans is a losing battle with diminishing returns—there will always be new debtors entering the default funnel with each graduating class. Taking this reactive response to the issue is akin to treating a symptom, not the disease.

Counseling:
A proactive approach with long-term benefits

Thinking about the people behind CDR—both alumni and students who will soon enter repayment—means considering the importance of financial competency. It means offering a proactive, holistic approach to responsible borrowing where counseling around student loans is part of an overall financial education. It’s about creating responsible borrowers.

An effective Responsible Borrower Program allows universities to offer neutral, plain-spoken advice that helps students and alumni navigate the loan process, make smarter financial decisions, and avoid delinquency. The key is to meaningfully engage students throughout the academic lifecycle, and provide informed counsel at the critical points where delinquency is most likely to occur.

Proactive engagement works because it better prepares students for future repayments, reduces the risks of default, and, in turn, reduces CDR for universities. Responsible borrowing is a sustainable solution that can improve CDR with each new graduating class.

References
Inceptia Contributing Articles

A Guide to Lowering Your Cohort Default Rate through Challenges, Adjustments and Appeals

Dave Macoubrie
Inceptia Vice President of Rapayment Solutions

For some schools, challenges, adjustments and appeals are a necessity that can’t be avoided — a make-or-break action that can have a positive impact on the all-important CDR. For others, it’s an optional step that can keep your school’s CDR in check, before it grows into a bigger issue.

The months of February and March are the perfect time to take a close look at your draft Loan Record Detail Report (LRDR). That data, for better or worse, forms the basis of your school’s official CDR. This is your opportunity to note any inconsistencies and take action before they become part of the official report.

With all this data available to you, it might be overwhelming to think about the next step. However, you can get started by asking yourself three simple questions prior to tackling the numbers.

1. **How many errors do you have to find (and successfully challenge) to make a 1 percentage point difference?** If you have 100 borrowers and 30 defaulted, you only need to find one to get your CDR under 30. But if you have 1,000 borrowers and 300 have defaulted, you need to find 10 to get under 30. That’s a big difference, and a point you need to seriously weigh before you put in the time and effort required with challenges.

2. **Do you know the truncation rule?** If your rate is 22.95, to the Department of Education (ED) it’s actually 22.9. The ED truncates (or rounds back), not up. So if you challenge and lower your rate to 22.91, your rate remains at 22.9.

3. **Is a challenge worth your while?** Logically, this will be a larger expense for bigger schools than smaller ones. If you’re good at keeping NSLDS updated throughout the year, you will have very few errors, if any; so, there will be no need to file a challenge or appeal. Spending time trying to find an error may be next to impossible, which just might not be the best use of your time. If you’re not spending time to review your defaulters and keeping NSLDS updated throughout the year you have potential for a significant change (and an impetus to take a hard look at your process).

Through these three questions and a deeper understanding of the challenges and appeals that come with the release of the new cohort default rate (draft or official), you can ensure your institution will be on the right track for years to come.

A Look Back on Financial Aid History as it Reflects an Astute Perspective

Sara Whitwer
Inceptia Marketing Director

In 1643, Lady Anne Radcliffe Mowlson gave Harvard College 100 English Pounds to support needy scholars. With that, the first financial aid event was recorded in what is now the United States.

Three hundred and seventy-one years later, college-bound students still need assistance to help pay for college. The events that took place between Lady Anne’s gift and 2014 shaped our present-day financial aid offices.

**So, what were the major moments in financial aid history?**

Add your favorite moment in financial aid history by tweeting to hashtag #FinAidHistory. Was it the signing of the Higher Education Act in 1965 or was it the day you paid off your own student loan? One of Inceptia’s favorite moments was in 2011 when school partners began benefiting from performance-based pricing.

Join the conversation and make your own indelible imprint on Financial Aid History.

Significant Moments in Financial Aid History!

The financial aid world is full of significant moments that span decades. From the truly monumental events to the truly perplexing. Performance-based pricing is one of many great moments we’ve added. It’s our way of making sure that students and schools succeed. Today. Tomorrow. Always.

Check out all of the moments at Inceptia.org/FinAidHistory. Tweet your own moment using #FinAidHistory and we’ll add it to our Twitter timeline.
So You Want to be a Director?

Doug Severs
Financial Aid Director
Oregon State University

In the last column I discussed metaphors for being a financial aid director and asked readers to send in what other positions would be a good metaphor. The first submission was from Jordyn Wright from Washington State and she won the Starbucks gift card. Here is her metaphor:

“Financial aid directors are the coach of a football team. Their actions represent the team and their influence and motivation help the team move forward.”

I really like this metaphor as a director’s coaching and fostering teamwork are critical in creating a successful financial aid operation.

Houses with Broken Windows
I was reading an article about what could be the “broken windows” in a person’s life. Broken windows in houses were deemed by some social researchers as sign that a neighborhood was not in good shape. The article outlined what they believed would be signs in your life that it was not on the right track. I won’t go into what were my broken windows (unless you want to buy me a beer at WASFAA!). What I want to review in this column is what can be considered broken windows in a financial aid office. Knowing what items show that an office is not operating as it should be is very helpful when you are considering becoming the director and when you are a director.

Before reviewing broken windows financial aid I think I should note that different areas tend have a different perspective on what are offices broken windows. You have of course the staff, the administrator the office reports to, peer directors like the Admissions Director or Registrar and then the upper administrators including the school’s president.

Long Lines
This is an old standard of there may be problems with financial aid. Tie this with lines due to problems with aid disbursement you really a big broken window. For the upper administration it is a visual clue that things are not going well or are going well. I know my office received kudos when lines at the beginning of the term didn’t go out the door and into the exterior hallways.

Long phone wait times and dropped calls
This is a less obvious red flag as the upper administration generally only gets a clue that there may be an issue if students begin complaining that it difficult to connect with the office or they may outline they had to wait a long time. If students have trouble calling in non-peak times it is more of an issue to resolve. We have weekly data on our phone calls with an average hold time and with the number of dropped calls. This gives us a picture of what is going on and if we need to provide more support.

Complaints to upper Administration
You can’t avoid having complaints about financial aid go to your upper administration. Though, if it seems like you are having a steady stream complaining to the higher ups you definitely need to treat it as a broken window. When I first began one of my director’s positions I found that one of our student workers was directing upset students to the president’s office!

Excessive Staff Turnover
New directors or directors to be should be especially concerned about this. This may indicate that staff salaries are not where they need to be or there is internal turmoil amongst staff. Either one or both will make being a director a challenge.

Lack of training opportunities for staff
This is may be a sign that the financial aid office has not been funded to level that one would expect. You might then find staff salaries at a competitive level. You could then have an under trained staff with a high prospect for staff turnover and errors.

Audit or Program Review findings not sufficiently addressed
Before becoming a school’s financial aid director I highly recommend that you find out if they have any recent audit or program review findings. If they have find out if these findings have been taken care of. They may be expecting you to come on board to do that. If these finding are not taken care of soon the school and you may be in for another more expensive visit!

What other broken windows items are there in running a financial aid office? Please send it to me and I will publish them in the next newsletter.
USA Funds Article

With the Feb. 18 release of draft 2011 three-year cohort default rates, you’ll want to compare your school’s own records against the information from the U.S. Department of Education. Examine the data and, if appropriate, submit an incorrect data challenge.

Let’s review 10 key steps in evaluating your cohort default rate data from the Department and potentially issuing a challenge:

1. If you believe that your cohort default rate is incorrect, review information about cohort default rate calculations in the Department’s Cohort Default Rate Guide, available at ed.gov.

2. Download the Department’s Electronic Loan Record Detail Report (DRCO35, School Cohort Default Rate History Report — extract version, message class SHCDREOP). The Department offers information about downloading the report.

3. Collect and review any relevant enrollment and repayment data. This data should include the following:
   - Records from the financial aid office or the registrar’s office.
   - Student Status Confirmation Reports or other electronic enrollment reports.
   - Transfer requests for new students and former students.
   - National Student Loan Data System borrower enrollment history or borrower aid history.
   - Lender or servicer records.

4. Create a spreadsheet with data about borrowers in the cohort and when they entered repayment, based on your school’s data.

5. Compare the internal data against the data on the LRDR. If there is data on the LRDR that you believe is incorrect, based on your internal data, you should contest the LRDR data.

6. Access the Department’s eCDR appeals Web-based application. The Department is the data manager for all Direct Loans and offers information about filing appeals through eCDR.

7. Determine what kind of error you believe has been made. Allegations usually fall into one of these categories:
   - Data incorrectly reported.
   - Data incorrectly excluded.
   - Data incorrectly included.

8. Review and confirm your data.

9. Gather supporting documentation. You must provide documentation to prove each allegation.

10. Submit the incorrect data challenge. The Department’s guidelines set a 45-calendar-day time frame for submitting incorrect data challenges — which means you had until April 11, 2014, to challenge your draft 2011 three-year cohort default rate. Make sure you maintain documentation that verifies the receipt of the incorrect data challenge, and all electronic documentation that you submitted as part of the incorrect data challenge.
My non-FAFSA Vacation

Ashley Munro
Communications Committee Chair
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Do you ever dream about vacations while sitting at your desk? I do! I plan trips to the beach, surfing lessons and sitting under palm trees. I never dream that work will follow me to my hammock. This last year, I’ve been planning my spring vacation. (Where does an Alaskan go for spring break? You ask. To Hawaii? To the Bahamas? Nope, to northern Europe, where it’s the same temperature as home.) I planned city tours and museum tours, and still never dreamt that work would follow me.

My first stop in Scandinavia was Copenhagen. My friend, Jeni, was traveling with me. (Up until a job change in January, she worked in the Financial Aid Office as well). We had signed up for the World Half Marathon Championships, a fun way to see the city and not have to worry about eating too much European chocolate. The day before the race, we took a city bike tour. I was expecting a nice leisurely bike ride down paths towards castles and palaces, but what I got instead, was a terrifying bike ride through cobblestone streets with cars trying to run you over.

Because of my unease with being smushed by a car, I tried my best to stay right behind the tour guide. One of our first stops was University of Copenhagen, where the guide told us about the education system in Denmark. University is free. Every person can attend and not need to pay tuition. In addition, the students get a stipend equivalent to $1000 per month to pay for supplies and housing. My amazement was pretty obvious, because this lead to a long discussion about the FAFSA, student loans, and how paying for college works in the US. As we rode along, dodging open car doors and side mirrors, he asked how Americans can afford college and admits that our system “makes no sense”. It was a topic he couldn’t give up, so I continued to answer questions about college as we rode past the royal palace and The Little Mermaid statue.

Despite my resolve to not respond to work emails, I couldn’t help myself. Later that night, I logged into my email to help my husband with a student-related question. An hour later, I had responded to students, sent a blog to the WASFAA Water Cooler and asked for articles for this very newsletter. The next day, I distracted myself from running 13 miles by thinking about the rest of my trip, the dessert I could have that night, and, of course, work.

I continued to check emails whenever I had a working Wi-Fi connection. It actually kept me entertained while we waited in airports, train stations and ferry terminals. I didn’t think too much of the pattern I was in. It wasn’t until one of the last few days of our trip, when I had a “what are you doing moment?!”. We were walking down a street in Helsinki, when I saw a big green sign that said FAFSA’s. I told Jeni that I found it interesting that there would be a FAFSA help center in the middle of Helsinki (keep in mind, that by this time, I was very much sleep deprived). In reality, it was a pita restaurant.

So I guess the lesson I learned, is that you dream about vacation while at your desk, and you dream about your desk while on vacation. Perhaps my next vacation really will include a beach, some palm trees and a WiFi free zone.