

President's Update – April 2017

Mike Johnson

Greetings WASFAA members!

I'm writing this a few hours after the sun moved north far enough to cross the imaginary line above the equator to usher in spring. It even feels a little spring-like in Portland, which is a welcome change from much of the last few weeks here. I hope that warm, sunny weather will come to all of you soon if it hasn't already. Now, on to more mundane business: my final monthly Highlights.

Since writing the March Highlights, I've continued to be busy with WASFAA-related activities. On February 25, I gave a financial aid update at the "Improving Financial Aid and Admissions Outcomes and Increasing Financial Aid and Economic Literacy" TRIO conference in Monterey. The conference was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, and conducted by the Washington DC-based Council for Opportunity in Education. The TRIO counselors already knew a lot about financial aid, so they were most interested in talking about what the future might hold. We had an interesting, if speculative, conversation about that. I'm scheduled to present at a similar conference in Spokane in May.

On March 1 – 2, Past-President Barb Bickett and I attended the NASFAA Board meeting in DC. NASFAA continues to impress me with its work on our behalf to benefit our students. The June Board meeting will be my last as an observer; I'll become WASFAA's representative to the Board at the November meeting.

Speaking of NASFAA, the process for selecting the recipient of the NASFAA National Chairs' scholarship for one financial aid administrator/student from each region has almost been completed. A subcommittee of WASFAA Executive Council members is reviewing applications and will let the recipients and NASFAA know the results in early April. Good luck to all of you who applied!

Speaking of scholarships, you can now apply for Ethnic Diversity Scholarships and General Scholarships to attend the Sister Dale Brown WASFAA Summer Institute in June. The link to the applications is https://www.wasfaa.org/docs/forms/Scholarship_app_17.html to. **Be sure to get your applications in by April 6**, which is 60 days before the Institute starts. You can read more about the Institute at <https://www.wasfaa.org/docs/training/summerinstitute/2017/index.html>. Remember, this year we'll have beginner, intermediate, and advanced tracks, so there will be something for everyone.

The WASFAA Strategic Plan Committee continued its work in March. During a March 6 conference call, we reviewed and edited each goal and strategy/action. We are now reviewing the version of the plan that resulted, with the hope of presenting the final version to the EC at its April meeting.

WASFAA's team on the NASFAA Regional Thought Force also continued its work. The Thought Force discussed next steps with other regional members during a March 9 conference call led by Dr. Lisa Blazer, NASFAA National Chair. Our next step will involve reviewing and commenting on draft alignment plans.

On March 13 – 14, I attended the PacFAA Conference in Honolulu. March is a great time to go to Hawaii! Thank you to everyone for being so warm and welcoming. In addition to a federal update and sessions on policies and best practices, many participants attended NASFAA sessions that will potentially let them earn NASFAA credentials. During the business meeting that closed the conference, I learned a lot about PacFAA's impressive high school counselor training efforts, and the work they're doing on policies & procedures.

I have one more state conference to attend in my role as WASFAA President: the Arizona conference, which will be held April 27 – 28 at the Embassy Suites Phoenix-Scottsdale. As usual I'll be doing a session and providing a WASFAA update. I have a feeling that April will be a great time to visit in Arizona! I've been told that I should bring my golf clubs. We'll see.

In closing, and I'll have more to say about this during the WASFAA Conference in Seattle, I'd like to convey to you here how much I've appreciated and enjoyed the opportunity to serve you as WASFAA President this year. Thank you for letting me get to know so many of you, and for allowing me to have been part of what WASFAA is doing to support and further your work as financial aid administrators. It has been an honor and a privilege.