

## December 2017 WASFAA President's Update

“Six trips in seven weeks”—book title or story of my life? You be the judge!

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 (MLI) 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 28<sup>th</sup>

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](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!

Sincerely,  
Helen Faith