



MAFAA Matters

A Newsletter for the Minnesota Association of Financial Aid Administrators

January 2021

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Inside this issue:

President's Column	1
Fall Training Synopsis	2
Prof Dev Fall Events	2
Outlook for Higher Ed Policy	3
Calendar of Events	4
Living With Passion	5

A Few Thoughts from the President

Carolyn Chesebrough, 2020-21 MAFAA President

My wish and hope is that all of you, in this time of isolation and loneliness, and unrest in our nation's capitol, found the joy of the past holiday season! I missed seeing my daughter and having our annual tradition of making Christmas cookies. We have done this since she was little (as I did, since I was little, with my mother.) It is sad to have to give up some traditions; however, there is opportunity to create new ones, and they may be a one-time thing or become a new one to pass down. I found that instead of spending funds on all the ingredients for cookies, I donated to a local food-shelf. I think that will be one of my new traditions.

Speaking of donations, we may have started something at our last Executive Council meeting. The MAFAA council members traditionally conduct a fun gift bag exchange to culminate our December holiday meeting. This time, instead of our grab bag exchange, we were encouraged to donate to a local organization that would benefit our Minnesota students. Members of our Exec Council really stepped up! It was gratifying to hear on our virtual Teams call all the different organizations where members of the Exec council donated. They included organizations such as Open Door (a mobile food shelf) and Second Harvest Heartland, as well as other local and campus food shelves to help students.

As we look forward to a new year, a new administration, and new education leadership in our country, let us hope for unity and strength. COVID-19 has caused a great change in everything we do, and the new year brings a vaccine and the hope that this virus will be eradicated. What will the new administration bring to the financial aid table? A new Student Aid Index...free college...improved loan forgiveness for non-profit work?? It seems that there are reasons to be hopeful about the way FSA funding helps our students achieve their educational goals. I look forward to the discussion and changes.

During this new year, try to be kind and generous to all those who are important to you and remember that this time will pass and once again we will be able to come together in our traditional celebrations.

The MAFAA Executive council met and all active members should have received an email from me concerning MAFAA's plan for spring conference. There was a survey link attached. If you have not yet answered the poll, please follow this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZWM7Y3D>. If you have questions about the information, please contact me or any member of the executive council.

MAFAA Fall Training Event a Success

Brynn Juranek, Conference Planning Chair

The annual MAFAA Fall Training was held on October 28-29, 2020, virtually, which was a first for the Conference Planning Committee. Thank you to the 275-plus attendees and exhibitors who truly made this event a success. The Whova site for the MAFAA Fall Training will be live until mid-April 2020; attendees can revisit session materials or visit with other attendees using the chat feature.

Sessions offered covered a wide variety of topics from federal updates, to local issues concerning what is going on at the state level, to student focused concerns. A special thank you to all speakers and moderators who provided membership with valuable information.

The virtual platform allowed our attendees to meet virtually through meet ups and the chat feature was very popular as well. This engagement allowed attendees to meet or catch up with other members, even though we were not together.

Spring Conference will be held May 5-7, 2021. At this time we are not able to confirm if this will be in person or held virtual. In the new year, more information will be made available to membership.

The Conference Planning Committee is actively seeking members to help plan for our Spring Conference and we are still looking for Chairs for the 2021-22 year. If you are interested in joining please reach out to Brynn Juranek (Brynn.juranek@rasmussen.edu).

Professional Development holds MAFAA Events

Shannon Sullivan and Anita Ostercamp, Committee Co-Chairs

Thirty MAFAA members participated in the virtual Professional Development event on **Hot Topics** in November. The topics featured at this event centered around Success in Changing Circumstances—focusing on change in the school environment, student success, and financial wellness.

Mr. Jon McGee, Head of School at Saint John's Prep in Collegeville, Minnesota, shared his expertise and insight on the topic of leading in change. Dr. David Jones, VP of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management at Minnesota State University, Mankato, led a discussion on student success. The half-day event ended with a panel on financial literacy. Participating in the panel were: JoElyn Krohn of Martin Luther College, Kathy Czech of St. Catherine University, Brad Riebel of Sallie Mae, and Carol Swenson of Ascendium Education. Valuable insights on the need for financial literacy and ideas for implementing such a program were shared.

The committee continued their lunchtime series, **Better Together**, by hosting a virtual session on December 16. It was a great venue to network and participate or just listen to whatever topic of the day spurred on the participants.

The next Professional Development event will be held in February and will offer a NASFAA U credentialing session. In March, the committee will host the FinAid 101 training for newer financial aid and other college professionals. Stay tuned to the MAFAA listserv for the committee's announcement of dates and registration.

2021 Outlook for Higher Education Policy

Anna Smith de Yoma, MAFAA Legislative Issues Liaison

With President-Elect Joe Biden being confirmed by the Electoral College, we are well on our way to the start of a new administration. There are big proposals on the horizon for higher education and specifically financial aid. As many of us are aware, the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act is years overdue. Chances of passing an Higher Education Act Reauthorization bill have largely been up in the air as Congress is focused on the current state of the pandemic. With the senate officially in place and one party holding control of all three branches, we could see some movement after the pandemic gets under control. However, with such a slim majority, the filibuster and division even within the Democratic party, it is likely there will need to be some compromise and reconciliation of HEA bills. At the minimum, I believe we are likely to see more smaller updates added to budget and relief bills. Some proposals currently being pushed are more economic relief measures for institutions, a greater substantial increase in Pell Grants, movement on federal Dream Act legislation, and the inclusion of college students previously left out of stimulus payments.

In the more immediate future, we are focused on COVID-19 relief funds for institutions and students. Right before the new year, many updates were passed through including additional COVID relief funding and FAFSA simplification. Some [notable highlights](#) include \$22.4 billion in additional funds earmarked for the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), elimination of the term “Expected Family Contribution” and shortening the FAFSA by the 23-24 cycle, restoration of Pell eligibility for incarcerated individuals and convicted felons, and repealing SULA. I highly recommend attending NASFAA’s upcoming [webinar](#) on Friday, January 15, to hear a detailed summary of the new updates and changes. As the newly installed representatives get underway be on the lookout for more proposals coming out soon. There is also the uncertainty of the state of loan repayment, as the current relief was extended through the start of the new administration. The Biden Administration has publicly stated they are exploring options for the cancellation of some federal student loan debt, preferably through the legislature and not executive order.

President-Elect Biden made good on his commitment in choosing a career educator, Dr. Miguel Cardona, as his pick to lead the Department of Education as Secretary of Education. Nominee Dr. Cardona has a focus in bilingual and multicultural education and is fluent in Spanish. Given this experience, he is said to “have his eyes focused on low-income students of color.” He does bring some higher education experience as well as he taught as an adjunct professor at the University of Connecticut for four years. In his nomination announcement, Present-Biden sung his praise, “He will also strive to eliminate long-standing inequities and close racial and socioeconomic opportunity gaps -- and expand access to community colleges, training, and public four-year colleges and universities to improve student success and grow a stronger, more prosperous, and more inclusive middle class.” Dr. Cardona followed up in his [acceptance of the nomination](#) stating, “For far too long, we’ve let college become inaccessible to too many Americans for reasons that have nothing to do with their aptitude or their aspirations and everything to do with cost burdens, and, unfortunately, an internalized culture of low expectations.”

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2021 Outlook for Higher Education Policy, *continued*

Overall, there are many unknowns about his specific higher education stances and proposed focus areas, but those should become clear in the coming weeks throughout the confirmation process. Additionally, we will want to pay close attention to who is named Under Secretary as they will most likely have much more high education experience. Another thing to watch out of the Department of Education this year, President-Elect Biden has expressed some desire to undo several of the policies put in place by Secretary DeVos such as the Title IX provisions she implemented. One final important note at the federal level, Dr. Jill Biden, the future first lady, has announced her specific focus of her work as First Lady will be centered on achieving debt free public community and technical college across the country. She has been a community college professor for decades.

At the State level, we will again have a divided legislature ensuring that legislation will have to be bipartisan. Another layer of complexity is additional swing votes in the Senate with the newly formed Independent Caucus as two former members of the DFL left the party. We are facing a tightened state budget as the surplus diminished under the economic conditions caused by the pandemic. We will start to know more about the funding and policy proposals on the table in the coming weeks as the legislature begins the new session.

In the coming months, I plan to share resources, tips and opportunities surrounding advocacy to prepare you to connect with your elected officials to share your opinion and input regarding the variety of legislation being discussed. I, for one, am hopeful that it is going to be a big year for our field on Capitol Hill.

Please **save the date** for an upcoming event hosted in collaboration with Minnesota Association for College Admissions Counseling (MACAC). We will be organizing a **Virtual Day on the Hill for February 23-24**. Stay tuned for details and sign ups.

MAFAA 2021 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan 15	Executive Council meeting	Virtual
Feb TBA	NASFAA U training	Virtual
Feb 19	Executive Council meeting	Virtual
Feb 23-24	MN Day on the Hill	Virtual
Mar 19	Executive Council meeting	Virtual
March TBA	FinAid 101 for Newer Professionals	Virtual
Apr 16	Executive Council meeting	Virtual
May 5-7	MAFAA Spring Conference	Virtual Madden's Resort
June 27-30	NASFAA Conference	National Harbor, Maryland

MINNESOTA
ASSOCIATION OF
FINANCIAL AID
ADMINISTRATORS

MAFAA Matters is published online four times per year. Submission deadline for the April 2021 issue is March 12. Please email contributions to MAFAA Matters Editor, Carol Swenson
cswenson@ascendiumeducation.org

MAFAA's Statement of Purpose

The Minnesota Association of Financial Aid Administrators (MAFAA) is an association of professionals committed to the principle that no one should be denied access to higher education for financial reasons. MAFAA is dedicated to working with students, educators, policy makers, and others to ensure that adequate programs of financial assistance are available to every student attending a Minnesota institution of higher education.



Living With Passion

RETIREMENTS

Karen Kilzer is retiring after serving Normandale students for 27 years. Her expertise in childcare and work-study will be missed.

Jane Erberle, Loan Officer, is retiring after serving Normandale students for 20 years.

Liz (Elizabeth) Holm who manages the Grad/Professional Schools is retiring from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities effective January 15.

Also retiring January 15 is **Eleanor Pijut**, who had been in financial aid at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities for many years before moving to a position that coordinates all the University campuses in the central office of Academic Support Resources.

Four people at the University of Minnesota Duluth have or will be retiring.

Scott Schweikert, Financial Aid Business Analyst, retired on November 5.

Hilary Ramsey, Financial Aid Program Manager, and **Kathy Peterson**, Financial Aid Program Manager are both retiring on January 15.

Brenda Herzig, Director of Financial Aid, is also retiring on January 15 after 32 years in Financial Aid at UMD, 23 of those years as the Financial Aid Director. In retirement, she hopes to visit both of her children who live out of state. She and her husband will spend time in the summer at their newly purchased family cabin on Rainy Lake near International Falls. Brenda also says she's going to make sure she vacations in a warm climate for several weeks in the winters.

**Congratulations to all recent retirees
and thank you for your dedication
to Minnesota students!**



— *Live with Passion* —