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Indiana's College Goal Sunday Largest in U.S.

Marty Case & Jacki Switzer, CGS Co-Chairs

Since 1989, Indiana has offered College Goal Sunday to Hoosiers needing help completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. As the originating state and the model for the program currently being offered in 35 other states plus the District of Columbia, we continue to assist more families on College Goal Sunday than any other state in the nation. In 2008, our volunteers helped 2,920 attendees through the process. That's an increase of 4.3% over 2007.

In 2008, 440 volunteers assisted Indiana families at College Goal Sunday—an increase of 7.8% over 2007. We only had 17 volunteers who registered in time to have a shirt ordered but who did not show up. (In the past that number has been much larger, a perennial budget aggravation). So thank you to the volunteers who registered on time and followed through with your commitment. We appreciate your years of service to College Goal Sunday and hope that you will continue to support this worthwhile effort in Indiana in the years to come.

The evaluations from students and families attending were of interest this year (at least the ones we've seen so far). Attendees overwhelmingly suggested that the sites without computer access should try to provide it next year, and in keeping with our ISFAA tradition, all appear to want free food and drinks. Responses to presentations were very positive, and we saw over and over again comments such as, "Keep doing what you're doing. This was extremely helpful to this anxious parent."

One thing that differed this year from last was that our PR firm, MillerWhite, asked that each site coordinator (except at the Indianapolis sites) provide a media coor-

dinator to follow up with their local media outlets to make sure they were using the materials that MillerWhite provided to every media source in the state.

National CGS provided some professionally produced television and radio spots, all of which, and more, were provided to every media known outlet in the state. What we have found in the last couple of years is that without a local contact, those public service announcements and advertisements—which would draw our target audiences to our sites—are not being used by local media to the extent they could be.

If you are at a site that has had declining attendance over the last couple of years, please consider participating in the *media blitz* leading up to College Goal Sunday 2009.

Several sites had significant increases in attendance. Some of those sites and their increases were: Bloomington 29.8%, Ft. Wayne 72.4%, Gary 107.5%, Hammond 63.1%, Indy Arlington 32.5%, Logansport 32.3%, Merrillville 35.7%, Terre Haute 30.2%, Vincennes 250.0%, and Warsaw 91.1%. In

(Continued on page 2)



Tim Nace (Taylor University) presenting at Marion High School



Students registering for CGS in Gary

addition, the new site, Rensselaer, had 52 attendees in their 1st year.

We strongly believe that sites saw these increases because of their media efforts, and those sites with decreased attendance are probably not getting the local media coverage they need. Site coordinators need to appoint a media coordinator early in the process, and that person needs to follow up with local

media outlets, schools, etc. to make sure the message is getting to those who need our help.

Some feel that media coverage should be a responsibility of the site. The reality is that CGS no longer has the budget to hire someone to follow up with media as we did years ago. Just as with most things in the Financial Aid world, College Goal Sunday has to figure out

In 2008, our volunteers helped 2,920 attendees through the process. That's an increase of 4.3% in attendance from 2007.

how to do more with less.

As this is the last year of our three-year commitment to serve as co-chairs for College Goal Sunday, we want to thank all who volunteered and all who served on our steering committee. We are happy to hand over the reins to the next pair of capable co-chairs, and we look forward to assisting them in this worthwhile endeavor.



Robert Helgeson presents to families at Valparaiso University.



Students receiving one-on-one help from CGS Volunteers at Saint Joseph's College in Rensselaer

Responses to presentations were very positive, and we saw over and over again comments such as, "Keep doing what you're doing. This was extremely helpful to this anxious parent."

From the President's Perspective

I don't know about you, but, I like beginnings. I like the beginning of the school year, the beginning of the calendar year, the beginning of a vacation, the beginning of a new basketball season (not this year, particularly for my Purple Aces, but usually), and so on. There is something about a fresh start. Even New Year's Resolutions are something I try each year—I suppose hope springs eternal with my "weight loss" one. But it is reassuring to think I can start over with a clean slate and plan in a new way. Whether it is organizing my desk, cleaning out a closet or starting a fitness routine, there is something "powerful" about at least *thinking* I can control in a different way the tasks that lie ahead.

In the same way, I found myself today, during a UE Open House presentation on Martin Luther King Day, thinking about the beginnings these students and families will experience over these next several months. These seniors will experience the beginning of a "higher education" on many of our campuses.

No matter the age of the student, I expect quite a few of them probably feel some bewilderment, uncertainty, fear and trepidation at the new things that await them in post-secondary education.

My message today is that their encounters with the financial aid community ought to leave them with answers, encouragement and the spirit of possibility. As our high school financial aid nights wind down, as we successfully pull off another College Goal Sunday, and as we talk with prospective students this spring, let your attitude be one of helpfulness to all we meet. The answer about financial aid eligibility is not always positive, but it can be given in a positive way. Not everyone will get the "free" money, but everyone can be advised in a helpful manner—even if it involves payment plans or various loans.

Every day as we come to work, we pick up the mantle to impact student lives. We have the chance to be the one who makes a student's decision easier

because of the information we share. In the next several weeks we have opportunities to help entering students make decisions that can ultimately change their lives. We might be the person who helps some student one day be a student "success story."

FAFSA questions and aid explanations may be *old hat* to us, but we must keep in mind that some people have never heard any of this jargon that we use. They don't realize the importance of a deadline. If we have a responsibility to help students achieve their educational potential, then I encourage all ISFAA members to take the positive approach with families over these next critical months. Be encouraging, helpful and responsive. Make a difference in someone's life. Make this season of FAFSA filing the best you have ever experienced because of your attitude of helpfulness. There is an American proverb that says: "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." Make the most of it. "Aha"—another beginning. Regards,

JoAnn

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Matthew Nettleton

Midwest Regional Account Executive

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As students and families prepare their 2007 federal income tax returns

Pointing out Potential Tax Savings

Sue Allmon, Account Executive, USA Funds Services

Tax law changes in recent years have added and expanded higher education tax benefits. As your students and their families prepare their 2007 federal income tax returns, you can help them see if they qualify for savings under these tax law provisions:

Student loan interest deduction—Taxpayers may be able to reduce their taxable income by up to \$2,500 for interest paid during the tax year on their student loans.

Hope Tax Credit—Taxpayers may reduce their federal income tax by as much as \$1,650 per student for out-of-pocket tuition and fees for each of the first two years of study toward a degree or certificate from a college or vocational school. Students must be enrolled at least half time to qualify.

Lifetime Learning Credit—This credit offers the opportunity for taxpayers to reduce their federal income tax by as much as \$2,000 for qualified tuition and related expenses paid for students enrolled in an eligible postsecondary institution. The maximum credit equals 20 percent of the first \$10,000 of qualified expenses.

Deduction for higher education expenses—Students and parents may be able to reduce their taxable income by up to \$4,000 for qualified higher education expenses that they paid during the tax year. This deduction may benefit them if

their income is too high to qualify for either the Hope or Lifetime Learning credits.

Employer-provided education benefits—Taxpayers may exclude from their taxable income up to \$5,250 in higher education assistance provided by their employers each year.

529 college savings plans—Students and their families may be able to exclude from their taxable income earnings from qualified tuition programs, commonly known as 529 savings plans, that they used to pay qualified education expenses. These plans permit you to prepay or invest to pay higher education expenses.

Coverdell Education Savings Accounts—Taxpayers may contribute up to \$2,000 annually to a Coverdell Education Savings Account, formerly known as education IRAs, on behalf of a designated beneficiary who is younger than age 18 or is a special-needs beneficiary, to pay qualified education expenses. Although these contributions are not tax-deductible, they will grow tax-free until withdrawn.

To help students and their families determine eligibility, you may wish to refer them to a tax adviser or the IRS, on the web at www.irs.gov or by calling (800) 829-1040. They also can order IRS Publication 970, "Tax Benefits for Education."

USA Funds offers a free brochure, "Higher-Education Tax Benefits—Expanded Taxpayer Savings," at www.usafunds.org. The web site offers more information about higher education tax benefits at www.usafunds.org/taxbenefits.

New Bill May Change SSACI's Ten Year Rule

Laurie Gavrin, Director for Research and Policy Analysis SSACI,
with Kathy Moore

With the 2008 session of the legislature focused on property tax reform, one would think that SSACI would have a quiet time of things. However, a number of pieces of legislation affecting SSACI have surfaced this year. Three focused on the same topic: SSACI's ten year rule.

Eligibility in a time frame

SSACI's code stipulates that once a student uses one semester of grant, a ten-year time frame begins. During that ten-year time frame, a student can use up to a total of eight semesters of grant eligibility, provided on-time and correct application is made and the student is otherwise eligible for a grant. But if the student sat out or dropped out, the ten-year time frame could come to an end before the student used eight semesters of eligibility—meaning that even if the student were otherwise eligible at a later date based on FAFSA information,

SSACI is prevented from making an award. This is particularly troubling when a student has used only one semester of eligibility.

Our research showed that this rule mainly affected women, three to one, many of whom left college to raise families and now wish to complete their education. One of these three bills (Rep. Porter's bill HB1049) has passed out of committee; it was based on the recommendations of the legislative summer study group on education. If ultimately passed, SSACI will be able to include those students who would otherwise have been affected by the ten year rule in its award calculations this spring. SSACI feels this is a good thing to happen for adult education in Indiana.

Other House Bills in play

In addition, there have been several bills proposed which expand on teacher education (HB1184), purple heart recipients and SSACI's CVO program (HB1249), and foster children and SSACI's 21st Century program

(HB1165). With the exception of the last bill, these bills entail new costs, which means they will have a hard time moving forward in a non-budget year.

Figures to be proud of

For those with burning questions about SSACI's programs, funding and progress over the past year, the 2006-07 annual report is now available on SSACI's web site, www.ssaci.in.gov; click on the link "Calendar and News" in the black bar on the left and then the link for the report center. Overall, SSACI awarded \$216,280,041, with total administrative expenses of 0.98 percent. Of this \$216M, \$163M was spent for the Frank O'Bannon Grant, \$20M for the Twenty-First Century Supplemental Program and \$17M for the Children of Veterans and Officers Program, the three largest programs SSACI supports. Over 69,000 grants were made, providing over 48,000 students with college tuition assistance. And that is something about which SSACI and colleges alike can be proud.



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"USA Funds is helping me pursue my dream."

When I graduate from medical school, I want to be able to offer free health-care services to Hispanic residents in the Indianapolis area who need them. I'm half-Hispanic and speak Spanish fluently, and it's one of my goals in medicine to serve that population. Understanding how to run the business side of a medical practice will help me accomplish that goal, so I wanted to take advantage of a special MBA program for medical students at Indiana University. I have a wife, a 2-year-old and another baby on the way, and my wife and I weren't sure we could swing it. When the letter from USA Funds arrived in the mail telling me I qualified for the USA Funds® Access to Education scholarship, we knew we could go forward with our plans. It was the answer to our prayers – the scholarship is helping to relieve some of the financial burden of the MBA program and allowing me to pursue my dream.

To learn more about how USA Funds helps students pursue their dreams, call Sue Allmon toll-free (866) 497-USAF, Ext. 0424, or visit www.usafunds.org.

There for you

USA Funds®

William Province
Medical Student
Indiana University School of Medicine

Rosie's Rainbow

A student success story

When Early Childhood Education student Rosie couldn't find employment and she and her children were evicted from their home, returning to school was the last thing on her mind.

Despite a successful career as an administrative assistant, Rosie found herself in an unexpected situation—more expenses than income. After struggling for months, she was unable to maintain payments on her home, and she and her children were evicted. At the same time, she lost her job. "I had never had a hard time finding a good paying job," said Rosie. "It's a frightening thought. A lot of good people are just one paycheck away from being homeless."

Although scared, Rosie chose not to turn to her family for help. "My family would have helped, but I wouldn't

have learned anything. I felt this happened for a reason, and I had to face it on my own. I had faith in God, that He would lead me to where I needed to go."

Rosie and her children turned to Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN), a community and faith-based organization which helps homeless families. Through IHN she found a place to stay while getting her finances and life back together. Rosie faced obstacles in her job search—she couldn't get past the first interview.

Inspired by her children and grandchildren, Rosie decided to take a chance and contacted Ivy Tech Indianapolis. "It was really easy to get enrolled," she recalls. "I called in December 2005 and was registered for classes by January. I didn't have any money for tuition, but I was directed to the Financial Aid office

and the TRiO program. The staff helped me get the assistance I needed."

Life as a college student and parent wasn't easy for Rosie. She had to balance family and school. "I put a lot of pressure on myself to make A's and B's," Rosie said. "Talking with Amy and Sarah from TRiO helped me realize that I knew the path I had to take. I just needed to walk it."

Rosie will graduate with her associate degree in Early Childhood Education in May 2008. After graduation she is planning on transferring her credits toward a bachelor degree in Elementary Education. Reflecting upon her experiences, Rosie says, "It's important to remember that at the end of the storm, there is a rainbow. When you have a dream, you have to move toward it. No one else will do it for you."

Where can students turn to find scholarships and grants? Or name something that's better than a loan

**Julie Nicholson, TG Senior
Regional Account Executive**

In the coming months, more students will visit the financial aid office for help with the FAFSA and college loan applications. Although borrowing money to pay for college is a good option for many, it's important to encourage students to research and apply for scholarships and grants before considering loans.

Scholarships and grants—gift aid—are the ideal forms of financial aid for students because, unlike loans, they don't have to be repaid. Unfortunately many students don't bother applying for gift aid because they believe their grades aren't good enough.

Remind students there are many unique scholarships offered by a variety of sources wanting to invest in higher education. With so many options it's a mis-

take for anyone to assume they won't be eligible for a scholarship or grant.

Scholarships are not only awarded for merit in academics, athletics or a particular field of study. Many are also awarded based on ethnic background, religious affiliation and special interests. Students should research all possible sources of scholarships and grants in their local community and state, such as schools, colleges and religious and civic organizations.

Below is a rundown of some obvious—and some not so obvious—sources students can use to find scholarships and grants.

High school counselors and teachers

Students should discuss college majors and career possibilities with teachers and counselors to get suggestions on

the types of scholarships available for someone with their interests.

High school library, public library or bookstore

Libraries and local bookstores almost always carry directories and guides on scholarships. Students should talk to their school librarian for more information.


The Internet

Many web sites like Adventures In Education (www.AIE.org), FinAid! (www.finaid.org), and the Princeton Review's web site (www.princetonreview.com) provide free scholarship searches.

Colleges and Universities

The college or university a student plans to attend can help with finding scholarship programs. Students can call the

(Continued on page 8)



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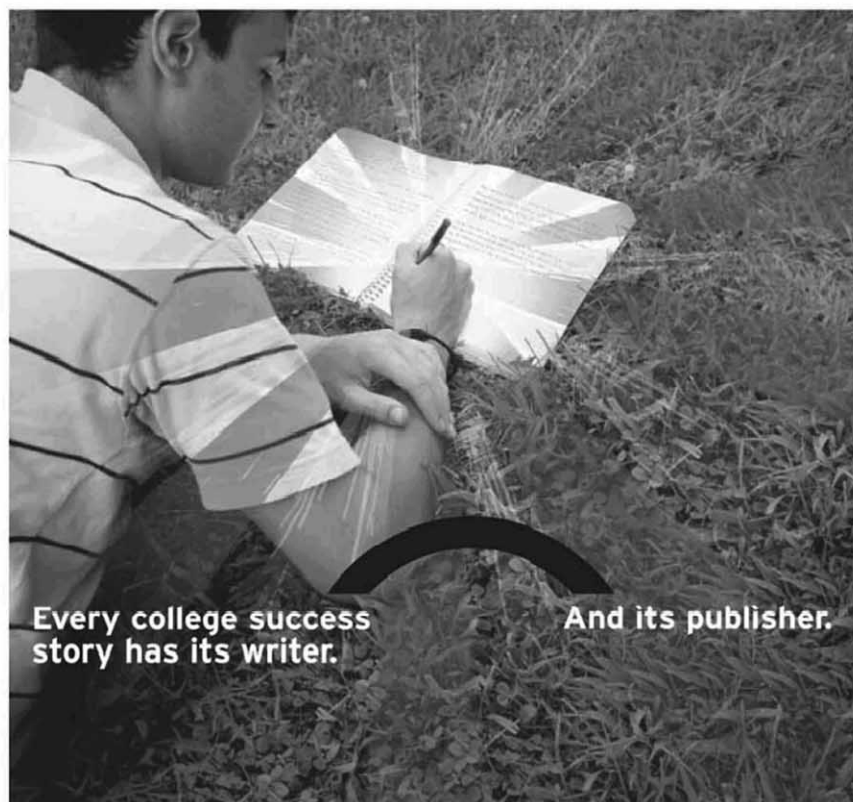
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admissions office or financial aid office and ask for help on finding scholarships. Colleges and universities are also good places to find out more about scholarships offered by state and local government agencies.

Parents' employers

There may be a scholarship fund or program available to students through the company where their parents or guardians work

Churches, synagogues or other religious organizations

Religious organizations have long histories of creating programs to help youth with education. Students should speak with their minister, rabbi, priest or other religious leader about available scholarship programs.

Local, state and national businesses

Many types of businesses contribute in some form or other to scholarship funds for students—it's part of their responsibility to participate as positive members of their community.

Branches of the military

All branches of the military have programs to provide scholarships to students. In most cases, the student will likely have to serve in some capacity to become eligible. Many students who need assistance to attend college and also want to develop leadership skills and work experience serve

in the military and then go to college on military-funded scholarships.

Julie Nicholson is a Senior Regional Account Executive with TG serving schools in ISFAA. You can reach Julie at (800) 252-9743, ext. 2504, or by e-mail at julie.nicholson@tgsic.org. Additional information about TG can be found online at www.tgsic.org.





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Executive Committee Member Focus

Kathy Purvis, President Elect

As the President Elect of ISFAA, Kathy Purvis will be no stranger to *Bits and Bytes* readers during the 2008-2009 newsletter year! Our next President was kind enough to share some other details of her life in and away from the office. She is married to Dale, and they live in a very small town (Hagerstown), leading to an hour commute every day to Indianapolis. Our next President is a huge dog lover; she has two chocolate labs, Ella and Lance. A graduate of Indiana University, Kathy, while claiming to love many sports, singled out NASCAR for specific mention to this reporter.

Q. Kathy, please tell Bits and Bytes about your current position.

I am the Director of Student Financial Aid Services at IUPUI.

Q. How do you trace your beginnings in Financial Aid?

I started at IU East in Richmond as a clerk in the budget office, and the financial aid clerk's position opened up. It paid more, so I applied. I had no idea what I was getting into. Now 25 years later I am glad I made the move.

Q. Tell us about your current role with ISFAA and being on the executive committee.

I am currently the President Elect. As President Elect I chair the Finance Committee and the Bylaws Committee. In addition, I serve as the Indiana Representative to the MASFAA Executive Board.

Q. Do you have a least favorite thing about your profession?

This is a difficult question. I certainly wish our profession had more funding to provide to more students, but overall I like what I do each day. I don't wake up and wish I didn't have to be a financial aid administrator.

Q. Do you have a story about a student you helped or some event that moved you over the years or showed the good work that FA folks do?

I think over the years the cards and thank you letters that students send our office, to the staff, just makes me feel good about the work we do for the IUPUI student.

Q. Do you have any thought or message you would like to pass along to the other ISFAA members?

Get involved! It has made such a difference for me in my career and to my institution. I have other people at different schools who I can call on if I have a question about how they do a certain process. I learn new and better ways of administering financial aid by sharing with others. I would not have this if I did not step out of my comfort zone and got involved in our Association.

Thank you, Kathy!

What to give a student who has everything

A Crash Course in Credit Repair

Tasha McDaniel, Great Lakes Training Consultant

College students today are bombarded with credit card offers. They report that their primary source for selecting a credit card vendor is through the mail. By the time students are in their final year of college, 91 percent report carrying at least one credit card, and 56 percent carry four cards or more.

With the temptation of easy credit, students are bound to encounter difficulties. When they do get into trouble, it's important for them to know what they can do to *repair* their credit. Having good credit gives students more options and enables them to do the things they want to do. Offer your students these credit repair tips to get them back on the right track.

Know Your Score. To improve your credit score, you need to know what your credit report looks like and what your current score is. You can receive your credit report for free from annualcreditreport.com. Your credit report describes your financial history, but does not give your credit score, which represents how well you've handled credit in the past. Generally, scores below 650 make it more difficult or costly to obtain credit. You can obtain your FICO credit scores for a nominal fee from myfico.com.

Keep Your Balances Low. It's also important to keep your card balances low. Keeping your balance to 30% of the

credit card's limit will help increase your score.

Know Your Credit Card Limits. Know the limits on your credit cards and make sure the limit on your credit report is the same limit you have on the card. If it is not the same, ask your lender to update the information on your credit report.

Keep Old Cards. The longer you've had a credit card, the better your credit history will be. If you have old cards that you don't use often, charge something periodically in order to keep the account active. It's important not to close unused accounts as a short-term strategy to raise your credit score.

Use Your Status as a Good Customer. If you've been a good customer, you might be able to erase one late payment from your credit history or have your interest rate lowered. Ask your lender for help in removing a late payment or lowering your rate.

Correct Errors. If your credit report contains errors, make sure to correct them. Your credit score is calculated based on the information in your report.

For more information on improving your credit score, visit myfico.com/CreditEducation/ImproveYourScore.aspx.

For more information on helping students improve their credit, please call Doug Hess or Dave Bowman, your Great Lakes marketing representatives. Tasha McDaniel is the School Training Director with Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation.

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In the Red Zone

**Jim Patton, Director of Financial Aid
University of Southern Indiana**

Recently, a TV commercial used the phrase, “the Retirement Red Zone.” Defined as the period five years before and after retirement, it is when we should become more conservative with our retirement planning. Personally, besides looming financial concerns, other questions come to mind as I approach *THE END*.

Why did I stay in this profession for 30 years? Tracy Reisinger, of Marylhurst University, addressed colleagues’ questions regarding why she had not *bailed out* from her recent post on Finaid-I. She said in part, “First and foremost, I love the people in this profession. I have met so many wonderful, caring and conscientious friends and colleagues... They are the most hard-working and dedicated people I know. I am so proud to be a part of their community.”

I share Tracy’s heartfelt sentiments. As I reflect on my 23 years in Indiana, I too remember some of our larger-than-life financial aid personalities. Some who come to mind are Mike Phillips, Jimmy Ross, and Kathleen White. These are people who enjoyed life fully, and in so doing enriched ours. I am proud to be part of the community of which they were such an important part.

Now it’s your turn. Reflecting on your years in Indiana, do you recall ISFAA’s 50th birthday party? Where is Dan “Cupcake” Stockwell today? We couldn’t afford a cake for someone to pop out of, so we made do with a cupcake costume. Guess who could fit into the costume?

Does your ISFAA experience include Mark Franke’s won-

derful story-telling, or Steve Morris’ scholarly explanation of new legislation? When was the last time you called Joyce Hall, Bob Zellers, or (fill-in-the blank) _____ for advice?

Did you make a mental note of Jerry Lewis’ *formal attire* at the spring conference in Clarksville? Did you know that Jerry championed ISFAA’s first recorded early awareness efforts? But enough sentimentality, old folks are supposed to offer advice/opinions:

My first observation is that technology should not be more important than people. It is estimated that as many as 20 percent of Indiana families do not have computers in their homes, and another 20 percent have inadequate Internet access. Over reliance on technology creates an excuse for not working with those who most need our help. The excuse is called *student self service*.

My advice is not to allow your job to become more important than everything else in your life. When that happens, you are less fun to be with (with whom to be?). Balance in your life is not just important, it is crucial.

Share your good ideas with others. When someone latches onto something you have created, it is the greatest compliment you will receive professionally. I should know—I have complimented many of my colleagues this way!

As I approach retirement on March 14, I am content to subscribe to Booker T. Washington’s view that “Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he [or she] has overcome while trying to succeed.” I don’t know if I will miss the obstacles, but I will miss my ISFAA colleagues.

Tired of waiting for answers on student loans? ...not with ISM.

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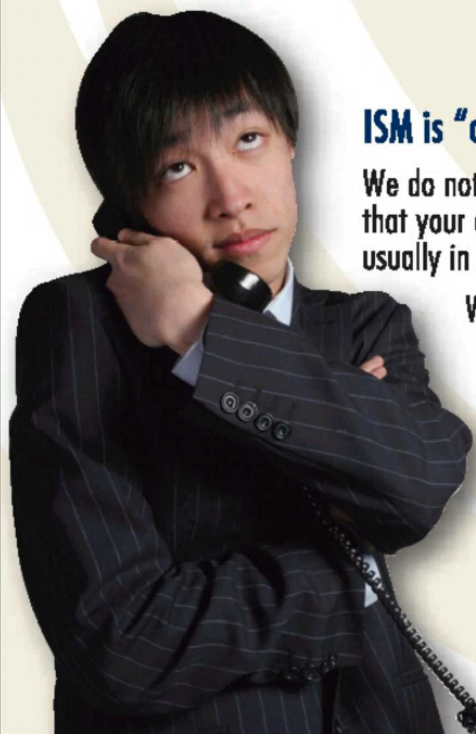
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Our representatives have an average of seven years experience and know the student loan program!

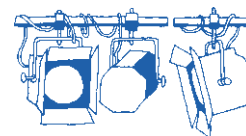
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Committee Spotlight Governmental Relations



Co-Chairs Mark Franke and Bob Zellers

A colleague once jokingly referred to the Governmental Relations committee membership as the "Old Crusties" of ISFAA. The committee membership does seem to include many of the—not to put too fine a point on it—more experienced financial aid administrators in the state. Given the complexity of legislative issues at the state and federal levels, this depth of experience is essential to understanding the implications of policy proposals and changes.

The committee membership is assembled to get the broadest possible backgrounds and perspectives. Balance among publics and privates and proprietaries, large campuses and small, are all important considerations in selecting committee members. And in spite of its reputation as the ISFAA old folks home, the committee does look to include younger members who

represent the future leadership of the association. Many of ISFAA's recent presidents served on Governmental Relations prior to their election.

The largest proportion of the committee's time is spent on state, specifically SSACI, issues. ISFAA's close relationship with SSACI is maintained largely through the Governmental Relations committee. SSACI leaders are invited to each of the committee's meetings, and much of the agenda is devoted to state issues. One or more Governmental Relations members attend SSACI commission meetings and speak to associational concerns.

State matters come to the forefront each winter when the General Assembly is in session. Governmental Relations tracks bills and pays particular attention to the state biennial budget, which sets the parameters around which SSACI deter-

mines award levels. Even though 2008 was not a budget year, several financial aid bills were monitored by the committee. A bill to end the ten year rule for SSACI awards was supported by committee members. Several other bills which affect the CVO program were not supported, including one to eliminate part-time students from funding.

Because of the rapid pace of the legislative session, the committee generally does not take a public stance on behalf of ISFAA but instead works through individual members who speak to their institutional state relations directors to provide the financial aid profession's perspective on pending legislation.

Governmental Relations deals with federal issues in several ways. A committee representative sits on the MASFAA Federal Issues committee and commu-

(Continued on page 13)



Tony Hollin chairman & CEO



Judith Kerzner senior vice president



Elena Lubimtzev senior vice president



Steve Queisser vice president



Karen Gibson vice president



Paige Hendricks assistant vice president

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nicates important discussions back to ISFAA. The committee also drafts the federal issues letter carried by the President Elect to Indiana's congressional delegation in the spring. This year's white paper focused on Pell funding, continuing FFEL issues and the proliferation of narrowly targeted programs at the expense of broader program funding.

A unique opportunity arose last fall for the committee to participate in the annual Indiana Pathways to College Network conference. One committee member served as responder to keynote speaker Tom Mortenson's presentation on college access and participation, and an ISFAA panel led a breakout session focused on the interaction between merit and need-based aid in campus awarding decisions.

That is the Governmental Relations year in review. Minutes from each meeting are posted to the ISFAA listserv so that the membership can stay informed, and committee members welcome any comments or suggestions from colleagues.

The Expanding Role of the Financial Aid Officer

Bringing Better Service to Students and Higher ROI for Colleges and Universities

**Leonard Gude, Vice President,
Financial Aid Solutions, Regent**

Financial aid officers at colleges and universities across the country are becoming an increasingly important part of the institutions they serve. It wasn't always that way. During my 30 years in higher education—including my position as a university financial aid administrator (FAA)—I observed that at many institutions the FAAs work in something of a silo and are excluded from the strategic planning process of the institution.

Amazingly, the part of the financial structure of the institution that most directly touches students and families—one that could be a powerful force for success—

was operating essentially on its own. With limited tools and only sporadic participation in the strategic planning process, there was a serious disconnect between the financial aid office and the other economic centers of the institution.

Hopefully those days are over or, at least, they are fast coming to a close. The trend today is that, at many institutions, the financial aid office has become a much more important part of the overall financial strategy of the institution in ways that might surprise even veteran aid administrators. FAAs are taking on a higher profile role. One significant reason is that new innova-

(Continued on page 14)

tive tools, using the latest technology, now enable the financial aid office to track and report key performance information in real-time. They also—for the first time—allow these metrics to be shared instantly with senior administrators within an institution. These new tools enable greater accuracy, access, speed and accountability.

The effects? Financial aid has become 1) a stronger recruitment tool that can act more quickly in the application process to attract top students who might otherwise go elsewhere, 2) a more service-oriented system with technology doing much of the administrative grunt work and enabling financial aid officers to devote more of their time to interacting directly with students and families, 3) a means for retention of students who would otherwise leave for financial reasons, 4) a better fiscal management system, and 5) a more successful way to handle compliance and audits.

Financial aid plays a bigger role today than ever before. In 1993, \$41.9 billion in student aid was awarded, 75% of it in federal funds. Today, that figure has increased to \$200 billion with nearly two thirds of students getting some form of assistance. This underscores the important role that financial aid plays in the decision-making process of America's top high school students as they search for the right fit in a college or university. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the percentages of students receiving assistance at various types of colleges are:

| | |
|--|-------|
| 2-Year Public Colleges | 46.8% |
| 4-Year Public Colleges & Universities | 68.6% |
| 4-Year Private Colleges & Universities | 83.3% |
| Private, for Profit (Proprietary) Institutions | 89.9% |
| All Institutional Types Combined | 63.2% |

Here are the five primary ways in which technology has increased the importance of the financial aid officer and how those officers in turn help their institutions to a far greater extent than ever before:

Recruitment. Research has shown that increasing the number of contacts with prospective students increases the likelihood of their enrolling at your institution. While the admissions office may contact a prospective student three or four times during the decision process, the financial aid office does so even more frequently. Some financial aid management systems

enable institutions to correspond via mail and electronically with prospective students and parents at home and at multiple email addresses at the same time.

Responding quickly has become another important aspect of the admissions process. By automating the application processing and communications processes, the financial aid office increases its efficiency and effectively in reaching students early and quickly. Staying in front of the students, at the appropriate intervals, reminds them that the institution is truly interested in them, and ultimately improves the yield for the institution.

*Less time entering data
and creating reports means
more time interacting with
students and parents.*

Quality Student Service. An important component of success is quality student service. FAAs can make a good impression on students and parents—by being available, responsive, and helpful. Technology is automating many of the rote but necessary administrative chores in the aid office. Financial aid management solutions can help institutions by automating key processes, such as tracking, packaging, awarding, communicating, reporting, and disbursing of funds. Less time entering data and creating reports means that the staff can devote more time interacting (face-to-face and on the phone) with students and their parents.

Retention. Slow awarding and delivery of funds due to a poor data management system in a financial aid office can often result in students failing to continue enrollment at the institution. For example, if students do not know how much aid that they will receive, they may elect not to register for classes. If they have not received funds necessary to purchase books, pay housing, meal and transportation costs, they may withdraw from classes. This can be costly in several ways. First, the institution loses enrollment funding. Second, if the student withdraws before 60% of the term has ended, a portion of federal aid may have to be returned resulting in a receivable for the student. Both the student and the institution lose. The use of newer technology enables the FAA to speed up the award-

ing and aid disbursement processes. Students get their money on time, pay their tuition on time and are less apt to leave.

Sound Fiscal Management. Enrollment optimization is a strategic imperative for every institution. Financial aid plays a key role in the realization of this goal. At many institutions, funding is contingent upon enrollments. If an institution can't process financial aid in a timely manner, it won't be able to maximize enrollment at the beginning of a term. Even if students have a firm promise for tuition deferments, they are uncertain as to whether they will have money for books and their other educationally related expenses. Consequently, they may enroll only part time (if at all) as a result—thus the institution's enrollment and/or FTE count goes down costing the institution money that it would otherwise have received.

Also, any delay in receipt of funds for payment of tuition and other institutional charges negatively impacts the cash flow of the institution. Once again, the use of newer technology to speed up the awarding and aid disbursement processes can improve both cash flow and revenue of the institution.

Compliance and Audits. In this day of ever-changing federal regulations, accountability and compliance have gained increasing importance. Major mistakes discovered during financial aid audits could result in institutions to have to repay millions of dollars. Security, controls and safeguards embedded in the modern financial aid management system can help institutions avoid them. These controls significantly reduce the incidence of mistakes, and when they do occur, lessen the negative impact on the institution.

The use of modern technology tools breed confidence throughout an institution and have made the role of the financial aid officer more important than ever. With compliance and regulatory pressures abound, higher education institutions are demanding solutions that provide seamless toolsets for managing all the mission critical functions for Title IV delivery. Additionally, they are seeking toolsets that will assist them in achieving operational excellence. By adopting a powerful software solution, the financial aid office may change its perceived role from a back office administrative function to a front line strategic initiative.

STATE OF INDIANA
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
INDIANAPOLIS

Executive Order

PROCLAMATION

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS MAY COME, GREETINGS:

- WHEREAS, February is the month that high school students and current college students should be applying for financial aid; and
- WHEREAS, there are many outreach activities conducted in February by financial aid professionals to raise awareness of aid possibilities; and
- WHEREAS, the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association will be conducting a state-wide College Goal Sunday on February 17, 2008 at 36 sites across the state; and
- WHEREAS, over the past 19 years College Goal Sunday in Indiana has assisted more than 70,000 Indiana residents in the financial aid application process; and
- WHEREAS, College Goal Sunday is a joint effort of the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association (ISFAA), Lumina, Lilly Foundation, and USA Funds.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., Governor of the State of Indiana, do hereby proclaim the week of February 17-23, 2008 as

FINANCIAL AID AWARENESS WEEK

in the State of Indiana, and invite all citizens to duly note this occasion.

*In Testimony Whereof, I hereto
set my hand and cause to be affixed the
Great Seal of State. Done at the
City of Indianapolis, this 5th
day of January in the year of our
Lord 2008 and of the Independence
of the United States 231.*



BY THE GOVERNOR:

M E Daniels, Jr.

➤ Comings and Goings <

And other tidbits of association news

Sue Allmon

Comings

The University of Southern Indiana is pleased to announce that **Mary J. Harper**, will become their new Director of Financial Aid March 15th upon the retirement of Jim Patton (see "retirements"). Mary comes to us from Kentucky Wesleyan College where she was the Director of Financial Aid. Welcome to ISFAA Mary!!

Ancilla College has hired new Assistant Director, **Marcella (Marcy) Hopple** to assist Kathy Mills. Marcy was promoted from the Business Office where she has worked the past six years. She is familiar with financial aid from the Business Office perspective and has worked very close with financial aid over the years. She started working in the Financial Aid Office on January 28th.

Tom Mrozinski joined ISFAA this January. Tom is Senior Vice President of M&I Bank (Wisconsin) Student Service Cen-

ter. He will introduce M&I's 28 year student loan program to Indiana.

Transitions

David Campbell has stepped into a new role on a new campus. He is leaving the financial aid office at IUPUI to become the Director of Admissions and Financial Aid at IU-Kokomo.

Ivy Tech Community College—Richmond has added a new staff member! **Sarah Soper** has joined the staff as a financial aid assistant. She was previously at the IU-Bloomington FAO.

Carrie Anglemeyer will be replacing Jennifer Ford (see births) as the Associate Director of Student Financial Services at the corporate office for Indiana Business College.

Donald Ronan will be replacing Carrie Anglemeyer as the Director of Financial Aid at the Medical campus for Indiana Business College.

Promotions

Jennifer Bicknell, Indiana Business College-Muncie has made a job move/promotion at her campus. She is now the Director of Education and will be leaving the wonderful world of financial aid behind.

Goings

Sharon Foster, Assistant Director will be leaving the University of Evansville on February 15th to become the Director of Financial Aid at Kentucky Wesleyan College in Owensboro, KY. She will be missed but always welcome back across the river!

Retirements

Jim Patton, Director of Financial Aid at University of Southern Indiana, has found his replacement (see "comings") and will be officially retired from USI on March 14th. We will miss him and wish

(Continued on page 17)

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him well on his new adventures.

Steve Morris, Director Financial Aid and Compliance for Indiana University-Bloomington plans to retire from Indiana University effective June 30, 2008. Steve writes, "With accumulated vacation time to take I will finish up around the middle of May. So if I don't see colleagues at the ISFAA Spring Conference I want to extend a fond farewell to all and thank everyone in ISFAA for their friendship and support during the past 36 years. I do plan to attend the Spring meeting so I hope to see many colleagues in April."

Phil Howard has recently retired from Purdue University after a 25+ year career, prior to Purdue, he was in the financial aid office at Indiana State University for 4+ years. Phil came to Purdue in 1982 as a financial aid administrator, became an Assistant Director then the Associate Director for Client Services. In 1997, Phil chose to reduce his responsibilities to those of a Financial Aid Administrator until he retired in January, 2008. Many good memories and 'best wishes' were shared at his reception on January 2, 2008. A week or so later, he also attended the Provost's Service Award

Luncheon and was presented a 25-Year Service Award.

John Morris will be retiring on April 6th from ISM. John says, "I've worked and saved since I was about 13, and it's time. I've been a parent, student, lender, and I've worked at three student-loan companies, but never at a school. After some 'rest' I might like to work part-time in financial aid."

Births

Raygan Marie Petter made her grand appearance on December 16, 2007. She weighed in at 7 lbs 4 oz and proud papa, **Josh Petter** from The Art Institute, says both daughter and mother are doing fine. This is their first child and is sure to be spoiled rotten!

If you see **Barb Thompson**, USA Funds University, puffing around, it is because she has a new grandbaby to brag about! Granddaughter Cassie Jo Thompson arrived this winter to keep her older brother Trey, from being an only child.

Robert Sommers, Account Executive with Edamerica, is a proud papa for the second time. His second son, Brayden Christian Sommers was born on Janu-



**Brayden Christian Sommers
with Mom and Sammy**

ary 18th. His big brother Sammy is sure taken by him!

Christina Lucas, Associate Director of Financial Aid, Franklin College writes, "I have two new granddaughters. Molly born 10/1 and Madison born 10/18 of 2007. Molly joined sister Meagan who turned 4 on 12/31. [I] love being grandma to all these girls since I was only blessed with boys."

Jennifer Ford, Associate Director of Student Financial Services at the corporate office for Indiana Business College delivered a baby boy, Mitchell Everett, on Sunday, February 3rd. Jennifer will become a full-time mother at this point.



Bits and Bytes

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Apr. 25 for May Issue
Sept. 25 for October Issue
Nov. 25 for December Issue
Jan. 25 for February Issue

Thanks